

***Muslim Women
between
Backward Traditions
and
Modern Innovations***

(المرأة المسلمة .. بين التقاليد الوافدة والراكية)

By: Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazaly

Translation and Commentary by: Jasser Auda

In the name of God, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful

Introduction

A group of Muslim immigrants in Britain requested a permit from the British authorities to build private Islamic schools.¹ This is a normal request. In Muslim countries, for example, it is normal that immigrants from other countries build their own private schools, where they learn about their religion and their language, as well as some general background knowledge that is required by the governmental education systems.

However, some British journalists and writers opposed the request and showed dislikeness to the idea of founding such schools. They said that such schools would be based on 'discrimination between boys and girls.' They, further, accused Islam of discriminating against women and disregarding their rights.

But the British Labor Party supported the request! Their official spokesperson for educational affairs, Mr. Jack Straw, said, as quoted by the Times Magazine, 'Those who oppose founding those schools are wrong. Perhaps they are influenced by some racist thinking.' He also said, 'they do not know what Islam is all about.'

Mr. Straw added the following, in a conference held in London on *The Future of Islamic Education in England* (exclamation marks are mine):

The attitude of the Muslim society towards women must be studied carefully. This study has to be based only on the fundamentals of Islam. (!) I heard a lot of false claims that Islam is against women, based on what people see nowadays, that Muslims women do not preach Islam and are not allowed to lecture in the mosques and that Muslim men monopolize this field as they monopolize politics ... But there is almost a total ignorance in the world now about the role of women in Muslim theology and in Islamic history itself. (!) Careful consideration shows that the status of Muslim women was much better than the status of Jewish or Christian women in the ancient days. Moreover, Prophet Mohammed gave women inheritance rights thirteen centuries before the British government did. (!)

I, honestly, appreciated for the British Labor Party representative his excellent defense, although the BBC related it to some political game to win some votes from the Conservative Party in the next election!

In this book, I will talk briefly about the topic of Islam in the West, since I detailed it in another book. The main topic of this book, however, is the following: Islam is accused of humiliating and oppressing women! Is there any evidence in the Book of God or the *Sunnah*² of his Messenger? We have the Qur'an, not a single character of it is altered. The Qur'an is clear that humanity flies with two wings, men and women, together. Breaking one of the two wings means stopping and falling.

¹ The Sheikh wrote this book in the late eighties of the twentieth century.

² Literally, the tradition or the way. It is an Islamic term that comprehends all saying, actions and endorsements of Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him.

Now, let us consider what the *Sunnah* says. However, I would like first of all to filter out the opinions that are falsely associated to the *Sunnah*. Islam's crisis is because of those who talk about it out of their own whims, not because of the scripts themselves. The *hadith*¹ narrations of the Prophet, peace be upon him, are encouraging women to go to the mosques, under only one condition, that they do not display their ornaments. But Al-Qastellani, when he was explaining Al-Bukhari's collection of *hadith*,² thought that women should go to the mosques, 'with their kitchen outfits, with the smell of food in them.' (!) Another interpreter said that they 'should never go anyway.' I wonder which of the two interpretations did more evil to Islam.

The following is another example. In Al-Bukhari's collection, the Prophet, peace be upon him, told 'A'ishah, his wife, 'This was Gabriel (the angel) and he is greeting you with peace.' Gabriel, in the shape of a man, greeted 'A'ishah. But some people say, 'Men could only greet women when there is no possibility of mischief.' Some others say, 'This only applies to close relatives, the elders, and the ugly ones.' So, despite of the fact that the *sunnah* is showing men greeting women and women greeting men, interpreters' contribution was to restrict these greetings to very particular situations. And as time passed, restrictions increased, until the Islamic principle is totally replaced with a false and pessimistic interpretation!

In every era, there are outstanding, cultured, and knowledgeable Muslim women, who are capable of converting their homes into mosques that are full of good deeds. Among them is Umm Waraqah. Al-San`ani said in *hadith* number 392, in his collection, 'The Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered her to lead her household, men and women, in prayers.' She wanted to fight in the battle of Badr, but the Prophet exempted her from fighting and appointed for her a man to call for prayers. Al-San`ani said, 'She was leading him in prayers, as well as her servant and her maid.' (!) Abu Thawr, Al-Muzni, and Al-Tabari evaluated this narration as 'authentic,' but all other scholars thought otherwise!!³

I am inclined to the opinion that this woman was a special case because she was knowledgeable with the Qur'an. However, as far as leading prayers in major mosques is concerned, men are usually more capable of doing this job.

Back to the endeavor the Muslims in Britain will go through after they build their private schools. I wonder whether they will require female students to cover their faces! If this happens, it will be the end of the Islamic cause in the west. Not a single man or woman will accept this religion! Europeans know the uniforms of chastity, which some nuns

¹ The sayings of Prophet Mohammed, peace be upon him. Plural: *hadith*.

² Muhammad Ibn Isma'il Al-Bukhari (810-870), *Sahih al-Bukhari, The translation of the meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari: Arabic-English*, by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Beirut, Dar al-Fikr, 1979. There are several other available English translations.

³ I 'followed the chain' of the *hadith* and found it 'authentic,' narrated after trustworthy narrators all along. Scholars who rejected it did that 'based on its content,' and not its chain of narrators! But based on this narration, women are allowed to lead men in prayers in every school of Islamic law, albeit always under some condition of necessity and usually only in optional, rather than obligatory, prayers! The only prophetic narration that is against women leading men in prayers is a narration attributed to Ali Ibn Abu Talib, which states: 'a woman does not lead (prayers)' (*la ta'umm al-mar'ah*). However, it is rendered 'weak' or 'non-authentic' by all scholars. Nevertheless, it is always used as counter-evidence in classic literature!

wear, for example. These styles are very similar to the *hijab*.¹ If we stick to this dress code, we will do justice to our religion and encourage chastity-lovers to accept it! But hiding hands with gloves, hiding faces behind those veils, and making women walk in the streets looking like ghosts that are isolated from the society – these are things that no religion has ever asked of people! This will make the Labor Party defense void and darken the future of the Islamic cause.

I have a question for those who preach covering the face. You know that the vast majority of interpreters, narrators, and scholars do not support your opinion. So, why don't you give it up, for the sake of gaining a higher benefit and avoiding a serious harm?

I know Dr. Omar Nassif, the President of the Muslim World League.² He is one of the most mature and pious workers in the field of the Islamic call, and he is well aware of the obstacles in its way. Can't this smart man convince the religious authorities in his country with a more guided stand? Then, efforts will be gathered towards the most prior of good deeds, like establishing prayers, giving charity, enjoining the good, and forbidding the evil.

Nowadays, there are young and older men who have dark and hard heads. They say, 'Our opinion is the only valid one, and there is no room for any other opinion.' This is the new version of the old Kharijites!³

One of my excellent students narrated to me a dialogue that he had with an extremist who is – as he describes himself – affiliated to the brothers who call themselves the People of the *hadith*. He asked my student, 'Are you among those who hang images on walls and agree on publishing them in newspapers?' The student said, 'Yes.' He replied, 'You will be punished according to the *hadith*, "the ones who are tortured the most in the day of judgment are the image-makers," because you urge them and support them.' The student said, 'The opinion that my teacher and I believe in is that the *hadith* is talking about those who fashion statues not those who draw on paper.'⁴ I do not want to argue with you, but I want to remind you that there are many Islamic acts of worship that requires revival today and there is no difference of opinion over reviving them! So, come

¹ Literally, a barrier, and commonly used for 'headscarf.'

² An international Saudi-based Muslim organization

³ Arabic: Khawarij. Literally: Those who withdrew. The earliest Islamic sect, which traces its beginning to the controversy over the Caliphate between the companions Ali and Mu'awiyah. After fighting the indecisive Battle of Siffin (657 A.C.E.) against Mu'awiyah's forces, Ali agreed to arbitration. This concession aroused the anger of a group of Ali's followers, who protested that, 'judgment belongs to God alone' (*Qur'an* 6:57). They withdrew under the leadership of Ibn Wahb and, when arbitration proved disastrous to Ali, were joined by a larger group. They formed the Kharijites, who engaged in campaigns of massive killing against any Muslim or non-Muslim who rejected their views. In Nahrawan (658 A.C.E.), Ali killed Ibn Wahb and most of his followers, but the Kharijites persisted in a series of uprisings against Ali (whom they assassinated) and Mu'awiyah (who eventually succeeded Ali as caliph). The Kharijites were known for their extremism. They considered any Muslim who commits a major sin an 'apostate who must be killed.'

⁴ Prohibiting full statues is the opinion endorsed by the majority of Muslim scholars. The rationale behind this ruling is to 'cut the roots' of idol worshipping. However, a number of contemporary scholars, for example Sheikh Muhammad Abduh, restrict the prohibition to nude statues or statues that are purposefully fashioned for worship.

along, bring your group, and let us cooperate in our efforts of reform. Let us stop arguing about the controversial issues.’ The man’s answer was, ‘We are not to cooperate with you. We are not to trust your faith. In fact, you and the enemies of Islam are equal.’

I told my student after I heard his story, ‘If the man is diligent but blinded with fanaticism, then he will see the truth one day and return to it! But I am afraid of one thing: that he and his group turn into supporters of the evil while they are not even aware of it.’

The enemies of Islam in Muslims countries are skillful and cunning. They know that if knowledgeable Muslims, who mastered *fiqh*¹ and true knowledge of Islam, lead the Islamic front, Islam will certainly be victorious! That is why they open one thousand ways for extremists, like the above People-of-the-*hadith* brother, to make their loud voices dominate the Islamic front. Now, when the wise people in the society reflect upon the dominant ‘Islamic’ talk, they will certainly decide to quit Islam altogether.

The Algerian Islamic movement in the nineties was advanced, with a bright future. It was about to free that country from the remnants of the old occupation. Chastity replaced permissiveness and the Islamic morals were guiding civil development, leading it to freedom, good deeds, and all other human rights! Suddenly, some mad loud voices started to call for the necessity of covering the face, wearing coats, and other irrelevant issues. The result was that the Algerian wise men got scared of Islam and its revival, and they have an excuse to think this way! A big mess occurred and the Islamic movement has been moving backwards since then.

If we move from Africa to Asia, we will find the same disease and the same results. Most non-Arabs, who are the majority of Muslims, follow the Hanafi or the Shafi’i School of law. However, those who call themselves the People of *hadith* like to defame those two schools and those major scholars.² Consequently, mischief occurs. Our religion has no future with all of this academic and moral chaos.

I advice those who raise the banner of the *sunnah* – while they themselves do not really follow the *sunnah* – to fear God for what they do to themselves and their *ummah*.³ They have to unite efforts not scatter them. They have to pave the way for the return of Islam instead of filling it with obstacles. They have to know that the Muslim nation recognized and tolerated differences in opinions for centuries.

In this book, there are scattered and brief thoughts about *fiqh*, literature, history, and old and contemporary *fatawa*.⁴ They are all, however, related to women, family, and community issues. I thought that this style will be more appealing to the seekers of knowledge among Muslims and, hopefully, appealing to the non-Muslim reader when

¹ *Fiqh* is, literally, the understanding. It is the branch of Islamic sciences that deals with the Islamic practical rulings as understood from the scripts and the general principles of Islam.

² The Islamic schools of law (*madhahib*) are named after renowned scholars who, independently, put distinct sets of rules/theories for concluding rulings from the Islamic sources of legislation. In addition to those scholars’ brilliance, the popularity of their schools is also due to several historical and political reasons, for example, the support that the Ottoman Empire gave to the Hanafi School, etc.

³ Literally, nation. All Muslims are one nation/*ummah* according to verse 2:143.

⁴ The plural of *fatwa*, which is an Islamic legal opinion based on the *Qur’an* or *Sunnah* or their interpretations.

he/she reads about Islam in this modern short-essays style. The knowledge of *fiqh* might seem dry when presented in an abstract and traditional format. So, I decided to be creative!

Those articles were originally published in several newspapers, but I thought that it would be beneficial to gather them in a small book. May God make it of use, and may He support the truth and widen its circle.

Muhammad Al-Ghazaly

Chapter 1. Let us understand Islam, first

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1.1. The correct source of belief

When I reflect upon God's signs in people and the universe, I become more realistic and less dreaming, whether I am reflecting upon an enormous or tiny sign. I also like to put every sign in proportion. So, I know that planets are huge and germs are tiny, even though I need telescopes to see both!

I might remember a sign I see after a while and reflect upon it. I remember a mountain that I saw in Algeria. It was such a tall rock that looked like the digit '1'. I felt that it is going to fall. Then, an hour after leaving the place, I remembered the strange mountain again and asked myself, 'Is it still really going to fall?' I answered myself, 'No.' It will stay as it is until the time that God defined comes and the following happens. 'And they ask you about the mountains. Say: My Lord will carry them away from the roots. Then leave it a plain, smooth level. You shall not see therein any crookedness or unevenness.'¹

Sometimes, I imagine the billions of suns and stars that revolve in the far space. They rise and set, like the sun that we are familiar with, regardless of whether we are awake or asleep. They all revolve regularly and never stop, as God described them, 'I swear by the angels who violently pull out the souls of the wicked, And by those who gently draw out the souls of the blessed, And by those who float in space, then those who are foremost going ahead, then those who regulate the affair.'² They revolve only at their Lord's order. When will they stop? 'On the day when the trump resounds.'³

The magnificent works of God amaze my mind. Amazement increases when I realize that The One who supervises all these vast heavens is The One who supervise, in the same instant, germs and bacteria, billions of which can occupy one centimeter. He is also supervising the work of billions of nerve cells that exist in a brain, while there are five billion of those brains on earth today! Add to this all the other creatures, which God says about, 'There is not an animal in the earth, or a flying creature flying on two wings, but they are peoples like unto you. We have neglected nothing in the Book (of Our decrees). Then unto their Lord they will be gathered.'⁴

The natural laws that govern the universe, from the atoms to the galaxies, are consistent. For example, the laws that govern blood flow in the veins of the human body are similar to the laws that govern water flow in rivers. The lesson I learnt is that there is no single atom that is not under the Creator's control, will, and knowledge, and according to His wisdom.

If I move from the physical world to the intellectual world, I learn the same lesson. The waves of emotions that fill my soul, understanding, imaginations, and intentions do not exist only in me. They are in all creations. And all thoughts in any human mind and all knowledge that he or she learns, in all forms, are all written before God in one comprehensive record, regardless of the language or time. 'And everything they have

¹ Qur'an, 20:105-107.

² Qur'an, 79:1-5.

³ Qur'an, 79:6.

⁴ Qur'an, 6:38.

done is in the writings.¹ He is never to miss anything, and nothing can ever occur out of His hearing, sight, and control!

So, before discussing women issues, I would like to say the following to my fellow Muslims: The *Qur'an* is the main source for faith and correct information, and the knowledge we learn about the universe and life is actually the interpretation of the *Qur'an*. That is why this knowledge deserves much reflection and diligence. The glory of God is more obvious in the era of science and knowledge. Scientific development is the friend of faith and the enemy of atheism.

I also want to warn believers from those non-believers who falsely associate themselves with 'science,' such as Freud, Durkheim, or Marx. These people would have never advanced except in the space that the believer scholars fell short to fill!

¹ Qur'an, 54:52.

1.2. Enhance the image of Muslim women

I heard the German ambassador¹ saying to Muslims, in the Islamic Thought Conference,² 'You have to improve the status of women in your countries! The current image of Muslim women scares Europeans away from Islam!'

One of the attendees asked me, 'What does he want us to do?' I said to him, 'If a merchant describes his merchandise with false specifications, then he is a cheater. But if he is describing it without having enough information about it, to the extent that people underestimate it, then he is a fool who is causing his business to fail.'

The ambassador, after God has blessed him with accepting Islam, is trying to tell Muslims to improve the way they portray their religion. Muslims' misconceptions and evil deeds are scaring people away from Islam! Assume that a caller to Islam only knows the fabricated *hadith* that even Al-Hakim included in his book, *Al-Mustadrak* (The Amendments), that 'a woman should not learn how to write,' or maybe the other fabricated *hadith* of the author of the book *Al-Zawa'id* (The Additions), that 'a woman should never see a man and never be seen by a man.' Imagine that this poor soul carries his false and fabricated collection of *hadith* to Europe or America and tries to preach Islam. Would anybody accept Islam? Would any man or woman respect Islam?

Some Muslim callers preach a false and ugly version of Islam and then complain because people do not accept it! I think that those ignorant preachers should be criminalized because they divert people from the way of God and the truth that Muhammad, the final messenger, declared.

Islam has, certainly, equated men and women in terms of rights and duties. This is a fundamental and general rule. The few differences between men and women in some rulings are only due to their physical differences and, accordingly, the different role that each gender is most capable of playing. However, the fundamental rule of equality is obvious in the verse, 'So their Lord accepted their prayer: That I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other,'³ and the verse, 'Whoever does good whether male or female and he is a believer, We will most certainly make him live a happy life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did.'⁴

Despite of the above verses that clearly imply general gender equality, there are traditions that some people invented, which God did not send authority for, which degraded the intellectual and social status of Muslim women. Those people are still insisting on the traditions that were common in the dark ages before Islam and refusing

¹ He is referring to Dr. Murad Hoffmann, a former German diplomat and top NATO official who embraced Islam in 1980. His book, *Islam: The Alternative*, drew much public attention when it first appeared in Germany in 1992. Refer to Hofmann, Murad Wilfried (1931 AC) – [*Islam als Alternative*. English]. Islam: the Alternative. Translated from German by Christaine Banerji and Murad Hofmann, originally published by Reading: Garnet, 1993. North American Edition published by Amana Publications, Second Edition, 1997.

² Held yearly in Algeria.

³ Qur'an, 3:195.

⁴ Qur'an, 16:97.

to apply what Islam came with. The result was miserable oppression of Muslim women. Eventually, turmoil occurred in the life of the whole Muslim nation because of that.

One of the attendees of the Islamic Thought Conference asked me heatedly, 'Would you be happy if Benazir Bhutto becomes Prime Minister of Pakistan?' I answered, smiling:

A British Muslim asked me whether they should declare a war against Mrs. Thatcher because, he said, 'she is a woman and she is ruling.' I answered him, 'What if she tells you, and I know that she is very cultured, that I am ruling according to the Islamic schools of law that allow women to rule?' Then I told him, 'Please do not use the issues that are considered controversial in some Muslim countries as obstacles in the way of calling for the main beliefs and pillars of Islam in the West.'

1.3. A woman in two prisons: Ignorance and poverty

I was talking in a social club in some Arab country about women rights. I was saying, 'A Muslim woman has the right to call for the way of God, to enjoin good, to forbid evil, to lecture on Islam, and to debate those who reject Islam,' and so on. One of the audiences told his friend who was sitting beside him, 'We thought that this speaker is a pious man, but he turned out to be worse than Qassim Amin¹.' (!)

I remembered what Mr. Ahmad Moussa Salem² said about Qassim Amin and the role that he played to defend Islam against the French 'intellectual crusade' that was so intense in his days.

This 'crusade' started by the historian Ernest Renan attacking Arabs and Muslims. But Jamal El-Din Al-Afghani³ refuted his arguments, showed how biased he is, and defended Islam. The stubborn enemy seemed soft-spoken afterwards.

Then, Sheikh Mohammad Abduh⁴ challenged the French Foreign Minister at that time, Mr. Hanotaux. Mr. Hanotaux made a number of incorrect statements about Islam and its Prophet, peace be upon him.⁵ So, Sheikh Mohammed Abduh's book, *The Relation Between Science and Religion*, which he wrote in one night, put things in order.⁶

Ahmad Moussa said, 'Qassim Amin's contribution to this debate was instantaneous. He wrote a book on the status of women in the Islamic Law, which was mainly a reply to another French attacker, Duke Daker, who published a book in 1893 titled, *Egypt and Egyptians*. In this book, Daker discussed the social life in Egypt under the Mamluki and Turkish governments. The true fact is that this stage was a dark six centuries period for

¹ An Egyptian writer who wrote several books in the beginnings of the twentieth century. His book entitled *Tahreer Al-Mar'ah (The Liberation of Women)* caused a great deal of controversy. The book is, basically, calling on Muslim women to uncover their faces and attend primary schools! Several contemporary scholars, though, thought that it is an opened call for 'westernization.' Refer to the text of the book (in Arabic) and some useful analysis on the contribution of Sheikh Mohammad Abduh to its ideas, in: *Qassim Amin's complete collection*, compiled by Mohammed 'Imarah, published by Dar Al-Shuruq, 1988. An English translation is: Qasim Amin, 1863-1908, *The Liberation of Women: A Document in the History of Egyptian Feminism*, trans. Samiha Sidhom Peterson, American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, Egypt, 1992.

² An Egyptian historian.

³ A historical Muslim leader who is considered to be one of the early founders of the modern Islamic revival in the twentieth century. His works are compiled in Arabic in: Afghani, Jamal al-Din (1838-1897). *The Complete Works*. 1979. al-A'mal al-kamilah: Jamal al-Din al-Afghani; Dirasah wa-tahqiq Muhammad 'Imarah. Beirut: bal-Mu'assasah al-'Arabiyah lil-dirasat wa-al-Nashr, 1979.

⁴ Al-Afghani's student and a former head of Egyptian *fatwa* authority, also considered to be one of the early founders of the modern Islamic revival. His writings in the early 1900 have inspired many influential twentieth-century Islamic reformers that appeared after him.

⁵ Hanotaux's book is called *L'Europe et l'Islam* (Europe and Islam). Refer to: Tal'at Harb, Muhammad, 1867-1941. *L'Europe et l'Islam* (French): M.G. Hanotaux et le cheik Mohammed Abdou. Avec préf. de Mohamed Talaat Harb Bey. Le Caire Impr. J. Politis, 1905.

⁶ Hanotaux's book and Abdu's reply is published in one book (in Arabic). Refer to: Hanotaux, Gabriel, 1853-1944. *Europe et l'Islam*. Arabic. al-Islam: risalah / bi-qalam Misyu Hanutu ; wa-radda 'alayha Muhammad 'Abduh wa-nazrah fiha bi-qalam Muhammad Farid Wajdi. al-Qahirah.

the Egyptian people. However, Duke Darker used the corrupt political system in Egypt in these centuries to draw a dark and ugly image of Islam itself and the whole Muslim nation, especially Muslim women, whom he specifically insulted. He related all this to 'the nature of Islam that is incompatible with civilization,' in his words. (!)

What Qassim Amin did to defend his religion and his nation was to write a book, in which he refuted Darker's arguments and confirmed women rights in Islam, especially human, financial and intellectual rights. In his book, Qassim Amin also compared between the Muslim uniforms of chastity and uniforms of immorality that some women wear in the name of civilization.

What Qassim Amin wrote was based on two guidelines. First, he defended Islam according to its main sources of legislation, the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah*. Second, he apologized for the backwardness of Muslim women, saying that it is due to people's unfair traditions, not the revelation itself. What else can he do?

Let us assume that someone accused Islam - in front of me - of banning women from attending mosques, and therefore, he accused Islam of being a 'weird' religion since no religion whatsoever bans women from going to their places of worship. What should I say to him? Should I agree to what he is saying or tell him honestly that this disappearance of Muslim women from their places of worship is not Islam's fault but only due to some wrong traditions in some Muslim countries? Should I be honest and defend Islam, or lie and defend Islam's false followers?

I came across some 'Islamic activists' who blindly defended their inherited traditions that have no basis in Islam. It seemed easier on them to reject what God and His Messenger have said and not to change the traditions they inherited from their forefathers!

There are people who guard wrongdoing itself and scream loudly when someone criticizes it. I was, in my early days, indifferent towards this kind of behavior. But eventually, I realized that this screaming is becoming a hate message against the reformers, which I cannot tolerate. The whole religion will be in danger if I remain silent and its rulings will be rendered void. I heard people calling names upon Jamal El-Din Al-Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, and Rashid Reda. I heard children who defame them, just because they said some opinions different from what those children inherited from their fathers, who were, actually, as ignorant as they are!

I was amazed when some religious persons attacked me, saying things that are harsher than what they said against the Zionists and the Crusaders! I understand now what Mr. `Essam El-`Attar¹ said, 'If those who call themselves Muslims would have spent one tenth of the efforts they spent fighting each others to fight the true enemies of God, Islam would have been victorious a long time ago. But there are souls that find energy for falsehood, and not for the truth. There are persons who get motivated for their desires and worldly gains but not for the hereafter and pleasing God. I really disgrace those people who present their most evil desires as if they are high moral values.' As you can see, this is a quote that expresses of a bitter feeling that a serious caller for Islam experienced.

¹ A contemporary Muslim scholar and leader, from Syrian origin and based in Germany.

We, the callers of Islam, are strictly dedicated to the revelation, the Prophet's tradition, and the guided caliphs. But the historical events and the traditions that developed afterwards were the result of some rulers' decisions and some communities' public interests; both are certainly not sacred and subject to error as well. We are to judge them, not the other way around. The preserved and sacred Islamic sources are only the Book of God and the *sunnah* of His prophet, peace be upon him.

At the early era of Islam, which came immediately right after the peak of the Arabic 'Dark Ages,' women gave a covenant of support to the Prophet at *al-'Aqabah*. They also gave a covenant under The Tree,¹ to 'die in the fight if necessary and not to run away from the enemies.' However, it was impossible to allow women to give such covenants after that era. What does this mean?

Let me move on to a conflict I witnessed in my early days. Dr. Taha Hussein, who was the Dean of the Faculty of Literature at Cairo University at that time, allowed female students to his faculty. The stand of 'the believers' was to protest this decision because 'it is unlawful,' they said. The other front, which was called 'the atheist front,' supported higher education for women until they succeeded! What good did those 'believers' do to Islam in this ridiculous conflict? What they actually did is that they portrayed Islam as a supporter of ignorance and 'atheism' as a supporter of education! I wonder when are we going to stop people from lying publicly in the name of Islam?

For another example, I asked the officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Algeria to hold special sessions for women at special times in the main mosques, which are to be lead by the (female) graduates of the Islamic University. I do not know whether they will answer my request or the ignorant ones, who say that the voice of women is '*awrah*,'² will win this time! Those ignorant ones, surprisingly enough, never protested the work of the nuns who are exploiting people's miserable circumstances in their country and effectively achieving their missionary goals! These ignorant people are only occupied with how to imprison Muslim woman in two prisons, (1) ignorance and (2) poverty. That is why the whole Muslim nation is still suffering from intellectual and political backwardness, while the world lives the era of atomic power and space conquest.

¹ Mentioned in 48:18, 'God was well pleased with the believers when they swore allegiance unto you beneath the tree, and He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down peace of reassurance on them, and has rewarded them with a near victory.'

² Literally, a private part. It is a term for what a man or a woman should cover or hide in public.

1.4. Islam protects the family

Some concerned British writers complained about the big increase in the percentage of divorce today. In England, for example, divorce is now at 33%.¹ In addition, the percentage of British children raised by a single parent is now 40%. Custody court cases are also on the rise: The father wants to take his children and the mother, after the divorce, wants to deprive him from them. The future of a whole generation in today's world is uncertain because of these kinds of conflicts.

Divorce is a dreadful decision, especially after having children, because those innocent ones will certainly be harmed! I always believe that to be safe is better than to be sorry. Therefore, putting an effort for the marriage to work is better than leaving it to break and dealing with all the consequences of divorce.

Putting this effort requires the following: true and sincere belief, a man who is content with his wife that is destined for him, and a woman who is content and keen to keep her husband. This is derived from what God Almighty said about the servants of the Beneficent, 'And they who say: O our Lord! Grant us in our wives and our offspring the joy of our eyes, and make us guides to those who are pious.'² One's happiness and content with his or her partner is important. It is actually a pillar that is necessary for the home to last and be stable.

Do the new traditions that modern civilization promotes, such as promiscuous dancing, guarantee this stability? The honest and straight answer is: No! All guarantees are dispersed in today's party culture that takes place in dancing balls. These are places that encourage pure lusts, especially if the woman is wearing a 'party uniform' or, in other words, almost naked! If this environment is not going to demolish a husband-wife relationship immediately, it will do that eventually. Also, some people have an absolutely unconstrained mix of men and women, without any guidelines set by any divine or moral code, and women prepare for this mix with all kinds of ornaments! This culture compromises the dignity and stability of today's family system.

The Islamic moral code in this area is oriented towards preserving the family's present and future, and keeping the infidelity and divorce ghosts away! However, divorce is starting to become quite common in Islamic societies too. The social problems of some western societies are now knocking on our doors violently.

The success of the invading innovations is due to the weakness of our resistance and the stupidity of our defenders! I was in Cairo University when Taha Hussein³ allowed girls to enroll and the 'Islamic movement' thought that female students' high education is forbidden! It is also a fact that Girls' education in Egypt started only after the British occupation, and before that, it was restricted to a very few number of private schools. The dominant Egyptian culture was making illiteracy an obligation for women, in the name of Islam!

¹ The Sheikh wrote this book in the late eighties of the twentieth century.

² Qur'an, 25:74.

³ The former Dean of the Faculty of Literature at Cairo University.

Western women are conquering the space, while some people in Muslim countries are fighting against Muslim women attending the prayers in the mosque and say that home is the best place for women to exist! As long as these people's opinions are popular in Muslim nations, the evil in the invading globalization will find nothing to stop it.

1.5. Scholars are accountable

When I find contradicting evidences and a variety of opinions on a certain issue, I give myself the right to choose one of those opinions for *fatwa*.¹ I might prefer specific legal evidence over others or choose what is easier on people and more likely to solve the problem that I am dealing with.

Recently, I was asked to give a *fatwa* to a woman whose husband's sudden death caused her to almost lose her mind. Her concerned family thought that taking her for an *'Umrah* and getting her to visit the Sacred House in Mecca would support her belief and patience. They asked me whether it is lawful for her or not to travel during the waiting period.² I said, 'It is recommended that she stays at home during her waiting period.' They said, 'We are concerned about her health and mind.' So, after some thinking, I gave them a *fatwa* based on *'A'isha's* opinion, which does not put a constraint on the place in which the widow spends her waiting period. Sheikh Sayed Sabiq, the author of the *Fiqh-us-Sunnah (The Fiqh of the Sunnah)*,³ said, '*A'ishah* gave a *fatwa* to the widow to go out of her home during her waiting period. She took her sister Umm Kulthoum to Mecca for an *'Umrah* when her husband Talhah Ibn⁴ *'Ubaidillah* died.'

Abdul-Razzak narrated that Ibn Abbas said: 'God, the Most Glorified, said that she should wait for four months and ten days. He didn't say that she should stay at home. She can stay anywhere she wishes.'

But there are scholars who thought that a widow in her waiting period should stay at home, at least during the night. During the day, she might go out, to work for example. They also said that she should mourn and strictly avoid ornaments.

The issue at hand is no big deal anyway. I am just giving it as an example on choosing an opinion that best suites the situation.

I get so angry when some people choose the oddest opinions for *fatwa* and therefore spoil the reputation of Islam and its message. A reader asked me about an opinion that he read in a significant Islamic reference, saying that Omar banned women from learning how to write and implied that illiteracy is better for them! I answered sarcastically:

¹ A legal opinion or edict; the Islamic rulings applied to a specific situation.

² The widow's waiting period is mentioned in 2:234, 'If any of you die and leave widows behind, they shall wait concerning themselves four months and ten days: When they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you if they dispose of themselves in a just and reasonable manner. And God is well acquainted with what you do.'

³ Al-Sayed Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, English Translation, 4 volumes, translated to English by Amira Matraji, Dar Elfatih for Arab Information, Cairo, 1999.

⁴ *Ibn* means the son of, *Bint* means the daughter of, *Abu* means the father of, and *Umm* means the mother of. Using these terms with sons', daughters', and fathers' names, etc, is a conventional way of mentioning Arabic names. These conventions will be used, in Arabic, in this translation only with the companions' names. The reason is that companions' names with *Abu*, *Umm*, etc, are the most familiar to the Muslim reader. Note that *Abu* will be used consistently although, in Arabic, it can be *Abi* or *Aba*, according to Arabic grammatical rules.

Why would women be the only ones who are illiterate? Men and women should be illiterate according to the distorted understanding of the *hadith* that says, 'We are an illiterate nation'! My friend, the *hadith* that bans women from learning how to write is simply fabricated, and we should doubt every narration or story that brings down knowledge. The nation that the Messenger, peace be upon him was sent to, was an illiterate nation, which is a well-known fact. However, it is also a fact that they changed after the *Qur'an* was revealed to them and showered knowledge upon them through its clear verses. 'And if you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you shall have no guardian from God, nor any helper.'¹

The Islamic ruling is the following: Men and women should always add to their knowledge. They should never get enough of whatever knowledge they can attain.

Therefore, the narrations we have in the Islamic sources have to be revised in order to filter out unauthentic stories. Some major scholars narrated certain unauthentic stories that they themselves never used simply because there are more authentic evidences! I will give an example by the strong, known to be 'indifferent towards worldly gains,' and pious Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal. This major scholar never endorsed some narrations of *hadith* that he, himself, narrated in his famous collection.

