

The Burqa of My Psyche

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The Burqa

The burqa wraps a woman head to foot in a tent-like garment that fits tightly over her crown, flows to her ankles and has only a rectangle of mesh for her to look through. The Taliban imposed the burqa on Afghan women in 1996, and offered the Western world an image that represents the oppression of women. Coming from a civilization and religion seen as foreign to our own, the burqa acts as an embodiment of the destructive realities of sexism, misogyny and the transgression of human rights. The impersonal phrase, “the oppression of women,” takes on a face, a heartbeat, a humanness when pictures and stories of women in burqas burst onto our television screens. The burqa moves the term from a concept to an image, enlivening it. As Jung says, “Concepts are coined and negotiable values; images are life” (CW14:226).

The layers of meaning attached to the burqa, along with the fascination and sentiment it awakened in the Western world, qualifies it as a symbol. In North America, the sight of it hooks our emotions and our convictions. Newspaper editorials, classroom discussions and everyday conversations debate its origins, what it means, whether it should be allowed in our country. D. H. Lawrence explains our interest in a poetic way: “Many ages of accumulated experience still throb within a symbol. And we throb in response” (*Apocalypse*, p. 48).

For the most part, North Americans associate imprisonment, enclosure, persecution and tyranny with the burqa. Our philosophical ideals assure us that we are above such misuse of power, such disregard for women. Our obsessive fascination with the burqa, however, points to something that lies unconscious within our own culture. Anything that remains outside a nation’s psychological self-inventory “...is apt to turn up in the guise of a hostile neighbor, who will inevitably arouse (the nation’s) anger and make (it)

aggressive” (C. G. Jung, CW10:456). North America’s military is still in Afghanistan, preoccupying us and assuaging us so that we don’t have to look at a splinter of our own cultural shadow.

The violation of girls and women goes on in our own country, through sexual abuse, rape and domestic violence; the constant media reports of these offenses renders them unremarkable to us. Furthermore, the crimes committed against girls and women here in Canada usually happen out of sight. Glimpses of women in burqas, on the other hand, catch our attention and serve to revive concerns about the maltreatment of females in a new and down-to-earth, real-life way.

Sometimes the collective consciousness triggers in an individual psyche something that remains collectively unconscious, behooving the person to examine both her personal and cultural situation. The following dream came to a woman deeply involved in analysis:

I am to deliver a lecture on the burqa. The venue is the sanctuary of a church. People are gathered and I stand at the pulpit, which is at the back of the room--meaning that the congregation sits with their backs to me. The women are wearing burqas, the men wear shirts and casual-dress pants. The room is very dim, and I can’t see my notes. The lamp attached to the podium shines straight down, and can’t be adjusted to shine where my notes rest on the lectern. I have a small flashlight with me. When I shine it on my notes, the beam is highly focused, creating an intense and very small pool of light. As I move it across a page of notes, I see that the paper is covered in brightly-colored designs, like bold fabric. The designs completely obscure my notes.

In the dream, the setting is very dim. The dreamer’s lecture notes are unreadable. Her talk is being delivered from the back of the sanctuary, to the backs of the assembly. The dream-ego comes prepared to share with these parts of her own psyche something that is unconscious to them.

The majority of the audience is women, and they are wearing burqas. Somewhere, sometime, an overbearing message tyrannized these feminine aspects of the dreamer's psyche. In her outer life, this North American woman enjoys freedom of speech and dress and movement. Her dream, though, reveals an inner confinement, suggesting that subtle cultural attitudes and teachings undermine her ability to fully express herself. The church setting, the women clothed in burqas, and the dreamer's personal history with church authority invites an exploration of patriarchal religions--in particular, their attitudes toward women.

All three of the monotheistic religions--Islam, Christianity and Judaism--subordinate females. Areas of women's lives that are affected by the views and teachings of these religions include everything from their sexuality to clothing, and much in between.

Jewish laws concerning menstruation are extremely restrictive. Menstruating women are seen as unclean and impure; furthermore, their impurity infects other people and contaminates anything they touch. (No wonder some women still refer to menstruation as a "curse.")

Adultery is considered a sin by all faiths; however, the definition of adultery changes from one religion to another. While the Koran describes adultery as an extramarital affair between a married man and a married woman, the Bible considers only the extramarital affair of a married woman to be adultery (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22; and Proverbs 7:5-27). It is the woman's marital status that determines whether the man involved is guilty of adultery; a married man sleeping with a single woman would not be deemed adultery. The Koran and the Bible order punishment for both parties involved (Surah 24:2; Leviticus 20:10).

