sustainable communities. This appealing long-term goal stands in stark contrast to many disaster managers' short-term goal of simply removing people from harm's way.

Enarson's review of the literature on how women fare in disasters makes a persuasive case for why gender and disaster scholars and activists should learn from each other. In disasters, women typically suffer higher mortality rates than men, which Enarson usefully points out is due only in part to their physical differences; more relevant are their roles and relationships. While women may be less able to swim, run, or otherwise escape from threats, they also, as caregivers, tend to prioritize the safety of their children or others over their own. After the immediate danger has passed, women's caregiving imposes additional stresses—which may explain their greater rates of post-traumatic stress syndrome compared to men. But the greater social support women experience through their care networks is also protective, in that women are alerted to risk sooner and receive help faster and assistance longer than men, who are generally more socially isolated.

One of the surprises for readers will be the rise in domestic violence and rape after disasters that scholars have documented in the US, using data from shelters and police reports. The usual explanation that disasters cause stress, and that men relieve stress by abusing women, is inadequate and highlights a need for more research. Enarson suggests that disasters amplify women's vulnerability to such violence when they are displaced from their homes, housed in shelters, or must share custody of children with abusive ex-husbands or partners—and when disaster policies and managers are insensitive to these gendered issues. In short, when disaster policies ignore social problems, those problems compound.

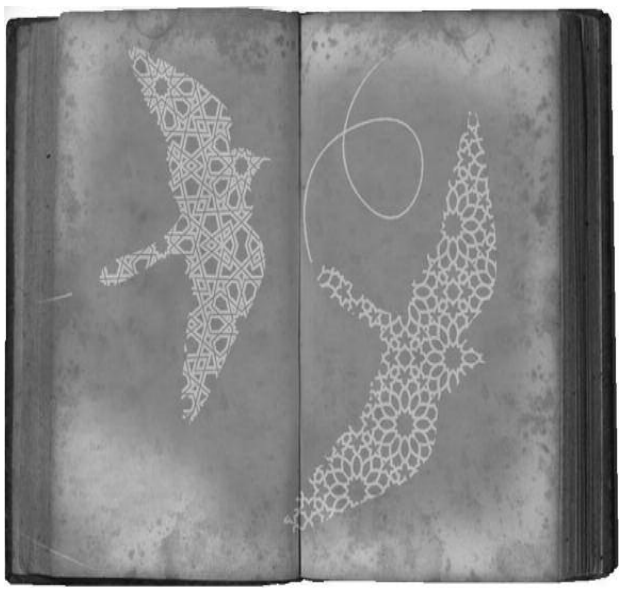
Although Enarson advocates an intersectional approach that considers how gender, age, race, ethnicity, class, ability, and sexuality contribute to both vulnerability and resilience, most research on gender focuses on the vulnerabilities of heterosexual married women and mothers. For these women, the double shift of home and paid work expands after a disaster and creates conflict in both arenas. Women who are already disadvantaged economically and occupationally often suffer the greatest losses. Enarson points out that "the large [gender] gaps in pre-disaster or 'normal' times become gaping holes during disasters." These holes in the system open up because social safety nets as well as everyday social institutions have failed to consider how to respond to women's specific needs during and after disasters.

Enarson is banking on women's organizing to build resilience to disasters. She cites several examples of women's groups that have pushed back against disaster managers' plans when they see them as inequitable. However, these groups are usually initiated by more advantaged women and those who are less overwhelmed by the demands of recovery. Furthermore, they are often focused on returning to normal rather than on achieving greater gender equality or otherwise transforming society. The stories of resilience in *The Women of Katrina* provide some understanding of the possibilities and limits of women's postdisaster activism.

Enarson provides a lengthy and specific list of recommendations, which may make more sense to disaster planners than to gender scholars. In brief, she recommends "mainstreaming gender" through employing more women in disaster management agencies and as first responders. Further, she argues that women's own organizations provide women with material and political resources, both of which contribute to disaster resilience. By building partnerships between women emergency managers, women's community organizations, and politicians, Enarson asserts, communities will become more resilient. As transformative events, disasters can present opportunities to create inclusive participatory democracies, but only when we can get beyond the dramatic scenes of heroic rescues and tragic victims, and into the hard work of rebuilding community.

Elizabeth Fussell is an associate professor in the Sociology department at Washington State University. Since Hurricane Katrina she has been studying postdisaster population change in New Orleans, including the arrival of the Latino immigrants who participated in the city's recovery, and the differential displacement and return of pre-Katrina New Orleanians. She is currently writing a book titled ***Katrina Stirs the Gumbo Pot: The Arrival and Reception of Latino Migrants in Post-Katrina New Orleans***, and has contributed a chapter to ***Displaced: Life in the Katrina Disaspora*** (2012), edited by Lori Peek and Lynn Weber.