Ibn Al-Jawzy said in his book, *Sayd-ul-Khatir* (Capturing Thoughts):

Some students of *hadith* asked me whether there are narrations of *hadith* in the collection of Ahmad that are not authentic and I answered, 'Yes.' Some followers of Ahmad's school of law thought that it is a big deal for me to give this answer. But I ignored them because they are laypeople! Later, I found them having *fatwa* in writing from some scholars from Khurassan, among them was Abul-Alaa' Al-Hamadani, discrediting any person who says that there are unauthentic narrations of *hadith* in the *hadith* collection of Ahmad! I was so surprised and said, 'What a wander! Scholars are also becoming laypeople.' The reason behind this mistake is that those scholars did not research what is authentic and what is not in Ahmad's collection, although he confirmed that he narrated both. Isn't Ahmad the one who labeled the *hadith* that he narrated on 'ablution with wine' as 'unknown'? In the book of Abu-Bakr Al-Khallaal, there are many narrations of *hadith* that are considered unauthentic that Ahmad himself narrated in his collection. I read what Judge Abu Ya'la Muhammad Ibn Al-Hussein Al-Fara' said when he commented on this *hadith*. He said, 'Ahmad narrated the narrations of *hadith* that were known at his time. He didn't mean to restrict his book to neither authentic nor non-authentic narrations.' What supports this is what Ahmad's son, Abdullah, narrated, 'I asked my dad about the *hadith* narrated by Rabi' Ibn Herass at the authority of Huzayfah. He asked: 'The one narrated by `Abdul-`Aziz Ibn Abu Ruwad?' I said: 'Yes.' He said: 'There are other *hadith* that do not agree with it.' I told him: 'But you narrated it in your collection.' He said: 'I included in my collection all narrations that I know of. If I would only narrate what I think is authentic, I would have put in this book only a few narrations of *hadith*. But, my son, you know my methodology. I do apply the weak *hadith* if I find no other

¹ Qur'an, 2:120.

evidence in the same topic.' The Judge said: 'He illustrated his methodology in his book. Therefore, whoever considers all his collection authentic, then, he is against Ahmad's school and its methodology.'

I say: In this era, I am also sad because scholars are also becoming 'laypeople,' as Ibn Al-Jawzy had said. They say, 'it is narrated that so and so,' and mention *hadith* that are clearly faked. One should cry for their low motive. This is what Ibn Al-Jawzy himself is saying about the collection of Ahmad, but there are some people who 'support the kingdom more than the king himself,' as the statement goes.

1.6. The conceited religious ones

The worst thing for any religion is to have conceited supporters. Each one of them would think that his/her affiliation to his/her religion guarantees him/her paradise! But first, one should ask: Did he/she control his/her desires? Did he/she eradicate his/her greed? Did he/she use his/her resources to glorify God and give care to people in pain? If he/she had done nothing of the above, yet full of the feeling of that 'special relation with God,' then this is a fake and worthless 'faith.'

For this type of religious people, ends justify means, regardless of the moral value of these means. Some of the early Children of Israel were experts in these crooked ways. To justify their ways, they claimed that Jacob, the Prophet of God, stole the Prophethood from his brother Esau using conceit, lies and a few other things! How come? Because, they said, he thought that he is better than his brother, and therefore, 'evil tricks are justified in order to achieve what he wants,' they said. Consequently, his grandchildren are committing no sin to imitate their father in lying! The Children of Israel also claimed that Abraham saved his own life by giving his wife to one of the tyrants! They say that he also wanted some worldly gains and got them.

In fact, the Jewish society, before the Messiah,¹ overflowed with sins. In the era of the Jewish reign, the Holy House in Jerusalem witnessed tragedies against honor and killing of the noble people.

On the Mountain of Olives, east of the Holy House, the Messiah, the Master, shouted repeatedly to warn the Jews who gathered to listen to him:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.²

And we read the following dialogue in the Gospel of John between Jesus and the Jews.

'Abraham is our father,' they answered. 'If you were Abraham's children,' said Jesus, 'then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things.'³

In another instant, Jesus clearly revealed the nature of their false practices by accusing them of making the house of God a 'cave for thieves'!

Religion, as revealed from God and demonstrated by true believers, is all about good deeds, high morals and fair dealings. It creates rulers who fear God and nations that promote mercy and build their culture on charity and help.

¹ The *Qur'an* calls Jesus, Al-Masseeh, or the Messiah. The Islamic concept of the Messiah is 'the one who is touched by a mercy from God.'

² Matthew, 23:36-38 and Luke, 13:33-35.

³ John, 8:39-40.

It is remarkable that the *Qur'an* warned all Peoples of the Book: Muslims, Christians, and Jews, from ignoring the core issues of the religion and focusing only on the peripherals! God Almighty said, 'Unto God belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth. And We charged those who received the Scripture before you, and (We charge) you, that you keep your duty toward God. And if you disbelieve, lo! Unto God belongs whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and God is ever Absolute, Owner of Praise.'¹

Would the Jewish Rabbis who supported the Zionists in their injustices against Palestinian Arabs apply the above instruction? Would the lost and blind Muslims who never abided by the Islamic rulings or morals apply the above instruction?

¹ *Qur'an* 4:131.

1.7. For whose sake?

Currently, there is a race among a number of religions, each is trying to expand. Yet, I find it strange that some Muslims are not aware of this reality. They commit foolish actions that spoil the reputation of their religion and drive people away from it. They feel comfortable with what they believe, and they simply do not care whether people believe in God or go to hell! This is ignorance and immaturity! A precious good might sell bad because of bad advertising, while a less valuable good would sell good because it was successfully promoted.

Contemporary civilization made humanity a slogan and human rights a basis for international relations. It also gave special care to social justice, public health, and education. It is true that some people accuse this civilization of being deceptive or of falling short from fulfilling its duties. However, these accusations cannot stand to the fact that international organizations agree upon working for and respecting the above-mentioned values.

My question is: For whose sake it is that some people present 'Islam' in a way that is against humanity and human rights? For whose sake that some voices become so loud when debating side issues and become surprisingly low when talking about Islamic core issues? For whose sake it is that some Muslims only choose the opinions that agree with their traditions and then claim that this is 'Islam' and nothing else is Islam? They further claim that their land is the 'only remaining place that practices heavenly teachings'?

I said to some of them, 'Islam's face is so pretty, but you make it look frowning and ugly! You will be doing a rewarded act of worship if you stay silent! Any speech that supports dictatorships, social injustice, or backwardness, does not represent the Islamic law. Islam is a healthy life style, intellectually and psychologically.'

I had a discussion with a Canadian who had concerns about Islam's stand from women. Part of what I told him was that, according to the Islamic law, a Muslim woman is free to choose her husband and to sign her marriage contract herself or delegate someone else to sign for her, if she wishes so. A man was observing our discussion in anger. I thanked God that he remained silent! But after the discussion was over, he approached me and said politely, 'It is not lawful for a woman to sign her marriage contract herself. Islam is against this.' I told him, 'Your opinion is against this, not Islam. You imitated some *fiqhi* school of law and I preferred another opinion because I thought that it is closer to the European and North American mind. Moreover, some respectable Muslim countries are implementing my opinion in their legal systems. I believe that it is better for Islam that more Muslim countries endorse this opinion.'

A great evil is done to Islam when some of its followers restrict themselves to some specific *fiqhi* opinions regarding minor issues and then attempt to give it the status of principal beliefs and values in Islam. The trader who loses because he only deals with one specific broker is not a trader.

1.8. The fault of the ignorant friends

If we can have one single Islamic society that respects women and appreciates their role, a lot of mischief will disappear from this world! Good people in the west detest promiscuity and the declination of family values, and yearn to a better social system than what they already have. However, they certainly do not think that Islam is this better system they yearn to because of the extreme Muslims who give them a false and scary impression on Islam. Extreme Muslims give the impression that Islam loves to imprison women but, perhaps under the pressure of modern civilization, it started to allow them to get an education and go to the mosque on Friday! Extreme Muslims give the impression that Islam is against giving women any political rights by always cursing those 'westernized' Muslim rulers who gave women voting and parliament-representation rights. If this type of Muslims were to rule in any given country, they will lock up women and order them to hide their faces!

If this false and ugly image of Islam is the one that is presented to non-Muslims, I think that they would have all the good reasons to hate Islam and become so apprehensive about its return to real life.

On the other hand, those extremists are very similar to the People of the Book whom God told, 'O people of the Book! There has come to you our Messenger, revealing to you much that you used to hide in the Book.'¹ Those extremists deliberately hide that the female companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were praying their five prayers in the mosque from dawn to night, fighting in wars, giving covenants, and enjoining good and forbidding evil! Women at the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) were human beings with complete materialistic and moral rights, not second-class citizens, as those ignorant extremists think and tell.

My brother *Ustadh*² Ahmad Moussa Salem said, 'God, with His justice and wisdom, put a law that supports women and give them all the rights that men have. These rights allow women to choose freely how to relate to and how to deal with men.'

This confirms what Qassim Amin wrote in his book *The Liberation of Women* when he said: 'The Islamic Law was the first to equate men and women. Islam announced women's freedom and independence at the time when all women on earth were in their worst shape. Islam gave women all human rights and equated them to men in all civil rights. Islam never put women under the control of their fathers or husbands. Some western women did not have these advantages until the beginning of the twentieth century.'

Yes. There are a few exceptions for the general equality rule. However, these exceptions themselves confirm that the rule is equality. Moreover, these exceptions are never meant to put down women, but rather to accommodate their special physical and social role. The general rule is the verse, 'If any do deeds of righteousness, - be they

¹ *Qur'an* 5:15.

² *Ustadh* is, literally, Mister. Often used with highly respected Muslim teachers.

male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.'¹

The world needs the justice of Islam. However, some reckless and ignorant Muslims, who also hate those who have knowledge, are diverting the nations of the world from Islam by spoiling its reputation.

Those ignorant friends are more dangerous than all envious enemies. It is amazing how their voices are loud as if devils are boosting them! Could these devils be the enemies' agents in the Muslim land?

¹ *Qur'an* 4:124.

1.9. The missing role of Muslim woman

The American presidential candidates compete in giving Israelis promises on the expense of others' materialistic and moral rights.¹ One of them said, 'All Jerusalem is Israel's capital.' Another said, 'There is nothing called a Palestinian State.' And another said, 'The military space program is a joint program between USA and Israel,' etc. As if Israel is the fifty-first state or even more important than that!

Something new happened recently and I wish that the readers reflected upon it! The wife of a Democratic Party leader, who is nominated for the presidency, is announcing everywhere her loyalty to Israel and she said that she wishes she could spend the rest of her life in Israel. I read this interesting story in an Arabic newspaper under the title, 'An Israeli Queen in the White House.' (!) I am not sure why I instantly remembered the story of Ferdinand and Isabella, Portugal's King and Queen who brought an end to Muslim Andalusia five centuries ago. What happened in Andalusia teaches us many lessons. Muslims, however, have lost their memory!

A woman, in our Islamic countries, has no political or intellectual role. She has nothing to do with the educational or social systems. She is absent from the mosques and the battlefields. Mentioning her name is a shame. Seeing her face is a sin. Her voice has to be hidden. Her one and only job is to prepare food and bed!

The Jewish woman is actively participating in building Israel on both the civil and military levels. She is very close to be a 'Queen' in the White House.

Meanwhile, some of those who call themselves religious in Muslim countries are still debating whether it is lawful or not for a woman to go to the mosque to pray! We are committing suicide this way.

Isn't it time for us to wake up?

¹ The Sheikh wrote this book in the late eighties of the twentieth century.

1.10. Equality is proved by the Qur'an

Europeans, who work hard towards a comprehensive economic, social and political unity, talk about a common Greek philosophical heritage and Roman religious history and how they were the basis for contemporary Europe, despite their alteration during the Enlightenment era. However, let us examine women status during the Greek and Roman periods. This review is useful not only for Europe, but for the whole world, in which Europe has a leading position today.

First, Greek philosophers were never fair to women, never cared about them, and never tried to enhance their status. History narrates shameless scandals about those philosophers' careless lifestyles.

On the other hand, Roman history is not any brighter than the Greek one. The lustful tales of the Caesars and their palaces that were full of both bond and free women are well known. Christianity failed to limit this vice because it went to the extreme of Monasticism. Eventually, some monks' sins were almost as bad as the kings' sins!

The vulgar men of today's world would envy the ancient kings for the endless lusts they had! Somebody added to the Old Testament that King Solomon had one thousand women. Nobody questioned how most of those women would obviously be indefinitely deprived from their man? A few only questioned how this man could own this Harem or wealth of lusts! Today, the 'innovative' idea is to replace the old Harem, which thankfully no longer exists, with a new form of 'public Harem,' as Ahmad Moussa Salem put it! He said, 'It is an opened harem in bars, restaurants, on the sidewalks, in the public parks, and in the dancing balls. Everybody is allowed to do anything with anybody. This is the amazing new version of freedom. It is a freedom from morals, chastity, family ties and the rulings set by God. This is the modern version of the ancient Harem that is destroying families all over the world.'

We propose Islam as an excellent way of life that presents an alternative to this chaos. However, 'Islam' that we call for should never be represented through those mad people who say that, 'a woman should never go out except to her husband's house and, then, her grave.' We understand Islam via the Book of God and the *sunnah* of His Prophet, peace be upon him. The disaster of our religion is those people who change its rulings out of their own whims and abrogate several clear verses and well-known narrations of *hadith* with one fabricated narration.

If you reflect upon the verses of the Qur'an, you will realize that gender equality is a general and basic rule. In the limited cases when one gender is given an advantage, they are certainly given an alternative heavy responsibility. It is not just a biased preference.

For example, men have what is called '*qiwamah*' in their homes.¹ However, this does not mean that the general rule of equality is violated. Every nation should respect their

¹ *Qiwamah* is mentioned in verse 4:34 in the form of a verb that describes men's role with women. The Arabic is '*Ar-Rijalu Qawwamuna 'la-Nissaa'e.*' The root '*Qa-wa-ma*' is used in verbs used for people and

government but this does not mean that the government becomes an authoritarian dictatorship. Putting men in this special position as a sort of social organization does not mean that men dominate women and control them.

Some people say disgraceful things about women. For example, I heard a man saying, 'The weak of understanding¹ are the children and women.' I told him, 'Who narrated this? Is it your Chief of the Village or your Leader of the Bedouin tribe?' Another liar said that the verse talking about: 'a wearisome burden is he to his master; whichever way he directs him, he brings no good' is actually talking about women. (!) I told him, 'This verse is talking about the ignorant ones, whether men or women.'

It is a shame that the above description of 'the ignorant ones' applies to the Muslim masses all over the Muslim land, as a result of forsaking their mission and Holy Book and begging their food from victorious civilizations.

I am concerned about Islam because of its enemies who fight against it, and its friends who have no correct knowledge about it. We should combat bad medicine as we combat plagues.

Some Muslim 'sheikhs,' unfortunately, deny all the rights that Islam gave to women! The enemies of Islam use what those sheikhs say to defame Islam. In my youth years, Al-Azhar itself opposed women higher education! Decades ago, delegates from several Bedouin tribes went to Riyadh, the capital of Arabia, to contest opening girls' schools! Now the world has changed and things look much better. However, the relationship between men and women is still not as the *Qur'an* prescribed. Some Muslims still resist!

God Almighty said, 'And (as for) the believing men and believing women, they are guardians of each other; they enjoin good and forbid evil, keep up prayer, pay charity, and obey God and His Messenger.'² This is a relationship of 'guardians of each other' and cooperation in enjoining good and forbidding the evil, and carry out acts of worship. The whole society would be, then, a productive society with a mission.

Now if one of those believing men marries a believing woman, the relationship of mutual guardianship becomes stronger. It becomes a kinship in belief, cooperation in carrying responsibilities, friendship for life, union of objectives, and harmony of cultures. The mean people are the ones who understand marriage as a 'contract for using a body,' or

objects. When used with people, it indicates the role of a person who maintains others and is fair to them and when used with objects it indicates the action of straightening and fixing. The variation in the ways this phrase is translated is very interesting! Yusuf Ali (and each of Muhammad Al-Hilali, Jack Perk, and Adel Khorri) said, 'Men are the protectors and maintainers of women.' Shakir said, 'Men are the maintainers of women.' Mohammed Ahmad Rassul said, 'Men are the protectors of women.' Murad Huffman said, 'Men stand by and take responsibility for women.' Irving said, 'Men should support for women.' Mohammed Asad said, 'Men are the caregivers for women.' Pickthall said, 'Men are in charge of women.' The Saudi *Qur'an* Translation Committee said, 'Men have authority over women.' (!)

¹ He is referring to those mentioned in verse 4:5, 'Give not unto the weak of understanding your wealth, which God has given you to maintain; but feed and clothe them from it.'

² *Qur'an* 9:71 and this is Shaker's translation. The second phrase is also translated as 'friends one of another' (Pickthall) and 'protectors one of another' (Yusuf Ali).

‘owning a commodity and paying for it.’ (!)¹ Where is love and mercy?² Where is honor and fulfillment of promises?

I read the story of Fatimah, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad. I read that she used the mill until her hands got swollen and carried her sack of water until her shoulder got weakened. I never felt that she was doing all this because she is a ‘female’ serving a ‘male’! I felt that she was doing all this because she was a pious wife and mother who were striving to maintain her home with love. That is why she was offering all what she can for her beloved man and children. Fatimah was not a humiliated wife who was at the order of her ‘lord of the house.’ She was a partner who shared her husband’s rough days in order to serve their religion and their life together.

In this very context, I understand what Assma’, the daughter of Abu Bakr, said about her husband, Al-Zubair Ibn Al-`Awwam. She said, ‘I was doing all the housework for Al-Zubair. I was feeding and cleaning his horse, getting water out the well using a bucket, water the land, and carry seeds on my head to his land two-thirds of a league away.’

The vast majority of scholars said that the Islamic ruling is that a wife is under no obligation to serve her husband! Wives, however, should not use this ruling literally but rather serve their homes out of care and love.

A man is supposed to be the leader of the household, for sure. However, this leadership is a responsibility and a sacrifice. It is not just a privilege for the man. The problem is that ignorance is very common in the Muslim world and most Muslims are considering marriage relationships as mere physical relationships. They become mothers and fathers without knowing anything about the mission of Islam nor do they teach it to their children. Marriage, for them, is a ‘contract’ between two persons where the stronger body controls!

¹ These are ‘definitions for marriage’ given in some classic books of the Islamic law! These definitions are un-Islamic. The *Qur’an* defined marriage as a relationship of ‘love and mercy’ (verse 30:21).

² The Sheikh is referring to the verse 30:21, ‘And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your hearts.’

1.11. Consider the difference in roles

In the realm of the madness of the calls for 'absolute equality' between men and women, some political decision was taken in Egypt that is worthy of note. The decision was to employ females as bus cashiers! But buses in Cairo, for those who do not know, are always extremely over-congested. A strong man can hardly push people to get out the door at the station he wants. So, how about young ladies working as cashiers and, therefore, walking back and forth in the congested bus as cashiers do? Anyways, what happened is that those ladies were employed for one day and then the administration changed its mind!

I also saw in one of the busy Arabic capitals policewomen regulating the traffic. I commented, 'This is a hard job that women should not be having need of doing.' A policewoman can be employed in airport terminals and the like. But it is inappropriate to employ them to regulate highly polluted streets crowded with cars and pedestrians.

I also think that men are more suitable of working on airplanes to serve passengers. Women should not work in this job, especially for long flights where they often have to spend several nights in hotels and stay away from their families for several days at a time.

A friend of mine told me that in Moscow, women work in all kinds of jobs including washing the streets in the early morning. He said that Russian female laborers work in very harsh environments to the extent that he thought that their jobs are affecting their femininity and sensitivity. Once he saw an older Russian female laborer walking from the factory where she works to her home. She was so tired to the degree that she was walking like a drunk!

I am against these applications of absolute equality. When I was young, I saw a farmer and his wife in our village taking turns in rotating the Archimedean-Screw.¹ I told them, 'This is not fair. I tried to rotate this handle before and it fatigued me! One must lift several gallons of water in every rotation with one's arm. A female farmer can sow, for example. However, a mother - and I meant the farmer's wife - should never be subjected to such heavy loads.'

That is why I gladly supported the following recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO), East of the Mediterranean Branch:

In all cases, women should not work in jobs that do not suite their nature, like industrial rough jobs. The appropriate jobs that women excel in are many, for example, teaching, medicine, nursing, social work, and writing. They also proved to excel in business and trade.

It is neither suitable nor lawful for a woman to work in rough jobs like working in special police forces, as car mechanics, as laborers in heavy-machinery factories, washing

¹ An old hand-operated and heavy machine that lifts water from the lower levels of canals to the farmers' fields.

streets, driving trucks, etc. The industrial nations do not consider women as equal to men in these jobs in any case. Several statistics confirmed that women are paid from 59% to 79% less than what men are paid for the same jobs.

It is very useful to refer to the valuable study that the International Herald Tribune newspaper published in issue number 32650 on February 16th, 1988. They mentioned that Dr. Rose Fresh, a Professor of Health Sciences at Harvard, made a study on 5398 women between the ages of 21 and 80 and presented the results of her study to the American Association of Advanced Sciences. The following is the conclusion of her study:

1. The top female athletes have irregular periods and their level of fertility is almost zero. They can regain their fertility if they decrease their level of exercise. Professor Fresh gave the following advice:
A woman cannot do everything all in one time. You can be an Olympiad star but if you want to have a baby, you have to stop. Even a low-profile level of exercise for the Olympiad would have a negative effect on your reproduction organs.
2. The study proved that the 2622 women who were unusually overactive in sports suffered from one type or another of either cancer or diabetes. The 2776 women who were more moderate did not suffer from these diseases.

The newspaper mentioned two other studies done in two Canadian universities; one of them is University of Alberta. The studies proved that physically tough and fatiguing jobs affect the level of fertility for women and the regularity of their monthly period.

I think that women should reflect upon these studies and stop these tiring and painful attempts to prove their physical 'equality' to men.

1.12. Towards a pure society

One of the most unpleasant human experiences is the process of developing sexual desires in the teenage years, around the age of fifteen. However, at this age, a person, male or female, is still not mature enough to carry marriage responsibilities, care for a family, and treat a partner fairly and kindly.

Marriage is not only about the ability to have sex! It entails certain financial, moral and social obligations, which in turn require a variety of qualifications. Islam defines the way a teenager can live a pure life until the time comes and marriage qualifications are fulfilled.

I think that making a teenager busy with five prayers every day has a deep effect that kicks out unpleasant ideas out of his/her soul. In addition, parents have to make sure that their children are away from all kinds of seduction that make desires explode!

The Islamic *hijab*,¹ lowering one's gaze,² avoiding unconstrained mixture of boys and girls, and always making teenagers busy with all kinds of Islamic struggles and challenges; scientifically, socially and militarily (if applicable) – all of this will help in building a pure society with good moral values.

Marriage, which I recommend to be early, also plays a big role in keeping the society pure. Unfortunately, Muslim societies burdened themselves with many costly marriage traditions and now they are suffering from them! It is one of the amazing features of the human race; they create a harmful tradition or myth, make it sacred, and then suffer from it!

I witnessed the traditions in many Muslim countries making lawful marriage unaffordable while all sorts of sins are affordable and available (!). Even average TV commercials are introduced by girls who are not dressed properly, to say the least. Some TV shows are presented by ladies who always give the impression that certain hairstyles are sacred! Some of them change their hairstyle several times in one day!

The historian and writer Will Durant mentioned in his book, *The Pleasures of Philosophy*:³

City life discourages marriage and, in the same time, introduces and facilitates all means for fulfilling one's sexual desires. Nowadays, people reach physical

¹ Literally, a barrier. It is a women dress code that has a purpose of modesty. Thus, it should cover a woman's beauty with a material and style that do not defeat that purpose. The exact 'fashion' varies across cultures!

² Mentioned in verses 24:30, 31, 'Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: And God is well acquainted with all that they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (ordinarily) appear thereof ...'

³ Durant, Will, 1885-. *The pleasures of philosophy: a survey of human life and destiny*, Will Durant. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953. Note that the translation here is from the Arabic that the Sheikh mentioned, rather than a quote from the original book, which I could not find!

maturity earlier than before and reach financial independence later than before. While controlling one's desires seems possible in the old agricultural society, it is difficult and even seems unnatural in this industrial world. Marriage age is rising, until it is now around 30 for men. People cannot just ignore their physical desires, and controlling them is much more difficult than before. Nowadays, chastity brings sarcasm while shyness, which is a source of beauty, disappeared.

Men are becoming proud of their multiple relationships and women are asking for their right for equality with men in this area! Sex before marriage is becoming natural and prostitution is disappearing not because it is illegal, but because sin is available everywhere. The moral values of the agricultural society are destroyed and 'civil societies' no longer believe in them.

The social evil that late marriages cause is unpredictable. I consider cheating on spouses after marriage as one of the consequences of permissiveness that people got used to before marriage. A man before marriage gets to know street girls, who follow every 'modern' way of wearing ornaments and stimulating sexual desires ...

Then, when the chaste city girl gives up on marriage, she rushes into sinful adventures provoked by men who flirt with her just to spend a nice time. They give her stockings as gifts and make her special champagne parties, all in return of sex. Then, she thinks that since she is financially independent, she does not need a husband to rely on.

A man is not interested in a woman who has a long record of adventures, even if he himself has a similar record! However, when he thinks about how much money she makes and how his income alone is not enough to support for a family, he might stop hesitancy and marries her ...

The above was written 60 years ago. The situation is certainly much worse now. The reason behind this mess in modern societies is forsaking religion and completely following desires without any disapproval neither from faith nor from fear of the hereafter! True Islam is the cure of these social disorders. Islam builds a pure and chaste society starting from home. All family members pray together and parents follow up on their children's prayers, closely and kindly. Moreover, the Islamic etiquette in eating, dressing, talking, sleeping and entertaining guests is taught at home.

On the 'street' level, community members have to cooperate to combat evil looks and inappropriate words and to kick sin and nudeness out of every neighborhood – all as prescribed by the Islamic law under the rulings of enjoining good and forbidding evil. When neighbors cooperate in the way of God, sinners and immoral people will disappear from the street and from the society.

Finally, on the media level, Muslim media is supposed to present useful knowledge and culture and to restrict entertainment to the programs that are purest in words and objective and furthest from mischief. The media is supposed to present all streams of life in a way that protects homes and publicize purity. Muslim media is supposed to raise straight generations!

1.13. The danger of the sex bomb

I attended a conference organized by the World Health Organization (WHO), East of the Mediterranean Branch, and I learned a lot. I gained some knowledge on social sciences that I would like to spread among my readers.

George Paloczi-Horvath wrote in his book, *The Sex Revolution*:

Now, our fears of a nuclear war almost disappeared after the major world forces came to some sort of mutual terms. However, we should be really concerned about the ultra importance that sex is taking in our lives! Aren't we concerned about all these waves of free sexual desires and ways of seduction in our societies?

We must be more serious about the huge sexual mess we live in right now, especially that nothing is able to stop it; not even fear of hellfire, sexually transmitted diseases and even pregnancy. (!)

Those who care about the future of the human race and its moral values are really concerned because of the tons of sexual bombs that explode every day, which cause mass destruction. Actually the future of our children is indefinite. Perhaps they will transform into monsters that care about nothing except fulfilling their sexual desires. Great deformation will happen to the human race all over the world ...

James Ruston, of the News York Times, also wrote about the 'sexual bomb.' He said: 'The danger of the sexual bomb might be, after all, bigger than the danger of the atomic bomb.'

The famous historian Arnold Twinby noticed that civilizations disappear when 'sexual desires dominant over morals and traditions.'

Sinful relationships are no longer occasional and temporary adventures. They are becoming like a cancer or a fire that is spreading everywhere. Satan has developed many ways for sinful relationships in our modern world. Sex itself is no longer defined as a physical relationship between two persons, whether married or not. Sex is becoming a global business that includes many professions and tools. In fact, it is impossible to have a short walk in any big city without being literally shelled with sex bullets; ads with naked pictures of all sizes, magazines, posters, movies, calls from prostitutes, and thousands of girls and women who wear clothes that, until recently, were labeled 'inappropriate'!

Homosexuality, bisexuality, group sex, temporary marriages, nudeness clubs, playboy magazines, immoral posters, etc, became the characterizing features of modern societies all over the world!

The Qur'an, Islam's Holy Book, always relates forgetting God and being captured by lusts to missing prayers.¹ Islam welcomes women in mosques on condition that they have their own lines that are separate from men's lines and observe the Islamic dress code. Then, both genders are ordered to lower their gaze and women, specifically, are ordered not to display their beauty and ornaments except what ordinarily appears, their faces and hands. Islam, moreover, encourages everybody to get married and makes marriage 'one half of the religion,' as the Prophet said.

It is sad, though, that Muslim extremists forgot about the above Islamic principals and strictly imprisoned women. They, moreover, accepted traditions that made marriage totally unaffordable and hence opened the way to mischief in the Muslim world! This mischief spoiled the reputation of Islam and Muslims all over the world. In addition, it is amazing how rich Arab tourists behave when they visit western cities in their search for lusts. Those tourists are bringing shame on every Muslim!

Isn't it time to think seriously about the best way to implement the rulings of Islam in Muslim countries?

¹ For example, verse 19:59, 'But after them there followed a generation who missed prayers and followed after lusts soon, then, will they face Destruction.'

1.14. Islam outside its land

Hundreds of thousands of French men and women embraced Islam. I have no doubt that those new Muslims feel happy and fortunate to embrace Islam, even with all the difficulties they face! They must have been subjected to many disturbances! The enmity of some non-Muslim French people is certainly one of these disturbances. However, I think that the most serious disturbance to those new Muslims is the situation and the behavior of other Muslims in their community; namely those who immigrated to France from Africa and Asia. Those immigrants are so backward, uncivilized and most of them live miserable lives. They are, in fact, a shame to every French Muslim. There is no comparison between the Muslim community in France and, say, the Jewish community in France.

Dr. Hassan Hathout¹ says:

The European countries lost millions of its people in the Second World War. However, after the war, they all started to use birth control methods to avoid poverty and preserve their standard of living, so they said! Then, when the Europeans started to have a significant deficiency in laborers, they allowed laborers from all over the world to immigrate to their countries. European businesses were happy with the low payments that satisfy these laborers.

Then, those laborers, coming from poor and oppressed countries, liked their new life and decided to get the citizenships of the countries they migrated to. Eventually, they started to form distinct communities and the European societies started to be multicultural societies!

In Brussels, which considers itself the Capital of Europe, one out of every two newborns is a Muslim. In UK, the number of Indian-accent English speakers is double the number of Welsh-accent English speakers! In France, Muslims are now 700 thousand, which is double the number of votes between the winner and loser political parties in 1974 elections! In West Berlin, there are three Turkish-language TV channels. In several European countries, the number of mosques is larger than the number of churches. The stream of European converts to Islam never stops!

The facts above require us, Muslims, to revise our way of dealing with non-Muslims all over the world and to learn how to understand Islam and call for it correctly. But before that, we have to practice Islam and apply its rulings to our life.

Muslims in non-Muslim countries should go to the mosques regularly, get to know each other closely, and open those mosques to all men, women and children in their communities. Mosques have to carry out their original mission.

Muslim communities in non-Muslim countries must build active social clubs that both genders contribute to. At the same time, men and women should guard their chastity

¹ A contemporary Muslim American physician, writer, and speaker.

and the morals that Islam calls for. They should also work hard to eradicate from their communities all kinds of liquor and drugs that their larger societies are suffering from.

These mosques and clubs are the best environments to learn and practice the Arabic language and any activity that builds up the Muslim character and fosters social relationships among the Muslim community.

Families should exchange visits, share knowledge about all relevant private and public issues, and cooperate in all deeds of piety, including marriage. It is insane to let the Muslim male and female students be subjected to a seductive environment in their educational institutes, while not allowing them to meet pious female or male Muslims. Muslims have to create an atmosphere that encourages Islamic marriage.

Muslims in non-Muslim countries should also realize that carrying the call of Islam and strengthening their communities require opened and educated minds. The ignorant and non-professional ones, who are only good at complaining, are not fit for carrying this mission. On the other hand, the immigrants' original countries should not forget them. They should continuously send them help in the form of scholars, teachers, books, and newspapers, in addition to all kinds of moral support.

I also think that it is an obligation that Muslim immigrants get to know people from other religions. It doesn't cost anything to smile at people and introduce yourself to them! Non-Muslims, who have no correct knowledge about Islam, have two excuses for their lack of knowledge: First, thousands of scholars from many other backgrounds tell lies about Islam and its Prophet. Secondly, many Muslims presented themselves in a terrible way and caused lots of naïve people to hate Islam. Muslims in non-Muslim countries should, then, be patient in correcting all of those misconceptions.

Western European countries are moving towards unity. Eastern Europe might join them one day. This union will be a great power and Muslims who live in these areas should use this power to serve their communities and their cause.

It is interesting that the misconceptions that many western people have about Islam have nothing to do with Islam's actual beliefs and acts of worship! These misconceptions are mainly caused by traditions that some ignorant Muslims preach and practice, especially in the area of women rights and obligations. We have to show no tolerance towards those Muslims who give *fatwa* without knowledge. These days, all they talk about is 'the obligation of covering women's faces,' the 'forbiddance of pictures,' and similar irrelevant issues!

1.15. A dialogue with a Marxist!

Some young ladies complained to me. They said that their philosophy teacher at school is trying to convince them with ideas that contradict religion. They asked me to meet him and dialogue with him. I said, 'Bring him any time to my office!'