Regarding suspicion of adultery, the Old Testament instructs the jealous husband to take his complaints to a priest. The priest prepares a bitter potion known to cause intense physical suffering; the woman drinks it in his presence. Over the next few days, if her abdomen swells and her “thigh withers,” she is deemed guilty, and the community rejects her (Numbers 5:11-31). A wife’s suspicion of adultery on the part of her husband is not addressed.

Disparagement of the female gender takes many forms, conveying lack of respect and value. Judaistic tradition has a naming ceremony for a newborn son, but none for the birth of a daughter. The Catholic Bible states, “The birth of a daughter is a loss” (Ecclesiasticus 30:3) and advises parents to “Keep a headstrong daughter under firm control, or she will abuse any indulgence she receives. Keep a strict watch on her shameless eye, do not be surprised if she disgraces you” (Ecclesiasticus 26:10-11). This injunction resembles the beliefs underlying honor-killings in some branches of Islam. In Christianity, the physical life of such a daughter is not endangered, but the attitude portrayed by the scripture can set the girl and her parents up for conflict, distrust and heartbreak.

The three patriarchal religions also speak to divorce. Christianity abhors it: “...anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery” (Matthew 5:32). Judaism allows divorce without a cause, but women cannot get a divorce unless they acquired a Get document before they were married...and only men issue Get documents. Islam recognizes divorce but discourages it.

In regards to financial rights, the Talmud describes a wife's entitlements as nil: "How can a woman have anything; whatever is hers belongs to her husband. What is his is his and what is hers is also his..." (Sanhedrin 71a, Gittin 62a). Under canon and civil law, until early in the twentieth century, a woman in Christian America and Europe lost her property rights upon marriage. In Canada, a married woman could not open a bank account without her husband's signature until the early 1970's.

All religions counsel females to dress modestly. The Koran gives this advice: "O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters, and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad): that is most convenient, that they should be known (as such) and not molested" (Surah 33:59). How much of the female "person" is to be covered remains open to interpretation.

In the Hasidic sects, modesty involves a married woman covering her head. Many of these women choose to cut their hair short or shave their heads, and wear a wig, this being more comfortable than keeping their hair long and covered by a scarf or a hat. Considered sensual, a woman's hair is to be hidden from men.

Christians have the New Testament command: "...every woman praying or prophesying with her head uncovered disgraces her head...let her cover her head" (I Corinthians 11:5-6). Today, some Some Eastern Catholic, Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches and certain Mennonite branches require that women cover their heads when attending or participating in church services; some ordain it to be worn at all times. Women of the Jehovah's Witness religion must wear a head-covering--even in the home--whenever the husband, or a son who has been baptized, or any man of the faith is present.

For hundreds of years, Catholic nuns wore habits, exposing only the hands and face. The parameters within which these women could serve God were designed to remove them from the public scene in a cloister not only of body but also of mind and spirit. Those who stood by their own insights and conscience provoked retaliation from their male superiors; severity of punishment included entombment, excommunication and execution.

When it comes to religion, interpretation is everything, and politics makes interpretation its business. The endorsement of ultra-conservative interpretations can happen anywhere that a fundamentalist body carries power.

Misogyny is not new. For centuries, women have been controlled, bullied and scapegoated in the name of religion or tradition. China engaged in foot-binding. There is honor-killing in the Middle East and much of Asia, in Jordan and Brasil. India burns brides and Africa circumcises girls. Historically, North American laws have kept women in sexual fear, discriminated against them economically and denied them reproductive self-determination. Today, in the United States, the religious right advocates to have miscarriage defined as murder, and punishable by law. No society is above misogynist practices.

Sometimes sexist beliefs become privately ritualized, carried out under the guise of simple practicality. My mother was the youngest of ten children. In the upstanding Christian home of her childhood, her father was fed first at the table, then her brothers, next her sisters, in birth order, and finally her mother. To the day she died, my mother's favorite piece of chicken was the neck, reflecting her childhood experience: the neck

was the only part of the chicken left on the platter when it came to her. She and her mother were fed last, and least.

This was not uncommon in the rural culture in which my mother grew up. The reasoning for the custom was that feeding the men first allowed them to return to their field work more quickly. The era and religious denomination of my mother's background also supported such patterns. A clandestine practice, it kept women and girls in their place in the family, church and social hierarchies.

