

technical education, the whole environment is hostile to her. A non-disabled woman is not sufficiently accepted, a woman with a disability is subject to severe restriction and humiliation. If she overcomes all these obstacles, she is then confronted with discrimination or rejection in the labour market. In many cases, women with disabilities are paid less on the grounds of their disability, and they have no choice but to agree to this injustice.

In some cases religion plays a vital role in preventing a woman with a disability from getting proper treatment. If a male physician or physio-technician (we only have a few recognized physiotherapists in our country) touches the woman's body, it is viewed as a sin.

Though we now have dowry-protection laws, in reality these laws are not fully enforced. In many cases, without dowry, marriages are hindered. Marriages of women with disabilities are doubly difficult. The idea that the child of a woman with a disability will be born disabled also prevents such marriages. Women fall in love with and marry men with a disability but the reverse is extremely rare. Women with a disability marry only after the exchange of a handsome dowry.

A national policy and plan of action for citizens with disabilities is still to be developed in Bangladesh, despite the establishment of a ten per cent quota for hiring candidates with a disability in some employment sectors. This quota is not respected or enforced. The quota ensures on paper that jobs will be given to deserving applicants with a disability, but without policy, there are no measures to provide the education and resources necessary to make this vulnerable group "deserving" applicants. Since disability is a curse and the result of sin, people with disabilities are supposed to be dishonoured, and they are not to speak of equal opportunities and participation. Total rehabilitation of women with disabilities is far from being accomplished, and no steps have been taken in this direction yet.

Until and unless the above barriers are removed, women with disabilities will continue to be the most marginalized of marginalized peoples. The following poem depicts the condition of a woman with a disability in Bangladesh.

A woman with disability is not a woman.
She is a shadow of woman.
A woman with disability has no choice.
She is only to be ordered.
A woman with disability has no voice.
She is supposed to only listen.
A woman with disability should have no heart.
She has to kill or conceal her feelings.
A woman with disability is no longer a woman.
She is only to hear from everywhere 'Goodbye.'

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This article was translated from Bangla into English by Mayeen Ahmed.

JENNIFER FOOTMAN

Amputations

The good Romans in the old Roman way
would cut off the arms, the legs and the cocks
of the nasty Greek statues so no one
could compare Greek and Roman. It would never do.

for a Greek to have stronger arms to bear
greater burdens, have longer legs to run
faster races, or be proud possessors
of larger members to excite the dumb

women out of their vacant heads.
Mass jealousy could lead to suicide,
democracy, socialism, fascism—
so we were to learn at a later date.

This surgery they performed only on the males
though there were a few exceptions. What is her
name? That
Venus-something-or-another. Armless

wonder. Well...the female statue is
really nothing but a frivolous lump
of marble for a slight admiration.
Perhaps for garden decoration...with fountain
or flowers?

We all know that the skull of the female
contains the brain of a fish
and is made of three segments: smell, vision
and balance; the largest being vision.
When this simple brain gets
a message, behaviour too, is simple.

Time counts for nothing for the female brain.
Her cold brain works only
in the present tense and that is why we
have no need to mutilate the female

at least not their statues, not their statues.

Jennifer Footman is originally from India, but spent most of her life in Edinburgh and is now living in Brampton. She has had poetry published in a number of magazines, and her poetry collection, Through a Stained Glass Window, was published by Envoi Press in 1990.