When the teacher came, I asked him, 'Are you a communist?' He answered, 'I am a Marxist.' I asked him, 'Do you follow Marx in his atheism or his economical theory?' He answered, after a bit of thinking, 'In his atheism first. There is no god and life is all about material.' (!)

I told him, while looking at his big body, 'When you were born, you only weighed a few pounds. Now you weigh more than 200 pounds. How did this happen?' He answered, 'This is how nature is.' (!) I answered, 'Is nature responsible for transferring your food into flesh that is full of life? Food has no sense. You cut a piece of bread with a knife and it doesn't complain. How come this piece of bread is transferred into life?' He answered coldly, 'I told you that this is how nature is.'

I said, 'OK. It is a powerful and knowledgeable nature, then. But does this "nature" take care of you alone or of five billion people on this earth?' He said, guardedly, 'Everybody on this earth.' I said:

It is certainly a 'nature' that is knowledgeable, powerful, wise, and great. See how it takes care of billions of people from their embryonic stage, through all stages of life and until death. For each person, 'nature' nurtures thousands of systems for chewing, digestion, absorption, food distribution, lung movements, and pumping blood into veins continuously, day and night.

He answered, like a monster that feels a great danger, 'Nature is intelligent.' I said, 'Intelligence is an adjective. So, who is the noun? I mean, if you and everybody else need this intelligence to survive, what would be this intelligent thing? Could it be air or dust? Don't you think that there should be one intelligent "being" that is different from everything else?'

He said, 'Don't go in circles. I told you this is how nature is.' (!) I told him, 'Do you think that "nature" is another holy name of God? This world that we live in is full of life that, as you agreed with me, requires intelligence, power and wisdom. So, what is the thing that is described with these qualities? There must be something that is to be described with these qualities!'

He answered, 'It seems that you are an argumentative Sheikh of a mosque.' I said, 'Forget about me, whether I am a Sheikh of a mosque or a Sheikh of a tribe. When I say you are fat. Then, there is fatness and you are described with it. Therefore, when we say that there is intelligence that controls the universe, then, there has to be a God who is described with this intelligence. No doubt about that.'

He said, 'This is a backward thinking that is no longer valid!' I said, 'If using logic is backward and stupidity is not backward, then, I am backward, you absentminded Marxist.'

Chapter 2. Forgotten stories from our history

1. This was her status.
2. Did Islam 'spoil' women?
3. A mother is a school.
4. On the old dark ages.
5. The Arabic 'Dark Age' was better.
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11. What do Muslim women do?
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13. Two rare women.
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15. Women in the Arabic literature.
16. Down with the liar.
17. The tradition of 'being worthy of praise.'

2.1. This was her status

The more I read about the life story of the Prophet, peace be upon him, the more I realize how high the status of women is in Islam. Women were highly valued and respected! The narrators of *hadith* say, 'When the verse, 'And warn your nearest relations'¹ was revealed, the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, ascended the Safa mountain and shouted: 'O sons of Abdul-Muttalib! Buy yourself from God. O Safiyah, the aunt of the Messenger of God, and Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of God, buy yourselves from God. I cannot protect you from God.'

Calling women's names with this loud voice is abhorred in the Arabic culture nowadays! Some Muslims consider a woman's name confidential information! If this same warning would take place today, some people would say, 'What does a woman have to do with these issues? It is enough for her to send a man from her family to hear the speech and then return home and tell her what happened. Calling her name in public like that is a shame!'

But women in the days of the message knew the high value Islam is giving them. This is one of the reasons behind their prompt embracement of Islam. Historians narrate that Omar Ibn Al-Khattab's sister embraced Islam before him. When he knew about it, he slapped her violently. However, she told him, 'O Omar! The truth is not in your (idol-worshipping) religion. I bear witness that there is no god but the One God and Muhammad is His messenger.' Omar accepted Islam after that!

Many men and women accepted Islam at the time of the Prophet and gave their covenants to him to defend the truth. The Mosque of the Prophet witnessed prayer-lines of believers, men and women, all on equal basis.

Umm Hisham Harithah Bint Al-No`man said, 'I memorized the Chapter of Qaf² only because the Prophet, peace be upon him, used to recite it every Friday within his speech.' Look how attentive she was to the speech to the extent that she memorized the whole Chapter? The tradition was that the Prophet, peace be upon him, read whole parts of the *Qur'an* in his Friday speech. It is a tradition that is ignored today. It was also a tradition that women attend the regular congregational prayers as well as Friday prayers in the mosque. Interestingly, it is also a tradition that is ignored today!

Another interesting story, which Al-Bukhari narrates in his authentic collection,³ tells us about a rich female companion who used to hold an opened dinner for whoever wants to eat after the Friday prayer with the Prophet, peace be upon him. Al-Bukhari wrote:

Sahl Ibn Sa`d said, 'One of us, companions, was a woman who planted beet in her farm. Every Friday, she used to collect some of it, boil it with ground barley, and make a delicious soup. After every Friday prayer, we would go to her house and greet her with peace. She would, then, serve us the soup. We used to

¹ Verse 26:214.

² Chapter fifty, which contains forty-five verses.

³ Muhammad Ibn Isma'il Al-Bukhari (810-870). Refer to: *Sahih al-Bukhari, The translation of the meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari: Arabic-English*, by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Beirut, Dar al-Fikr, 1979.

eagerly wait for Friday just to taste her soup, although it had neither meat nor fat in it.'

So, this is a story of a generous female believer who found some happiness in treating people with what God has provided her. If a woman does that today, extremists will criticize her! Those who give *fatwa* without knowledge will tell her, 'How come you let them greet you? And how come you greet them back? And how come you receive male guests at your place?' And so on.

The traditions that dominate the Islamic world today are based on neither the *Qur'an* nor the *Sunnah*. But because of these traditions, cultured women everywhere are skeptical about Islam, thinking that it is the reason behind women's backwardness and oppression in the Muslim world. However, the fact is that the revelation gave Muslim women many rights that they practiced in the bright days of the Islamic civilization. Then, their rights were abused when the Islamic civilization started to decline and Muslims went astray.

2.2. Did Islam spoil women?

One woman told me, 'Islam is harsh on women because the spoilt husband can divorce his wife whenever he wishes. This is a continuous threat that Muslim women live.' I answered, 'Well. You can also say that Islam spoils women by allowing them to divorce their husbands and quit whenever they wish!'¹

In any case, the husband-wife relationship should not be viewed through a tense conversation about divorce laws! I think that common traditions of people in the Orient are behind these weird views!

It is true that the man is the 'leader of the household.' However, we, in the Orient, have a tendency to think that a leader must be a pharaoh dictator who consults no body, listens to no body, and does not recognize others' opinions and preferences! This understanding of leadership resulted in deterioration of all Eastern/Oriental countries, not only on the family level but on the political level as well.

The Islamic concept of leadership is one of burden and responsibility. Within the borders of a Muslim home, a husband's leadership is part of a group of mutual rights and obligations between him and his wife. The *Qur'an* said, 'And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them.'²

The bases for a healthy husband-wife relationship are high morals, enormous love, preferring the other to oneself, and forgiving minor mistakes. This reminds me of the Arabic poem that says that problems are never because there is not enough space for everybody, but they are because there is not enough patience for everybody!

I noticed in Chapter 65 of the *Qur'an*, titled *The Chapter of Divorce* (and sometimes titled *The Shorter Chapter of Women*) that Islam is so keen to mix practical rulings and laws with encouraging good morals, for example, 'After a difficulty, God will soon grant relief,'³ 'and for those who fear God, He will make their path easy,'⁴ and, 'if any one fears God, He will remove his ills, from him, and will enlarge his reward.'⁵

Families that ignore good dealings and kindness and only consider courts and laws are bound to devastation!

¹ The Islamic divorce issued by women is called *khul'*. It is similar to the man's divorce except that the wife asks for divorce in front of a judge, while scholars do not ask the same of the man (except for some recent twentieth century opinions). The judge normally asks the wife to pay back to the husband the dowry that he had paid her at the start of the marriage. This is in case the husband has no obvious blame for the divorce, for example, abuse or lack of support, etc. Refer to the books of Fiqh for more details, for example: Al-Sayed Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, English Translation, 4 volumes, translated to English by Amira Matraji, Dar Elfatih for Arab Information, Cairo, 1999.

² Verse 2:228. I added the words between brackets for the sake of a more accurate translation of the verse.

³ Verse 65:7.

⁴ Verse 65:4.

⁵ Verse 65:5.

On the other hand, societies in the East and the West now acknowledge that divorce is a psychological and social necessity in some cases. Divorce is not a weapon in the man's hand, as some people wrongly perceive it, but rather a solution for the woman's unsolvable problems! However, I know of Muslim families who consider themselves one body, solve any problem that come by, and no partner ever thinks about divorce. The unity of their families is their first priority.

But many Muslims in these days of moral and cultural declination forgot about the role of the family and the future of the children. I heard about cases where some people destroy the future of the family over something as trivial as a pound of meat that the husband refuses to buy! What can I say in such a situation except what God had said at the end of the Chapter of Divorce, 'And how many a community revolted against the ordinance of its Lord and His messengers, and We called it to a stern account and punished it with dire punishment, So that it tasted the ill-effects of its conduct, and the consequence of its conduct was loss.'¹

¹ Verses 65:8-9.

2.3. A mother is a school

I did some research, the objective of which was to assess the intellectual level of Arabic women in the era before Islam! For me, the intellectual level could be measured by the ability of people to react positively in different situations, judge what is right and wrong, and raise good children.

I avoided all non-authentic sources of information about this era and used poetry as my source of information. Arabic poetry is the most authentic account on the Arabic life before Islam. I searched for stories of women, especially those stories that show moral values, the way they reacted to their society traditions, and their level of 'humanity' in general!

I came across *Diwan Al-Hamasah* (The Poetry Book of Enthusiasm), by Abu Tammam and started reading the Chapter on Lamentations. I found so many poems by Arab women crying the loss of their beloved ones. I chose the following verses by `Omarah Al-Khath`amiyah as an example that shows the moral values those people had. She lost her two sons in the war. So, she was counting their merits. She said:

They were two brothers who supported those who had no
brothers and called them for help

They were honorable in the best way people ever knew
and were never disgraced

They were like two suns that went off after enlightening so
many people

They never cared about crossing the land which people
fear death in

The sad mother was talking about her children's courage even when they faced death and accounting for the honor they enjoyed and the help they used to offer. So, although it is a complete disaster to lose her two sons, the woman is greeting them for their generosity and honor. Are the Arabic women today up to this level of maturity, good morals, and struggle? The answer is no!

Arab women before the modern colonization were illiterate, falsely in the name of Islam. Then, when modern civilization founded girls' schools in the Muslim world, girls were taught nothing about their culture and the excellent merits that their grandmothers had in the ancient days. They only learned modern philosophies and fashions!

What complicated the problem is the amazing ignorance of some popular Islamic speakers who preached loudly that, 'A woman should never see anybody or be seen by anybody. A woman should go out twice, the first time to her husband's house and the second time to her grave.' (!)

However, I find the following poem by Hafiz Ibrahim beautiful:

A mother is a school.

When you build her,
You build a whole excellent nation.

2.4. On the old dark ages

The Greek, Romans, and other ancient civilizations oppressed women greatly. They hated having baby girls and carelessly transgressed against women's financial and social rights.

A tiny minority of Arabs before Islam buried their baby girls alive! It is certainly a savage, atrocious, and horrible thing to do. However, I have no doubt that these were rare incidents that the majority of Arabs disgusted. Numerous popular poems written by Arabs all over Arabia tell us how attached they were to their children, boys and girls, how they valued them as their 'livers walking on earth,' as poets said, and how they strived to make money and be healthy only for their sake.

Moreover, most Arabs before Islam were so devoted to protecting the women of their families and worked hard to honor their female children.

Al-Monthir Al-Lakhmi, the King of Heerah,¹ who had a daughter by the name Huraqah, lost his kingdom. Huraqah said a poem, which became very famous, on how they were ruling over people, how others started to treat her and her family as laypeople, and how the pleasures of this worldly life never last, and so on.

When Sa`d Ibn Abu Waqqas conquered Persia, Huraqah came with some of her maids asking for help. When he saw them all, he didn't recognize her from amongst them. He asked, 'Who of you is Huraqah?' She said, 'I am Huraqah.' He asked, 'Are you sure you are Huraqah?' She said, 'Why did you ask your second question? This world is bound to extinction and it never stays the same. My family ruled this very region that you are ruling now and everybody used to obey us. But then, calamities hit us and we were scattered everywhere. This is how life is, Sa`d! People who live in happiness will certainly taste sadness one day.' Sa`d honored her and gave her valuable gifts. Before she left, she said, 'I will greet you as we used to greet kings: May God make you needless to the evil ones! May God always make the honorable people in need of your help! And may God make you the reason for compensating noble people for what they lost!' When she returned to her people, they asked her, 'What happened with the prince?' She said, 'He honored me. The honorable ones are honored by honorable people.'

See how this former princess reasoned, how she dialogued with Sa`d, the victorious prince, and how she deserved his respect and admiration.

I wish that cultured Arab women nowadays be at this level so they deserve the respect of one of the ten companions promised with paradise,² as this woman was. A woman earns a great credit if she proves to be knowledgeable, fluent, and principled.

¹ An ancient kingdom in North Eastern Arabia.

² Sa`d was among the ten companions who were given glad tidings of paradise, according to one *hadith* of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

2.5. The Arabic 'Dark Age' was better

Some Muslims blamed me for saying that the Arabic Dark Age was way better than the Roman and the Greek Dark Ages, especially regarding the social status of women! I think that this blame is related to the fact that Arabs think bad about themselves after all the recent defeats they had. There is a true statement that says, 'When life smiles at someone, it grants him others' good attributes, and when life turns its back to someone, it takes away from him his own good attributes!'

Worshiping other gods with The One God was a common problem in all of these dark ages. Hubal, Arabs' false god is similar to Apollo, the Greeks' false god! Both nations were equally foolish by worshiping those idols!

But respecting women and fighting for protecting them was definitely an Arabic trait, which Romans and Greeks never knew! Poetry proves this argument.

Consider, for example, Amr Ibn Umm Kalthoum's famous poem which Arabs hanged on the wall of the *Ka'bah*. He said that: Arabs protect their women to the last breath and there is no meaning for life if their women were to be assaulted.

There is no comparison between this poem and the equally famous poem written by Simondos, the celebrated Greek poet, in which he says that women are different because God made some of them from pigs, some from female foxes, and some from dogs that bark if they find nothing to do. (!) Someone might say that Simondos is a foolish poet and we should not generalize. My answer, however, is that Greek poets who said such things were many.

However, if we put poets aside and read what Aristotle, their most famous philosopher, proposed for his 'Utopia,' we will realize how much the Greeks disrespected women. Aristotle put all women at the lowest level of his imagined Utopia and made them all at the order of men at the levels of rulers and knights! Is this supposed to be a Utopia, an ideal city?

As for the Romans, they always disrespected women and never gave them equal rights to men. And since the European laws were strongly related to the Roman legal system, the British law, for example, until the nineteenth century, allowed a man to sell his wife! The only constraint was the maximum price that the law defined for a woman at that time! The French law, until now, is still making some of the women's financial transactions subject to their husbands' approval!

The Islamic Law is the only system that protected women's independence and prohibited transgression against their rights. 'I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other.'¹

¹ Verse 3:195. Another example is 4:4, 'And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, Take it and enjoy it with right good cheer.'

I feel sad because a number of ignorant 'religious' persons in our Islamic countries are endorsing and practicing the above Greek and Roman ideas, rather than the Islamic ones! What makes the situation worse is that they claim that these ideas are 'Islamic'!

How can we protect Islam from its ignorant followers who are more dangerous than its enemies?

2.6. Women in the age of backwardness

I also compared the status of Muslim women at the dawn of the Islamic history with their status in the later days of defeat and backwardness. I concluded that their status in the old days was significantly better!

As I mentioned before, I consider killing baby girls, which history tells us about Arabs in the pre-Islamic era, to be an uncommon crime committed only by an ignorant and tiny minority. In any case, Islam has ended this practice forever. So, let us agree to put this issue aside and discuss the general status of early Muslim women, their social maturity, their personality, their participation in peace and war, and their general ability to change the course of their people's history. I found remarkable proofs for a really high status that women reached in the early Islamic era!

Women gave covenants to the Prophet, peace be upon him, in *`Aqabah* and under The Tree!¹ I am sure that they would be banned now from giving similar covenants and will be told, 'Stay at home.' (!)

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal narrated that Anas Ibn Malik said:

Abu Talhah, who was still non-Muslim, proposed to Umm Sulaim, after she embraced Islam. She told him, 'O Abu Talhah! Don't you know that your god that you worship is a plant that grew from earth?' He answered, 'Yes. I know.' She said, 'Aren't you ashamed to worship a plant? If you would like to marry me, embracing Islam is the only thing that I would ask for a dowry.' He said, 'Let me think about it.' He, later, returned to her and said, 'I bear witness that there is no god but the One God and Muhammad is His Messenger.' Umm Sulaim told Anas (her son, who is also the narrator of this *hadith*), 'O Anas! Allow Abu Talhah to marry me.'

What a society this was! I am amazed by this woman's smartness and sincerity for her faith. I am equally amazed at how pure their environment was, how easy marriage was, and how straightforward a marriage procedure was!

Umm `Atiyyah also narrated that the Messenger of God, upon his arrival to Medina, gathered the Muslim women in a house and sent Omar Ibn al-Khattab to them. Omar stood at the door and greeted them with peace. They greeted him back with peace. He said, 'I am the messenger of the Messenger of God.' They said, 'Welcome to the Messenger of God and welcome to the messenger of the Messenger of God!' Omar said, 'Do you give a pledge that you will not associate other gods with God, will not steal, will not commit fornication, will not kill your children, will not utter slander, and will not disobey the Messenger in what is good?' They said, 'Yes!' Omar stretched his arm in the air, from where he is standing, and they did the same. Omar said, 'O God! Witness this!'

¹ Mentioned in verse 48:18, 'God's Good Pleasure was on the Believers when they swore Fealty to you under the Tree: He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down Tranquility to them; and He rewarded them with a speedy Victory.'

Omar did not shake their hands while taking the pledge, and this was the prophetic example, so that their religious environment remains pure of the corruption that is common in other religions. There are numerous stories about what some mischievous priests do with women who attend rituals. It is better that Islam be protected from such mischief. We do not want another Rasputin¹ in our Muslim community!

I remember now when a scholar, who is also a high official in some Muslim country, blamed me for greeting my female students with peace before my lectures! I told him, 'What is wrong with a teacher greeting his students?' He said, 'This is not lawful!' I said, 'But Al-Bukhari, in his collection of *hadith*, narrated otherwise.' He said, 'But scholars did not authenticate his narration.' I said, 'What scholars? The ignorant ones are the ones who talk about Islam without knowledge and prefer their fathers' traditions over Islam's teachings.'

¹ Gregory Iefimovich Rasputin, a Russian monk who lived in the beginnings of the twentieth century. He was famous of his women adventures, even with the Russian Queen at the time! He was assassinated in controversial circumstances.

2.7. Let us learn the correct information

No mercy was given to Muslim women in their history, except for their golden days at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his guided caliphs!

Reflect with me upon the Prophet's response to Jamilah Bint Aws when she complained to him. She said that she hates her marriage only because she doesn't like her husband physically to the extent that she feels disgusted from him! The Prophet, peace be upon him, told her, 'He gave you his garden as a dowry. Are you willing to give him his garden back?' She said, 'Yes.' So, the Prophet ordered the man to divorce his wife and the man did!

A family cannot survive if the woman hates the man and desires to leave him. That is why God said: 'And if you fear that they cannot keep within the limits of God, there is no blame on them for what she gives up to become free thereby.'¹

Now, the juridical debate on whether the above *hadith* indicates a 'divorce' or a 'nullification of a marriage contract' is irrelevant! What is relevant and was crucial to change is an Egyptian unjust 'family law' that ordered law-enforcement officers to return the woman, by force, to her home, which they called 'the home of obedience,' and thus, force her to sleep with a man she hates!! Another wrong Egyptian law, which was only a reaction to the above one, bans the man from ever entering his home if he ever utters the word, 'I divorce you.' (!)

Why are we causing all of these turbulences by not understanding what the Islamic law is all about and how it should be implemented? How can we ignore the saying of God Almighty, 'The couple should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness'?² It is amazing how Muslims sometimes miss the point behind the rulings of divorce, whether the man's divorce or the woman's divorce!

I will mention another story, with sadness and regrets: Some sisters went to pray in a mosque and stood in a line at the very far end of the prayer hall. The Imam of the mosque came quickly towards them and said, 'Mosques are only for men. God Almighty said, 'In houses which God has permitted to be exalted and that His name may be remembered in them; there glorify Him therein in the mornings and the evenings, Men'³ ...'⁴?' Those sisters came to complain to me and they looked depressed. I said, 'This is an ignorant man. God said, "Among the Believers are men (Arabic: *rijal*) who have been true to their covenant with God." But it is well known that giving covenants is not for males only! And what does the following saying of God mean, then? "I will not waste the

¹ Verse 2:229.

² Verse 2:229.

³ 'Men' is the literal translation. The Arabic word is '*rijal*,' refers to people from both genders. However, nowadays, the word '*rijal*' is commonly used only for men in popular Arabic dialects, but this usage of the word is different from the high Arabic of the Qur'an.

⁴ Verse 24:36.

work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other.”¹

It is a sign of ignorance that many Muslims ban women from going to the mosque because, they say, ‘it is an innovation in the religion.’ (!) Similarly, they ban them from education because, they say, ‘it is a western innovation.’ (!) They also forbid them from participating in public activities because, they say, ‘It is an act of nosiness on their part.’

How can a closed-minded woman be a good mother who is responsible for a family? How can she raise the next generation? Certainly, the backwardness of Muslims nowadays is a direct result of their misunderstanding of the correct Islamic stands on women issues.

¹ Verse 3:195.

2.8. Narrations that harm Islam

Our classic books of Islamic law are very valuable. However, they also include some rulings that scholars wrote as they heard them from others, without enough investigation or proof from the Book of the God or the *sunnah* of His Messenger. For example, one of the *Fiqh* references mentioned that, 'An embryo might stay in his mother's womb for several years. Therefore, the divorce period of pregnant women might last for years.' (!) Now we know that it is impossible for a baby to stay that long in his mother's womb and that the whole womb will explode before one full year of pregnancy. What is mentioned in that reference is obviously something that a scholar copied from some laypeople hearsay!

There are similar *fiqhi* opinions in our literature. For example, there is a false narration that says, 'A man's prayer is void if a dog or a woman passes in front of him while praying.' (!) The Imams Abu Hanifah, Malik, and Al-Shafi'i totally rejected this narration. Ibn Hazm, though, had a different opinion. He said, 'A passing donkey, dog or woman interrupts the prayers unless the woman is laying in front of the praying person.' (!!) How come a woman interrupts the prayer if she passes in front of the praying person and does not interrupt it if she lays in front of him? This is an extremely nonsense opinion!

Why did Ibn Hazm say this strange thing? Because he read in the authentic collections that `A'isha, the Prophet's wife, would sometimes lay down in the direction of the *Qiblah* while the Prophet was praying. I am not sure, though, why didn't Ibn Hazm apply this narration as a general rule and disregard the other false narration, as the other jurists did?

Ibn Hazm's above opinion is similar to another opinion he gave, which I don't think any sane person would agree with! He said that if a person kills another by poison, then there is no punishment, according to the Islamic law, for that! He referred to a story narrated about a Jewish woman who tried to kill the Prophet, peace be upon him, by putting poison in a meal of lamb meat she presented to him and his companions. The Prophet felt that the meat had a strange taste and ordered his companions to stop eating from it. The companions brought the woman, who confessed that she put poison in the meat and asked for the Prophet's pardon. The Prophet pardoned her. Some narrators, however, say that some companions died later from the effect of the poison, and so the Prophet ordered the woman to be killed. Some other narrators denied that the woman was killed over what she did.

According to Ibn Hazm, the Prophet pardoned her even though he confirms that some of the companions had died because of her! So, he stated in the eleventh volume of his book *Al-Muhalla* (The Beautified) that poisoning somebody to death has no punishment in the Islamic Law. (!!)

The narration about donkeys and women interrupting the prayers is as false as the other narration about pardoning killers. These are illusions that deserve to be ignored. Please understand your religion, May God pardon you!

2.9. The wives of the Prophet (1)

There is a widespread rumor that says that Muhammad had nine wives whom he continuously made love with and whenever he is bored of one, he goes to another. Some people even commented on this by saying that this was an inappropriate style of life for a man who claimed to be spiritual and always talking about the hereafter. They said that Muhammad was, therefore, showing that he was a man of worldly pleasures, not a man of religion.

I would say that if the premises were true, then the conclusions are true, but if the premises were false, then the conclusions are false! What those people are saying is a mixture of truth and falsehood, which is, for me, a sort of lying. The life story of Muhammad, which everybody knows, gives us a different image. It is well known that Muhammad married *Khadijah* when he was twenty-five and she was forty years old. He lived with her, monogamously, for twenty-eight years until she died. When he was forty she was fifty-five and when he was fifty-three she was approaching her seventies! Everybody acknowledges that he was totally loyal to her over his entire youth years. What 'worldly lusts' are they talking about?

Then, *Khadijah* died and he called the year that she died in the year of sadness. Then, he married a woman as old as *Khadijah* and she was the one who migrated with him to Medina.

It is true that in the last ten years of his life he married several other women! But who were they? They were mainly a group of widows with very harsh situations. None of them was known to be beautiful or young except for 'A'ishah, whom he married to be closer to Abu Bakr, her father and his friend. Then he married *Hafsah*, the daughter of his other friend *Omar*, after her husband died, to support the family in their struggle!

He also married *Umm Habibah*, the daughter of *Abu Sufyan*, who was the leader of the pagans after she migrated to Ethiopia for the sake of Islam and eventually became a lonely and isolated widow there. He didn't even see her when he proposed to her. He sent a messenger to Ethiopia to propose to her in his name.

The rest of his wives were simply women with very special status in Islam who had very bad circumstances. Physical desires were obviously not a motivation behind those marriages. The Prophet's wives knew that the Prophet married them for compassion reasons. That is why some of them offered him, quite openly, to give up their physical needs as wives. So, again, what physical desires are they talking about?

God revealed a few verses asking the Prophet's wives to be content with what they have been given. 'If a wife fears ill treatment or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best,'¹ and 'You may put off whom you please of them, and you may take to you whom you please, and whom you desire of those whom you had separated provisionally; no blame attaches to you; this is most proper, so that their eyes may be

¹ Verse 4:128.

cool and they may not grieve, and that they should be pleased, all of them with what you give them.’¹ He obviously cannot do more than that. This proves that there was no physical desire behind the marriages. The marriages were basically to support some leading female companions in their tragedies.

Even if we assume that beauty was behind one or more of these marriages, did the Prophet or his family ever tasted comfort with all the struggles they have been through? What a difficult mission to be a wife of a guardian of a huge nation, whom people ask for help and refuge day and night! History confirms that the Prophet used to give people what he had and sleep – him and his family – hungry!

Al-Bukhari and Muslim² narrated that ‘A’ishah said, ‘The house of Muhammad, peace be upon him, never ate enough barley bread for two consecutive days until he died.’ Muslim also narrated that ‘A’ishah said, ‘The Prophet, peace be upon him, was never full from eating bread and oil twice in one day.’ Al-Tirmithi narrated that Masruq visited ‘A’ishah. After she presented food to him, she said, ‘When I am full, I cry, whenever I wish to cry.’ Masruq said, ‘Why?’ She said, ‘I remember the situation of the Prophet, peace be upon him, when he died. He was never full from eating bread and meat twice in one day.’ Al-Bayhaqi narrated that ‘A’ishah said, ‘The Prophet, peace be upon him, was never full for three consecutive days. If we wished, we would have been always full. But he would prefer others over himself.’ (!) Al-Tabarani said that there were never any leftovers whatsoever at the table of the Prophet, peace be upon him.³ Al-Hassan said, ‘The Messenger of God was preferring people over himself. He would even patch his cloak with old pieces of leather.’ This was simply because of the big number of poor people asking him for food and clothes every day!

Visitors to the Prophet’s place may arrive much earlier than the time of the meal and leave much later. This was inconvenient for him and his family. The revelation had to put a strict system for these visits, ‘O you who believe! Enter not the Prophet’s houses, - until leave is given you, - for a meal, (and then) not (so early as) to wait for its preparation: but when you are invited, enter; and when you have taken your meal, disperse, without seeking familiar talk. Such (behavior) annoys the Prophet: he is ashamed to dismiss you, but God is not ashamed (to tell you) the truth.’⁴ The wives of the Prophet, and he too, suffered a lot while serving the community, educating people, helping the needy, and entertaining groups of guests.

It was normal that the Prophet wakes up, goes to pray in the mosque and then, when he returns home, asks if there is anything they have for breakfast. If the answer is no, he would make intention to fast that day. When he would sometimes find some vinegar at home, he would never complain or feel bad. It is narrated that he would say with contentment, ‘Vinegar is a good dip.’ (!!)

This is the life of the man that some people say that he lived a life full of lusts and women. Where is this easy life that they are talking about?

¹ Verse 33:51.

² Imam Muslim. *Sahih Muslim (The Authentic Collection of Muslim)*. Rendered into English by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi. International Islamic Publishing House, Riyadh, 1971.

³ He is indicating that the food they had was always barely enough.

⁴ Verse 33:53.

All the books of *Seerah*¹ mentioned how all of the Prophet's wives, at some point, felt bad about this rough life and how they all congregated and asked him to change it. The strict answer was: 'Either this life or departure!' All of them, then, preferred to serve their belief and basically, 'wait for the hereafter.' They preferred to live close to the struggling Prophet over the pleasures of this worldly life. The house, which the revelation was coming down to, was supposed to live as the poorest house on earth. The wives in this house were expected to endure, as if they were refugees who lost everything. God, glory be to Him, rewarded them for this sacrifice by giving them the title, 'The mothers of the believers.' This was obviously an honor as well as a duty.

Now, is there any religion on this earth that bans polygamy? No. The prophets of the Old Testament were polygamous by default. They narrated that Solomon had 300 wives. Christianity does not ban polygamy either. In fact, Will Durant told us in his book, *The Story of Civilization*² many surprising stories about 'polygamous' priests and monks! But let us forget about the 'religious' men and consider, for example, the lifestyles of the ancient Greek philosophers who are regarded as the leaders of human thought! I always prefer not to mention such nasty things in my books. But it really angered me that those who defamed Muhammad have no shame. So, I decided to be tough this time!

Modern civilization inherited from the Romans and the Greek many of their immoral practices in the very area of lusts. However, some people try to hide their sickness that they live in and dare to slander the leader of the Prophets, peace be upon him; the man who taught the world the meaning of purity and chastity!

¹ The life story of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

² Durant, Will, 1885-. *The story of civilization*. New York Simon and Schuster, 1935-1975.

2.10. The wives of the Prophet (2)

A man asked me with an expression of surprise on his face, 'How could `A'ishah marry while she was early in her teens?' I answered, 'It is a good question. But I think that your surprise will disappear when you know that `A'ishah had one proposal before Muhammad!'

He opened his mouth in amazement and said, 'How come?' I said, 'It is narrated that Jubair Ibn Mut`am Ibn `Adi considered `A'ishah. He was not Muslim. He told his parents, who agreed and asked Abu Bakr for her hand. Then, they were afraid that their son might embrace Islam and forsake their religion. So, they decided to postpone the marriage. Then, Khawlah Bint Hakim told Abu Bakr that the Prophet, peace be upon him, is considering `A'ishah. Abu Bakr went to Mut`am and asked him whether he is still interested in his son's marriage to `A'ishah. Mut`am said no and apologized. So, Muhammad married `A'ishah.

Girls in some environments reach maturity at a very early age. A doctor told me that he, after some medical examination, estimated the age of a certain girl to be seventeen and she turned out to be thirteen. `A'ishah was certainly mature when she married the Messenger. Moreover, I have no doubt that this marriage was meant to foster friendship ties between the honored Prophet and his first and best companion, Abu Bakr. As I mentioned previously, this is the same reason behind the Prophet's marriage from Hafsa, Omar's daughter, after her husband died. There were several social and political reasons that called for the Prophet's marriages, for example, supporting close friends in their disasters and building strong bridges of marriage ties between the leader of the Islamic call and several other important families in Arabia.

Some people asked, 'We believe that polygamy was known in all religions and that Islam limited it to four wives at some point in the Prophet's life. Why, then, didn't he limit himself to four wives after the ruling was announced? Didn't he order a man with ten wives to divorce six and only keep four?' I answered, 'It is a good question! But bear in mind that those six divorced women were free to remarry whomever they wish. However, The wives of the Prophet were forbidden from doing so according to the verse, 'And it is not for you to cause annoyance to the messenger of God, nor that you should ever marry his wives after him. Lo! That in God's sight would be an enormity.'¹ Their status was 'mothers of the believers' as the following verse is saying: 'The Prophet is closer to the believers than their selves, and his wives are (as) their mothers.'² A believer cannot marry 'his mother'! How can they be divorced and live afterwards in loneliness? Is this the fair reward they deserve for bearing with the Messenger his rough life and the siege put on his nation? They chose him when he gave them the choice to go and preferred to struggle to living in other homes that are full of luxury. Would their reward be to divorce them?'