The burqa constitutes a more public and obvious subjugation of women. Under the rule of the Taliban, a woman could not leave her house without a burqa, a pair of silent-soled shoes, a permit, and a male relative at her side. Such confinement was visible, and therefore could be named for what it was.

The sight of a burqa conjures up ideas about what it must be like to be inside one. Many of the imaginings prove to be close to reality. One woman describes her subjective experience of wearing a burqa this way:

It was hot. Shrouded in this body bag, I felt claustrophobic. It was smelly, too. The cloth in front of my mouth was damp from my breathing. Dust from the filthy street swirled up under the billowing burqa and stuck to the moisture from my covered mouth. I felt like I was suffocating in stale air...It also felt like I was invisible. No one could see me. No one knew whether I was smiling or crying. The mesh opening didn't give me enough view to see where I was going. It was like wearing horse blinders. I could see only straight in front of me. Not above or below or on either side of the path. Suddenly, when the road changed, I stepped on the edge of the hideous bag that covered my body and tumbled to the ground. No one helped me. (Sally Armstrong, *Veiled Threat*, pp. 4-5)

The woman's head supports the weight of the burqa, producing headaches. Research done by the Physicians for Human Rights found that the burqa causes eye problems and poor vision, skin rash, hair loss, increased cardiac problems, itching of

the scalp, and exacerbation of asthma and hypertension (Sally Armstrong, *Veiled Threat*; Ana Tortajada, *The Silenced Cry*).

Living in virtually windowless houses (the Taliban ordered all windows to be covered) and being enclosed head-to-toe when outdoors leads to vitamin D deficiency in Afghan women (Sally Armstrong, *Veiled Threat*). This, in turn, causes the softening of bones, a condition known as osteomalacia. Bone fractures, muscle weakness and widespread bone pain characterize this disorder.

The anonymity enforced by the burqa promotes depression. In the story above, the woman tripped over her burqa and no one came to help her. It's as if she didn't exist, as if the burqa was simply a bag of potatoes tossed against the curb. Being inside the burqa "...is not a question of claustrophobia, but rather one of loss of identity; you are no longer a person" (Ana Tortajada, *The Silenced Cry*, p. 211). Under the burqa, the woman becomes nobody. "You can hear things...you can feel the heat and perceive smells, but still you've been cut off from the rest of the world and the life that exists outside there, on the other side of the burqa..." (Ana Tortajada, *The Silenced Cry*, p. 211).

Women's inability to recognize each other as they move along the street imposes a profound isolation. In public, they are invisible to each other. When they pass a friend on the street, neither of them knows it. The human connection that occurs through the meeting of eyes, the recognition of faces, the commonality of sharing a sidewalk or a shop in a certain moment ceases to exist.

Un-named and undifferentiated, the women appear to be clones, even to each other. They are treated alike. Whether yelled at, beaten, maimed or killed, the women

become anonymous tent-shapes, looking stupid as mules as they stumble about, pivoting their whole bodies in response to sounds and smells outside their field of vision.

Physiological elements of a gendered nature contribute to the confining effects and psychological stress wrought by the wearing of the burqa. These factors have to do with the brain and the eye.

The two sides of the human brain are functionally different. The hemispheres work in close concert with each other. When one side is damaged, or is deprived of stimulation--as happens when under the burqa--the unrestricted side loses its partner. Impairment in thinking and/or behavior occurs.

A simplistic but sufficient summary of the functions goes something like this. The left brain manages speech and abstract thinking; the right brain appreciates music, recognizes faces and facilitates intuition and insight. It is better than the left in perceiving space and making judgments as to balance, harmony and the composition of the overall picture. Left brain dissects, analyzes and thinks about the content of what is said; right brain notices the nuances, inflections and gestures accompanying the words. The left brain functions sequentially and analytically; the right brain comprehends the whole picture. In short, the left side of the brain concerns itself with doing, and the right brain is about being. Left-brain functions carry a masculine quality; the right brain exhibits a feminine approach to life.

In the development of the fetal brain, the right side forms first. It is the part that was present before humans evolved into creatures with two hemispheres. As the "old" side of the brain, it is concerned with issues and activities of survival. It integrates feelings and recognizes images. It grasps input from all of the senses all-at-once.

The Taliban's sanctions against women deprived the right brain of stimulation that speaks most naturally to women. Faces and bodies were covered, music was banned, vocal sounds were prohibited and, through the enforcement of the burqa, spaces and movements became confined.

