

From childhood I cannot understand why I was born in this form

Mona Ahmed

Myself
Mona
Ahmed

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To: Walter Keller <wkeller@scalo.com>

Subject: From Mona May 31st 2001

Date: Thursday, May 31, 2001 6:30 PM

Dear Mr Walter

Received your email and I am so happy to read. Now I am going to tell you about me everything as you like.

My birth date 9 November 1937, because in my family have a book where all birth dates and death dates are written.

I was born in Old Delhi at home, in a middle class family. I came after two sisters. After me also born a girl, then born another boy.

He died before 47. Then another girl was born. Then two more boys. So we were 8 children. My father was a business man selling caps, Gandhi caps, every kind of the caps.

My house had two rooms, one big and one small, one kitchen where my mother used to cook and sometimes my grandmother. Both my parents were from Old Delhi.

My first name was Ahmed Hassan.

My two brothers were born after 10 years, so my childhood was spent playing with my 4 sisters. I never played boys games like football, cricket, instead we played with dolls. We used to make weddings for our dolls, make little clothes for them and then have small dinners for all our dolls.

After the partition my all family went Pakistan to meet my fathers brothers, me also to Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, my father stayed back to look after our shop, but when govt announced that all in Pakistan should stay in Pakistan, then my father rushed and brought us all back to India. When we come back in India I was 11 or 12 so read in a mosque holy quoran and went to a primary school, near our house.

My mother loved me very much, she never beat me and she wept when father beat me. She never scolded me or made me feel I was different. Where ever she went she took me with her.

My father was very angry man and always he beat me and saying me "why you are walking just like a girl, why you are talking just like a girl. You are a boy and you must be hard, don't play with girls play with boys". But the boys of the schools and neighbors made fun of me. Then I started to realize I was different from other boys.

Teachers and boys wanted to make wrong type relations with me. So I did not want wrong relations. But my father wanted to give me good education so I could be a big businessman, but it was my bad luck, whenever I went everyone makes me fun. Neighbors said me bad names.

So I could not make any friends with boys. When I read in the school, the elder boys want to make me bad relations.

So everytime I am thinking in my heart, who am I. I had no peace in my heart, I was searching some love and sympathy and respect for me and friendship. So I went in any garden and sit in a corner and think about myself and after 2-3 hours when I come back to my house, my father asks me where you were, and give me punishment and say me get out my house. My mother wept and loved me even then.

In our society wife cannot do anything and cannot speak loudly in front of her husband.

So one day I met some eunuchs in a park, and they made me friendship. I felt very happy to meet them and very comfortable for first time in my life. So I made a relation with 2 eunuchs Sona and Chaman. They were very beautiful and modern style, they had a rented house and simple furniture but very clean and very nice. They were also singing and dancing very good. They attended marriage parties for dancing just like singing girls. They did not dance for blessing new house or child like other eunuchs.

After one week they invited me to stay in their house with them. I felt a nice atmosphere in their house. So many gentlemen came their house and gave them money and invited on their ceremonies. One day I slept in their house. When I returned home my father beat me so much and took off all my clothes and said me get out from house, saying where you were all night. My mother requested to father to keep me at home and so I stayed on. I think my father had understood that his boy was not a full boy and so was angry. One day when I was sitting in the eunuchs house, he came there searching me and took me home. And he touched my feet and requested me, now you must never go to their eunuchs house. And he took me to a wrestling akhada, and asked them to make my heart like a boys, and my body strong like a mans. Father gave me dryfruits, milk, buffalo ghee and so many other things to make me a strong man.

But it was my bad luck I did not make a strong man.

Then both the eunuchs took me away with them to Lahore for castration from a doctor. My family was sad and searching me in Delhi and asking every eunuchs – where is the Ahmed. Some eunuch told them I had gone to Lahore for castration. So my younger sister wrote a letter in Lahore to our relative saying if I had been castrated then to kill me there and then. I was 17 or 18 years by then. So my uncle have passport, he got visa and came to Lahore and searched me in Lahore. He did not beat me, did not say me bad names, he wept and requested to come back to India and our family. So I returned with my uncle without the castration and again started to live with our family and started again going to school.

But when I get some time I went to the eunuchs house to meet them. When my father come to know he asked me and I said I never went. So one night when I was sleeping midnight my father sit down on my chest and with both hands he tried to press my throat. I cried and woke my family but my father was weeping and wanted to break his head and saying to gods "oh Allah, what sin did I commit that such a child is born to me".

I was also in trouble and thinking what I will do, where I will settle. So some eunuchs was going to Bombay, I say I am also coming with you. I gave them some money and they took me in Bombay. When we went in Bombay I stay in eunuchs house in Falkland road, so there was going one ceremony to make a eunuch a bride because 40 days from his castration were over. I saw all are making her makeup and new sari blouse and jewelry and making her beautiful with flowers. They give big dinner for all eunuchs with dancing and singing all night and in the morning they all went to chowpatty beach and put fruits and flowers in the sea. Then they gave some utensils and clothes to the eunuch that made the castration and more clothes and jewelry from each eunuch to the new castrated eunuch.