God permitted them to stay and decreed a special ruling for them. God Almighty said, 'It is not lawful for you to marry more women after this, nor to change them for (other)

¹ Verse 33:53.

² Verse 33:6.

wives, even if their beauty attract you, except any your right hand should possess: and God does watch over all things.’¹

I have a question for those who denied Muhammad’s prophethood based on his marriages: I know that false stories were told about other prophets and pious men. They even, falsely, called them ‘the prophets’ sins!’ Lot, the pure Prophet, was accused in the Bible of adultery while drunk with his two daughters! They even accused him of having children with them! Prophet Jacob (Israel) was accused of ‘stealing the prophethood’ from his older brother Esau by plotting against his blind father! Solomon was accused of wandering all over Jerusalem to find a new lover, even though he had one thousand wives! The story of that wild wandering, by the way, lasts for a few pages in the current Bible and was named the Song of the Songs! If you wish, refer to the Old Testament and read it.²

The scribes who wrote the Bible falsely and insanely accused those prophets with these major sins! However, it is interesting that they still consider them ‘Holy Prophets!’ Nowadays, Solomon is specifically recognized as a very special king. He is the king whom the Zionists work on rebuilding his temple so that, ‘the Lord can rule the world from it through his chosen people, the Children of Israel.’ (!!)

But Muhammad, the ever-fasting and ever-praying man, is defamed and accused of lying, just because he married a few overwhelmed women who lived with him the roughest and most devoted-to-God life that people have ever known. Now, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is issuing statements to protect Muhammad’s slanderers!³ And who are those haters who slandered Muhammad? Are they priests who are praying to God day and night? They are people who drink without stop and experience every lawful and unlawful lust without shame.

Modern civilization made available for laypeople what was only available for the kings before! A beggar can now sleep with seventy women without any restriction! How dare these people accuse Muhammad of ‘following lusts’? What logic is that?

Islam never ‘preached’ polygamy but made it as a license in certain situations. The Islamic marriage is not only about physical desires. It is mainly about educating and raising a family. Whoever is not capable of doing so is ordered not to marry, to start with, and to fast instead.

I have some questions to those who defamed Muhammad: Is polygamy better or adultery? Are the European societies, for example, strictly abiding by monogamy or the reality is that polygamous relationships are part of the world’s new ‘culture’? Was Islam wrong when it considered the non-avoidable need for polygamy in some situations or, rather, the new immoral traditions are the wrong way of life? Finally, do those who are

¹ Verse 33:52.

² The Bible: The Song of Solomon 1

³ The Sheikh is referring Salman Rushdie and his book, *Satanic Verses*. Rushdie, Salman. The satanic verses. London (England); New York, N.Y.: Viking, 1988. Also refer to: Khan, Majid Ali. The holy verses: in reply to Salman Rushdie’s “The Satanic verses” / Majid Ali Khan. New Delhi: Islamic Research Foundation, 1989.

serious about studying history realize how pure and moral Muhammad was? Did they ever hear about him drinking liquor or even eating luxurious food?

Muhammad had marks on his body from the rough mat he used to sleep and sit on. When he once ate some meat and bread, he told his companions that this is a joy that they indulged in and that they will be all questioned about it in the hereafter!!

Does this Prophet deserve to be accused of following lusts? And who are the ones accusing him? Those who suffer from epidemics of sexually transmitted diseases!!

2.11. What do Muslim women do?

One of the most famous Arabic days is the day where the battle of *Thee Qar* took place. Persians attacked Arabia with a big army and the Arabs forgot their internal conflicts, temporarily, formed a united front, and defended their land.

History says that the Arabic leader Hanzalah Ibn Tha`labah ordered the belts that hold the palanquins on the camels to be cut and ordered all women to walk behind their fighting army. He then shouted, so the whole army can hear him, 'Let everyone of you fight for the honor of his wife!' This call ignited enthusiasm and ended hesitation. The Persians were defeated badly and ran away.

Before the battle of Uhud, the women of the disbelievers sang songs that said that they would reward their husbands if they win the fight and they would divorce them if they lose!

Women of the ancient days, as you see, were aware of what is going on in their societies and played a role in motivating their men to win their battles. Even Abu Lahab, the Prophet's uncle and envious enemy, denied the revelation and rejected the message with the help of his wife. She would call Muhammad (which literally means the praised one) *Muthammam* (which means the ill-praised one)! She said a poem in which she mocked the Prophet, peace be upon him, and announced it everywhere in Mecca. So, God revealed, 'His wife carries the (crackling) wood - As fuel! - A twisted rope of palm-leaf fiber round her (own) neck!'¹ She was a lady and never carried wood! But God is giving a similitude between spreading her evil talk and igniting fire!

The two main figures who ended Islam from Spain were Ferdinand and Isabella, two kings who cooperated to defeat the Muslim armies.

I wondered once, 'Evil is supported by many women who are really active in spreading it. Why isn't belief supported with an alternative front of believer women?' There are thousands of Muslim women who are capable of serving Islam. Why do some people prevent them from doing so?

Last year, the wife of a Democratic candidate for the United States presidency was working restlessly to help her husband. This woman had strong Jewish inclinations to the extent that some people said that the White House future first lady would certainly be the strongest ally ever to Israel. When the Republicans won the elections, she was depressed and couldn't forget her grief except by getting drunk over and over, until she needed medication! When I heard that, I wondered, 'What a degree of sincerity and high dedication this woman has! Why wouldn't our Muslim women serve Islam with a similar degree of enthusiasm? Why do they listen to the ignorant ones who ban them from serving Islam?'

¹ Verse 111:4, 5.

Islam is encouraging men and women, especially husbands and wives, to cooperate in enjoining the good! A form of cooperation is when a wife advises her husband to improve. The following are interesting examples from the Arab culture.

Sa'd Ibn Nashib was blamed by his wife for his stiffness. He defended himself in a famous poem, in which he explains how he is only stiff with those who treat him badly and seek to oppress him. It is a nice poem and an acceptable defense. My point behind mentioning this is the advice that the woman gave her husband in order to improve.

Another Arab man was so generous to the extent of giving away camels to beggars! His wife blamed him for giving so much. So, he answered her with a poem asking her not to blame him and to help him to give away more. She answered him with another poem in which she apologizes, promises to help him, and urges him to give more to those who ask for his help.

The above are a couple of examples that show how the family can be the source of good morals with the cooperation of the husband and the wife.

Islam urges women to give part of the home's budget to charity (of course without causing their homes harm). `A'ishah, the mother of the believers, reported that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'If the woman gives charity from her husband's money, she is rewarded and so is he! He is rewarded for earning the money and she is rewarded for spending it in the way of God. Both have full rewards.'

Asma' Bint Abu Bakr asked the Prophet, peace be upon him, if she is allowed to give charity from Al-Zubair's money that he brings home. The Prophet answered her, 'Give what you can and do not hold the money. Otherwise, God will hold your providence.' (!!)

Now, do we still have the Islamic tradition of generosity with those who seek our help or we now have new 'modern' traditions of selfishness and greed? Are we still happy to protect our 'honor' and families or we become, like some other people, cold and careless about these things?

Muslim women nowadays brag that they have tens of dresses according to the latest fashions! Add to this the endless kinds of ornaments that they waste their money on. Ancient Arabs, men and women, even before Islam, had much higher aspirations and were very keen to spend their money in good ways, even if it is a generous entertainment of a poor guest, as Hatim Al-Ta'i, the famous poet, used to do.

It is beautiful if the husband and wife are writers, scholars, or, both, distinct in any good way. If one of them temporarily ever loses heart, the other would grab his/her hand and help him/her to go on!

2.12. A woman who is better than one thousand (good) men!

Many generations of Al-Azhar University¹ scholars, who graduated from the Faculty of the Fundamentals of the Religion, are indebted to a pious woman who transferred all her fortune to Islamic endowments,² for the sake of God. She founded organizations that generated good deeds and will continue doing so forever, by the will of God.

I am one of those who benefited from this enormous generosity. I studied in this Faculty more than half a century ago. I learned from a group of the best Islamic scholars and leaders of the Islamic thought. Many like me studied in the same Faculty of the Fundamentals of the Religion, which 'Al-Khazindarah'³ built. She also built beside the Faculty a nice and big mosque!

Every year, the academic year would start with a huge event in the mosque, at which we, students, hear speeches about the importance of learning for the sake of God and not for the sake of any material gain. We would also be reminded of the Imams of the Islamic knowledge and their struggle to educate the masses and guard the truth. Every one would, then, start classes with a feeling of dedication and enthusiasm.

Who is 'Al-Khazindarah' who built our faculty? What is her real name? Nobody knows anything about her! The Egyptian society in the old days had a tradition that forbade mentioning women's names, either mothers or wives! I am not sure why mentioning the woman's name was considered a shame! Maybe they had an illusion that it is a 'private matter,' as some people now, amazingly, claimed her voice to be!! Is this Islamic? Of course not. The Prophet, peace be upon him, as I mentioned before, ascended the mountain of Al-Safa and called Safiyah, his aunt, and Fatimah, his daughter, by their names, and asked them to believe in One God! It wasn't a shame or anything.

I shall return to Al-Khazindarah's story. The Faculty was used for the undergraduate studies. The graduate studies programs were carried out in the mosque itself and the classes used to take the shape of small circles inside the prayer hall. I still remember Sheikh Amin Khattab, the second chairman of Al-Jam'iyah Al-Shar'iyah in Egypt.⁴ He used to teach a course on 'The apparent contradictions in the narrations.' He was, God bless his soul, a man who cries from the fear of God. The students who attended his class would feel as if they were in a prayer.

¹ Al-Azhar is the world's oldest existing university. For more than one thousand years, Al-Azhar was a major international foundation for Islamic knowledge. Al-Azhar's main mosque is located in one of the oldest quarters of Cairo, Egypt. However, its universities and schools are all over the world. Throughout its millennium of Islamic education, Azharites spread the message of Islam throughout the world. Al-Azhar Islamic University presents the most comprehensive and moderate programs for Islamic education.

² Endowments are Islamic charity systems. An endowment is a profitable project/organization, which is built from charity money given by one or more donors. The profit is used for the salaries of the management of the project plus any other charity expenses defined by the donor(s). In the story that the Sheikh is mentioning, that woman donated the money to build the Faculty, a mosque and a hospital, and the profits that these institutions generated were used for their running costs. Western endowments in the middle ages were built after the endowments (*awqaf*) Islamic model.

³ Literally, the treasurer. It is a title and not an Arabic name of a woman.

⁴ An Egyptian Islamic group that is mainly concerned with building mosques and collecting charity for the needy and orphans.

When the number of students grew substantially, the management started to think of moving to a larger place. I heard somebody saying that they might merge the nearby Orphans House building with the Faculty building to create more space. Later on, I realized that the Orphans House they were talking about is another endowment project built by the same pious woman and that she asked that the orphans be provided full accommodation from her own money!

For some reason, the Orphans House project was never completed! A person I know said sarcastically, 'Maybe they didn't find orphans in Cairo!' I felt that there are so many good projects that are wasted because of bad managers who do not fear God. The donor did her job but the administration failed to carry out their duties. And because some people's disaster is some other people's benefit, as Arabs say, we added up the Orphans House building to our Faculty buildings and started to use its rooms for our classes. I think that the pious lady will still be rewarded for that Orphans House because she, simply, did her part in full. The people who fell short to fulfill their duties will be accounted for that, 'On the Day when every soul will be confronted with all the good it has done, and all the evil it has done, it will wish there were a great distance between it and its evil.'¹

While attending one of my classes, I heard loud noises that sounded like construction work. I asked, 'What is this?' Somebody told me, 'This is the new Al-Khazindarah hospital!' I prayed from the depth of my heart to this pious woman who built a Faculty, a mosque, an Orphans House, and a hospital in order to spread knowledge, encourage worship, raise the orphans, and cure the sick! What a kind heart this woman had! She actually saved her money for herself in the hereafter, 'On that day you will see the faithful men and the faithful women-- their light running before them and on their right hand-- good news for you today: gardens beneath which rivers flow.'²

It is a fact that pious women in the Islamic history were many. They never hoarded their money or effort and, silently, achieved a great deal! There are so many women names in our books of history that are hidden in the books and never got the chance to be famous. Only God knows how high their ranks are.

Then, one day, we heard that the Egyptian Government decided to demolish half of Al-Khazindarah mosque in order to widen a nearby street! The masses felt that the government does not care about the Houses of God and that this great mosque will be molested. Some Muslims decided to fight until death for the mosque. I was an officer in the Endowments Ministry at that time and I went to Sheikh Al-Baquri³ to ask him about the news. The man, honestly, looked depressed. He thought that the aggression against the mosque is an aggression against him personally, and against Islam as well. He was happy that the masses protested. Finally, and to avoid shame and people's anger, Nasser ordered that the mosque stays as it is.

But the Revolution Council decided to transfer the hospital and the Orphans House from special charity services into public services. They aimed at depriving Muslims from their

¹ Verse 3:30.

² Verse 57:12.

³ A renowned Azharite scholar who was a Minister of Endowments during the days of Nasser of Egypt.

charity organizations and endowment civil system. Later, the Faculty building was transformed into a *Qur'an* College. The mosque stayed, until now, although it is totally neglected, I have to say!

May God bestow His mercy on Al-Khazindarah, who gave her fortune for the sake of God and struggled to cure the patients, feed the hungry, and teach students. May God guide Muslim men and women to follow her footsteps.

2.13. Two rare women

Khadijah, the mothers of the believers, was a woman with so much insight about people and a great ability to distinguish the good and the evil ones! Maybe her work in trade trained her. Traders are the most capable to perceive what is in people's hearts!

During some trade business, Khadijah got to know Muhammad, peace be upon him, and she proposed to him! Muhammad was well known for his high morals that everybody witnessed. Sometimes, a certain peaceful and bright face indicates, without doubt, a kind heart. This is how Muhammad was.

But after the marriage, Khadijah started to realize that she is actually married to a very precious and perfect person! So, when he told her about what he saw in the cave of *Hira*,¹ she recalled all what she knew about him and gave an oath that someone like him would never go astray. She concluded that God will take care of him as He bestowed on him all of these traits of honor and nobleness. She said, 'By God, God will never let you down. You speak the truth, deal kindly with your relatives, help the weak, support the poor, entertain your guests, assist people with their disasters, and safeguard the trusts.'

Yes, God would never let down a person with all of the above traits! This is a man who is protected from evil. God said, 'As for My servants, no authority shall you (Satan) have over them: Enough is your Lord (Muhammad) for a Disposer of affairs.'²

Khadijah was one of Arab's top ladies and was the first to believe in Islam. But Islam is for everybody, the noble and the humble. As some of the rich ones love Islam and embrace it, many of the poor ones find happiness in it as well. Rich and poor all had equal status in Islam. Abu Bakr, a famous nobleman, embraced it. And Bilal, the slave whom Abu Bakr liberated, embraced it. Then, Omar, the great, embraced it and said, 'Abu Bakr is our master and he liberated our master.' There are no 'levels' in the Muslim society. All Muslims are brothers and sisters.

Khadijah, who was from a prominent family, embraced Islam and was the first believer. Sumayah, Ammar's mother, who was from a humble family, embraced Islam and was the first martyr!

God tests His people with all varieties of tests, with fame and obscurity, with fortune and poverty, and with health and weakness. The only thing that matters is the hereafter.

Othman Ibn `Affan – who was also from the elite – narrated:

I was walking with the Messenger of God in the desert when I saw Ammar, his father, and his mother while being tortured in the heat of the desert to abandon Islam. The father of Ammar (Yassir) said, 'O Messenger of God. Are we going to stay for ever in this situation?' He replied, 'Patience, O family of Yassir. O God forgive the family of Yassir. I know You did already!'

¹ When the Prophet, peace be upon him, saw the Archangel Gabriel the first time.

² Verse 17:65.

When the leaders of Quraish came to entertain themselves by watching the torture, (!) Abu Jahl was among them. He was so mad when Sumayah challenged him and showed much patience with all what she suffered from. He stabbed her with his arrow below her stomach and torn her uterus. She died instantly and became the first martyr in Islam.

Much later, God punished Abu Jahl, who was also called The Pharaoh, for his crime. It was at the battle of Badr when two Muslim teenagers surrounded him and kept poking him with their swords until he died! 'We have sent to you (O men!) a messenger, to be a witness concerning you, even as We sent a messenger to Pharaoh. But Pharaoh disobeyed the messenger; so We seized him with a heavy punishment.'¹

I have so much respect for the first believer in Islam, who was a woman, and the first martyr, who was also a woman!

¹ Verse 73:15, 16.

2.14. The eloquent saint

`A'ishah, the mother of the believers, had a great skill with Arabic literature and poetry. She would quickly make excellent quotes from poems or literature in different situations. I have never come across a woman like her in this area. When Ali Ibn Abu Talib died, she said a couple of eloquent verses implying that he is finally happy to meet his beloved ones who passed away before him. She meant the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his companions, who died before Ali, that Ali was always longing for them in his last days.

And when Abu Bakr, her father, was dying, she also quoted a couple of eloquent verses about death and how nothing prevents it. Abu Bakr instructed her that it is better to quote the *Qur'an* and recited the verses, 'And the stupor of death will come in truth; that is what you were trying to escape.'¹ She also said another eloquent poem when her brother Muhammad was killed in Egypt. She sent her brother Abdul-Rahman to bring Muhammad's children to Medina so she could raise them. She did a good job with them until they grew up. Then, she told her brother Abdul-Rahman one day, 'I raised those children and thought that I would be kinder and more patient with them than you. Now they are grownups. So, take them and be like how Hujayyah Ibn Al-Mudrab was for the children of his brother Ma'dan.'

The story that `A'ishah refers to here is an interesting story. After Ma'dan passed away, his brother Hujayyah raised Ma'dan's children. One day, Hujayyah saw his maid giving them a few sips of milk in a broken cup, as his wife ordered! He was so angry at his wife because of her ill-treatment to his orphan nephews and he took the following decisions: His nephews will milk the goats in their place before they are milked in his place and they will eat before anybody in his own household eats. Hujayyah's wife was upset and blamed him for his decisions. So, he answered her with an excellent poem that became famous. He explained to her how he is angry at her to the extent that he doesn't care about her blame, how his brother was always a support to him, and how his orphans cannot survive if they eat very little food in a broken cup, etc. `A'ishah, The Saint, was so eloquent in reminding her brother with this story in that particular situation.

`Urwa Ibn Al-Zubair said, 'I never saw a more knowledgeable person in medicine, Islamic Law, or poetry than `A'ishah!' Ibn Sa'd also mentioned in his history that she was the most knowledgeable among the companions and that the most senior among them would always ask her for her opinion. Abu Salamah said, 'I have never seen anyone more knowledgeable with the *Sunnah* of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, than `A'ishah. I have never seen more balanced and valid opinions than `A'ishah's opinions.'

She would give *Fatwa* in the days of Omar and Othman and until she died. And she was knowledgeable enough to correct several misconceptions that other companions had about several issues. People trusted her because of her wide knowledge of the *Qur'an*, the *Sunnah*, and the Arabic language.

¹ Verse 50:19.

Doesn't `A'ishah deserve to be an example for Muslim women in every place and time?
But some people tell Muslim women, 'Stay at home! No poetry and no literature either.
No work for the hereafter and no work for this life either.'(!!)

2.15. Women in the Arabic literature

After the recent decline of the Islamic religious thought, the level of intellect of Muslim women declined in a shameful way in the areas of literature (and science too). The old Dark Ages' traditions are back and sprouting in the Muslim land!

We even read Arabic lamentation poems said by some women before Islam that show a level of moral values that Muslim women today never reach, in general! The following are examples.

Umm Al-Sarih Al-Kindiyyah lamented some of her people who died in a battle by saying that there would be no blame on them if they run away, because the enemies' army was much larger. However, they preferred to die with honor! Al-Harith Ibn Hisham said in one of his poems that when he found himself fighting alone, he returned to his people with hope that one day he would punish his enemies. But Umm Al-Sarih did not wish to approve Al-Harith's political maneuvering and preferred that her people 'die with honor,' as she put it.

Another woman was lamenting her son whom she lost. He was trying to make a fortune when he died. She described poverty as destruction, which is true! However, in a later Islamic age, people considered poverty as an act of worship! This is a false act of worship that is even against human nature!

Safiyyah Al-Bahiliyah lamented her brother by mentioning all the good deeds they were competing to do together and how he is gone leaving her alone.

These were the values of women in the old days before Islam. Do we have similar values now? The answer is no.

2.16. Down with the liar

The whole Muslim family used to show interest in Islamic affairs, even political and military ones. This interest did not stop at the level of following up the news but went beyond that to the level of participation in wars! All members of the Muslim family used to participate in wars, including wives and mothers.

I will give just one example from the Apostasy Wars,¹ when Muslims fought against the followers of Musaylimah, the liar, who claimed to be a prophet!

Musaylimah was a strange person. Sometimes, the madness of arrogance might lead people to commit awful crimes. Nero burned Rome and Houlka destroyed Baghdad. But Musaylimah did his crimes in the name of Prophethood, which was really out of the ordinary. It would have been more appropriate if he has formed a desert gang and gained the reputation he was looking for through that!

Musaylimah claimed to be a prophet at the time of Muhammad, peace be upon him. He even sent Muhammad a message saying that he decided to divide earth between the two of them. The Prophet, peace be upon him, disregarded this joke and sent Habib Ibn Zaid to dialogue with him. Habib was a brave young man with a strong belief. Musaylimah asked him, 'Do you believe in Muhammad as a messenger from God?' Habib said, 'Yes.' Then, Musaylimah asked, 'Do you believe in me as a messenger from God?' Habib acted as if he is deaf and pointed to Musaylimah that he cannot hear him. Musaylimah repeated his question over and over and Habib is insisting on his sarcastic and silent answer. Musaylimah started to cut Habib's organs one by one while still asking the same question and Habib answering in the same way. Habib died while refusing falsehood and supporting the truth!

Nusaybah Bint Ka'b, Habib's mother, felt so bad when she knew the story. She made a vow that she will never take a shower until Musaylimah is killed. Nusaybah went out with her other son Abdullah to fight against Musaylimah's army in Al-Yamamah battle. She participated in the fight and was wounded twelve times! In the same day, she also lost her hand in the vicious fighting. At the end of that day, Musaylimah was killed, the truth was victorious, and Nusaybah returned after fulfilling her vow!

Did anybody order Nusaybah not to fight with the Muslim army? Of course not. She already fought with the Prophet's army in the Battle of Uhud and Hunain. She also gave the Prophet the all-famous vow under the tree to die in the sake of God and witnessed the Conquer of Mecca.

I know for fact that many contemporary 'scholars' would have ordered Nusaybah to stay home if they saw her on her way to the fight! Their argument would be that 'it is not lawful for women to fight!' Those false scholars remind me of the lowest point in our

¹ The whole Arabic peninsula embraced Islam towards the end of the Prophet's life. Then, after his death, most Arabs refused to pay the obligatory charity through the government of Abu Bakr, the Prophet's successor, and decided to fight together against the Islamic State in Medina. Muslim armies used Medina as a base and fought in all directions until they defeated all Arab armies and stopped their aggression. These fights, which lasted for about two years, were called the Apostasy Wars.

Islamic history. This kind of thinking simply did not exist in the early days of our Islamic history and cannot exist in any mature society.

2.17. The tradition of 'being worthy of praise'

A very respected and rich family went through several financial problems and eventually became poor! An undignified, but rich, man tried to use the situation and proposed to a girl from this family with an offer of money. The girl's father felt insulted and wondered, 'Does this temporary misfortune that we have validate this man's proposal while he is not good for my daughter!'

That is why he rejected the man's proposal in a rough way. He told him, 'Are you seeking to be honored by marrying our daughter who is way more honorable than you? Go away. There are so many families, other than ours, that might agree to you! But I would never sell my daughter to an undignified man just because I became poor!' He even quoted a poem that shows how their family is 'worthy of praise.'

I like two things about this story. First, although the father was in bad need of money, he was constantly patient. Second, he honored his daughter and the dignity of his family and refused that proposal from the rich person despite of his need of the money. Both moral values show a dignified man who respects himself and his family. The other details of the story are irrelevant.

The Arabic society is governed by certain traditions, some good and some evil. The high considerations that Arabs give to the family from whom they, or their relatives, marry have their advantages. However, sometimes these traditions cause the Arabs to become proud and arrogant about their own families.

*Ustaz Ahmad Moussa Salim*¹ says:

The tradition of 'being worthy of praise' was very strong among Arabs. That is why Muhammad (literally, the praised one), peace be upon him, was the most of them in being worthy of praise. His ancestry was the most honored, as he himself said.

Al-Khansa', the famous poet and companion, said that she does more and more good deeds and considers people's praise to her to be her treasure. Umm Hatim Al-Ta'i felt so hungry one day, so she made an oath that she would never see any hungry person unless she gives him/her all what he/she asks for! She kept telling people so eloquently that this generosity is her nature and nothing that she forces herself to do. Jam'ah Bint Al-Akhnas, the wise woman, urged people to always say the truth and fulfill the promises so they, again, 'deserve to be praised.'

I endorse what *Ustaz Salim*, the prominent writer, said about 'being worthy of praise' with one reservation. It is true that Islam asks us to do good deeds. However, Islam made sincerity a condition for the good deed to be accepted and be of benefit to its doer in the hereafter. So, we have to be sincere to God, glory be to Him, so that He would give us the good reward of this life and the afterlife. It is forbidden in Islam to do a good

¹ An Egyptian writer.

deed only to attain people's praise and respect. Arabs in general like to be famous and praised and this might actually destroy the heavenly rewards of good deeds.

In any case, women before Islam and in Islam's early days deserved to be 'worthy of praise.' They never suffered from the obstacles that Muslim women suffered from in the later ages. In the early days of Islam, a Muslim woman from the Kharijite Sect led an army that defeated Al-Hajjaj himself¹ and surrounded his palace.

However, in the later days of declination, Muslim women knew nothing about anything outside their homes! And when western civilization proved its superiority, Muslim women only imitated western women in how they dressed according to the latest fashion! They never imitated them in conquering outer space, discovering atomic energy, excelling in studying psychology, or traveling all over the world. Muslim women were told that these things are none of their business and have nothing to do with their mission in life. This is totally false because Islam does not differentiate between men and women when it comes to doing good deeds. All Muslims are equal in terms of belief, acts of worship, morals, science, work, and diligence. Just because men in general are more muscular than women does not make them better, and just because women in general are more sensitive than men does not make them better either.

The *Qur'an* says, 'If any do deeds of righteousness, - be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.'²

In the world of sports today, men's competitions are different from women's and the distances and records are evaluated differently. It might be right to do that in sports but it is definitely wrong in the area of good deeds and working for the hereafter. A diligent woman can reach higher ranks than any man on earth and if she deviates, nothing will benefit her even if she is a prophet's wife! The wife of the Pharaoh was better than him, Mary was better than most men, and Noah and Lot were both better than their wives.

Once a man told me that Qur'an prefers males to females and he quoted the verse that says, 'the male is not as the female.'³ This is a crooked understanding of the verse. What he mentioned is part of a verse that talks about the wife of 'Imran. She was pregnant and wished for a baby boy who would eventually be dedicated to serve the temple and lead the prayers there. So, when she found out that she got a baby girl, she said this phrase because she thought that her girl would not be able to be at that leadership position in that temple. But she then realized that it is the will of God and she prayed for her girl and the girl's offspring to be protected and nurtured. God answered the prayer and made that girl, Mariam, Jesus' mother, higher in rank than billions of people. He, Glory be to Him, also made the girl's son one of the prime prophets to humanity.

¹ Al-Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf Al-Thaqafi. A Governor of Iraq in the early days of the Umayyad State who was famous for his brutality.

² Verse 4:124.

³ Verse 3:36. The whole verse is, 'Behold! a woman of 'Imran said: 'O my Lord! I do dedicate unto You what is in my womb for your special service: So accept this of me: For You hear and know all things.' When she was delivered, she said: 'O my Lord! Behold! I am delivered of a female child!' - and God knew best what she brought forth- 'And the male is not as the female. I have named her Mary, and I commend her and her offspring to your protection from the Evil One, the Rejected.'

There is no doubt that there are things that men in general do better and there are other things that women in general do better. But these 'areas of specialization' have nothing to do with the general just rules of equality that God ordained.

Chapter 3. Let us start with our homes

1. Marriage is an act of worship.
2. 'Choose for your seeds.'
3. Necessary conditions for the marriage.
4. Marriage is a mean and not an end.
5. The only avenue for a man and a woman.
6. The reward of supporting one's family.
7. Do not underestimate the mother's job.
8. The woman who lost her husband.
9. Honor is holy!
10. Homes are built on love.
11. The sacrifices of men and women.
12. Where is the home's role?
13. Parents in our days.
14. Kindness to relatives is part of our belief.
15. Good deeds not numbers.
16. The disfigurement that we suffer from.
17. Religion between Thatcher and Muslims.
18. AIDS and the gays' freedom!
19. The crisis of toxicants.

3.1. Marriage is an act of worship

The continuity of life through generations is an Islamic higher objective by itself. It is one reason behind Islam's encouragement of people to get married and become parents and grandparents. 'And God has given you wives of your own kind, and has given you, from your wives, sons and grandsons, and has made provision of good things for you.'¹

That is why Islam rejected Monasticism because the stream of life stops at the monastic man or women and, if everybody does that, human race will disappear! If everybody starts to consider Monasticism an 'act of worship,' humanity will be committing suicide!

Therefore, it should be no surprise that Islam made marriage an 'act of worship' and even made sex, within marriage, a rewarded good deed. One *hadith* says, 'If you want to meet God pure and purified, marry a good woman.' Another *hadith* says, 'Four deeds, if you have them, then you have attained the good of this worldly life and the hereafter: A thankful heart (to God), a mentioning tongue (that mentions God), a body that is durable to calamities, and a wife that commits no sin with neither her body nor her husband's money.' The durable body is the healthy body that is capable of carrying burdens and responsibilities, which is all about 'manhood.'

But there is a question that we have to reflect upon deeply: On what basis should one marry someone?

First, you have to know that marriage is not only a sexual relation that produces offspring. The Muslim family is founded to produce not only children but morals as well! This would result in the growth of both families and belief, on equal basis. So, the objective behind marriage is not only to produce other people who only eat and drink well and enjoy their lives. The objective is also to raise generations that carry the mission behind our existence on this earth. Both parents should cooperate in raising their children with strong minds, souls and moral behaviors and goals.

Consider, for example, what Ibrahim, the Father of the Prophets, said after he got the children he wanted, 'Praise be to God Who has given me, in my old age, Ishmael and Isaac! Lo! my Lord is indeed the Hearer of Prayer. My Lord! Make me to establish proper worship, and some of my posterity (also); our Lord! and accept my prayer.'² So, he wanted children who 'pray to God.'

It is a shame not to care whether your children are believers or atheists! There are nations who live on this earth who, simply, do not care about what their children believe in! The only thing that they care about is to increase their national income, even if they all go to hellfire afterwards! We, Muslims, disapprove this way of thinking and consider these people to be totally ignorant, even if they live a 'civilized' life.

¹ Verse 16:72.

² Verse 14:39,40.

'The servants of the Beneficent' say, 'O our Lord! grant us in our wives and our offspring the joy of our eyes, and make us leaders to the righteous.'¹ The eyes that always turn from one partner to the next, over and over, are cheating eyes that lead to loss! The husband and wife should be the joy of each other's eyes and continue like that. That is how they could, then, cooperate in raising believer children and plan for their family's future. Those happy couples also seek to be 'leaders to the righteous,' as the verse says. The ways of doing good deeds are numerous but a hard-working Muslim should seek the best of deeds that lead to the highest of ranks, which is this rank of the 'leaders for the righteous.' Seeking the highest of ranks is a sign of deep belief and God loves those who seek the highest rank of paradise. So, it takes a big effort to build a happy Muslim home but paradise is the reward.

¹ Verse 25:74.

3.2. 'Choose for your seeds'

Inheritance is a scientific fact. However, it is a puzzling phenomenon because we have no certain knowledge about how characteristics pass directly through the genes, show after one generation, show after many generations, or even disappear forever.

The interaction between one's characteristics and the environment adds one more degree of complication. Some environments enforce, and some environments hinder, certain characteristics. In other words, some characteristics happen to find certain circumstances that nurture them and some others happen to find circumstances that suppress them. All of this occurs according to a destiny that we cannot control! All what we have to do is to follow the Islamic rulings and be sure that we succeed in this life and the after life.

An Islamic ruling that one has to follow is to choose a good spouse that can be an ideal parent in the family that one is intending to build. Marriage is not only a physical relationship that makes people feel good. It is a much higher relationship.

There are *hadith* that encourage men to choose good wives. For example, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'Beware of the beautiful girl who is raised in a bad environment!' He also said, 'Choose for your seeds. Blood conveys characteristics.' Even if some scholars label these *hadith* 'unauthentic,' the authentic *hadith* that says, 'People are like metals,' supports the meaning. People are like metals in the sense that they could be useful, useless, smooth, and rough! Therefore, a man or woman who seeks a spouse should look for the purest partner.