The composition of the human eye is relevant to the issues of the burqa as well. Made up of rods and cones, the eye also performs opposite but complementary functions. Rods are light-sensitive and correspond to the right brain in their ability to perceive reality all-at-once. Cones register color and provide focus, information that the left brain is suited to process. Stimuli picked up by rods and cones are fed to both sides of the brain; metaphorically, their functions fit with one hemisphere or the other.

Like the right brain, rods have an older ancestry than cones. All vertebrate eyes have rods, but only a few animals possess cones in abundance. The visual big-picture perception of things has been with animals for a long time, facilitating survival of both the species and the individual.

Women have more rods in their retinas than men do, giving them better peripheral vision. Men's eyes contain more cones, enabling them to see one segment of the visual field in greater detail, resulting in better depth perception. Forcing a woman's eyes into tunnel vision therefore handicaps her more than the same restriction would most men. Her perceptual strength is the ability to take in a great deal at a glance. Denied peripheral vision, she is all but blind-folded.

Women's eyes and brains predispose them toward relatedness, multi-tasking, big-picture comprehension and intuitive understanding. They are cut off from their natural sources of information and avenues of expression when they were forced into the

burqa. Surviving suddenly requires a different mode of thinking and perceiving and behaving. Such rearrangement in the brain does not happen overnight; donning the burqa, however, did descend overnight. Literally.

On one day, like thousands of days before, the cities of Kabul and Kandahar bustled with an urban culture much like ours. Women fed their families breakfast, sent the children off to school and followed their husbands out the door to work. Young women populated the campuses of universities. Women of all ages wore makeup, nail polish, a variety of colors, fashions and shoes. Many women had never worn even a headscarf in their entire lives.

The next day, by order of the new government-occupiers, women and children did not leave their houses. The women had no job to go to and the children had no school. In order to go out of her house, a woman had to be wearing a burqa; few women owned a burqa.

This was the reality of oppression imposed visibly, concretely and instantly from the outside. Invisible subjugation--like the above example about serving the food to men and boys first--works more subtly, and lacks the shock factor that the burqa brought. Nevertheless, this private tyranny produces many of the same difficulties associated with the outer burqa. It becomes internalized, revealing itself in restricted physical movements, social connections, feminine perceptiveness, and overall well-being.

Two of the most important influences on a child are the emotional constellation of her immediate family and the configuration of her culture. A family is embedded in a culture. The myths and religion of any given culture shape the psyche of the individual. Farida Shaheed is the coordinator of an association called "Women Living Under

Muslim Laws,” and lives in Pakistan. She explains the impact of family and culture on a woman’s mind and psyche this way: “Women who aren’t literate, aren’t educated, believe what they’re told and trust what they hear. In a society that oppresses women and has an unequal socializing process, what the women hear sets them up for a lifetime of subjugation” (Sally Armstrong, *Veiled Threat*, p. 152).

In juxtaposition to this, the suppressive climate in which the burqa became a prison for Afghan women brought to the fore the resiliency, strength and moral fibre of some of those women. For the most part, these women were educated income-earners before the Taliban took over. They knew that life could be different, because they had lived that different life. They fought back in many ways, both hidden and visible.

The Taliban decreed that windows of houses must be covered so that no one walking along the street would be defiled by glimpsing a woman inside the house. Women dealing in beauty services moved their operations inside those shuttered houses, helping women to feel beautiful beneath their enforced shrouds. Teachers, suddenly without work, taught small groups of girls inside their darkened houses, despite the risks to family members and to themselves. One female Afghan doctor openly treated women in the clinics and hospitals she ran, using her regional status as folk hero to protect herself.

Like the burqa imposed by the Taliban, or by Pakistan’s Muslim law, a psychological burqa-state starts from outside influences. Usually, this happens very early. The woman who dreamt that she delivered a talk on the burqa to the backs of men in casual wear and women in burqas was born and raised in a Christian home within the patriarchal culture of the United States. A bright, imaginative child, she read the Bible

from cover-to-cover when she was eight years old, and felt bewildered by the treatment of women in those stories. Around that time, she remembers being repeatedly chastised by her Sunday school teacher--a woman--to stop answering the questions in class so that the boys would have "a chance to show that they're smart."