The Pure and the Impure



The Good Muslim

By Tahmima Anam

New York: Harper, 2011, 304 pp., 25.99,

hardcover

Reviewed by Mandira Sen

In her second novel, which explores the emergence of Bangladesh in December 1971, Tahmima Anam captures the aftermath of independence. Her first novel, *A Golden Age* (2007) focused on the ferocious civil war between the two wings of Pakistan, when the Bengali Muslims of East Pakistan rose up against their perceived oppressors, the Urdu-speaking West Pakistanis, also Muslim. In that first book, Anam wrote about the Haque family: Rehana, the mother, who found herself in the heart of the struggle; Sohail, her son, who joined the rebel forces, the Mukti Bahini; and Maya, her daughter, who worked with refugees in India and the government-in-exile. In this novel, Anam revisits the Haques during the early years of independence. Not surprisingly, these turn out to be traumatic in a different way from the war, and she crafts her story with now-familiar delicacy and understatement, showing a world turned upside down, with no easy answers or solutions. The devastation is inward, too—in people's hearts and minds.

The story is told through the point of view of Maya, still restless, outwardly tough, and unconventional. Her narrative slides back and forth in time, from the victory of 1971 to its aftermath, mirroring Maya's confusion and preoccupations. During the war, the three family members had counted the days when they would be together again. However, they soon discover that the war has changed them and created distances not easily bridged. Rehana and Maya, who has returned home, welcome the victory and try to pick up their old lives. They work with the Center for the Rehabilitation of Women, where women who were raped and mutilated during the near-genocide faced by the Bengalis receive counseling and abortions (although these are never publicly mentioned). Maya wants a war crimes tribunal. She cannot accept what *Bangabandu* (the friend of the Bengalis) Mujibur Rahman, the revered leader of the revolt, who has returned as prime minister, has offered: the nation's reverence toward the raped women as *birangonas*, heroines, who have paid with their bodies, just as dead male soldiers have, for liberation. Maya believes this erases what the women were forced to endure and wholly ignores a social reality in which rape ruins a woman's life.

Sohail returns from the war so deeply disturbed that his mother puts the Book (the Qu'ran), into his hands, thinking this will lessen the turmoil that overwhelms him:

> He sits and reads the words ... refusing to see his friends or celebrate the victory. Dimly he hears them: time to go back to the university; stop worrying your mother... be happy.... Most of all he is afraid to talk. Maya is always regarding him hungrily, eager for small scraps of detail ... he wants her to be quiet so that she can hear that roar, the roar of uncertainty and the roar of death.

Sohail turns his back on modernity and seeks to make himself over into a better Muslim. A young man who had a kind of charismatic power over his

contemporaries at the university, he rejects his education and takes up the austere life of a religious leader. Maya is horrified. She tries to encourage Sohail to return to everyday life, but in response, he burns all the books he had lovingly collected over the years. Rehana remonstrates with Maya that religion can never be harmful and tells Maya she should not have provoked Sohail. Maya leaves home to work as an itinerant doctor in small towns and rural areas, staying away for seven years.

South Asian Islam has always had its own character. The great Sufis, or saints, who proselytized Islam did so by persuasion and allowed converts retain some elements of their former practices. Thus, South Asian Islam shares some patterns of behavior, and even some festivals, with the other faiths in the region. Urdu-speaking Muslim elites, such as those who lived in East Pakistan or had moved there when India was partitioned, held themselves to be *ashraf,* or pure. They looked down on Bengali-speakers as uneducated peasants who were *altaf*, or impure, because they retained beliefs and customs of the other faiths around them. At the start of the war, some East Pakistani Urdu-speakers, including the Haques, decided to become Bengali-speakers, to throw in their lot with East Pakistan. Paradoxically, after the war, some of these, Sohail among them, began to question whether they had been proper Muslims. They looked to Arab Islam, with its Puritanism and its elimination of Sufis, who were intermediaries with the divine, and insisted that all a believer required was the one Book. They aimed to create a homogeneous religious community, suppressing much of the beauty and culture of the syncratic Islam of South Asia: its music, literature, and dance.

The search for a pure faith lessened the importance of prosecuting war crimes, since many of the perpetrators were Muslim. Sohail, on his way home from the war, had rescued Piya, a woman he had found left in a Pakistani military barracks, her long hair shorn so that she could not harm herself with it, kept in bondage for the use of soldiers. They travel to her village,and she later comes to see him in Dhaka. One day, when she, Sohail, and Maya are out in their Dhaka garden, writes Anam, Piya whispers that she has done something very bad.

> Sohail came very close to her, careful not to touch her, and said, "It doesn't matter, forget it.You should try to forget it." She grew silent, but they could hear her breathing, as though the words were struggling to get out of her, and she was struggling to keep them in. Everyone else was determined to forget, to move on and leave behind whatever dirty things had happened in the past; it would be cruel to deny Piya this, a chance to begin again. Certainly they had only meant to comfort her. But Piya was different after that night. Something had rippled within her, demanded to get out, and they had silenced it.