It is natural that we, humans, love irresistible beauty, substantial wealth, and prominent families. I am not asking young men and women to totally ignore these factors. However, if they wish to consider these factors, they should come in a secondary position, after piety and good morals, which should come first. If there is neither piety nor good morals, there should be no motivation to go on with the marriage.

I was watching 'The World of Seas' TV program. I saw a colored fish with wonderful patterns on its skin. Then, the expert said that all parts of this fish are poisonous! I wondered, 'Marvelous looks and dangerous impact!' There are so many people who are like that. God said about them, 'And of mankind there is he whose conversation on the life of this world pleases you (Muhammad), and he calls God to witness as to that which is in his heart; yet he is the most rigid of opponents.'¹

I advice a Muslim who is considering marriage not to be concerned about looks only and to search for a pure heart! If you do not know how to perceive what is in the hearts, I would advice you to study his/her family. In most cases, the child inherits the mother and/or the father's traits.

Othman Ibn Abu Al-`Ass Al-Thaqafi wrote in his will an advice for his sons to choose good girls for marriage. He said, 'O my son! You are planting a seed. So, study the land

¹ Verse 2:204.

where you plant your seed. A bad selection will, most probably, lead to disasters. So, take your time until you find a good selection.'

One of Omar Ibn Al-Khattab's sons asked him, 'What is the child's right over his/her father?' He answered, 'To select his/her mother well, to name him/her a good name, and to teach him/her Qur'an.'

A good selection results in a happy marriage life, which is what every believer yearns for. A believer cannot live lonely. 'The servants of the Beneficent' say, 'O our Lord! grant us in our wives and our offspring the joy of our eyes, and make us leaders to the righteous.'¹ `A'ishah said, 'Choose for your seed and marry the one who matches you.'

¹ Verse 25:74.

3.3. Necessary conditions for the marriage

To ensure a pure and pious offspring, Islam puts some mandatory conditions for marriage. It is not lawful for a Muslim to marry an atheist, who does not believe in God or the hereafter. It is also not lawful to marry somebody who worships several gods; idols, for example.

If a Muslim man marries a woman who has no religion, he is putting his children in danger because she is under no obligation to abide by the Islamic rulings. Moreover, the difference between chastity and permissiveness might not be clear enough in her mind!

A poor, but true, Muslim young lady is better than a pagan princess and an average and humble Muslim young man is better than an atheist professor. We, Muslims, should seek a spouse who would teach our children piety, good morals, prayers, and indifference towards evil desires. That is why God said, 'Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), until they believe: A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe: A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he allures you. Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the Fire. But God beckons by His Grace to the Garden and forgiveness.'¹

Now what about non-Muslim European and American women? Most of them claim to be true Christians! I wish it were true, but it is not! Many of them are drowning in sins and the idea of accountability to a God never crosses their minds! Fornication is so common that it is very rare to find an unmarried woman who is virgin! I don't think that history has ever witnessed a civilization that was indulged in sinful lusts on the scale that is happening now! It is impossible to raise good Muslim children if a Muslim marries one of those ill-behaved and lost women. 'Women impure are for men impure, and men impure for women impure and women of purity are for men of purity, and men of purity are for women of purity: these are not affected by what people say: for them there is forgiveness and a provision honorable.'²

It is true, however, that Islam allows Muslim men to marry women of the 'People of the Book.' But we have to realize that those are very rare and difficult to find. So, if a Muslim finds a chaste woman who believes in One God, then marriage could be a way for her to, eventually, know Islam and embrace it, if she wishes so. But, in any case, a Muslim husband has to make sure that his children grow as practicing Muslims.

What happens in most real cases is a totally different scenario. The Muslim man, often, loses his children and himself too! Marriage to non-Muslim women usually ends up in a disaster and the 'modern' culture drowns everybody with its irresistible flood.

¹ Verse 2:221.

² Verse 24:26.

3.4. Marriage is a mean and not an end

The main role that a Muslim home plays is to protect its members' belief, dedication to worship, good morals, and high principals! The two parents are partners in this process but the mother's role is crucial and burdensome. A man looking to get married should realize that. A man would be a silly lust-oriented person if his only goal from marriage were physical pleasure.

Some people live to eat and some others –and those are obviously more honorable– eat to live! I know how strong one's physical desires might get! It is advantageous to fulfill these desires. However, it is a fact that the children, who result from this expression, require excellent care and education. Otherwise, those children will be an easy prey for the enemies of Islam. It is most important to build a generation that is smart, pure, active, strong, independent, and pious.

The first step in building this generation is to choose good parents for those children, who come from pious families. Those parents will likely raise good children. 'From the land that is clean and good, by the will of its Cherisher, springs up produce, (rich) after its kind: but from the land that is bad, springs up nothing but that which is niggardly.'¹

It is well known, since ages go, that good families are expected to bring good children. That is why people were amazed when Mary was pregnant without marriage. They said, 'O sister of Haroun! your father was not a bad man, nor, was your mother an unchaste woman.'² They could not believe that this is a miracle until the baby spoke miraculously, 'He said: Surely I am a servant of God; He has given me the Book and made me a prophet.'³

One *hadith* said, 'A man proposes to a woman based on four criteria; her wealth, her lineage, her beauty, and her religion. So, win the one with the religion so that you gain the good.'

People today search for wealthy and beautiful brides, especially if she is an actress or a model, etc. There is no value for a woman whom every man could touch and there is no value for a home that is built for this woman. Marriage is a mean and not an end! It is a mean for the human race to extend not just a way of fulfilling lusts. An average house that a pious woman builds with you is much happier and more guided than a luxurious house that a mean woman resides in with you. That is why the honorable Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'The world is a group of earnings but the best thing you can ever earn is a pious woman.' He gave more details in another *hadith*, 'The best thing that a believer earn after piety is a pious woman; if he asks her, she answers him, if he looks at her, she pleases him, and if he is away, she takes care of herself and his money.' How can this wife exist without being raised with care and dedication? Can such a woman exist in an ignorant and backward environment that forbids her from education?

¹ Verse 7:58.

² Verse 18:28.

³ Verse 19:30.

3.5. The only avenue for a man and a woman

In Islam, there is only one way of expressing sexual desires, which is through marriage. Sex outside marriage is forbidden and abhorred by all religions that God revealed. The *Qur'an* clearly states, 'Who abstain from sex, except with those joined to them in the marriage bond.'¹

A marriage-home is the only place where a man and a woman can meet intimately. Any other form is a sinful aggression against the limits set by God. There is no difference in opinions about that among Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. The permissiveness that is happening in nowadays world is unacceptable according to all religions.

I noticed that some priests are so cold towards the flood of sins that attacked the world. Some of them, even, contributed to the process of legalizing sins! This is no surprise. Some people in the ancient days deviated from the very fundamentals of belief!

The family is the only avenue for a man and woman. That is why it is a good deed to build a family and nurture it. It is a form of religious struggle (*jihad*) to combat any illness that endangers the family in order to protect its outcome, the children.

In today's world, however, criminals replaced the family with two sinful alternatives, adultery and 'alternative lifestyles.' Both practices are considered 'legal' according to the modern laws, under all circumstances except in cases of rape. Immoral dancing and all other ways of seduction are practiced and also totally legalized.

I was surprised when I read that some of those who are struggling against AIDS are struggling so that people 'become free to have any sexual style they like,' they said! This 'struggle' would never be blessed. Those who do medical research just to give sinners more freedom to sin are just as sinful as the sinners themselves!

Physicians have a consensus that protection is better than treatment. Therefore, the best way to avoid sexually transmitted diseases is to restrict oneself to lawful relationships. However, I am not aware of any scientist, teacher, or media station that is calling on people to return to lawful and healthy relationships!!

I always hoped that every country on this earth form a 'Ministry of Family' to supervise building families and protect them from all dangers.

A British official said that Britain decided to spend one billion pounds in the next year to account for sexually transmitted diseases carriers, support medical research on these diseases, and protect the British citizens from them. I commented, 'Sins are so dangerous and costly while lawful actions are safe and affordable! Straight relationships do not cost that much. Unfortunately, many people do not want to be straight!'

¹ Verse 23:5, 6.

3.6. The reward of supporting one's family

When a man fulfills his duty of supporting for his family, God rewards him in multiples! I was very surprised when I learned the Islamic rulings in this area.

I was asked a question: If I have some money, what is the best way to spend it: give it to those who fight for the sake of God, give it to the poor, or pay for my family's needs? To answer this question, let us consider the following narrations.

Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'You spent one Dinar for the fight for the sake of God, one Dinar to liberate a slave, one Dinar to a poor person, and one Dinar to support your family. The most rewarded Dinar is the one that you spent on your family.'

Thawban, the Prophet's servant, narrated that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'The most rewarded expenditure is what a man spends to support his family, on his horse that he uses to fight in the way of God, and on his friends for the sake of God.' The narrator commented, 'Notice that the Prophet started with the family.'

Sa'd Ibn Abu Waqqas narrated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'Everything you spend for the sake of God gets you a reward, even when you feed your wife with your hand.'

Abu Mas'ud Al-Badri narrated that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'If a man supports his family with the intention to get a reward from God, he will be rewarded the reward of charity.'

Al-Miqdad Ibn Ma'd Yakrib narrated that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'When you feed yourself, it is a charity. When you feed your children, it is a charity. When you feed your wife, it is a charity. When you feed your servant, it is a charity.'

There are many similar *hadith*. The above are just a few examples.

The above narrations are very interesting. Before I knew them, I was always thinking that what I spend to support my family is just 'necessary expenditures.' However, I never imagined that this money I spend would be put in my scale of good deeds in the hereafter! And when I learned that supporting one's family is even better than supporting fighters for the sake of God and liberating slaves, I wondered why? After some reflection, I realized that the Muslim home is the place where belief and morals are built. Therefore, the money that supports this place must be blessed. I realized that supporting my family is the best 'investment' I can ever think about!

It is a permanent part of the Muslim way of life that an honorable man must work hard to earn money and support his children until they grow up and be financially independent. Muslim men consider this an Islamic obligation that they must fulfill, regardless of the required time and effort.

Now, modern civilization preaches a culture that allows a man to tell his children, boys and girls, when they reach maturity; 'You are on your own!' Some men in this modern world even find it too much to feed their wives!

Strong families that follow the good traditions result in a strong society that God blesses! This was how our Muslim nation was and this is how it should remain.

On the other hand, the supporter of the family should be appreciated and reassured by his wife. She should always be a source of support and joy, in words and actions. The wife who is not appreciative to her husband and is always ignoring him is pushing him towards disliking her and detaching himself from her. There is a *hadith* that says, 'God does not bestow His mercy on a woman who does not appreciate her husband although she can never do without him!'

The Prophet, peace be upon him asked a woman who came to visit him, 'Do you have a husband?' She said, 'Yes.' He said, 'How do you treat him?' She said, 'I do everything he wants except what I am not able to do!' The Prophet, peace be upon him, told her this wise and short advice, 'Take care of him. He is either your paradise or your hellfire!' In another *hadith*, he said, 'A woman is not fulfilling God obligations until she fulfills her husband's obligations.'

I read another interesting *hadith*, which Mu`az narrated, that is talking about some women who beat their husbands!! One of them was trying to prove her authority at home by force! I was smiling when I read the Prophet's advice to her, 'A woman who believes in God is not allowed to invite guests that her husband hates! She is not allowed to go to some place if he does not like it! She is not allowed to consider her relatives or friends and ignore him! She is not allowed to forsake his bed! She is not allowed to beat him up! ...' (!!) I stopped here and wondered, 'How dare this woman beat her husband up! Was this a man! Or maybe she was a musclem!' Then, I continued reading the *hadith*. 'Even if she thinks that he is wrong, she should try to approach him in a friendly way. If he becomes friendly, then how beautiful! God will reward her and prove to him that her argument is true. If he insists not to be pleased, then she should know that God knows that she has no blame.'

It is impossible that a home never faces problems. But good morals and friendly dealings guarantee that problems will eventually be solved! There is a very true Arabic poem that says that problems on earth are never because there is not enough space for everybody, but they are because there is not enough patience for everybody! This applies to men and women. I also concluded from experience that the couples who fail to solve their problems pass down complexes to their children and cause them major troubles in their future.

How wonderful to build the marital relationship on mutual love and respect! This has an excellent effect on the children and protects the family and its mission.

I will quote one *hadith* that some scholars mention on the same topic. However, it requires an explanation. Mu`az Ibn Jabal returned from a visit to Syria and visited the Prophet, peace be upon him. The Prophet was startled to see Mu`az prostrating to him when he came in! He told him, 'What is this?' Mu`az said, 'I was in Syria and saw people prostrating to their monks. So, I wanted to do the same with you!'

I myself saw some people 'prostrating' to their kings. It is not a full prostration, like what we do in prayers, but it is a bowing that is similar to our bowing in prayers. It is still practiced in some countries like Japan and Middle Africa. Arabs do not know this type of greeting and when Mu`az tried to make it a tradition in Medina; the Prophet showed him that it is unacceptable in Islam. He said, according to some narrations, 'Do not do that. If I am to order anybody to bow to anybody, I would order a wife to bow to her husband.' It is clear that the Prophet, peace be upon him, is implying that he is not and will not order anybody to bow or prostrate to anybody, including women to their husbands. The rest of the *hadith* says, 'I make an oath by The One who holds my soul that a woman is not considered fulfilling to her duties towards God until she fulfills her duties towards her husband.'

My comment is that the husband and wife are equal human beings, in terms of rights and obligations. But if the man is truly beloved by his wife, she will treat him like a king! And if a man wants to be treated like a king, he should show true dedication, sincerity and love!

3.7. Do not underestimate the mother's job

Can the daycare replace a family-home and a loving mother? Of course not. I do not approve daycares except for an emergency. An emergency, by definition, lasts for a short period of time until normal life resumes.

When Islam made it an obligation for the man to fully support his family, it was actually giving women a compensation for dedicating all their time to their husbands and families. This is, naturally, a mission in a woman's life.

Those who belittle the 'mother' job do not realize how serious this job is and how significant of an impact it has on the present and the future of nations, morally and socially. The duties of this job are actually equivalent to the duties of any professional job that the husband might have. *Shari`ah* is recommending for each gender the job they can do the best.

This does not mean, of course, that women who have certain talents are not allowed to develop their talents the way they wish. It was narrated that Safiyah Bint Abdul-Muttalib left the bastion; where the Muslim women were hiding in one of the battles, and climbed down to kill a spy from the Jewish tribe that they were fighting. She was worried that this man might lead other soldiers to the bastion. Does this mean that all Muslim women must serve in the army because of this narration? Of course not. There is a general rule that says that the two genders have different roles according to how God created them.

There is no doubt that the physical and psychological structure of women is different from that of men. A woman's body is created in a way that fits being a mother and her psychology is created in a way that fits being a caregiver to her household. In general terms, the organs, muscles, bones, and many of her biological functions are different from those of a man.

These differences are not created in vain. Nothing in this universe is created in vain or without wisdom. The man's body, in general, is structured in a way that enables him to strive and struggle all day. The woman's role that a man cannot play, which is most vital, is pregnancy, labor, nurturing the children, and preparing a peaceful home for her fatigued man at the end of his day.

Ustaz`Abbas Mahmoud Al-`Aqqad,¹ God bless his soul, wrote:

It is natural that women have a different psychological structure from men. Nurturing a baby is not only about breastfeeding. It is a continuous care and reaction to every emotion that the baby feels. This requires emotional and reasoning coherence between the baby and his/her mother. There is something that people frequently notice about women in every stage of their lives. A woman would, sometimes, act like a child, in the way she likes or dislikes, in her need to be spoiled or unspoiled, and in her love to be taken care of closely, even from a man her age or her children's age. These are feelings that women can neither

¹ A renowned Arabic writer.

pretend nor give up. These are feelings that women need to be able to understand and take care of their babies.

There is no doubt that women's caring nature is essential for nurturing and raising children. Women, in general, are emotional and sensitive while men, in general, are more rational and strong willed. This is an obvious difference.

I will quote some specialists from the World Health Organization (WHO):

Women play many roles in life; the most central among them is motherhood and raising children. That is why a woman is the source of all factors of development and construction in the society. The better she is as a mother the better the whole nation is.

But this role requires a lot of effort and pain, even more than other female creatures. Other female creatures have certain timing every year to be ready for fertilization. Women, however, are ready for fertilization every month, from maturity until they reach menopause. They have to put a lot of effort every time they get pregnant, give birth, and nurture their babies.

The woman's monthly period, in case she is not pregnant, might cause the following complications.

- Most women have some pain in the lower parts of their back and stomach.
- Some women have depressive tendencies during their period, especially at the start of it.
- Some women have partial headaches before the start of the period. Vomiting and blurred vision accompany this headache, sometimes.
- The activity of the woman's glands decreases to a minimum level during her period ...

Shari`ah actually considered all of these factors when it exempted women from prayers and fasting during their periods (however, they make up for the obligatory fasting at a later time). If God has exempted women from some Islamic obligations during their periods, how can the society overburden them by expecting a constant level of production?

3.8. The woman who lost her husband

Raising children is a burden that a husband and wife carry together. The children who are raised by both parents are actually fortunate, especially if the parents are kind and responsible.

However, life does not always bring good news! Tests and calamities are natural parts of this life. Sometimes, the loving father passes away, the mother becomes a widow, and the children become orphans! In this case, if the mother takes care of her children, she is raised to the highest ranks! Abu Dawud narrated after `Awf Ibn Malik that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'The woman with a pale face will be close to me in paradise as those (and he stuck his middle finger to his forefinger). She is a beautiful widow from a prominent family but she dedicated herself to her children until some grew up and some died.'

The beautiful widow, similar to the one mentioned in the *hadith*, who is too busy to take care of herself, until her face turns pale, because she is raising up her children by herself, is a very respected woman. However, are all women expected to make this kind of sacrifice?

The answer is no. Many factors decide what a widow should do, for example, her age, her financial situation, the children's ages, and also how established, religiously and socially, is the man who is proposing to her, if any! She will certainly be better off if she can find a close relative, for example, or a very pious man who will treat the children in the best manner! Therefore, I prefer not to put general rules, leave the decision to the widow herself, and trust that she will choose what she thinks is best for her and her children's future.

In the battle of Mo'tah, Ja'far the flyer,¹ became a martyr, at the age of thirty, and left behind his wife and children. Later, she married Abu Bakr. It was a very correct decision because Abu Bakr raised her children in the best manner.

History narrates that `Atikah Bint Zaid was a beautiful and cultured female companion. When her husband, Abdullah Ibn Abu Bakr was killed, she married Omar Ibn Al-Khattab. When Omar was killed, she married Al-Zubair Ibn Al-`Awwam. When Al-Zubair was killed in the Valley of Beasts in the Big Fitnah Battles,² she married Al-Hussein Ibn Ali. When Al-Hussein was killed in Karbala', she was the first to carry him. Then, she married no one after him. As a humor, Abdullah Ibn Omar used to say, 'Whoever wants to be a martyr should marry `Atikah Bint Zaid.'

All of `Atikah's husbands were killed and, of course, she has no blame. It was all destined. She said a famous poem after her first husband, Abdullah Ibn Abu Bakr, passed away, in which she mentions that she will remain sad for the rest of her life. I

¹ Ja'far was named 'the flyer' because he lost both of his arms in the battle before he died, so the Prophet, peace be upon him, said that God has given him, in compensation for his arms, two wings by which he flies in paradise.

² The fights between Ali and Mu'awiyah.

certainly think that she was truthful about her feelings that she expressed in her poem. However, life had to go on!

The above examples clearly show that Islam never puts obstacles in the way of people's natural needs. Muslims nowadays have traditions that, contrary to the above examples, forbid a widow from remarrying! The problem is that some Muslims make these traditions rule over Islam itself!!!

3.9. Honor is holy!

Sins that some ancient People of the Book committed are penetrating our Muslim society and deviating it from the straight path! Some of these sins are related to men-women relationships and some are related to displaying women's charms.¹

The display I am talking about here is different from 'beautification.' Beautification is to take care of the natural brightness of your body and clear out what harms it or makes it look ugly. There is no problem in beautification. In fact, it is recommended in Islam. What is forbidden is to display the woman's ornaments in a way that is meant to particularly provoke men's sexual desires. This is more abhorred if the woman is visiting the mosque and therefore, spoiling the pure atmosphere of worship. Mosques are not made for sexual attraction. A woman who commits this sin in a mosque should be asked to go home!

The women of the Children of Israel did commit these sins in their ancient days. That is why Islam warned Muslim women from following their footsteps and asked them to visit mosques without any ornaments.

Islam is adamant about purifying men-women relationships in markets, mosques, streets and homes. Islam ensures that men and women's intentions are pure when they meet in public. Islam not only bans sex-outside-marriage but acts to cut it at the roots as well.

Some men are always desirous and always like to have what they do not have a right to have. In order to feed their hunger, they keep looking for attractive women and continue falling into shame. Lowering one's gaze is a high moral and a protection from falling into sins. The whole society should remember the limits that God had put and guard those limits smartly. Therefore, facilitating marriage should be a top priority for the Muslim society because marriage is the strong guard that will protect and nurture individuals.

Arabs call the wife 'a holy site.'² It is a name that shows that they regard their wives' honor as something holy that has to be protected even if it costs them their lives.

However, a 'Harem,' which comes from the same root, is something different. It is referring to a wealthy man who would, somehow, gather a number of women and put them in a protected area for his own pleasures! If another man tries to approach this area, he might lose his life! You can read more about this hilarious style of life in the ancient myths and some historical accounts of some Muslim rulers, who should have been removed long ago!

In my opinion, the Children of Israel are the first people who drew that miserable image of 'human beings.' According to them, it is claimed in the Old Testament that Solomon had three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines, which means that he accumulated one thousand women in his palaces, again according to them! I cannot understand what would a man do with this army of women and how can he ever get to

¹ Arabic: *Al-Tabarruj*. When the woman makes a public dazzling display of her beauty.

² Arabic: *Haram*.

know them all! They said that he was not a prophet and that he was a king! Although this is a lie, the question is how can any man in this world sleep regularly with one thousand women? Human sexual abilities have certain limits that everybody knows. When you are hungry of fasting, you think that you will eat so much when you break your fast. The reality is that you become full quicker than you think. These 'Biblical' stories and other similar ones are just illusions that were authored by impotent men!

There is a word of truth that has to be mentioned here. Those whom people used to call maids or concubines are usually honored freewomen who were kidnapped at some point in their lives. Human history recorded long and dark ages when gangs used to attack villages and cities, kidnap helpless girls, and sell them as maids! This used to happen in Arabia in the Dark Ages (before Islam). In some cases, very honorable girls were kidnapped and sold!

It was narrated that `Urwah Ibn Al-Ward, who was known as 'an Arabic brave and generous thief' (!), attacked the tribe of Ghifar and kidnapped a girl by the name Salma. Later, he married her and had children with her. Salma, however, was always feeling humiliated because she was kidnapped and, eventually, she escaped back to her tribe and lived with them. `Urwah followed her to tell her that he loved her and wanted her to return to their children. Salma told him a few statements that were full of wisdom and dignity. She said, 'O `Urwah! I will say the truth even though I ran away from you. By God, I have never known any woman who had a husband better than you! No one is more polite, less evil, more generous, or more guarding to the truth than you! However, I was wishing to die every day when I was living in your home because I would always hear your people calling me your 'maid'! By God! I do not want to see their faces after today! Return to your people and be good to your children.'

How can Salma be considered a 'maid' after she was an honorable and free woman. However, life was cruel with her and with many honorable men and women who were sold as slaves and maids. Then, some lustful animal-like men gathered tens or even hundreds of those maids and had them available in what they called Harems!

In today's world, Harem still remains, albeit in different forms! Animal-like men these days can sleep with one thousand women, if they wish so. However, those women are not gathered in big palaces, as the ancient sultans and kings used to do. They can be reached in prostitution shops, at the corners of some streets, and in dancing halls and parties. The current modern 'civilization' made all of this available. So, what was available only to kings is now available to street beggars at affordable prices! It is really sad that humanity declined to this degree.

The best relationship that a man and woman can have is marriage, which adds tranquility to physical pleasures and coherence of thoughts to emotions of love. Marriage also offers a pure source for strong future generations.

Islam gave so much attention to families and family life. However, there are lots of misunderstandings about family rulings among Muslims and even the rulings that were understood were applied out of context! I do not pay much attention to those who do not approve polygamy while approving sexual relations outside marriage without limits. They make so much noise about any religion that allows polygamy, even under special circumstances and for good reasons.

I think that when Muslims learn how to put their religious rulings into practice, they will give such a high example of human societies that others will admire. Non-Muslims will, then, hurry to copy the Islamic example, totally or partially.

3.10. Homes are built on love

There are three necessary conditions for every Muslim home to fulfill its mission. They are tranquility, love, and mercy. I mean by tranquility satisfaction. A husband should be totally satisfied by his wife and vice versa. Love is a mutual feeling that makes the relationship a happy and enjoyable one and mercy is the basis of all good traits in men and women. God, Glory be to Him, tells His Prophet, 'Thus it is due to mercy from God that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you.'¹ Mercy is not a temporary feeling of sympathy. It is rather a continuous flow of niceness, high morals, and honorable attitude.

A home that is based on stable tranquility, committed love, and kind mercy, makes marriage the best blessing on earth. This home will overcome all obstacles and will only produce good children! I have a feeling that most of the complications and problems that the children have are because of the dysfunctional relationship and the continuous conflicts between their parents!

A reader might ask: Are you saying that emotions are everything and that materialistic means are of no importance? My answer is no. There is a number of other factors that contribute to the success of a marriage, in addition to the above factors.

Sa'd Ibn Abu Waqqas narrated that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'Three things contribute to your happiness: (1) A wife whom you like and trust that she takes care of your money and keeps her devotion to you even when you are away, (2) a fast ride that enables you to catch up with your friends, (3) and a big house with many facilities. And three things contribute to your misery: (1) a wife that you feel bad about who always hurts you with her words, and when you are away you do not trust her to take care of herself or your money, (2) a lazy animal that you ride, which fatigues you if you push it and does not carry you if you do not push it, (3) and a tiny house with few facilities.'

It is natural that we do the things that make us happy and avoid the things that make us miserable. One *hadith* says, 'Do what benefits you, seek the help of God, and never feel helpless.' It is every Muslim's right to seek a big comfortable house that allows him/her to work and be productive. It is every Muslim's right, too, to hate inconvenient means of transportation, inadequate facilities, and a terrible companion!

Religion does not deny the natural human needs of comfort, satisfaction, and happiness. When a man or a woman seeks marriage, he/she should make sure that the things that he/she likes exist in the other partner. If marriage proves that the other partner is good, then how excellent this marriage is! Otherwise, the future of the couple is indefinite.

I noticed that some men in the proposing stage claim to have certain morals, for example, kindness or generosity, while they do not really have them! The shocking reality appears, of course, right after the consummation of the marriage! Some men

¹ Verse 3:159.

might even promise a certain dowry before the marriage and never fulfill what they promised. Islam warns from those sick people and considers them betrayers and cheaters. The *hadith* says, 'If a man marries a woman after promising her a certain dowry, whether small or big, never had the intention to pay her what he promised, and then died without paying, he will meet God in the hereafter as an adulterer. And if a man borrows some money without any intention to pay it back and then died without paying his debt, he will meet God in the hereafter as a thief.'

Marriage is not a passing adventure! It is a life relationship, a firm covenant, and a very serious partnership. What the husband or wife has promised before the marriage should be carried out to the letter after the marriage. Actually, paying the dowry is just an example of fulfilling promises. If a man, for example, promised to be kind or forgiving and portrayed himself in this manner before the marriage, then he has to remain kind and forgiving or at least do his best to attain those qualities after the marriage! God blesses those who are honest and makes their life everlastingly happy. A woman might, willingly, give up her dowry, totally or partially, when she finds out that her husband is a real good and moral person! Since she gave him herself, she wouldn't mind giving him her money.

Some men think that they have rights and no duties! They live in a shell of their selfishness and never think about what the other partner feels! A Muslim home, however, must be found on the following fair base, 'And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of responsibility) over them.'¹ As I said before, this degree is the responsibility of leadership that the man assumes over his family. Every organization has to have some leadership. It is obvious that a man's leadership does not, by any means, diminish his wife's opinions and needs, whether social or materialistic.

The social obligations of being a married person require certain characteristics. If these characteristics are absent from a certain person, it is better for him/her to remain single. This applies to both men and women. For example, if the woman is stiff, has no compassion whatsoever, and has no consideration to others' emotional needs, then it is better that she remains single because she will not be able to be a good wife and mother! Let us assume that her husband at some point gets a severe sickness and they could not find a hired nurse that is willing to take good care of him. In this case, his wife should be able to be more patient with him than anybody else, kindly takes care of him, and prays for him!

An interesting narration, which Abu Sa'id Al-Khudrei narrated, said that a man came with his daughter to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said, 'This is my daughter and she refuses to get married.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'Obey your father.' She said, 'By The One who sent you with the truth, I will not get married until you tell me the husband's rights that the wife has to fulfill.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, mentioned to her that if her husband, for example, had a wound that required that she sucks some blood out of it and she did that, then she would be only doing her duty! She said, 'By The One who sent you with the truth, I will never get married.' The Prophet told the father, 'Do not engage those girls except with their permission!'

¹ Verse 2:228.

This girl was honest to herself by avoiding an obligation that she thought is difficult to fulfill. No one can force her to marry if she does not want to. It also goes without say that a man has to take care of his wounded wife in a similar manner. The proof is what God Almighty said, which I mentioned before several times, 'And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them.'¹

We cannot fully understand that girl's attitude and how all these rights and obligations would work until we realize that homes have to be built on mutual love. God talked to men about their wives and said, 'They are your garments and you are their garments.'²

Love's logic is different from the logic of 'mutual benefits' in trade! So many men sacrificed their lives for their families and so many women did the same. Therefore, I would advice men the same advice I gave to women: If you are not capable of marriage, psychologically and financially (in case of men), then do not get married! The Messenger advised you that, 'fasting suppresses your physical desires!'

¹ Verse 2:228.

² Verse 2:187.

3.11. The sacrifices of men and women

A cowardly woman hinders her husband from fulfilling his Islamic obligations, facing danger, and overcoming obstacles! A greedy woman prevents her husband from giving charity, entertaining guests, and supporting the oppressed! These kinds of obstacles at home prevent the man from success and make him just a servant to his wife and children and their endless requests.

God ordered husbands to sacrifice for His sake, even if their wives pull them back and warned them from preferring laziness and peace at home over beliefs and principals. This is the meaning of the verse that says, 'O you who believe! Truly, among your wives and your children are some that are enemies to yourselves: so beware of them! But if you forgive and overlook, and cover up (their faults), verily God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'¹ These enemies do not 'fight' with the man but rather overwhelm him with endless requests that deter him from struggling or traveling for the sake of God.

I reflected upon the history of the early Muslims and realized how much all family members cooperated to serve Islam and its mission and how much husbands and wives cooperated in offering sacrifices.

Umm Salamah narrated a story about her and Abu Salamah, her husband at that time,² after they decided to migrate to Medina to join the Prophet, peace be upon him. She said:

He prepared my camel and helped me climb it with our son, Salamah, and we all headed out of Mecca. A group of men from my tribe followed us and stopped us. They told him, 'We gave up on changing your mind, but Umm Salamah is our relative and we will not let her wander in the desert with you.' They forced him to give up the belt of the camel and they took my son and me away. The leaders of Abu Salamah's tribe were upset. They came and said, 'By God, we will never leave our son with her.' They pulled the boy from my family until they almost dislocated his arm and they took him away. My husband went to Medina by himself. So, we ended up each of the three of us in a different place.

For almost a year after that, I would go out every morning to the borders of Mecca and cry till the evening. A cousin of mine saw me once and felt bad for me. He said to my family, 'Let this poor woman join her husband.' So, they agreed and allowed me to join my husband. I took my son back from his father's family, rode my camel, and we both went out of Mecca alone!

At Al-Tan'im (just outside Mecca), I met Othman Ibn Talhah, who asked me, 'Where are you going?' I said, while on my camel, 'To join my husband in Medina!' He asked, 'Is there anybody with you?' I said, 'God and my son.' He grabbed the belt of my camel saying, 'By God, I cannot leave you by yourself,' and started to guide our camel towards Medina. By God, I have never seen an

¹ Verse 64:14.

² She later married the Prophet, peace be upon him, and became one of the Mothers of the Believers.

Arab man who was more generous and kind than him. He would stop occasionally, walk away until I descend the camel, tie the camel to a tree, and then rest under another further tree. Then, when it is time to continue the trip, he would prepare the camel, walk away until my son and I go on the camel, and then continue to guide the camel towards Medina. He continued to do so until we reached Medina. When we approached Amr Ibn `Awf's village, he pointed towards it and said, 'Here is where Abu Salamah lives. So, enter the village, by the blessing of God.' He turned around and went all the way back to Mecca after he completed his wonderful mission.

So, the whole family gathered again in their new land after a period of grief. Abu Salamah continued his struggle for the sake of Islam until God destined that he be a martyr in the Battle of Uhud. Umm Salamah remained lonely until the Prophet, peace be upon him, showed appreciation to her struggle, married her, and honored her forever.