In a primary school classroom, the last day of Grade Four, her teacher--again, a woman--weighed each child in class and announced their weights publicly. This girl was twenty pounds heavier than the biggest boy (and also four inches taller than the tallest boy, but that was not noted, either by the teacher or the girl). Not yet ten years old, she went home and put herself on a diet, losing twenty pounds in three months and ending up in the hospital for six weeks. There was no word or category for a disordered eating back then, and the child's condition baffled the parents and the doctor. The girl's mother was plump and had never dieted; the mother and father both accepted the mother's weight, and the girl's weight (which was normal for her height). There was no television, no newspaper or women's magazines in the home, and very little radio exposure. Yet the girl knew that "girls are not supposed to be heavier than boys." The woman, now middle-aged, still has difficulty embracing her natural body and her intelligence.

Today it is well known that the majority of girls in North America shut down their instinctual wisdom by age twelve. They stop speaking the truth about what they perceive and know. By age twelve, they have learned that it is safest to focus on what the teacher wants, what the boys want, what the parents want. They are able to read between the lines of what is said, and often deliver the paper or sex or behavior that's *really* expected.

This is the North American version of the burqa. It stifles and endangers a woman's psychological well-being, for it prevents her from showing up fully in her own life. Being covert, it is not easily recognized or resisted.

The woman who had the burqa dream is fortunate; she is shown the presence of the burqa in her own psyche, something about its context, and how to approach it. The dream takes place inside the sanctuary of a church. This suggests a complex tied to the patriarchal god of her childhood that judges and condemns. The women in the audience wear burqas, indicating that women-parts of her psyche have been shut up. It appears that an authoritative voice has put a burqa on her.

The dreamer's personal history is rife with examples of male church leaders who silenced her attempts to express her experiences and insights. It also contains incidents of hard outdoor work in the hot, semi-arid climate where she grew up, clothed from head to toe so that the family's men-neighbors would not glimpse her body as it transformed through pubescence. Generational history on her mother's side includes sexual abuse of the daughters within a family that was highly esteemed in the church and community. Poverty and physical abuse rendered her father's side of the family an invisible people, some of whom suffer serious depression.

In the burqa dream, the dreamer's ego, her consciousness, knows something about the nature and effects of the burqa, and is ready to educate those parts of her psyche that are still confined within it. According to the dream, this needs to be done carefully. Heavy designs obscure the dream-ego's script. The venue for the educational talk is dim. The flashlight is too focused and the lamp on the lectern is inflexible. Placed at the back of the auditorium, the dreamer addresses the backs of the men and women.

Taken together, these details advise an indirect, slipping-in-the-back-door approach to releasing the cloaked aspects of her psyche.

Perhaps, like the Afghan women who created schools and beauty parlors behind their sequestered windows, the dreamer needs to engage forbidden ideas and practice profane rituals within the cloister of her own house. Befriending women who are less restrained than she is, but who are also sensitive to and respectful of the inhibitions that circumscribe her self-expression, constitutes a careful attempt at re-educating the psyche that's still in darkness. An analyst who can wait patiently with her until these inner parts come out of hiding can provide the maternal protection she needs as she discovers her own authority. Progress toward a more authentic persona and presence may be slow indeed.

The individual brain, and the individual psyche, are greatly affected by the information and stimulation received over a long period of time. When a woman has spent her whole life wearing a burqa in public, and it is then removed through the liberation of a people from a terrorizing government, or through immigration to a different region or country, the woman's brain and psyche undergo a reconfiguration as she learns to move about in a more free and visible way. The experience can be stunning and disorienting. Jung speaks to this in his essay on American psychology:

The external assimilation to the peculiarities of a country is a thing one could almost expect. There is nothing astonishing in it. But the external similarity is feeble in comparison with the less visible but all the more intense influence on the mind. It is just as though the mind were an infinitely more sensitive and suggestible medium than the body. It is probable that long before the body reacts, the mind has already undergone considerable change, changes that are not obvious to the individual himself or to his immediate circle..." (CW10:971)

Women who grew up in an area where the burqa has always been required do not have a prior experience of themselves to return to, or to measure themselves by. The process of moving out of the burqa then becomes fraught with anxiety. Contact with women who show their faces and are not punished for doing so is often a first step.

A Western woman's psyche that has been enclosed in subtle beliefs about the inferiority of females needs an environment that allows the opportunity and time to find a new orientation and to come to trust its unique intelligence. Given the appropriate analyst and the right rhythm, analysis can provide this kind of setting.

The experience of analysis may be as jubilant and as confounding as the ousting of the Taliban regime late in 2001 was for the women of urban Afghanistan. At first, the women celebrated, eager to go back to their previous lifestyles. Yet, late in 2002, more than 50% of women in Kabul continued to wear burqas when outdoors because black-bearded men with machine guns still kept vigil on the streets. The women felt safer in their burqas.

