

Thought Piece One

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Answer:

Rokeya Sakhwat Hossain wrote *Sultana's Dream* is a bold dream that was the wish of a women's population in India during the British colonization in India. Hossain's plot poised on the utopian world of female dominance, and opposite to the dystopian reality of male-dominant in India back at that time. The universal experience that Hossain had been through her younger life reflects in *Sultana* discovering the world that she has wished to live.

The story's main character is *Sultana*, a Muslim girl by mentioning, "being a purdahnashin woman I am not accustomed to walking about unveiled," which means she is not used to walking outside without hijab. "Shy and timid" are the virtues of the Muslim women, but in her dream, they are adjectives for the men. I found in the story that *Sultana* would question a lot during the dream experience in a world where she can barely find a hint of men. She questions why would the way she acts is "mannish" at the beginning; "Where are the men?"; "How can you find the time to do all these? You have to do the office work as well? Have you not?", or her questioning on the historical period of the world that she is in that would explain why there are no men outside "By whom? -by some lady warriors, I suppose?" She bombarded questions because everything here, for her, is too good to be true. The characteristic of her reasoned her dream as she is craving this utopian world where she can find it safe and not in the real religious, political, colonized India that she is in. In *Sultana's* dream, the world is owned by women by the brain and the heart. It is the place where crime caused by the man's greed is nowhere to be reported because it is peaceful. Hossain, through the lens of *Sultana*, explains the reality of her world: "In India man is lord and master. He has taken to himself all powers and privileges and shut up the women in the zenana" but was inspired questioned to stand up for herself "Why do you allow yourselves to be shut up?" Through the conversation between *Sultana* and Sister Sara, there is a quick realization about the gender roles in society, and they are contemporary. "A lion is strong than a man," so why would she have to fear a man. In the dream world, the downfall of the foolish men using their muscles to fight and not through innovative thinking is how women in the powerful position.

The story exemplifies how a group of oppressed women can overturn a male-constructed society into a ladies' world by outsmarting them. Given the background and the country that the author related to, India and South Asia, as a whole, from then to now stills in the state of patriarchal society, and with the Hinduism and Islam's cultural imperialism as described through the strict rule that specifically for girls or women *Sultana* must follow. The real world that she is in does not allow her to speak, diminishing the social changes and letting the men form their gender roles as staying domestically is for women. In the context of the badly unjustified world, *Sultana's* dream world is genuinely "utopian," a female-dominance world that effectively runs better than her real world.

Sultana is the embodiment of young Hossain, and Sister Sara is her reflection as a women teacher that Hossain became later in her life. Reading Hossain's biography "*Rokeya: An Introduction to Her Life*" by Roushan Jahan accounts for her childhood to adulthood. The element of girl universities in the story is her inspiration for the school that she established in Bengal. It is the dream of having an exemplary institution that she was striving for. If all girls are well educated, the possibility of women inventors, women leaders, and women-run-country are goals of her world's perspectives. There is no mention of the word "utopia" in the story, but if I read the story during the period that she was in, it is something out of a blue moon related to the

dream of the entire population of girls in South Asia. Given the current world status on equality between men and women, there is still much work to achieve a neutral utopia for everyone. With the number of educated populations rising, there is more debate on gender roles in South Asia, and people are acknowledging it and making changes to redefine this contemporary social structure.