Islam was established through huge sacrifices. These sacrifices were carried out by brave Muslim families whose members, men and women, enjoined on each other truth and patience.

3.12. Where is the home's role?

The home has a deep effect in shaping the children's character as they grow up. I think that home is the first source of faith and language for the children. Specialists in psychology say that the two factors that shape the child's education and behavior are inheritance and the environment. They have different opinions about which of the two factors has a greater effect.

Arabs say that the father teaches his children how to live. But actually, the mother plays a major role in how her children grow, physically and intellectually. When Mary showed her people the baby she had without a husband, they said, 'O sister of Haroun! your father was not a bad man, nor, was your mother an unchaste woman.'¹ So, they referred to both her father and mother and their effect on her. I consider both father and mother responsible for giving full care to their children's present and future. A Muslim society can never be built without building proper Muslim homes first. Lack of children who are raised properly is a sign that we are losing our future as a nation.

Islam asked Muslims to pray their optional prayers at home so that the children get used to bowing and prostration to God! Islam also demanded that Muslims read *Qur'an* at home so that the spiritual feelings of revelation fill the place. There is a *hadith* that says, 'Pray some of your prayers at home and do not make them like graves.' He means that the home that people never pray in is like an abandoned grave. The Messenger of God said, 'The difference between the home where the name of God is mentioned and the home where the name of God is never mentioned is like the difference between a person who is alive and a dead person.' He also said, 'A man's prayer at home is light. So, enlighten your homes.'

Islam also orders us to teach the children in their early childhood how to pray and to get them used to high morals. Muslim specialists in education noticed that globalization forces are producing empty generations that have no principal and no objective. These generations only run after their physical desires, like animals, even though they have a bit of theoretical knowledge, which benefits nobody anyway. The majority of the third world nations are in this miserable category.

Ustaz Ahmad Moussa Salim complained that children in Muslim countries face the danger of losing their identity, character, and religion. He illustrated the fact that Muslim children have no knowledge about the good traditions in their societies, the history of their forefathers, the value of their mission, or the beauty of their language. He noticed that non-Arabic languages are dominating the Arab world. He added that the problem is bigger than just a language problem because all forms of media are only talking about the non-Muslim cultures and ways of life and never mention anything about a Muslim way of life!

Who is the role model that our children learn from, according to the Muslim media? Is he a soccer player shown as hailed by the masses as he kicks the ball! Or is she that type of actresses that they appear on TV today? The children who grow up thinking that those

¹ Verse 18:28.

are their role models will never achieve any success or gain any respect. It is impossible that our *Ummah* overcome its losses or backwardness through those children!

I think that the role that the Muslim home should play in raising the children should be carefully designed according to innovative scientific and intellectual standards. Otherwise, we will be declining fast!

If a child does not learn to be honest, loyal, trustworthy, and kind at home from his/her father and mother, where would he/she learn these values? Is the home's role to feed the children and nothing else! Didn't we listen to God saying, 'O you who believe! save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones.'¹?

The punishment for moral declination does not wait till the hereafter! Notice how backward the nations without moral values are and how they always live on economic 'begging' because they are so weak and helpless!

The strong and smart youth are the result of a childhood that was never abandoned and had a mature mother and an attentive father. When I was young, I noticed a foreigner mother, who was living in Egypt, in our neighborhood. I noticed that she always gathered her children every afternoon and closely supervised them while doing their homework. In their break, while they play in front of their home, she would always watch them from the window to make sure that they are safe and sound. This showed me how being a mother is not an easy job. It is a job that a man chooses a woman to do when he proposes to her. Certainly, a woman cannot qualify for this job if all her qualifications are that she is sexy!

A mother is a school.

When you build her,

You build a whole excellent nation.

However, historically, colonization of Muslim countries had two major objectives regarding Muslim women. First, it kept them ignorant about themselves and the world. Second, it taught them, if they insisted on learning, irrelevant matters like ornaments and fashions and prevented them from learning how to develop themselves individually and socially. The education systems at that time gave the children cold information without any educational content! And when some people protested and asked for 'religion classes,' they added to the curriculum a couple of short chapters from the *Qur'an* that the children had to memorize, even without understanding!

Then, globalization followed colonization and is now trying to destroy grownups after destroying the children! The following is a very depressing experience that I had recently.

Since I was young, I always skip the commercials in the Egyptian daily newspapers that are titled, 'Where to go this evening?' I always knew where to go and I never needed anybody to organize my time for me! I always seek more knowledge and serve more

¹ Verse 66:6.

people and I rarely find a spare time after these duties. However, one day last month, I thought of reading these commercials to have an idea on how people spend their evenings. I grabbed one of the major daily newspapers and started to read the titles of the movies that people spend their evenings watching. I was shocked and surprised to read the following movie titles that were advertised all in one day [My comments are between brackets]:

The fire of Satan. The professional wicked ones. The revolution of King Kong [I wondered who is this king who lead a revolution that I have never read about! Then, I realized that he is supposed to be a huge monkey who destroys cities!]. The destructive man. The inheritance of wrath. Aladdin. The tiger and the female [!]. A man in the eyes of a woman. The running beasts. The tin city. The trick. The cruel revenge. The conqueror of the crocodiles. The giant Ninja [I wonder what is Ninja!]. The revenge and the punishment. The bloody attack. The flying killers. The fight with the giant dragon. The sword of Satan. Girls of fire. The revenging fist. The fall of New York [Is it the moral fall!]. The lust to revenge.

As you can see, all of the above movies are advertised in one gloomy night! Can you imagine one night that carries all of these sickening movies and thousands of young men and women watching them? All of this lost audience is benefiting no body but the movie brokers who 'imported' those movies! Those young men and women spend hours watching this trash, which certainly causes them numerous bad effects! Can anybody learn from any of these movies an artistic talent or a bright idea? Do these movies help us educate our children properly? The generation that is occupied with these movies is not only empty, but full with all major and minor sins as well.

My opinion is that these 'imported' movies are as dangerous as Hashish and Heroin! The nation that watches these kinds of movies has certainly gone astray.

That evening, I kept remembering those movie titles. So, I recited this prayer: O God! Make my evening a good evening, not a shameful one!

3.13. Parents in our days

I was visiting a major Islamic country when I read in the daily newspaper that a big 'Elders House' was built. I was happy to read this because I always feel sorry for the sick and the weak and always pray to God to end their tests and cure them. But a friend of mine, who read the same news, said, 'This is made for people to send their mothers and fathers to spend the rest of their lives there, similar to what happens in Europe!' I felt pessimistic and depressed and wondered, 'The sinful modern civilization went too far in destructing family relationships that God asked people to maintain.'

I know that, unfortunately, many young European men and women live a full and enjoyable life and totally disregard their parents. They would perhaps see them on Christmas only. And when parents get older, their sons and daughters do not offer them the attention or the homes they need! Even if some of them invited their parents, with discomfort, to stay with them, the invitation is usually temporary and limited! Eventually, those parents go to what they call the 'Elders House' until they move to their graves! Their children, on the other hand, after the work hours, prefer to go to theatres and dancing clubs to staying with an elder mother or father! The behavior of these children is savage, to say the least, even if they think that they are civilized and knowledgeable people.

How can this behavior exist in Muslim societies? What happened to us!

Parents, in our days, were the blessing of the children. A man would go to work with joy when his parents pray for him in the morning and when he returns home the first thing he does is to ask about them. After that, he would pay attention to his wife and children! We changed a great deal, and the changes are, unfortunately, negative!

In the Holy Qur'an, God associated belief in Him with being good to the parents. 'And serve God and do not associate any thing with Him and be good to the parents.'¹ The reason behind mentioning them together is that the parents do their helpless baby an endless number of favors throughout his/her growth stages, until he/she is a teenager and, eventually, an adult. A child always thinks that it is his/her right to be taken care of and he/she has no duties towards those who take care of him/her! People often do the same thing with their Lord! They believe that their food, clothes, growth, health, and everything in their lives came just like that! Sometimes they believe that all this comes from someone who chose not to be known or thanked! Therefore, it is very rare to find thankful people to their Lord for His blessings and bounties.

God is reminding people with the right that their parents have on them as well as the ultimate right that He has on His creation, which is to be worshipped. He is The One who created parents, their children, and the whole universe. 'Your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of

¹ Verse 4:36.

humility, and say: My Lord! bestow on them Your Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood.¹

After the child grows up and becomes an independent and happy adult, would the reward of the cherishing parents be to spend the rest of their lives in an isolated and depressing 'Elders House'?

Some children totally reject their parents when they become old. They are not even as good as their parents' neighbors, as Umayyah Ibn Abu Al-Sult, the Arabic poet, said. Some others even abuse their parents, which is disgusting! Those who send their parents to the Elders House compare themselves to those mentioned above, and then say that they treat their parents much better than many others! Why do we have to make this comparison between two evil actions? Why don't we faithfully give our parents their right to be cared for and our Lord His right to be thanked?

Abdullah Ibn Omar narrated that a man came to ask the Prophet's permission to fight with the Muslim army. The Prophet asked him, 'Are your parents alive?' He said, 'Yes!' The Prophet said, 'Go and put your effort with them.'

Another narration says that a man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said, 'I gave you a pledge to migrate and struggle, seeking God's reward!' The Prophet asked him, 'Is any of your parents alive?' He answered, 'Yes. Both of them!' The Prophet asked him, 'Did you say that you seek God's reward?' He said, 'Yes!' He said, 'Return to your parents and take care of them the best way you can.'

Here is another narration given by Mu'awiyah Ibn Jahimah: Jahimah came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said, 'O Messenger of God, I wanted to participate in the battles and I thought I should take your opinion.' The Prophet asked him, 'Do you have a mother?' He said, 'Yes!' The Prophet said, 'Be with her. Paradise is at her feet.' A similar meaning was also narrated as follows, 'Paradise is at the mothers' feet.'

Homes, that include one's spouse, children and parents, must be built on piety, honesty, and good morals. That is how homes succeed and live happily. However, mistakes are inevitable and a Muslim must be patient, diplomatic, and smart, especially with parents. Malik Ibn Anas narrated that a man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said, 'My dad ordered me to do something and my mom forbade me from doing the same thing. What should I do?' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'Obey your father and do not disobey your mother!!'

Another example of parents who are demanding too much from their children is the following. A father went to one of the Imams and said, 'Demand my son to divorce his wife.' The Imam said, 'Why?' The father said, 'Because I don't like her.' The Imam said, 'Your disliking of her does not allow you to ask him to divorce her.' The man said, 'The Messenger asked Abdullah Ibn Omar to divorce his wife because Omar, his father, disliked her.' The Imam said, 'When you are at Omar's level, then I will answer you to what you are asking for!'

¹ Verse 17:23,24.

Sometimes, the mother in law wants to control her daughter in law and, sometimes, the wife wants to keep her husband all for herself. These selfish attitudes do no good. When we, Muslims, adhere to our religion and its moral values, we can overcome many obstacles and keep our families intact.

3.14. Kindness to relatives is part of our belief

What a terrible life to live for yourself only! What a terrible behavior to care only about your goals, worry only about your problems, know only those who benefit you, and avoid those whom you have no materialistic advantage in befriending! Those who live this kind of life are closer to animals than humans. A human being is different from an animal because he/she has a mind that travels in the universe and emotions of care about others similar to him/herself! An animal, however, cares only about its own life, desires, and little fears! It might care for its youngsters temporarily until they grow up and then depart forever. Some people are like that; they live day and night in their own selfish tight shells!

Islam is very adamant that every Muslim learns to care about others and their rights. The people that one should take care of the most, after one's parents, are the relatives. In the *hadith*, the Prophet, peace be upon him, is saying, 'Those of you who believe in God and the hereafter should be kind to their relatives,' and 'Those of you who would like to have more providence and longer lives should be kind to their relatives.'

Abu Zarr narrated the following words of wisdom. 'My close friend, peace be upon him, advised me to do good deeds. He advised me not to look to those who are wealthier than me and to look to those who are poorer than me. He advised me to love the poor and be close to them. He advised me to be kind to my relatives even if they are not kind to me. He advised me to disregard people's blame to me when I do something for the sake of God. He advised me to say the truth even if it is bitter. And he advised me to repeat, 'there is no power and no strength except by God,' because it is a treasure from paradise.'

Relatives are not the same. Some of them are immoral and evil and some are friendly, kind and nice. Abu Hurayrah said, 'A man said: 'O Messenger of God! I have relatives whom I am kind to, but they are mean to me. I treat them good but they treat me terrible. I forgive them but they always blame me.' The Prophet said: 'If what you are saying is true, then as if they are swallowing hot carbon dust. God is taking your side as long as you are treating them good.'

Arabs used to be proud about bearing with their evil relatives, never hating them, and always helping them, regardless of what they do.

But the circle of 'relatives' in Islam is much wider than what one would think. It goes beyond uncles, cousins, and first and second-degree relatives to encompass many others! Basically, Islam considers all human beings brothers and sisters who came from a single couple. God says, 'O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; - reverence God, through whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (reverence) the wombs (that bore you): for God ever watches over you.'¹

¹ Verse 4:1.

Whether they like it or not, people are all brothers and sisters, coming from the same roots, and have the same blood running in their veins. Why do they, then, boycott, kill, and repulse each other? Humans, all over history, were divided along racial ethnicities. National differences are still causing today's Children of Adam to be merciless with each other!

Some people say, sometimes loudly and other times secretly, that people who live in the northern part of the world, in general, are 'better and more developed than others.' It is a well-known historical fact, however, that 'northern' nations never had advantage over the world, except a few centuries ago.

Another source of continuous disputes among the members of the human family is the differences in religion. These differences resulted in bloody and unfair wars that killed many souls and wasted a lot of fortunes. These wars left the world with lots of hate and desires for revenge.

The Holy *Qur'an* disapproved what people think are sources of disputes and wars. 'O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).'¹

In the name of Islam, I tell those who have a different religion than mine:

You have a right on me that I treat you kindly and justly as my brothers and sisters in humanity! The only thing I am asking of you is to leave me practice what I believe in and leave others to follow me if they wish. We believe in The One God and in all the messengers that He sent and we call people for a religion that will unite mankind and guide their struggle in this life. Anyone who chooses to follow us will be equal to any other Muslim and those who choose to reject our faith should respect our freedom of belief and should not force us to fight them to protect ourselves from their aggression.

Commenting on the verse, 'Those who fulfill the promise of God and do not break the covenant, And those who join that which God has bidden to be joined,'² Abdullah Ibn 'Abbas said, 'God wants us to believe in all books and messengers, join the missions of all of them, and not to differentiate among them.' This is the true belief that unites all mankind and recognizes all prophets' blood relations and their followers' brotherhood/sisterhood.

It is easy to recognize the human ambitions when they cut relations and shed blood, even if they are disguised in 'nationalism' and 'ethnicity' outfits. God Almighty said, 'Then, is it to be expected of you, if you were put in authority, that you will do mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the men whom God has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.'³ (!)

¹ Verse 49:13.

² Verse 13:20, 21.

³ Verse 47:22, 23.

The following *hadith* has two interpretations, according to the Arabic language scholars.

When God created His creations, *Rahim*¹ said, 'I seek refuge from you from being abandoned.' God said, 'Would you be pleased if I be kind to those who are kind to you and abandon those who abandon you?' It said, 'Yes.' God said, 'I will do that.' And this is the meaning of the verse, 'Then, is it to be expected of you, if you were put in authority, that you will do mischief in the land, and break your ties of kith and kin? Such are the men whom God has cursed for He has made them deaf and blinded their sight.'²

Judge `Eyyad said, '*Rahim*, which we fulfill or abandon, is not an object. It is a meaning, just like knowledge, justice, and mercy, etc. It is a connection among people since the time when they were all in their great grandmother's womb. And since meanings cannot speak, how can the *hadith* be interpreted? One interpretation says that it is an Arabic metaphor that only shows how important kinship is and how big of a sin to abandon one's relatives. Another interpretation is that an angel spoke for the *Rahim* ...'

Regardless which interpretation is correct, the thing that matters is that being kind to one's relative is an important section of belief and a great act of worship.

¹ *Rahim* is an Arabic word, which in this context, means kinship. In other contexts, it might mean mercy, kindness, or a woman's womb.

² Verse 47:22, 23.

3.15. Good deeds not numbers

I read a research article written by an anthropologist about the earth's population since the dawn of history and until now. The writer also surveyed the current distribution of people on earth in terms of religion. He, finally, predicted the world's next major religion based on some scientific evidences.

One of the conclusions that this researcher reached is that the total number of people who populated earth since the dawn of history is 80 billion. He did not mention how he came up with this number! I don't think it is too exaggerated and I don't think it is too few either. But what I felt is that all of those 80 billions exist and never vanished! We will all follow them sooner or later and then, one day; everybody who ever lived on earth will wake up to face his/her destiny. The Holy Book said, 'Our Lord! You are He that will gather mankind together against a day about which there is no doubt; for God never fails in His promise.'¹

There is a very thin layer between life and death. Every moment, people whom we know and whom we don't know disappear. It is amazing that we do not seem to care about that and continue to go on with the overwhelming stream of life, until we forget those dead people and everything about them!!

I will now quit this line of thought and return to the researcher who wrote that earth has 5 billion residents now. He added that they are distributed over Christianity, Islam, Idol-worshipping, communism, and Judaism. He said that Christians are over one billion and Muslims are just under one billion. I know for sure that statistics done in Muslim countries are far from being accurate. However, what concerned me the most is the prediction he made, which perhaps he wrote that article for. He said, 'There is a rise in birth control in Europe and America. The population in many western countries is almost constant. However, the population in Muslim countries is always rising!'

I am not sure whether he forgot or disregarded the reasons behind this difference. There is still some chastity and purity in Muslim countries, which confines sex to marital relationships. On the other hand, there is a flood of sexual chaos in many countries, which causes a spread in sexually transmitted diseases! Medical researchers are now using the outer space environment in their attempts to find a cure for AIDS. So, scientific development is trying hard to deal with the plagues that these awful sexual crimes caused. Wasn't it easier to listen to the revelation sent from God that prohibited sinful actions and sayings?

Finally, I honestly announce to my Muslim brothers and sisters that I am not impressed with their number, even if it were two billions! The things that matter are good deeds, not big numbers!

¹ Verse 3:9.

3.16. The disfigurement that we suffer from

Arabs' disfigurement started among some cultured Arabs who found their own language disgusting (!) and disgraced their Arabic literature. For some reason, they felt that they have no value unless they speak others' languages and apply others' traditions and lifestyles as well. The Arabic nation, eventually, started to lose its identity. It became like a dry sponge that absorbs everything around it and produces nothing. Arabic poems, for example, are full of wisdom and beauty. However, no one learns or uses these poems in the Arabic world nowadays.

Moreover, the Arabic and Muslim world is now full of 'language schools' that teaches western languages to our children while totally ignoring Arabic. I am certainly not against teaching our children other languages. However, I am against a system of education that produces a child who is fluent in English or French but, shamefully, hardly speaks Arabic, the language of the Qur'an! How come no one is promoting or defending the Arabic language on any level?

How come I hear song requests and dedications from Bulaq of Cairo, Bastah of Beirut, or Qasbah of Algiers, for Pop or Rock-and-Roll songs, which, I am sure, they do not even understand? May God dishonor those disfigured listeners!! Our nation is suffering from a quick drop in the areas of language, literature, and arts. We have to work on this problem before we reach a point of no return!

3.17. Religion between Thatcher and Muslims

Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, gave a speech in Scotland on the strong relationship between her political philosophy and her religious belief. This was her reply to her political opponents who accused her that her policies made the British masses selfish and money-hungry!

The leader said that she likes everybody to be rich and wishes that every citizen made a fortune. She denied that she is pushing people to 'worship money,' as her opponents said. She explained how she wants every citizen to have enough so that he/she can be able to give charity and does voluntary work. (!)

My understanding of the summary that the Arabic BBC radio gave is that Mrs. Thatcher is giving an explanation that is similar to the following *hadith* of the Prophet, peace be upon him, 'How excellent a wealthy servant of God!' The Prophet also said, 'God loves the pious and rich servant.' Although Mrs. Thatcher, obviously, never read these Muslim words of wisdom, she is smart enough to include these values in her political philosophy. Finally, she denied that she is not religious and confirmed that she is a dedicated Christian!

I felt ashamed when I compared Mrs. Thatcher's speech – and she is the Prime Minister of one of the most powerful nations on earth – to the recent speech given by the Egyptian Minister of Arts and Culture. The Egyptian Minister said, 'What I plan to do to uproot Islamic extremism is to replace belief in the unseen with materialism. Belief in the unseen is attacking people and materialism has to defend them.' (!!)

His argument is baseless and sick! When you, unconditionally, refuse to 'believe in the unseen,' then you are refusing to have any religion! Claiming that religion is attacking people and the atheist materialism is defending them is a lie. The Minister has terrible misconceptions in his mind that has nothing to do with religion. He is also showing a total misunderstanding of the reality of the conflicts going on in his country!

Talking about Arts and Culture, I have to mention that I refused to accept the opinion that some young and immature men gave that said that singing is forbidden. However, I more strongly refuse to accept the Minister's unexpected opinion on 'belief in the unseen.'

Soon after the above nonsense that the Minister said, I read an article written by the renowned Egyptian writer Mustafa Amin. He wrote:

When a new Minister is appointed, we wish that the government told people who the new Minister is. It often happens that nobody knows anything about new Ministers, as if those Ministers suddenly came out from underneath the ground! If the Minister was a member of the Communist Party, we should tell the public so that they know where he is coming from when he takes certain decisions. If the

Minister was a member of the Leader Organization,¹ we should tell the public. This organization ruled Egypt at some time.'

Yes. Those people ruled Egypt at some time and it was an awful time for Muslims! Isn't it surprising that a first world country like Britain confirms its religious identity while an underdeveloped country like Egypt denies religion and 'belief in the unseen,' adding more complications to its other economic problems?

We, Muslim countries, are insisting on depriving ourselves from, both, heaven's blessings and earth's means. How can we survive then?

¹ Arabic: Al-Tanzim Al-Tali'i. A secret organization that was formed by the Egyptian Revolution Committee in the sixties to 'spread the revolution concepts among people,' and 'report the enemies of the revolution to the security forces.' (!)

3.18. AIDS and the gay's freedom!

The AIDS disease is spreading and the budgets allocated to combat it are increasing. Poor countries are barely putting up with these expenses.

Dr. Leonard Mata, Costa Rica's representative in one of the medical conferences, said, 'The Ministries of Health in Latin America are incapable of confining this disease, which is becoming a permanent problem! We are incapable of fighting homosexuality and prostitution, the two main media of spreading this disease.'

It is also a fact that the United States is concerned about this disease and allocated a budget for researching new approaches for curing it. The government is concerned to the extent of using one of the space shuttles trips to study the AIDS virus' attitude in the outer space; maybe they can find a solution!

I would certainly be pleased if scientists invent some medication for this disease. I pity every patient and always try to urge people to behave morally so that they would be safe and sound. I always pray for those who have physical or spiritual diseases that God cure them.

AIDS is a disease that only started to be known in the days of this modern civilization, which is a civilization with an overgrowing materialistic side and severely shrinking spiritual side. Muslim countries, however, are less subjected to this disturbing disaster because of the traces of Islamic teachings that they are still practicing. There is a wide disapproval in Muslim countries to adultery and homosexuality, which Muslims consider 'crimes.' On the other hand, these crimes are flourishing in many other countries where religious people are unable and incapable of convincing their nations to resist their evil desires.

I was very annoyed when I read an article on AIDS in a major newspaper in one of the Muslim countries. The article defined AIDS as follows, 'AIDS is an international problem that affect individual freedoms, stability, and security ... etc.' Are these the real dangers of this disease? What 'individual freedom' is this person talking about? Is it the freedom of prostitution!

It is time for those Muslim writers who forgot God and the hereafter to stop writing! Their writings are destructing all good morals that humanity has ever known!

3.19. The crisis of toxicants

Muslim thinkers are busy discussing the crisis of the widespread of toxicants, alcohol, cigarettes, and similar ugly addictions! They are saying that all of these things are seriously threatening the Muslim nation's future.

I thought about this crisis and concluded that it is inevitable that the Muslim nation suffer from crises at this time! Nations' immune systems get weak sometimes, similar to human bodies when their immune systems get weak! When the immune system gets weak, the body – or the nation – will be subjected to all kinds of diseases that can eventually cause death!

What we lost, as a nation, is our psychological and moral immunity! This is due to a wide lack of proper education and upbringing of our children. A Muslim child grows up without being taught enough good morals, pure worship, and good traditions that give him criteria to judge actions and people!

The family is obviously the place where a child learns these things. The human family's role is not just reproduction, as animals, birds, and reptiles do. A human family gives birth to a child and follows this with a process of education and upbringing. And when the human family loses its ability to educate its children, there is no use of those children!

A friend of mine told me, 'Why do you assume that you will find Muslim families that carry Islam's mission despite of the fact that all Muslim countries already forsake Islam's mission? Muslim governments should, first, respect its rituals, language and religious identity. They never mention Islam as an identity except after a long list of identities, African, Asian ...' I interrupted my friend saying, 'I don't want to discuss whether the hen came first or the egg came first! I acknowledge that the general chaos in our political systems is negatively affecting our families and children. However, we should work on both fronts simultaneously – the government front and the family front. We should advise our government to carry on its duty and in the same time, do our job as parents at home. For example, if the family is watching TV and a silly story or a pornographic scene comes up, one of the parents should immediately turn off the TV and show disapproval to the program ...'

A father who smokes should only blame himself if his children start smoking. And the parents who give up pure and intellectual talk and start exchanging indecent words should never be surprised when their children use foul language.

It is a tradition in many Muslim countries that families are allowed to spend a lot of money on a fancy dress for the wife or a nice feast that friends of the family admire! However, buying books, for example, is something unimaginable to spend money on! We leave our children to the street and their bad friends to educate them as if their future does not concern us! I watched an interview with some addicted Muslim young men and I was concerned because all of them started their miserable addiction experience with just one word from a friend!

I am also concerned because the Jewish people in Israel are raising their children in a very different manner! Education at home and school is based on the stories of the Old Testament, the Jewish heroic stories (even if they have happened tens of centuries ago), the Hebrew language (which returned as a usable life language after it almost disappeared!), high religious emotions, cooperation between couples in workplaces and private businesses, and defining time slots for rest so that they would be able to continue working hard. They are successful in educating their children and they are preparing well for a final fight with the lost Arabic nation!

Chapter 4. Misconceptions that have to be corrected

1. *Qiwamah* does not mean oppression.
2. A woman is free to choose her husband.
3. Women traveling.
4. The face is not an *`Awrah*.
5. Forbidding women's voices is a false rumor.
6. Religion is not about minor issues.
7. The Imam is singing.
8. Women, between military and civil training.
9. Those who like to destroy homes.
10. About beating the wives.
11. The house of obedience: A mistake.
12. Strictness in applying divorce.
13. Divorce is a temporary interruption of marriage.
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15. Women's clothing.
16. An invalid logic.
17. Do not prevent them from visiting mosques.
18. Is it then the judgment of the times of ignorance that they desire?
19. Marrying foreigners.
20. Children of the oppressed for sale.
21. Muslim orphans?
22. About controlling the embryo's sex.
23. Your neighbor has a right.
24. Lost singers.

4.1. *Qiwamah* does not mean oppression

Does the *Qiwamah*¹ of a man at home mean the right to be an oppressor? Some people falsely think that this is true!

However, there is something that everybody in every Muslim home has to abide by that is called 'the limits ordained by God.' I noticed that this expression is mentioned six times in two verses!!! The two verses are protecting the Muslim home from fracturing and, if fractures are inevitable, the verses are protecting that home from blowing apart! These two verses are 'A divorce is only permissible twice: after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness. It is not lawful for you, (men), to take back any of your gifts (from your wives), except when both parties fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by God. If you (judges) do indeed fear that they would be unable to keep the limits ordained by God, there is no blame on either of them if she give something for her freedom. These are the limits ordained by God; so do not transgress them if any do transgress the limits ordained by God, such persons wrong (themselves as well as others). So if a husband divorces his wife (irrevocably), He cannot, after that, re-marry her until after she has married another husband and he has divorced her. In that case there is no blame on either of them if they re-unite; provided they feel that they can keep the limits ordained by God. Such are the limits ordained by God, which He makes plain to those who understand.'²

What are these 'limits ordained by God' that are repeated six times in a few lines! They are the limits and rulings that protect people from chaos, carelessness, and transgression. They are the limits that revelation and logic put to achieve justice and peace among mankind because a home is not a cave of foxes or a jungle of beasts.

God described how men should view their wives and how their wives should view them by the following words, 'They are your garments and you are their garments.'³ This expression gives me an impression that a husband and a wife are one thing. And this is not about sex, because the sexual desires, even strong ones; do not produce a stable life by themselves!

The major interpreters of the *Qur'an* gave long commentaries on these 'limits ordained by God,' which were repeated frequently in the *Qur'an*, as I showed in the above example.

¹ As mentioned before, *Qiwamah* is mentioned in verse 4:34 in the form of a verb that describes men's role with women. The Arabic is '*Ar-Rijalu Qawwamuna 'la-Nissaa'e*.' The root '*Qa-wa-ma*' is used in verbs used for people and objects. When used with people, it indicates the role of a person who maintains others and is fair to them and when used with objects it indicates the action of straightening and fixing. The variety of ways this phrase is translated is very interesting! Yusuf Ali (and each of Muhammad Al-Hilali, Jack Perk, and Adel Khorri) said, 'Men are the protectors and maintainers of women.' Shakir said, 'Men are the maintainers of women.' Mohammed Ahmad Rassul said, 'Men are the protectors of women.' Murad Huffman said, 'Men stand by and take responsibility for women.' Irving said, 'Men should support for women.' Mohammed Asad said, 'Men are the caregivers for women.' Pickthall said, 'Men are in charge of women.' The Saudi *Qur'an* Translation Committee said, 'Men have authority over women.' (!)

² Verses 2:229,230.

³ Verse 2:187.

The main thing that all interpreters warned from is transgression! The author of *Al-Manar*,¹ may God be pleased with him, said:

Transgression is the ailment of civilizations and the destruction of nations. And transgression of one spouse against the other is worse and much more destructing than the transgression of the ruler to his people. Marriage is the strongest tie that can ever exist between two human beings. So, if this tie is damaged on a large scale, there is no limit for the deviation that can happen on the national level, which will eventually cause God's wrath upon everybody. Transgressing the limits ordained by God causes misery in this life and the hereafter. The weakness that I notice in marriage ties nowadays has no precedence in the Islamic history. Both spouses are corrupt and therefore, both transgress the limits ordained by God!

I think that the reason behind this weakness is the flood of corruption that invades every Muslim home nowadays.

So, we should agree first that both spouses will abide by the limits ordained by God, as outlined by the Holy Book and explained by the tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him. I think that a high level of knowledge and good morals, for both spouses, is crucial for establishing peace at home. This will enable the wife to feel in control of her life at home and will also enable her husband to work and struggle through life as he is supposed to.

Since a home is an educational and financial organization, therefore it requires a leader. And leadership never means to disregard others' opinions or to ignore the importance of group decision-making. This applies to every organization on earth, including homes!

God Almighty revealed the verse that says, 'those who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation'² in Mecca before any form of Muslim state! So, consultation is not only for military and political issues but for family and society as well.

Ustaz Ahmad Moussa Salem says:

The *Qiwamah* of a man only means that he takes responsibility for decisions after he honestly consults his wife. He has given this advantage because he is the one who is obliged to support for his family and carry its responsibility. Besides, the decision that he takes has to be affordable, fair to everybody, and within the limits of lawful actions in Islam. The wife has the right to object to his decision if she thinks that it is a serious mistake. In this case, she has the right to seek mediators from his and her family or, if she wishes, seek the authorities' intervention. Authorities have to make sure that the 'limits ordained by God' are kept.

I agree with the above balanced opinion and I would like to add some more points:

¹ Sheikh Muhammad Rashid Reda, *The Lighthouse Interpretation (Tafseer Al-Manar)*, published in Arabic.

² Verse 42:38.

1. The full support of the family is the sole responsibility of the man. The woman's contribution is something that is totally up to her. She should make sure that she puts the best of her timeslots to raise her children and supervise their growth.
2. A daycare is a temporary solution under special circumstances. The place in which the children should be raised is their home with their kind and caring mother!
3. There are strict limits that Islam put between lawful and forbidden actions that every practicing Muslim has to keep. Modern traditions that allow men and women to dance with any person from the other gender are totally unacceptable in Islam. Whether the woman's husband agree that she dances with men or not is irrelevant in this case. No man or woman has the right to commit unlawful actions or transgress the limits ordained by God.
4. A family is like a kingdom in our nowadays world, which has borders. These borders have to be protected and maintained, and cannot be opened to anybody without the man's and the woman's acceptance.
5. A marriage contract has certain Islamic, social, and educational elements that have to be recognized. Among these elements is the man's *Qiwamah*.

All of the above would have been much clearer if we, Muslims, have researched 'Islamic Sociology' and studied how all family affairs fit in the whole society picture can. We are still very underdeveloped in Sociology and Family Sciences and are totally dependant on what we translate from others'. In fact, we should put an effort in all other areas of arts, including education, education psychology, economics, and law since they all discuss family issues from several angles.