When Sohail asks Piya to marry him, she leaves without telling them. Later, she refuses an abortion and is celebrated as a brave *birangana*, the unmarried mother of a son. Maya comes to believe that she and Sohail made a grievous mistake in not encouraging Piya to talk about the rapes.

I find this particular plot development unconvincing. In Bangladesh, as elsewhere in the region, women keep rape hidden as something shameful; the prime minister's wish to honor them would not have assuaged their trauma. Some may have wanted to give birth, but felt they did not have the option. Anam falters on a few other occasions. When Rehana is suffering from cancer, for example, her son visits her and has her drink water from the Zamzama well in the Muslim holy city of Mecca. Rehana is miraculously—but not credibly—cured.

The Haques' neighbor Silvi had turned to fundamentalist Islam before Sohail. Silvi had married an army officer, who defected and joined the Mukhti Bahini. When he was caught and hideously tortured, which led to his death, she reacted with detachment. She believed it was wrong to break up the *umma* (the faith community) of the two wings of Pakistan and disapproved of the revolt. As Sohail starts on his journey to be a religious leader, Silvi and he marry. He tells his sister, "Silvi saved me. You were too busy killing those babies." The new Sohail is against abortion, and his Islam has no space for women.

The couple have a son, Zaid, who is six when Silvi dies of jaundice. Her death brings Maya back home and is one of the reasons she remains in Dhaka. Like Sohail, although for different reasons, Maya realizes that she no longer has much in common with her old friends, most of whom have thrown themselves into making money. However Joy—the younger brother of Aref, Sohail's former best friend, who was killed in the war—was a rebel soldier who was caught and tortured. Also at a loss in the new Bangladesh, Joy becomes Maya's refuge, as she is his. Not surprisingly, when Joy re-encounters his old hero Sohail, nothing meaningful transpires.

The story of Sohail and Silvi's son, Zaid, is puzzling. Would a middle class child be so physically and emotionally neglected? Why is he dressed in rags, kept barefoot, dirty, and half-starved, so that at age six he looks like he is only four? Fundamentalism doesn't prescribe this kind of treatment; it reveres women as mothers, after all. Rehana, Zaid's grandmother, does not wish to interfere, but she is aware that Zaid tells lies, steals, and is kept out of school.

Maya's attempts to teach Zaid at home are not successful, though the two do develop a bond. However, she fails to protect him from Sohail and his fellow zealots, who have set up shacks on the roof of the house, where they hold their prayers. A curtain separates the men's section from the women's, and the women wear the *niqab*, a head-to-foot covering with a slit for the eyes, which was rare before the war. These women report to Sohail that Maya is teaching his son with secular materials and trying to get him admitted to school. Sohail sends Zaid away to a *madrasah*, a traditional religious school, to learn Arabic and scripture.

At the *madrasah*, Zaid is starved, locked in a dark room, and sexually abused by the principal or his deputy. Maya's attempt to rescue him ends in a tragic misadventure, and Zaid never comes home. Sohail reacts by leaving for Saudi Arabia, to be the good Muslim he set out to be. It is not life that matters to him, but the afterlife.

In the midst of uncertainties, the security of religion is often comforting. However, therapy might also have helped Sohail deal with the horrors he endured during the war—why Maya, a doctor, or Rehana, never suggests this is unclear. At one point, Maya tells Sohail that his feelings are the consequences of his wartime experiences of killing people—and indeed, much of what he does is to expiate his feelings of guilt. Rehana believes that the death of Sohail's father, when Sohail was just eight, had an enormous impact on his sense of self. But Sohail himself feels that

> the Book spoke to his every sorrow, to every bruise of his life ... it spoke to the day his father died, ... it spoke to the machine-gun sound that echoed in his chest, night after night ... and every idea that he had ever had about the world, it spoke to those too. That every man was equal before God—how foolish of him to believe that Marx had invented this concept ... [it] is what God had intended, what God had created. He wept from the beauty of it.

Anam's achievement is to make readers understand the irresistible pull of faith for someone like Sohail, who is educated and urbane and not at all untutored, and his detachment from his family and friends, and even from his son. To him, all these take second place before God. Indeed, the fundamentalist achieves a feeling of invincible security through a simple faith that does not accommodate questions or choices. This is how Sohail thinks he must live his life; Maya and Rehana grapple directly with the tarnished victory.

Mandira Sen is a publisher of two imprints: Stree (gender studies) and Samya (culture, dissent, social change). She lives and works in Kolkata (formerly Calcutta), India.

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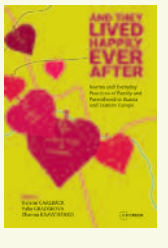

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