So I saw there all eunuchs looking just like girls, no hair on their arms and legs, so I asked them why you are looking so smart, they then told me that after castration they become like this. I was very impressed, so I talked with the eunuch who make castration. She asked me to give her 100 rupees, which I did and then she took me to some village outside Bombay and in the hut castrated me. I cried loudly, it was so painful, she removed all my private parts. I lay down on the earth and felt I was going to faint. Blood was flowing like anything. As I was about to faint she would slap my chilly and say don't sleep. After many hours the blood stopped flowing and in the morning they washed my body with hot waters. I felt many pains when they were washing. After the washing they took some hot mustard oils and applied them on my wounds.

Six days they did 2 times the same oil treatment, after washing. In six days they did not give me any chilly or mutton things, only bread and jaggery, vegetables and fishes.

Meanwhile in Delhi my family was searching me, they catch all my friends and asked the eunuchs where is my son. They threatened my fast friend that if he did not tell them where I was they would have him arrested from the police. So he asked the eunuchs and then he came to Bombay to fetch me, the Bombay eunuchs sent him to the village. When he saw me he wept and cried so much and broke the walls of the hut and said "what have you done". He gave some money to the eunuch who castrated me and took me away to Delhi and we stayed in his friends house.

After 2-3 days I took good bath with hot waters and wore pant shirt and went to my family with that boy. My sisters, my mother were very happy to see me, even my father and said me, now never go away from us. When they saw my face they said why are you so weak, so I told them I am sick and I wanted to go one hill station with this boy, so they give me some money and say me go as you like, but write us letter from there, and come back in a week. So I went to a hotel in Delhi, that boy went to the eunuchs and asked them now what should Ahmed do. They said wash the wounds with hot water and she will be alright in two weeks. After some days I returned home, my elder sister asked me, have you had castration? I said NO. My all sisters said if they found I had castration, they said they would all drop into the river and commit suicide. So I stay with my family, what else I could do.

My family seeing that I was becoming interested in singing and dancing, they asked me if you want to do this work, so you must go to the famous dancers and singers to learn, hoping atleast this could be my occupation, so I went to Shambhu ji maharaj for kathak lessons, but it is my bad luck that with my class fellows there also make me fun and asked me you are neither man nor woman, what you will do with kathak. So I stayed there only one year and did not learn full dance. After that I tried to learn singing from Ustad Manki khan, Ustad Mathoo khan and hari bhai, but this difficulty of being made fun off, stuck to me. Then I went to school on my family insisting, but there also classmates make me fun and want bad relations. So I left school in 11th class. Then I did correspondence course from Punjab university in Urdu. This also gave me some freedom from the family. So I started to live between eunuchs and my own house. My father was silent and became sick from sadness and gave his business to my 13 year old brother and left everything and sat all day in a corner in the house.

But then the news spread of my castration in the neighborhood from some eunuchs. My family was silent, so one day I again went away to Bombay. This time no one search me, after two months I come back to Delhi. When I went to my house nobody said me anything. Now they did not bother for me. So I went to the same 2 eunuchs who had many years ago taken me to Lahore and they asked me to live with them. So I began to go on programs with them. And my family sent me a message to say that I should never meet them again.

Because now I was looking like a very beautiful girl. Both the eunuchs loved me very much just like parent.

This Mr Walter is the reply to your question about how Ahmed became Mona. When I was in my family I attended only 2 or 3 marriages, other than that no one invited me to more marriages. I never attended my real brothers and sister weddings they did not invite me, only they send me sweets and fruits in eunuchs house. But now I was dancing in so many marriages in big houses also.

Thank you for your questions, today I feel I have written you very well. I hope you also think so.

But the day after my castration I started to have regrets, and wondered what I would do, because I did not like to go from house to house to beg and bless the public.

This I will tell you later

Blessings Myself Mona Ahmed



Dear Mr Walter

Happy New Year and what blessing shall I give you, for a long life, for success in work or good health or happy family life.

The happiest day in my whole life was when Ayesha came into my life, because then I felt that I belonged in this society.

I first saw Ayesha when she was 4 hours old, her grandmother placed her in my arms. The grandmother then left, and Ayesha's birth mother died while giving birth. The grandmother was my friend and since no one wanted this child they left Ayesha with me. They were very poor people and no one wanted to bring up this child. The husband had left the mother already.

While she was pregnant the grandmother asked me what to do with the child that would be born and I said "If no one wants the child give her to me, and I will bring her up". I then started paying for the mothers treatment. But I never met the mother. I also bought small clothes and feeders for the baby.

First the doctor had said she would be born in December, and I waited with great excitement. I was overwhelmed with a different kind of joy, but they never came and I thought they had changed their mind. Then on 26th January the grandmother came to take me for the delivery in the hospital.

I had always had a deep desire to be a mother or a father, to have someone of my own. When I took Ayesha in my arms I felt complete. My first reaction was of tremendous fear, and I could not sleep all night thinking how would I bring up this child alone. But when she was in my arms I felt happiness of a very different kind, I felt she was already a part of me, that I was now responsible for her. I felt like a human being's emotion.