We should also correct many misconceptions that Muslims have about Islam's rulings, even if these misconceptions are spread through some scholars without a base from the Scripts. The following are two examples.

Some women expressed their anger to me about a definition for marriage given in the books of *Fiqh* as 'a contract that allows a man to have sex with a woman.' My answer to them was that they are right and that this definition fell short of expressing all sides of the deep relationship between a husband and his wife! It is a definition that only considered the legal consummation of marriage, but did not consider all other social and human sides! Marriage is not just about sex. It is a major 'grace of God' in so many ways. God said, 'And God has given you wives of your own kind, and has given you, from your wives, sons and grandsons, and has made provision of good things for you. Is it then in vanity that they believe and in the grace of God that they disbelieve?'¹

Another woman asked angrily, 'What if I argue with my husband and he gets upset at me, even if I am right? Do I deserve, as some scholars say, the deprivation from the mercy of God and the curse of the angels ... etc, etc?' I interrupted her quickly and explained to her that the *hadith* that she is referring to is different from what she understood. The *hadith* is only talking about a woman who puts on her husband a great pressure by denying him, physically, while he cannot do without her!

¹ Verse 16:72.

Islam makes sense and is consistent with the human needs because it is 'the nature made by God in which He has made people; there is no altering of God's creation.'¹

¹ Verse 30:30.

4.2. A woman is free to choose her husband

Currently, there is a race among a number of religions each is trying to expand. It is strange that some Muslims are not aware of this reality. They commit foolish actions that spoil the reputation of their religion and drive people away from it. They feel comfortable with what they believe and teach, and they simply do not care whether people believe or go to hell! This is ignorance and immaturity! A precious good might sell bad because of bad advertising, while a less valuable good would sell good because it was successfully promoted.

The contemporary civilization made humanity a slogan and human rights a basis for international relations. It also gave special care to social justice, public health, and education. Some people might accuse this civilization of being deceptive or of falling short from fulfilling its duties. However, these accusations cannot stand to the fact that international organizations agreed upon working for and respecting all of the above values.

Then, for whose sake that some people talk about Islam in a way that is against humanity and its rights? For whose sake that some voices become so loud when debating side issues and become surprisingly low when talking about the main Islamic issues? For whose sake that some Muslims pick the Islamic opinions that agree with their traditions and then claim that this is Islam, nothing else is Islam and their land is the only remaining place that practices heavenly teachings?

I said to some of them, 'Islam's face is so pretty, but you make it look frowning and ugly with what you are saying. You will be doing a rewarded act of worship if you stay silent! Any speech that supports dictatorships, social injustice, or backwardness, cannot represent the Islamic Law. Islam is a healthy life style, intellectually and psychologically.'

I had a discussion with a Canadian who had concerns about Islam's stand from women. Part of what I told him was that a Muslim woman is free to choose her husband and to sign her marriage contract herself or delegate someone else to sign for her, if she wishes so. A man was observing our discussion in anger. I thanked God that he remained silent! After the discussion was over, he approached me and said politely, 'It is not lawful for a woman to sign her marriage contract herself. Islam is against this.' I told him, 'Your opinion is against this, not Islam. You imitated some *Fiqh* School of Thought and I preferred another opinion because I thought that it is closer to the European and North American mind. Moreover, some respectable Muslim countries are implementing my opinion in their legal systems. I believe that it is better for Islam that more Muslim countries endorse this opinion.'

A great evil is done to Islam when some of its followers restrict themselves to some specific *Fiqhi* opinions regarding minor issues and then attempt to give it the status of principal beliefs and values. The trader who loses because he always prefers to deal with one specific broker is not a trader.

4.3. Women traveling

A trip that a woman decides to take all by herself requires careful planning for every step the woman will take. I am not saying this to imply any pessimism, accusation, or doubts, but rather, to make sure that the trip is safe, secure, and protected. The Two Sheikhs¹ narrated that a man said, 'O Messenger of God! My wife is performing pilgrimage this year and I am supposed to fight with the Muslim army.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'Go and perform pilgrimage with your wife.'

There is a meaning behind asking a man to quit the army in order to join his wife in pilgrimage! The fundamental rule that governs this matter is: It is better to avoid harm than to bring benefit. In that woman's case, she would have to ride a camel and travel across the Arabian Desert by herself. This is a dangerous trip and it is much safer if her husband travels with her. Across the world, unfortunately, there are always some wicked men who would seize such an opportunity to kidnap the woman and rape her!!

Now, is this ruling supposed to change if it is safe for the woman to travel by herself?

Some scholars decided that if a woman needed to make a certain trip and made sure that she has a trusted company; therefore the trip is safe and lawful. The following authentic narration that `Adi Ibn Hatim gave is an evidence that supports this opinion. [My comments are between brackets.]

I was visiting the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, when a man came by and complained about being so poor. Another man came by and complained that gangs across the Arabian Desert are attacking people and stealing their money. [Note that at that point, the Muslim State was not established in all Arabia yet.] The Messenger said, 'O `Adi! Have you traveled to Heerah² before?' I said, 'No. But some people told me about it!' He said, 'If you live long enough, you will see women traveling alone on their camels from Heerah until they visit the Ka`bah, fearing nobody but God!' I thought, 'Where would be the wicked ones of Tay' who set Arabia to fire!' [`Adi is thinking that it is a remote possibility that the 'wicked ones' will have an end!] The Messenger then said, 'And if you live long enough, you will participate in opening Kissra's treasures!'³ I said, 'Kissra, the son of Hurmoz?' [`Adi could not believe that!] The Prophet said, 'Yes. Kissra, the son of Hurmoz!'

[`Adi said:] I lived long enough to see women traveling from Heerah to the Ka`bah by themselves, fearing nobody but God and I was one of those who opened Kissra's treasure boxes!

It is a long *hadith* but I quoted the above part to prove the point I am making, that a woman can travel alone if she is safe. However, I have the following important comment.

¹ Bukhari and Muslim.

² An ancient kingdom in North Eastern Arabia.

³ *Kissra* is the 'King of Persia.' His name was Anusheran.

Modern civilization has almost no relation to God, is totally forgetful of the hereafter, is only concerned about fulfilling people's physical desires, and is careless about what is lawful and what is unlawful when it comes to sex. On the other hand, many Muslims have low self-esteem when they compare themselves to others and wish they imitated non-Muslims in everything they do. Based on all the above, I agreed with the Islamic groups in some Muslim countries in their decision to forbid male and female students from traveling together on trips abroad. I said, 'Both genders should travel separately!'

I have no objection that female students travel on educational trips to discover and learn about the world. However, they have to be accompanied by female supervisors who are strong and attentive! What made me endorse this opinion is the terrifying stories I heard from some American female students, who went on long trips by themselves, about animal-like men who tried to rape them! I am also pessimistic about the effect of the sexual content of numerous media programs, which eventually turn people into wild animals! Our religion gives a top priority to the protection of 'honor' and equates rape with killing and paganism. The punishment from God for all of those crimes is a curse and a painful doom!

4.4. The face is not an `Awrah¹

I met a man who was obviously in his forties but when he talked he sounded like a teenager! He said with a riotous voice, 'Are you the one who gave *Fatwa* that the voices and faces of women are not `Awrah?' I answered quietly, 'Yes!' He said, 'Don't you fear God?' I said, 'I advice myself and you to fear God!' He said, 'You made a mistake and you have to repent!' I said, 'Don't blame me alone. Actually, you should blame all major interpreters of the Qur'an, ten narrators of authentic *hadith*, the founders of the four major Schools of Thought, and the founders of a number of other minor Schools of Thought as well! I followed all of those people in their 'mistake' and I feel good because I am associated with them.'

The man replied with an expression of surprise on his face, 'Are you saying that all of those people gave *Fatawa* that women's voices and faces are not `Awrah?' I said, 'Yes! But you prefer the popular traditions and the weak opinions to the truth. And even if we assume, for the sake of arguing, that there are two opinions and I chose one of them and you chose the other, why are you angry and offensive? Did you hear the *hadith* of Salman and Abu Al-Darda'?' He said, 'No!' So, I started narrating to him the following *hadith* that Al-Bukhari narrated after Abu Juhayfah.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, joined Salman, the Persian, and Abu Al-Darda' as brothers.² When Salman visited Abu Al-Darda', he noticed that Umm Al-Darda' (Abu Al-Darda's wife) wearing unpleasant clothes. Salman asked her, 'What is wrong with you? Why do you look like that?' She said, 'Your brother, Abu Al-Darda', is not interested in women any more.' (!) Abu Al-Darda' came with some food, which he served Salman, and said, 'Eat. I am fasting.' Salman said, 'I will not eat unless you eat with me.' Abu Al-Darda' broke his fast to show respect to his guest. Then, at night, Abu Al-Darda' did not sleep and started to prepare for a nightlong (optional) prayer. Salman said, 'Sleep.' Abu Al-Darda' slept for a while then he woke up to pray. Salman noticed that he woke up and said, 'Sleep.' And when most of the night passed, Salman said, 'You can wake up now.' They all prayed a night prayer in congregation. Then, Salman said, 'Your Lord has a right on you. Your body has a right on you. Your wife has a right on you. So, give every one their right.' Later, Abu Al-Darda' told the Prophet, peace be upon him, about what happened that night. The Prophet said, 'Salman said the truth.'

I told the man, 'I am mentioning this *hadith* because I want you to think about the conversation that Salman had with Umm Al-Darda'. If this conversation happens today, the guest will be beaten up, the woman will be killed, and people will tell the guest, 'What is your business with what the woman wears?' and tell the woman, 'How come you complained about your husband to the guest and how come you disclosed that your husband is ignoring you?'

The companions' pure intentions made their life easy and free from evil doubts. Then, people started to have evil doubts because, simply, they project the sins that they

¹ Literally, a private part. It is an Islamic term for what a man or a woman should hide in public.

² After migration to Medina, the Prophet, peace be upon him, joined every companion who emigrated from Mecca to a companion from Medina and considered them 'brothers.' It was the first social welfare system.

themselves do on others! Those who have impure hearts label showing a woman's face as a sin because, just by looking at a woman's face, their sick emotions can lead them to major sins. May God protect us!

4.5. Forbidding women's voices is a false rumor

The following is an interesting story that refutes a false rumor that says that a woman is forbidden to talk to 'strangers' because her voice is an *`Awrah!*

Ibn Isaac narrated that Abu Al-`Ass Ibn Al-Rabi` was a disbeliever who married the Prophet's daughter, Zaynab, before Islam. Zaynab was staying in Medina at her father's when Abu Al-`Ass was captured with other disbelievers in the Battle of Badr. The Prophet, peace be upon him, freed him without any compensation. Then, Abu Al-`Ass returned to Mecca and chose to continue to be a disbeliever.

Before the Conquer of Mecca, Abu Al-`Ass was in a trade caravan for Quraish on his way back from Syria to Mecca. The caravan was attacked by the Muslim army, Abu Al-`Ass escaped in the dark and sought refuge in Zaynab's house. She granted him refuge. (!)

The next morning, the Prophet, peace be upon him, led the dawn prayer in his mosque. After he started his prayer with *Takbeer*¹ and people followed him, Zaynab, who was standing in the women's line, shouted, 'O people! I granted Abu Al-`Ass Ibn Al-Rabi` refuge!'

After the prayer, the Prophet, peace be upon him, turned his face towards the lines and said, 'O people! Did you hear what I just heard?' They said, 'Yes.' The Messenger of God said, 'By The One who controls my soul, I have no knowledge of this story until I heard what you have heard with me! But, as I told you before, the least among Muslims have the right to grant refuge to non-Muslims!' The Messenger of God, then, went to Zaynab's place and said to her, 'O my daughter! Be kind to him but never let him touch you because you are not lawful for him.' (!)

The end of the story is well known. The man embraced Islam, visited Quraish to give them back their trusts that he had from before, and returned to Medina to serve in the Muslim army.

Did you notice what Zaynab said to people? Did anybody say, 'Your voice is *`Awrah?*' (!!)

Before that, Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter, blamed the leaders of Quraish when they laughed at the scene of a wicked person putting dirt on the Prophet's back while he was in prostration. She kept telling them how ignorant they were while removing the dirt from her father's back. Did any Muslim say that her voice was an *`Awrah?*

When Moses saw the two daughters of the pious man, he asked them, 'What is the matter? They said: We cannot water our flocks until the shepherds take back their flocks, and our father is a very old man.'² Afterwards, 'One of them came back to him, walking bashfully. She said: My father invites you that he may reward you for having watered our

¹ Saying: Godu Akbar (God is Great).

² Verse 28:23.

flocks for us.¹ Did anybody ever say that a woman cannot talk like that because her voice is *`Awrah*?

I mentioned before the story of the immigrant female companions and Omar's questions to them. Did anybody say that those women should have never answered Omar's questions because their voice is *`Awrah*? I hope no argumentative person claims that Omar received the answers of these questions in writing!!

Women at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, were narrating *hadith*, enjoining good, and forbidding evil. Nobody ever said that they should not talk!

The only voices that are *`Awrah* – and this applies to men and women – are the disturbing, seductive, or ugly voices!

No scholar ever said that a woman's voice is *`Awrah*. It is, simply, a false rumor!

¹ Verse 28:25.

4.6. Religion is not about minor issues

A friend of mine told me that some Islamic magazine condemned me because I said that, 'Singing depends on the wordings; what is good is lawful and what is evil is forbidden!' He said that the magazine said that all singing is evil! I told him, 'I might be mistaken because I am not perfect. That magazine has a point, in any case, because the great majority of nowadays songs are immoral. Moreover, these days, the singers' environment is a really bad environment.' He said, 'I feel that your opinion is very close to theirs. I wish I can arrange a meeting between you and them so that we can resolve the conflict!' I answered quickly, 'I don't like to have such a meeting! There is a true English statement that says that weak minds magnify minor issues and do not recognize major issues. Your friends should have spent their energy in discussing the major Islamic crises instead of making their readers busy with whether singing is lawful or not!'

Political corruption impaired our nations for ages. However, those people never protested against lack of freedom or consultation! Their silence at the time they were supposed to scream and their screaming at the time they were supposed to be silent discredited them in my eyes. I do not want to meet them or listen to what they have to say. I ask God to relief Islam from their 'knowledge' and their claims!

The following is another example of the issues those people are interested in!

A few months ago, a number of Muslim men and women visited me to consult me about their personal problems. After I reflected upon their stories I concluded that they are all stressed out and suffer from complicated social problems. I recommended that they seek psychological and physical help! Most of them, however, replied by saying that their only problem is that Jinn touched them! I told them that this was not true and repeated my recommendations to seek professional psychological and physical help. When they insisted on their Jinn stories, I told them the following words, which radio stations in some Muslim countries quoted, 'Why would Jinn attack you, Muslims, and no one else but you? Why didn't they attack people in the developed countries?' Then, I re-explained my diagnosis to the disturbances they had.

Later, a man, who has probably read some Islamic books, came angrily to me and said, 'How dare you say an opinion that is different from Ibn Taymiyah's opinion?'¹ I replied, 'How come! I strongly supported Ibn Taymiyah's opinion when he rejected the *Bid'i* divorce and approved the Sunni divorce,² although his opinion was different from all four Schools of Thought!' He said, 'I am not talking about that. I meant that Ibn Taymiyah used to drive out Satan from the human body. He would say to him, 'Get out you enemy

¹ Ibn Taymiyah (1236-1328 A.C.E.) is considered, according to several scholars, the reformer of the seventh century *Hijri*. From the rulings (*Fiqh*) point of view, he represented a more modern version of the *Hanbali* School of Thought. He had problems with the Sufi groups of his time and challenged their Sheikhs in several debates. Ibn Taymiyah is thus considered the major reference for the modern *Salafi* School.

² There are two conditions for considering a divorce a 'Sunni' (traditional/correct) divorce: The first condition is that the woman does not have her period at the time of the divorce. The second condition is that the husband and wife did not have intercourse since the wife's last period. A divorce that violates any of the above two conditions is considered a *Bid'i* (innovational) divorce. Most scholars say that the *Bid'i* divorce is, 'a forbidden action but the divorce counts.' Some scholars, like Ibn Taymiyah, consider it, 'a forbidden action and the divorce does not count.'

of God,' so he gets out!' I said, 'Regardless of whether what you are saying is true or false, why are you so angry and your face is so red as if you are ready for a big fight! The 'human devils' occupied our Muslim land, militarily and politically. Why aren't you angry about that? Why didn't you, or the ones who think like you, object to that?'

Some religious people have very weak minds! Their understanding of Islam is very limited and their thoughts are unbalanced! Some of them, somehow, became members of parliament in some Muslim countries. I remember putting exhausting efforts to cover up their silly mistakes and convince them to change their childish judgments!

I want people to know that Islam is a rational and faithful way of thinking that is based on a wide cultural background. Islam is about neither minor issues nor whims.

4.7. The Imam is singing

I have no knowledge of a single Muslim scholar who forbade religious songs. Who can disagree with a song that shows one's love to God and a deep desire to thank and glorify him? And who can disagree with a song that shows one's regret for falling short to fulfill one's duty towards God?

Scholars disagreed with what is called 'Remembering Circles,'¹ where people become loud and noisy, sing, clap, dance, and throw themselves on the ground, all in the name of 'remembering God.' These are actually circles for forgetting God not circles for remembering God! These are just 'dancing parties' that are full of innovations. I don't think any sane person would approve such actions.

In our literature, there are examples of religious songs that we should appreciate and spread. Abu Al-Hassan Al-Qarafi Al-Sufi narrated the following after Al-Hassan. Al-Shatibi mentioned this story in the first section of his book *Al-I'tessam* (Seeking refuge). [My comments are also between brackets.]

Some people came to Omar, may God be pleased with him, and said, 'O Prince of the Believers, we have an Imam who leads our prayer. Every time he finishes praying, he starts singing.' Omar said, 'Who is he?' They told him his name. He said, 'Let's go and talk with him. If I order him to come, he might think that I was spying on him, which is not true.' [Look at how Omar was respecting his citizens' privacy and rights!]

Omar went with some of the Prophet's companions to visit that Imam in his mosque. (!) When he saw Omar, he stood up and said, 'Why do you have to come, O Prince of the Believers? If it is something for me, it is my obligation to come to where you are, and if it is something for you, I should come to you out of respect. Who deserves more respect than the successor of the Messenger of God, peace be upon him.'

Omar said, 'Listen! I heard something about you that annoyed me.' He said, 'What is it, O Prince of the Believers?' Omar said, 'Do you mess about your prayers?' He said, 'No, Prince of the Believers. It is just an advice that I advise myself with.' Omar said, 'Tell me what you say. If the wording is good, I will say them with you. (!) But if the wording is bad, I will forbid you from doing that.'

The Imam said:

I always blame my heart for forgetting the Lord
But it never listened!
My heart is always playing
Until it fatigued me!
Stop playing, my evil companion
Life is running out!
My youth years are gone already

¹ Arabic: Halaqat Al-Zikr.

And I haven't done what I wanted!
I am now waiting for my end
My gray hair gives me no chance!
What a playful soul I have
Never in charity or good deeds!
My soul, I wish you and lust never existed
Observe and fear your Lord!

Omar repeated:

My soul, I wish you and lust never existed
Observe and fear your Lord!

Then Omar said, "Let those who love singing sing something similar to this."

I love songs with words that show true emotions and tunes that serve good morals! I don't care if some people disagreed with me. But I wish that they did not claim that their disagreement is in the name of Islam!

4.8. Women, between military and civil training

I agree with any Muslim who refuses to have female military teams, similar to those teams in some other armies. I believe that these teams are formed on an immoral basis!

However, I agree that Muslim women should participate in the Islamic armies that struggle for the sake of God. I think that this participation should mainly be in the areas of medication, medicine preparation and distribution, moving the wounded and the dead to the back lines, preparing food, and secretarial and administrative work.

Those women have to be armed and trained because they might find themselves in front of some enemy forces, face to face. They have to be able to fight and resist captivity. Muslim narrated that Umm Sulaim was carrying a dagger in the Battle of Hunain. Abu Talhah saw her and told the Prophet, peace be upon him, 'O Messenger of God! Here is Umm Sulaim carrying a dagger!' The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, asked her, 'What is this dagger?' She answered, 'I am holding it so that if any of the idolaters attack me, I would stab his stomach!' The Prophet, peace be upon him, laughed!!

Al-Tabarani narrated after Muhajir that Asma' Bint Yazid (and she was one of the companions who gave a covenant in `Aqabah) killed in the Yarmuk Battle nine Roman soldiers with the column of her tent. (!!)

Al-Bukhari narrated that Al-Rubayyi` Bint Mu`awiz said that women would participate in the battles with the Prophet, peace be upon him, by carrying water, serving the soldiers, and carrying the dead and the wounded back to Medina.

Muslim narrated that Umm Atiyyah Al-Ansariyah participated in seven battles with the Prophet, peace be upon him. She was guarding the tents, making food, medicating the wounded, and nursing the sick.

The Red Crescent¹ should put a precise system to utilize from Muslim women who would like to struggle in the way of their Lord. This system should abide by the limits ordained by God and the rulings of chastity and piety! I think that women, in general, make better nurses than men and that Islam needs those women to defend its existence. The Islamic battlefield is across all continents. Muslims are attacked and aggressed upon everywhere!

The great Messenger allowed Umm Haram to fight in sea battles. She was on the ships that Mu`awiyah lead to conquer Constantinople. She died in the war and was buried in Cyprus.

The military and social struggle of Muslim women is well known in the history of our pious ancestors. However, some Muslims panic when they hear anyone talking about it! If Islam's cultural leadership remains in the hands of those pessimistic immature people, the Islamic *Da`wah* will fail on many fronts!

¹ An Islamic medical charitable organization, similar to the Red Cross.

We are loyal to the *Sunnah* of our Prophet and we would like to see it applied in the most excellent way. We totally refuse to learn from those who are ignorant about the fundamental Islamic sources and those who worship their traditions.

4.9. Those who like to destroy homes

One day, a man knocked on my door and when I opened, he started to talk nervously about his family and some other financial problems. I had a feeling that is asking for help! I asked him calmly, 'What is wrong with you?' He said, 'I was angry at my wife and lost my temper. So, I told her that she is forbidden on me! I asked some Sheikhs about what I said and they said that now she is forbidden on me forever!'

I asked the man, "Do you pray five time a day?" He said, 'Yes.' I said, 'What about your wife?' He said, after some hesitation, 'She prays sometimes.' I asked, 'What about your children?' He said, 'Some of them do pray and some of them do not care about prayer.' (!) I paused for a long time, pretending that I am looking for a solution for him, and then I said, 'You can have your wife back under certain conditions.' He asked, 'What are they?' I told him, 'You and your wife should maintain the five daily prayers, you should make sure that the children go to the mosque and pray regularly too, and you should make up for your false oath. The way you make up for a false oath is to feed ten poor people if you can afford it or fast for three days if you cannot afford it. And you can keep your wife!' The man went out.

After a few days, those Sheikhs, who told him that his wife is forbidden on him, visited me and asked, 'How can you give him *Fatwa* that she is lawful to him? In this country, we follow Imam Malik¹ and we consider what he did an eternal separation between the husband and the wife.' I said, 'I follow a different School of Thought!² We think that when somebody turns a lawful thing into forbidden then it is a false oath. Muslim narrated that Ibn Abbas considered the forbiddance of one's wife as a false oath that can be made up for. Another narration says that a man came to Ibn Abbas saying that he made his wife forbidden on him. Ibn Abbas told him that this was not true and that she is not forbidden on him. Ibn Abbas then recited the verse, 'O Prophet! Why do you to be forbidden that which God has made lawful to you? You seeks to please your consorts. But God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. God has already ordained for you the dissolution of your oaths,'³ then he told him that he just have to make up for his oath.'

¹ The founder of the Maliki Islamic School of Thought (93-179 Hijri).

² The Islamic Schools of Thought (*Madhahib*) are named after renowned scholars who, independently, put distinct sets of rules/theories for concluding Fiqhi rulings from the original sources of legislation, the Book and the *Sunnah*. The founders of the Schools of Thought did not create the Islamic Law, as some researchers understood. These scholars, rather, explained the Law and applied it to their environments. The most popular of these schools are four: the Maliki School, named after Imam Malik Ibn Anas (711-795 A.C.E.), the Shafi'i School, named after Imam Ahmad Ibn Idris Al-Shafi'i (767-820 A.C.E.), the Hanafi School, named after Imam Abu Hanifah No'man Ibn Thabit (699-767 A.C.E.), and the Hanbali School, named after Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (781-856 A.C.E.). In addition to those scholars' brilliance, the popularity of their schools is also due to several historical and political reasons, for example, the support that the Ottoman Empire gave to the Hanafi School, etc. Most Sheikhs learn and follow only one of these schools in rulings. A well-educated scholar, though, is expected to be capable of assessing all the different opinions of these schools (as well as other valid opinions), regarding a certain matter, and choosing the opinion that achieves Islam's main objectives.

³ Verse 66:1, 2.

I felt that they are not convinced, so I said, 'Why are you so enthusiastic about destroying this home and turning the wife into a widow and the children into orphans while the man is alive? Schools of Thoughts usually have different opinions about the details of rulings. We, scholars, should choose from these opinions what is best for the couple's welfare, the children's future, and the society's stability! We also have to protect Islam from the accusations of its hateful enemies, who say that it is not a good way of life to have. So, as long as there are other respected Islamic opinions, we should be opened to them. Maybe those other opinions are better for people than the opinion we are familiar with.'

A weird person among them told me, 'You sound as if you dislike Malik and his school.' I said, 'God forbid that I dislike any pious man. I actually follow Malik in my prayers. I do not read when the Imam reads loudly and I read when the Imam is silent. Abu Hanifah's school, which I was taught, is forbidding reading behind the Imam, whether he reads loudly or silently! I find Malik's opinion more worthy of following in this issue!'

I hate blind following of a certain School of Thought. And when it comes to family and social issues, I follow the opinion that achieves the most benefit, on the individual and general level. I also prefer the opinion that is most coherent with what humanity yearns for nowadays, i.e., rational thinking and human rights. I have no desire to spoil the reputation of Islam.

4.10. About beating the wives

I felt sad and angry when I realized that the scholars, who specialized in the Prophet's *hadith*, fell short to understand the Qur'an! Sometimes, they recite a *hadith* without paying any attention to how coherent the narrated *hadith* is with the clear verses of the Qur'an.

In the third section of *Taysir Al-Wusul ila Jami' Al-Usul* (Facilitating Arrival to the Collection of Fundamentals), it is narrated that Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, may God be pleased with him, said that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'A man should never be asked why he beats his wife.' Abu Dawud verified it! Sheikh Muhammad Hamid Al-Fiqi commented on this *hadith*, 'Al-Nasa'i also verified it.' This means that the Sheikh is verifying the chain of narrators. I am not sure why did the Sheikh ignored commenting on whether the body of the *hadith* is verified or not!¹

It is obvious that the *hadith* is not authentic because the meaning that it implies contradicts the verses of the Qur'an and numerous other authentic *hadith*! Abusing a spouse, whether a man or a woman, is totally unacceptable because of the Law, logic, and justice! I have no idea how some people dare relate this false saying to the Prophet, peace be upon him!

A well-known fundamental rule is, 'Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it.'² How can a man, who beats his wife, be an exception from this rule? And how come people are not allowed to ask him about beating his wife! What if he is just an evil aggressive man? And how come the verse says, 'And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable'?³ Also, how come another very authentic *hadith* says, 'Be kind to women. They are your helpers. You have no other rights over them.'

Therefore, the '*hadith*' that Abu Dawud and Al-Nasa'i narrated is fabricated, regardless of what some people say about its chain of narrators.

Realistic thinking requires that we do not think that all women are angels and all men are devils, nor the other way around. These are ridiculous ideas because it is not fair to blindly take one side or the other in terms of men and women.

We should study family relations in a fair manner, consider the effects of differences in gender and culture, as well as the effects of stress and temporary crises that occur to families. We should never let insignificant issues destroy marriages. The destruction of a

¹ There are two components of every *hadith*, the *Sanad* (which is the chain of narrators) and the *Matn* (which is the body of the *hadith* itself). In order for a *hadith* to be authentic, scholars should verify both components. Very roughly speaking, a *hadith* should be labeled non-authentic, according to its *Sanad*, if any of the persons mentioned in the chain of narrators is known to be lying or non-practicing. Moreover, scholars must verify that each narrator was a student of the narrator who comes before him/her in the chain and a teacher of the narrator who comes after him/her in the chain. On the other hand, a *hadith* is labeled non-authentic, considering its *Matn*, if the meaning or ruling implied by the body clearly contradicts a Qur'anic verse or another stronger *hadith*.

² Verse 99:7, 8.

³ Verse 2:228.

home is a very serious issue! Islam orders the couple, even after a (reversible) divorce happens, to live with each other for a while. Maybe the good memories would reign over bad memories. Maybe love would reign over hate.

The society has a role to wisely mediate between the husband and wife and restore peace. The best people who can do this are the couple's close relatives. They will be the most keen to reach reconciliation and follow up on it. 'If you fear a breach between them twain, appoint two arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, God will cause their reconciliation: For God has full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things.'¹

Al-Shafi'i narrated, on his authority, that Ali Ibn Abu Talib, may God be pleased with him, saw a man and a woman coming towards his place with a large number of people with each. He asked, 'What happened to them?' They said, 'They had a conflict!' Ali said, 'Appoint two arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers.' Then, he asked the arbiters, 'Do you know what your duty is? It is to mediate if you think that mediation is better and to break their marriage if you think that divorce is better.' The woman said, 'I am pleased with what the Book of God judges!' The man said, 'Yes, except for divorce. I don't want divorce.' Ali said, 'No! You have to agree to what she agreed.'

The man didn't want the arbiters to dissolve the marriage in his name but he gave them the right to mediate! Ali refused this and illustrated that the two arbiters should have the choice to decide whether the marriage should continue or not! This is what the Book of God says. However, scholars have different opinions about the authority and the role of the arbiters. This is not a suitable topic to discuss here. But I would like to express my appreciation to this man who, despite all the problems with his wife, insisted on keeping the marriage and working out any problems.

In the above story, the whole community intervened, in the name of God, to mediate and restore the marital relationship. Nowadays, people take divorce lightly. A man might divorce his wife over a pound of meat she refuses to buy!

Let us face the truth. The traditions that govern Muslim women's lives are full of intellectual, moral, social, and economical disasters! We should change these traditions. We also need to reevaluate some narrations and *Fatawa* that were conveyed to us across many generations and contributed to those wrong traditions. We have to differentiate between what is revelation and what is fabricated narrations and between what should be followed and what should be disregarded.

¹ Verse 4:35.

4.11. The house of obedience: A mistake

Khul' is confirmed by the Book and the authentic *Sunnah*.¹ However, some people who took *Fiqh* as a 'profession' deny it! They refuse to end the marriage at the wife's request, neither by considering it dissolved nor by ordering the man to divorce his wife. However, a few of them accept to order a man to divorce his wife only if he abused her, which is called in *Fiqh*, 'divorce for harm,' but they do not consider the wife's resentment to her husband a good enough reason for divorce!!

Not long ago, the Egyptian 'Islamic' Court used to send policemen to the wife's parents' to arrest her and take her to her husband's place, which they used to call, 'the house of the obedience.' (!) It was customary that the wife's family would hide her in some remote place in order to avoid executing the court's verdict!! I would always ask myself, 'Is this how we understand the verse that says about wives, 'either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms; but do not take them back to transgress against them, or to take undue advantage.'²?

The thing I hate the most is to present Islam in a horrible and repelling image because of a terrible misunderstanding of a certain Script or blindly following a single School of Thought!

Today, some non-Muslims are searching hard for any fault with Islam. Islam is been accused of trying to wipe out women's personalities and of being indifferent towards their material and social rights. Tell me, for God's sake, why we disregard the *Khul'* rulings, which are, without doubt, part of the Islamic Law? How can we 'arrest' a Muslim woman and force her to a home that she hates!

I know that many men are indifferent to what women feel and never bother to consider their emotions. How can we consider these men the ideal representatives of the Islamic Law? These men are, simply, psychos who need counseling!

I understand that a merciful and just judge might choose to postpone answering the woman's request for divorce if there is a possibility that his and her families succeed to mediate between them. However, if the wife refuses all attempts for reconciliation, insists on her request for divorce, and is willing to give her husband back what he previously paid her as a dowry, then the judge has no choice other than dissolving the marriage. No one is allowed to ask the wife why exactly she insists on the divorce! It is her right!

¹ The Islamic divorce issued by women is called *Khul'*. It is similar to the man's divorce, with some technical differences. The main difference is that a wife should ask the judge to issue the divorce for her. The judge normally asks the wife to pay the husband back the dowry he paid her at the start of the marriage, in case the husband has no obvious blame for the divorce, for example, by abusing his wife, etc. Another main difference is that the divorce issued by the husband is reversible (at his will, within 3 months) while the *Khul'* is non-reversible. Refer to the books of *Fiqh* for more details, for example, Al-Sayed Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, English Translation, 4 volumes, translated to English by Amira Matraji, Dar Elfatih for Arab Information, Cairo, 1999.