This irony of the burqa providing a sense of safety shows the other side of the burqa as a symbol. Invisibility gives one a certain type of protection. Facial expressions and body gestures are hidden and therefore do not disclose the woman's fear, angst, lies, tears or joy. Some Afghan women have observed that bargaining for wares is easier when wearing the burqa.

The inner, psychological burqa assumes several forms, all of which obscure the ego. One involves a chameleon-like quality, in which a woman unconsciously becomes what the other person or the situation needs her to be. The woman lacks a sense of self. Her ego remains relatively undeveloped, hiding behind an ever-changing and

highly vigilant persona. This kind of adaptation starts young, providing protection that carries a heavy cost to the individual. When her invisibility no longer serves her well, it produces interior pain, which accumulates over time. Lucky is the woman for whom remaining unnoticed becomes more painful than the risk it takes to break out and become seen, however slowly.

Sometimes the changeable persona reveals itself most clearly in relation to men. The anima-woman draws the attention and projections of certain men. Such a woman may not know what is important to her, what she needs or wants. Unconscious of herself, the man finds her to be malleable and sets about grooming her to fit his fantasy of Woman. This kind of woman finds her *raison d'être* through men.

The inner burqa manifests in another shape whereby identification of the ego with the persona creates an exclusive orientation to outer life. Whether the persona is socially well-adapted (i.e., the supportive wife, the super-mom), or socially unadapted (i.e., the nosy gossip, the neighborhood witch), when the ego identifies with the facade that is shown to the public, the woman gives no consideration to her inner world. Imprisoned behind the persona, the ego is capable of only an external orientation. Unaware of the interior life, such a woman does not respond to internal events. Danger then lies within, for the unconscious can erupt into her conscious life in a destructive way. The woman often senses this danger, and avoids being alone, or unoccupied. A common fear is that if she looks inside, she will find nothing.

Living in a democratic society does not insure that a person develops a persona congruent with her real self. All of the above persona-states inhibit the expression of a

woman's personality. The woman's particular view of things, her individual timing, her distinctive gifts and her personal humanness remain undeveloped.

Animus-possession creates yet another type of the inner burqa. In this case, the animus overwhelms the woman's personality with "...the dynamic power of thoughts and words" (C. G. Jung, CW9ii:293), or Logos characteristics. Other people experience the woman as domineering and argumentative. What she says is often irrelevant to the situation at hand. As a result, she comes across as a social misfit who provokes and annoys those whose lives cross paths with hers.

Another kind of bondage to the animus is less extraverted. Many "free" women--free by virtue of living in a Western civilization--remain under the rule of a misogynist animus, which harasses her feeling states, undermines her creative ideas and silences her instinctual promptings. Since the animus parrots collective perspectives and opinions, and since our society is founded on patriarchal values and views, a woman can feel evaluated, judged and threatened from both within and without. The woman appears insubstantial, giving the impression of a nonentity, or a doormat.

In both cases of an improper relationship to the animus, the woman needs to come to terms with who is really boss in her life. Unmasking the source of her own authority allows the powers of the animus to support, rather than intimidate or dominate, her ego. This, in turn, enables the woman to respond creatively to the surrounding cultural pathology.

The burqas of the Middle East, and the terrorizing rule of the Taliban in Afghanistan, provide Western women a symbol for their inner and immense struggle for self-expression and self-fulfillment. The image of women secluded in burqas by the decree

of an extremist patriarchal regime catches the imaginations of, and sparks indignation in, many North American women. One result has been the formation of numerous petitions, activist groups and declarations targeting the attitudes and overt oppression under which many women live, to appreciable effect.

As the title of this paper hints, I am the woman who had the burqa dream. Through writing this paper, I hope to slip some new information to the feminine parts of my psyche that are isolated from each other and from my ego. The burqa as a unifying symbol holds the potential for bringing the silenced parts onboard as equal citizens in my psyche, moving me closer to wholeness. I believe it will also benefit the collective for whom the sight of the burqa has awakened the urgency of women's rights throughout the world.

Despite my best efforts, this exploration of the burqa as a symbol "remains a perpetual challenge to (my) thoughts and feelings" (C. G. Jung, CW15:119). Its pregnant significance cries out to me that it means more than I have uncovered or expressed. "We can put our finger on the symbol...even though we may not be able to unriddle its meaning to our entire satisfaction" (C. G. Jung, CW15:119). The writing of this paper has been a most useful endeavor, and for now, what I have come to know must be enough.

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