I distributed sweets in the whole neighbourhood and recited the Azaan in her ears and had her head shaved as is the custom here. At night we had a music party. I danced with joy, knowing that I was now a complete woman. All the eunuchs of my group were very happy for me. We were 4 eunuchs that used to live with our guru Chaman, in one house. We were like a family. They all helped me in bringing up Ayesha.

On her first birthday itself she got many books and copys as presents. She was very interested in reading and writing. I kept many tutors for her to teach her English, hindi, urdu, the Qoran sharif, then I admitted her in a school when she was 3 years old.

I had thought a lot for her, I wanted to make her an IAS officer,¹ or any other respectable professional. Because I wanted her to be independent and not have to depend on some man for her living. There are lot of men that harass their wives, that beat them, that do not feed them, and I was aware that whichever man married her would taunt her for being brought up by eunuchs. So I wanted to ensure that she could always stand on her own feet.

Women always came to me with their personal problems, and I was more than aware of how easily men would leave them or keep them but make their lives miserable. I could not bear the thought that ever Ayesha may be in a similar situation.

I brought her up with all the love that is humanly possible. I never ever scolded her. I wanted to give her all the worlds happiness. In Ayesha I felt all that I had missed in my life was more than made up for. Ayesha was like my own heartbeat. I truly felt that she came from within me, a part of my body.

Ayesha was a very stubborn child, and would only do as she pleased. But even that was ok because she was after all a princess, my princess. I regret that I did not have the breasts to feed her my own milk, so I used to feed her the bottle by placing it on my chest. Then I could pretend I was feeding her myself.

I used to look at Ayesha and wonder how it would be when she married and went to another home. How would I be able to cope with this separation. What would happen to me without her, but it did not even reach that point because she was taken away from me even before she grew up.

When Ayesha was 4 years old, and I felt she was running more to the other eunuchs in the house, I took to drinking but I did not know what a serious problem the drinking would become. I used to run away to the graveyard where my ancestors are buried. Between the drinking and running to the graveyard my whole life went upside down. Then Chaman sold our house while we had gone to Ajmer Sharif. I returned and had nowhere to go, so I moved into the graveyard, and Chaman took Ayesha away with her. This is as much as I can say now, I will write you more later, to explain why the eunuchs turned against me.

May I know how many children you have, May I know if you have ever suffered loss in your life, May I know how much you love your children? I ask you this because only if you have known loss closely will you understand my pain. Please don't mind. Loss makes your life into half. If you lose that is dearest to you, then you feel you have lost the whole world. It has so much power that one thing you love, that it can destroy your whole world, when it leaves you. Yes there is successful love in the world perhaps, but in my case I feel I should have restrained my love. Because Ayesha became my breath, I am in so much pain now. Maybe it is not good to love so much. One should love only as much as the other person wants to be loved.

Love is like the moon, when it is full it lights the whole world, and when it is no moon, then there is darkness in the whole world. First Ayesha gave me so much happiness, now I have as much pain. Why do you want the world to know my pain. We spend our lives running after happiness, then we find that joy, but when that joy ends, the rest of our life is a journey of pain, much more than the joy we chased.

On this sad but true point, I will send this letter to you.

Blessings Myself Mona Ahmed

¹ Administrative Civil Service of the Indian Government. Ed.



Dear Mr Walter

I was thinking that why is it in Western world, that the women wear so little clothing and the men too much clothing. Do you think it is because western men do not have beautiful legs? But western mens are very broadminded because even if they have sex change operation society still accepts them.

In India we prefer that women are fully dressed. Recently they have announced that in the Sikh gurudwaras even girls cannot wear skirts or jeans. This is not good because people should be free to chose what they wear, and in India now everyone is becoming narrowminded like the hindu party. And they call this our culture. Our culture should be tolerant and not so closed. This is not progress I feel. Do you agree. And muslims have always not liked girls wearing shorts or skirts in India. Very few people in every religion are so openminded that they respect and accept all cultures, even western cultures. Though if you look at Indian goddesses, they wear hardly any clothing, even in our temples we have so beautiful naked women, like in Khajuraho and Ajanta and Ellora. Then what happened to us, instead of becoming more modern we are becoming very close minded people. This is very sad thing for India.

We fought for our freedom for so may years from the British, and what have we got now? What democracy is this. They break a mosque and want to build a temple, if christians talk of their religion, we burn them alive, Indira Gandhi dies and 4000 sikhs are killed, this is not the democracy we fought for. So much fighting for religion, all those bomb blasts, all those riots, it is not so in the west, I think. So many Indians of all religions live in the west but nobody troubles to them.

Democracy is only about the party in power, what we call party power, but where is the peoples power? We people are powerless. This cannot be called democracy.

I was trying to write you a happy letter but this democracy idea is very scary at this time in India. You will see when you come. Come soon.

Blessings Myself Mona Ahmed