² Verse 2:231.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, sympathized with Barirah's husband because he showed strong love to her.¹ So, he tried to reconcile by asking her, 'Do you think you can return to him?' She said, 'Are you ordering me?' He said, 'No. I am only trying to intercede!' She said, 'I don't want him.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, agreed with her. Notice that the Prophet, peace be upon him, never accused her of being unfaithful or being disobedient to God, etc.

The wife of Thabit Ibn Qayss never accused him of abuse or oppression, but she hated him! She said, 'I have no problem with Thabit's faith or manners,' but she said that she just hates him.² There is no meaning for the marriage in this case!

What do policemen have to do in this case! How can the 'Islamic ruling' be that the wife stay imprisoned in the house that she hates! How can 'the limits ordained by God' be respected in such a house? What honor does a man with this controlling attitude have? And if she is willing to give her husband his dowry back as compensation, why not give her the freedom she is asking for?

Those who deny the *Khul'* do not really understand the verse that says, 'If you do indeed fear that the couple would be unable to keep the limits ordained by God, there is no blame on either of them if she give something for her freedom. These are the limits ordained by God; so do not transgress them if any do transgress the limits ordained by God, such persons are unjust.'³

Disregarding a woman's emotions and forcing her to accept a man she hates has nothing to do with Islam or the Islamic Law! Islam is the religion of justice and mercy. Those who claim that Islam treats wives like concubines and disregard their feelings are, simply, lying about God and His Messenger! I feel so depressed when I hear some sick and immature people talk in Islam's name! What makes the situation worse is that they defame the true scholars of Islam who deeply understand its scripts. The true disaster of Islam nowadays is these liars!

In addition to the above, a man is forbidden from abusing his wife to make her ask for *Khul'* and willing to pay any price for it! Sheikh Sayed Sabiq said in his important book, *Fiqh-us-Sunnah (The Fiqh of the Sunnah)*,⁴ 'It is forbidden that the husband abuses his

¹ Barirah was one of the Prophet's female companions. She insisted on divorcing her husband, Mughith, although he would follow her in the streets of Medina crying, telling her that he loves her, and begging her not to leave him! The Prophet, peace be upon him, once saw them, while standing with Ibn Abbas, and said, 'Aren't you amazed at how much Mughith loves Barirah and how much Barirah hates Mughith?' – the story is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his authentic collection under, *The Book of Divorce*.

² Narrated by Al-Bukhari: She said, 'I have no problem with Thabit's faith or manners, but I hate to be ungrateful (referring to her treating him bad because she hates him).' Another narration, by Al-Bayhaqi in his collection, she added, 'I hate him. He is so ugly.' Another narration, by Ibn Majah in his collection, she added, 'If I don't fear God, I would spit on his face.' Another narration, by Abdul-Razzaq, she added, 'As you see, O Messenger of God, I am so pretty and he is an ugly man! I saw him among his friends the other day and he was the darkest, shortest, and ugliest among them all!' The Prophet asked her, 'Would you give him back his garden that he gave you as a dowry?' She said, 'And more, if he wants!' So, the Prophet, peace be upon him, dissolved their marriage.

³ Verse 2:229.

⁴ Al-Sayed Sabiq, *Fiqh us-Sunnah*, English Translation, 4 volumes, translated to English by Amira Matraji, Dar Elfatih for Arab Information, Cairo, 1999.

wife and transgresses against her rights until she gets fed up and asks for *Khul'*. Dissolving the marriage, in such a case, should not be in the form of *Khul'*¹ and the man has no right for any compensation, even if the court says so!

It is not fair that a woman be forced to ask for divorce and then pays for it! God Almighty said, 'O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should you treat them with harshness, that you may take away part of the dower you have given them, except where they have been guilty of open lewdness.'² Imam Malik's opinion is that if the court gives the abusive man any compensation for the divorce, it is an Islamic obligation on him to return this money to his ex-wife.

On the other hand, Islam strictly refuses that the wife treats her husband naughtily and disobediently and takes advantage of the consideration and kindness that Islam gave women in its rulings. A Muslim home cannot fulfill its educational and social mission unless both partners cooperate, show mercy, and observe each other's rights and obligations. If the man is expected to work hard all day in order to support his family, then his wife is expected to create a peaceful and relaxing atmosphere at home! A woman who asks for *Khul'* for no reason except for reasons of selfishness is committing a crime! The *hadith* says, 'Women who divorce their husbands without any reason will never smell the fragrance of paradise.' Abu Hurayrah narrates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, described those women as 'hypocrites.'

Let us learn our Law and let us apply its teachings in order to advance our private and public life.

¹ It would fall under *Al-Tatliq Lel-Darar* or (Divorce for abuse or harm). In this case, the wife owes the husband no compensation, the divorce is *Ba'in* (non-reversible), and he owes her the compensation mentioned in their marriage contract, if any, plus all of her other financial rights as a divorcee. Refer to the same book (*Fiqh us-Sunnah*) for details.

² Verse 4:19.

4.12. Strictness in applying divorce

I do not bother much about the scholars' differences in the areas of rituals! It does not make a big difference whether you read or remain silent behind the Imam in congregational prayers. You are rewarded for the prayer whether you read or not. The only problem I have is with some Shafi'i followers who read the *Fatihah* with a disturbing voice while the Imam is reciting the *Surah*!

But I am really concerned about some *Fiqhi* opinions mentioned in our literature in the areas of civil and social dealings! My opinion is that Muslim governments have to intervene, reject unsuitable opinions, and endorse only one School of Thought for every issue!!

Some scholars, for example, invalidate the marriage of a non-Arab, even if he is Muslim, to an Arab woman. (!) Some scholars think that a Muslim should not be killed if he/she kills a non-Muslim. (!) There are many similar issues that some scholars talked about without enough knowledge!

I think that councils, not just individuals, should research major civil and social issues, like the ones mentioned above. Members of these councils should be free to choose, from amongst the different opinions, what they think is best for today's world. I view the family Law as one of those major issues that should be opened for any relevant opinion from any School of Thought. This would be much more beneficial for our *Ummah*.

And since divorce is, 'the most abhorred lawful act,' as the *hadith* says, we should make sure that we filter out the opinions that apply divorce in a strict manner. For example, some scholars give the impression that they are waiting to hear, or even imagine hearing, the word 'divorce' to dissolve the marriage, disperse the family, and even consider divorce final! I was so pleased by Imam Ibn Taymiyah when he invalidated the *Bid'i* divorce.¹ He showed such a smart understanding of the Scripts and the wisdom behind the verses and narrations. I was so surprised when his followers² nowadays rejected his views on this issue.

Ibn Hazm showed a distinct ability to memorize the narrations. This ability enabled him to reject many forms of divorce that other scholars, who do not have the same collection of narrations, approved. Ibn Hazm's problem was his extreme adherence to the *Zahiri* School,³ which drove him to some funny mistakes. I think that these few mistakes were the main limitation to his popularity despite of his wide knowledge and his obvious

¹ It might be worth repeating here that there are two conditions for considering a divorce a 'Sunni' (traditional/correct) divorce: The first condition is that the woman does not have her period at the time of the divorce. The second condition is that the husband and wife did not have intercourse since the wife's last period. A divorce that violates any of the above two conditions is considered a *Bid'i* (innovational) divorce.

² The Sheikh is referring to the modern *Salafi* School, which emerged from Saudi Arabia.

³ An Islamic School of Thought named after the phrase *Zahir-un-Nass* (the apparent meaning of the Script). It is a School of Thought that strictly adheres to the literal meanings of the Scripts and the very specific contexts that the Prophet, peace be upon him, dealt with. They do not approve analogy (*Al-Qiyass*) as a source of legislation. The scholars who founded this school are Imams Dawud Al-Asbahani (202-270 Hijri) and Ibn Hazm Al-Andalussi (384-456 Hijri).

brilliance. Ibn Hazm, based on the Scripts he memorized, invalidated divorce during the wife's period if it is said once or twice. However, he validated it in case the divorce word is said three times! This is an amazing contradiction that is obviously not what the Scripts meant!

Islam instructs the husband and wife to take enough time, in their attempts to solve their disputes, before they consider divorce. Maybe they would be able to save the marriage and return to their good old days. Any sane person will understand this when he/she reads the following at the end of the verse that talked about divorce, 'You do not know that God may after that bring about reunion.'¹ God also said in *Surah Al-Baqrah*,² 'A divorce is only permissible twice: after that, the parties should either hold together on equitable terms, or separate with kindness.' So, there are three chances to hold together on equitable terms or separate with kindness. After those three chances the divorce is final, or 'irrevocable with a great separation,' as they say in the books of *Fiqh*.

A divorce cannot be irrevocable except after many failed endeavors of reconciliation. However, Ibn Hazm approved three divorces when the husband says the divorce words three times one after the other all at once!! Ibn Hazm argued a lot to prove his point! I think that three divorces, which are issued all at once, is a childish alteration of the rulings that damages the stability and happiness of Muslim families. Ibn Taymiyah was much more considerate to the welfare of the Muslim *Ummah* when he counted those three divorces as only one.

I appreciate the following *hadith* (even though Ibn Hazm rejected it because of some missing narrators in its chain), 'The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, was told about a man who divorced his wife three times in one session. The Messenger stood up and said angrily, 'Do you play by the Words of God while I am amongst you!' A man stood up and said, 'O Messenger of God! Do you want me to kill this man?' He said, 'No.'" Anas Ibn Malik narrated that Omar used to spank on the head those who divorce their wives three times all at once!!

However, Ibn Hazm was absolutely correct in criticizing many other scholars who applied divorce in weird situations and with the strangest of phrases! He wrote:

When a husband tells his wife, 'You choose for yourself,' and she chooses divorce, marriage, or even nothing, then all this has no effect whatsoever, even if she chooses to be divorced a thousand times. Similarly, if a husband tells his wife, 'You are in control of your affairs,' or 'Your destiny is in your hands,' etc, nothing happens to their marriage regardless of what she says after that.

And if a husband tells his wife, 'You are forbidden on me,' or he says, 'You are like pork or dead-animal meat for me,' etc, all of these words are void, lies, and do not imply Islamic divorce, whether the man has an intention of divorce or not. (!!) God asked His Prophet, 'O Prophet! Why do you forbid yourself that which God has made lawful for you?'³ God blamed His Prophet for forbidding himself what He made lawful for him. So, a husband who tells his wife, 'You are

¹ Verse 65:1.

² The Cow, Chapter 2. The mentioned verse is number 229.

³ Verse 66:1.

forbidden on me,' is simply a liar because his wife is not 'forbidden on him' according to the rulings of God!

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'Any innovation in this religion of ours is void.' Forbidding something that is lawful is not justifiable in the religion and therefore the above forms of divorce are void. There are specific words that the Islamic Law stated by which a wife would be divorced and, hence, 'forbidden' on her husband. We should not accept any other words that people invented.

The Scripts imply that divorce is valid if it is issued with one of the following three verbs, or any word derived from them: divorce, release, or depart.

I think that these restrictions that Ibn Hazm put are excellent and I welcome any restriction that any scholar put to give the couple a chance to save their marriage. Some scholars went too far in applying divorce based on imprecise phrases; some of them are even metaphorical! They give the impression that they have a deep desire to terminate any marriage at the first possible chance! This behavior contradicts the Islamic Law that recommends giving chances for forgiveness and reconciliation. Scholars are not supposed to have an attitude of picking a word that a husband says here or there to destroy a Muslim home and disperse a Muslim family.

It is a sad contradiction that a Muslim who spent, out of traditions, a lot of time and money on the engagement, dowry, furniture, gifts, wedding party, etc, dissolves his marriage because he said once, 'If I smoke again, I will divorce my wife.'¹ Then, he loses his life and his investments for a cigarette!!

Ibn Hazm considered all forms of conditional divorce void. Only sixty years ago, the Egyptian legislators issued an amendment that says, 'Divorce, that is not assertively stated, is not counted if it is only meant to force oneself or others to do or stop doing a certain action.' An attached memorandum explained, 'Legislators decided to devoid divorce oaths according to some Hanafi, Maliki, and Shafi'i scholars and decided to devoid conditional divorce based on the opinions of Ali Ibn Abu Talib, Shurayh; the judge, and Dawud Al-Zahiri and his students.'

I suggest that divorce without witnesses be added to the above list. If two witnesses are necessary for accepting a marriage contract, why don't we consider them necessary for accepting divorce and remarriage as well? We should select the opinions that serve our society the best and protect it from individuals' evil desires.

As of those Muslim countries, which rejected all of those opinions and showed indifference towards all sources of the Islamic Law, they actually have other plans to apply non-Muslim laws instead!

¹ It is a widespread tradition in many Muslim countries, especially the Arab countries, that a man forces himself or others to do things by saying, 'Otherwise, I will divorce my wife.' This is called conditional divorce. Sometimes, he adds to this an oath, 'By God,' and this is called a divorce oath.

4.13. Divorce is a temporary interruption of marriage

A scholar usually extracts the ruling from the script that is directly related to the situation in hand. However, a scholar might decide to refer to an indirectly related script to conclude the ruling if he/she found it to be more appropriate. So, I feel surprised when I find a scholar disregarding the very clear and direct script without any need to do that!! This is very common in women related issues and the following is an example.

Ending a marriage does not happen abruptly. Islam considers divorce as a temporary interruption to a relationship that needs some revision, rather than a final termination of it. That is why divorce cannot be issued at any time. There are some conditions in terms of the timing of the divorce that are mentioned in the Scripts. And even after divorce is issued, as prescribed, Islam is instructing the couple to stay together in the same home so that, maybe, love would reign over hate. Islam also asks the relatives to attempt reconciliation in order to prevent the destruction of that home. I will quote here the first verse of the Chapter on Divorce [and my comments are between brackets]. 'O Prophet! When you do divorce women, divorce them at their prescribed periods [not any time], and count accurately, their prescribed periods: And fear God your Lord: and turn them not out of their houses, nor shall they themselves leave [it is forbidden that a wife leaves her home or be asked to leave right after the divorce is issued], except in case they are guilty of some open lewdness, those are limits set by God: and any who transgresses the limits of God, does verily wrong his own soul: you know not if perchance God will bring about thereafter some new situation (or reunion).'

The verse is explaining the wisdom behind the divorcees staying at home by saying that it is 'her' home. It is also clear from the above Script that divorce should only occur at its prescribed time. It cannot be issued during the wife's period or in the phase between two periods during which the couple had a sexual affair! Divorce is acceptable and lawful only under these conditions. Abiding by these rulings is what the verse referred to when it says, 'those are limits set by God.'

Using the expression 'limits set by God' reminds me of the verses talking about inheritance rules, which were also ended by, 'Those are limits set by God: those who obey God and His Messenger will be admitted to gardens with rivers flowing beneath, to abide therein (for ever) and that will be the supreme achievement. But those who disobey God and His Messenger and transgress His limits will be admitted to a fire, to abide therein: And they shall have a humiliating punishment.'¹ Muslims are at consensus that no one is allowed to change the inheritance rulings and any attempt to change these rulings is considered void. These are the 'limits set by God'!!

Divorce rulings, however, were treated differently! Scholars are at consensus that divorce is either '*Sunni*' or '*Bid'i*,' and that the *Bid'i* divorce includes divorce during the woman's period, in the phase between two periods during which the couple had a sexual affair, or more than once between two periods (in this case, only the first divorce counts). The *Bid'i* divorce is a forbidden innovation in the religion, according to all scholars. However, they do not disregard it! They should have treated a husband who divorces his

¹ Verses 4:13, 14.

wife a *Bid'i* divorce in a way similar to a person who alters inheritance rulings. Both are transgressors to the 'limits set by God' that we should abide by.

Unfortunately, a number of scholars (actually a large number of them!) accepted the *Bid'i* divorce and considered it effective! The only scholars who announced the truth on this issue were Ibn Taymiyah, Ibn Al-Qayyim, Ibn Hazm (to some extent), and a few others who were courageous enough to oppose the mistaken majority of scholars!

Validating the *Bid'i* divorce resulted in a lot of mischief in the Muslim *Ummah*. I heard many crazy, sad, and disgusting stories. For example, a man spent a fortune on his big wedding party and then, shortly after that, gave a divorce oath in the market that caused the new family to fail before even starting.

Another scholar, who is teaching in a religious institute, wrote in his textbook, 'Whoever tells his wife: 'You are divorced half a divorce,' then she is considered divorced from him one legal divorce.' (!!) What is this silly ruling? This sounds like a person who is under the effect of drugs, not a scholar!

Ibn Hazm wrote in his book, *Al-Muhalla (The Beautified)*, 'A man told his wife that she is forbidden on him and then asked Abdul-Rahman Al-Himyari his opinion. Abdul-Rahman told him: God told his Prophet: 'Therefore, when you are free, still labour hard, And to your Lord turn all your attention.'¹ You are not turning all your attention to your Lord. You are playing. So, go continue playing.'

Making things lawful or forbidden is not according to people's desires. 'But say not - for any false thing that your tongues may put forth-, This is lawful, and this is forbidden, so as to ascribe false things to God.'²

I only desire guidance and peace for the Muslim family. I have the right, and so do others, to revise the rulings of divorce mentioned in the Islamic literature. I will not claim to come up with new rulings, though. I am only choosing from amongst the different opinions what I think is closer to the Book of God and the *Sunnah* of His Prophet and what is best for the parents, children, and everybody's future.

I know some people who will get so angry with me writing these opinions.³ They want the *Bid'i* divorce to stay in effect! I do not care whether those people are pleased or angry with me. I only care about the Islamic Law and the welfare of Muslims.

¹ Verse 94:7, 8.

² Verse 16:116.

³ This was true. Sheikh Al-Ghazaly, God bless his soul, was harshly criticized for his views in this book by many traditional scholars.

4.14. Traditions that have to change

Many Muslim homes start Ramadan with a feeling of anxiety because trade and farming almost stop and prices rise in that month! The Muslim countries traditions made Ramadan a month for eating, not fasting, and a month of much higher budgets than all other months!

What can we do to avoid these problems? The honest answer is that Muslims have to change their extravagant traditions in Ramadan and return to make it a month of worship and struggle against all worldly desires! I wished that those who smoke would take advantage of Ramadan to quit smoking, even in a gradual manner, and those who are lazy would take advantage of Ramadan to work, study, or produce more.

It is true that one eats at home, but a Muslim home should never allow overeating or enter a competition on serving the most expensive food! Muslims' political and military situations call on us to save money not to waste money on our lusts.

Before, a Muslim home was the place that teaches the children good morals and acts of worship. Children would be nurtured in a similar way to seeds that are cultivated until they become fruitful plants. Boys and girls would learn at home how to pray, give charity, say the truth, and respect trusts. The Muslim home was the main source for good and guided citizens who enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil.

At a very young age, a child would learn how to pray. And when he/she starts to grow up, he/she would start fasting! What the child learns at this early age is the basis for all what he/she does in his/her life. Parents have to know the basics of educational psychology because good morals can never be taught except through a long educational process. What the Muslim home offers to the children is not only food; otherwise it will be like an animal breeding factory! How beautiful to see a child with a noble face, polite words, and pure intentions.

And since I am talking about Ramadan, I will mention some *hadith* that encourage Muslims to pray the optional night prayer. However, I would like to share with you some memories first.

When I was in primary and, then, secondary (high) school, my friends and me would study hard for long hours at night. We would constantly make sure that the information we learned are fresh in our memories; some of us wants to get the highest marks and some others are just afraid to fail! Sometimes, we would feel so sleepy and this was a problem. So, many of us would run and wash their heads with cold water. Then, they would feel refreshed enough to go on studying! I always remember these days and wish that my teachers had requested me to study more books. What you learn when you are young stay with you forever.

Some servants of God feel the same about preparing for the hereafter. They are gathering treasures of rewards from their Lord, which will appear in the hereafter as light that shines around them.

Salman narrates a *hadith* in which the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, says, 'Pray at night. It is the tradition of the pious people, who came before you, brings you closer to your Lord, washes away your sins, prevents you from erring, and kicks out illness from your bodies.'

A husband and wife should cooperate to perform night prayers; not by taking turns but by praying together!! Abu Hurayrah and Abu Said narrated that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'If a husband wakes up his wife in the middle of the night and they prayed together, they will be written in the book of those who mention their Lord much.' Those who can do that are only the believers who have a deep faith that encourages them to resist sleeping!

These prayers might help the children in their future. Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud used to pray at night while his son is asleep and say, 'This prayer is for you my son!' Then, he would recite, while crying, 'their father was a pious man.'¹

The Holy *Qur'an* mentioned the reward of those who stay late to pray at night in the land of happiness,² 'Who forsake their beds to cry unto their Lord in fear and hope, and spend of that We have bestowed on them. No soul knows what is kept hid for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do.'³

However, waking up in the middle of the night is difficult sometimes. Sleeping and laziness get in the way. The Honorable Messenger illustrated in the following *hadith* how the husband and wife be victorious over sleeping by using some water! Before I mention the *hadith*, I would like to mention that this does not apply to every home or every couple. They must have the desire to wake up and pray, they have to agree to do that during the day, and they have to be among those who would be happy if they wake up and mention God in the middle of the night.

Should I mention the *hadith* now? Perhaps I should do, although I hope that sleeping addicts do not get upset with me! The Messenger, peace be upon him, said, 'God blesses the man who wakes up in the middle of the night to pray and wakes up his wife. And if she refuses, he sprinkles water on her face. And God blesses the woman who wakes up in the middle of the night to pray and wakes up her husband. And if he refuses, she sprinkles water on his face.' In another narration, 'The man, who wakes up in the middle of the night and wakes up his wife, even if he has to sprinkle water on her face to wake up, and then, they pray for an hour at their home, will be forgiven, he and his wife.'

These Muslim homes that the Messenger founded changed the course of history and moved the world from the very bottom to the very top. What a difference between those enlightened homes of the companions and the homes today, in which people spend their whole night in front of absentminded TV programs and then sleep like dead people until the morning comes and a new cycle of their empty life begins.

¹ Verse 18:82.

² Paradise.

³ Verse 32:16, 17.

Ramadan is approaching and people are, unfortunately, busy with planning for making luxurious feasts, solving the silly TV 'Ramadan puzzles,' and wandering in the sinful cities all night.

Our Ummah is backward in the areas of morals, science, industry, and trade. When are we going to wake up and catch up with the caravan of civilized nations?

4.15. Women's clothing?

Clothes are important for every human being, man or woman, to protect, cover, and beautify their bodies. God, glory be to Him, says about that, 'O ye Children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness, - that is the best.'¹ Both genders like adornments that beautify them but what is the value of a handsome dress when the person is ill mannered? There is no value for those who are nice from the outside and ugly from the inside! That is why the verse is saying that the best and most honorable raiment is the raiment of righteousness.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, is advising every Muslim an advice that we should reflect upon. He said, 'Eat what you wish and wear what you wish as long as you avoid two things; extravagance and showing off.' He meant what you wish according to what is lawful.

We will realize how true the above *hadith* is when we know that physicians now say that most diseases are related to overeating and sinful conducts. In terms of clothing, there is a large amount of Muslim money that is wasted on showing off and there are lots of moral problems that are related to this extravagance. Moderation is the best way of life.

I was thinking the other day about the reasons behind this endless variety of colors and fashions in civil uniforms (versus military uniforms). There are so many etiquettes for wearing long or short clothes, wide or tight clothes, and day or night clothes. There is an endless race between Fashion Houses to introduce new cuts that appeal women and tempt them. After some reflect, you will be able to identify two motives behind all this; extravagance and showing off!!

A woman has a right to look good, after she fulfills the more prior attributes; wisdom and good morals. But the Indian Sari, which shows the woman's stomach and back, and miniskirts, which shows the woman's thighs when she sits, do not make the woman 'look good.' Those who designed those fashions do not respect women. They only make them objects for men's most evil desires.

I think that modern civilization is purposefully forcing women to immorality. I was walking on one of the beaches and I saw a man and a woman walking together. According to the latest fashions, he was wearing long and loose pants and she was wearing tight shorts. I wondered what the reason is for this double standard! Are these fashions designed to do any good to women?

Those who design fashions that are either uncovering the woman's body or stuffing her in tight clothes are not callers for morality. They are like slave traders! In order to guarantee a moral upbringing for our children, we need to oppose this wave of immorality in fashions.

¹ Verse 7:26.

I mentioned above that it is the woman's right to look good, but it is not the woman's right to display her dazzling beauty in public or to draw attention to her body by wearing, for example, an expensive night dress that she wears to show off with. In fact, Islam forbids both men and women from showing off or swaggering. The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'God does not give His mercy in the hereafter to the one who wears an extra long gown to show off.'¹ It is a silly and childish thinking to think that any person's status is according to a shiny pair of shoes or a dress that is decorated with silk or gold!

If a man or a woman lacks knowledge or ethics, nice clothes can never raise his or her status. Proper clothes have a certain job that does not include seduction and showing off. `A'ishah narrates that her sister Asma' entered the Messenger's place with transparent clothes. He turned his face away and said, 'O Asma', when a girl becomes mature, it is not appropriate that she shows any part of her body except this and this (and he pointed to his face and hands).' This *hadith* has many other authentic supporting evidences.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, saw a man by the name Damarah Ibn Tha'labah bragging about two lavish Yemeni gowns he was wearing. The Prophet did not like that and said, 'O Damarah! Do you think that those two gowns of yours will allow you paradise?' Damarah felt his mistake and said, 'If you ask God to forgive me, I will not sit down until I take them off me.' The Prophet said, 'O God! Forgive Damarah.' So, Damarah went away quickly and took his two gowns off.

No one can forbid the ornaments that God made lawful for His servants. Every human being has a right for nice attire, nice pair of shoes, and good outlook. However, this is different from showing off, extravagance, seduction, and seeking people's praise through a piece of cloth!

I knew that some women have more than seventy dresses. I was told me that some of those women change dresses several times during parties, just to show themselves in different styles and colors! Why don't they show the culture they learned or the values they believe in instead of this nonsense!

Extravagant traditions created big businesses and, we, Muslims, are nurturing these businesses although we suffer a terrible state of poverty and underdevelopment.

Modern civilization created another fashion that no religion approves! It is that women dress like men until one almost cannot tell whether a person is a man or a woman! This is something that any good woman disgusts. I saw Margaret Thatcher, the British Prime Minister, in her female clothing standing among the leaders of the world. She was carrying her purse and walking with self-confidence and pride, only out of her own talents and virtues. Attempts to eliminate natural differences between men and women are nonsense.

And there is another major difference between people that can never be eliminated, which is the difference in knowledge and good virtues. In this area, a woman might do

¹ It was an Arabic tradition for the rich to wear very long dresses that they drag behind them on the ground, as a way of showing their status and wealth.

much better than all men, and vice versa, because neither gender nor clothing has anything to do with this competition!

It is an authentic narration that the Prophet, peace be upon him, says, 'God curses men who imitate women and women who imitate men.' Imitating the other gender is a moral deviation, and perhaps a psychological disorder that requires therapy. But imitating others in good deeds is opened for everybody. 'Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily, to him will We give a new life, a life that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.'¹

Finally, I would like to mention an interesting scientific fact and then comment on those 'Nudity Clubs' that are becoming popular in the Muslim world, which Muslim governments overlook in order to 'propagate tourism.' (!) A Biologist told me, 'There is a big difference between the places of fertilization of plants and animals. In fields and gardens, fertilization organs are obvious to allow wind to carry the pollens everywhere. However, animals' fertilization organs are hidden and sometimes they are close to other organs that are responsible for passing bad secretions out of the body.' I commented, 'Maybe that is why Adam and Eve 'when they tasted of the tree, their shame became manifest to them, and they began to sew together the leaves of the garden over their bodies.'² But those who prefer to walk naked these days are closer to being animals than being humans.'

¹ Verse 16:97.

² Verse 7:22.

4.16. An invalid logic

Muslim women used to pray in the mosque of the Prophet, peace be upon him, since he built his mosque in Medina after the migration and until he died. They had a special door to the mosque that was never closed! A simple calculation shows that women prayed with the Prophet between 17 thousand and 18 thousand prayers. Numerous most-famous narrations confirmed this fact although a few single-chain narrations, which should be ignored, said otherwise.¹

Some people said that `A'ishah said, after the Prophet's death, 'If the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, witnessed what women are doing after he died he would have banned them from mosques as the women of the children of Israel were banned one day.' They say that women have to be banned from mosques because of this narration!

I say: This is an invalid logic because even if the narration is authentic, they were never really 'banned' from mosques. In fact, mosques in the days of the guided Caliphs after the Prophet were full of female worshippers, to the extent that Omar Ibn Al-Khattab asked Solaiman Ibn Abu Hathamah to lead women in a separate prayer in Ramadan so they can hear the recitation. Ibn Hazm narrated that Ali Ibn Abu Talib used to order people to pray at night in Ramadan and used to appoint an Imam for men and another for women. `Arfajah (who narrated the *hadith*) said that Ali ordered him to lead women in prayers.

Al-Zuhari narrated that `Atikah Bint Zaid, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab's wife, would always pray in the mosque. Omar told her, 'By God, you know that I do not like that.' (!!) She said, 'If you forbid me from going, I won't go!' Omar would say, 'I cannot forbid you!'² Omar was stabbed while she was inside the mosque!

Generalizing the above saying of `A'ishah might cause people to cancel a major Islamic ritual, which is praying in the mosque, just because of an illusion they have about mischief caused by female worshippers! We cannot say, following a similar invalid logic, that civil punishments in the Islamic Law should be cancelled because non-Muslims are using them to spoil Islam's reputation! This logic is flawed because God, the One who put the rulings, knows everything in the present and the future. He, glory be to Him, is the One who put the ruling that allowed women to pray in congregation under the condition that they do not make a public display of their ornaments.

But if a woman transgressed the conditions of piety and good morals, she should be asked to stay away from the mosque. This is an adequate punishment for her. But to punish all women and forbid them all from the mosque because one of them might be immoral is an unacceptable logic.

¹ A most-famous narration (Arabic: *Mutawatir*) is defined as, 'a narration that reached us through numerous chains of narrators, who cannot logically agree to lie.' The Qur'an itself is an example of a most-famous narration. On the other hand, a single-chain narration (Arabic: *Ahaad*) is a narration that reached us through one chain of narrators. Single-chain narrations are obviously less authentic than the most-famous ones.

² In another narration, he told her, 'How can I forbid you after I heard the Prophet, peace be upon him, saying, 'Do not forbid the maids of God from visiting the houses of God.'?'

I noticed that women are banned from mosques only, which is very strange! None of those scholars ever banned them from markets and streets, even if they show immoral behaviors there!

Banning women from mosques, as many Muslim nations do out of tradition, is the reason behind the moral crisis and lack of education of our *Ummah*.

4.17. Do not prevent them from visiting mosques

A Muslim's relationship with the mosque is very deep in his/her heart! It is the place that he/she visits day and night to pray to and glorify his/her Lord in its pure Prayer Hall. He/She will meet in the mosque similar brothers/sisters who are all working hard to please their Lord.

Continuous congregational praying in mosques creates springs of goodness on this earth and refuges to the believers, who seek God and the hereafter, from selfishness, lust, and all kinds of desires. That is why among the seven persons that God covers by His shadow in the hereafter, 'a man whose heart is attached to the mosques.'

However, sometimes, daily life activities oblige people to pray, individually or in congregation, in the desert, farms, or workplaces. There is no sin on those people in not attending the prayers in the mosque because they are busy with other obligatory activities and when those other activities are over, they return to the mosque.

Men and women are equal in terms of their need to maintain a continuous relationship with the mosque. They both need to be subjected to the mercy of God day and night. However, there is one difference that I need to explain.

A woman's role at home is her first obligation that God will ask of her and praying in congregation is an optional deed for her! Therefore, she should not ignore her home duties and her children's needs for the sake of this optional deed. But if a woman fulfils her obligations towards her home, it is her absolute right to pray in the mosque and to seek the reward from God. Her husband is not allowed to forbid her in this case. The Messenger of God, peace be upon him, says, 'Do not forbid the maids of God from visiting the houses of God.' And when a woman does not attend the mosque regularly because of her duties at home, she will be rewarded as if she were attended the mosque regularly!

Some scholars made a mistake by saying that praying in congregation is, 'for men and not for women.' Some of them even said that, for women, praying at home is more rewarded than praying in the mosque! They cited some fabricated narrations that have no value, by which they deceived laypeople. Meanwhile, they concealed the most confirmed narrations about mosques crowded with women over tens of years, at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his guided Caliphs.

Muslim narrated at the authority of Abdullah Ibn Omar that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'Do not forbid the maids of God from visiting the houses of God.' Bilal, his son, told him, 'By God, we will forbid them.' Abdullah Ibn Omar ran towards his son and called him the worst bad names the narrator has even heard and said, 'I tell you that the Messenger of God ordered us not to forbid them and you say we will forbid them!'

Muslim also narrated, 'Do not forbid women from visiting mosques late at night.' Therefore, it is necessary for every community to make sure that the roads are safe day and night.

But I would like to stress another issue. The mosque is not a fashion show or a beauty contest! When a woman goes to the mosque, then she is pleasing God, seeking the reward in the hereafter, defying Satan, and abiding by the rulings of piety! There is an authentic narration at the authority of Zaynab, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud's wife, saying that the Prophet ordered women the following, 'If any of you attends the prayer in the mosque, then she should not touch any scent.' There are two types of scents, a hygienic type that kills germs and bad odors, which is lawful, and a strong type that turns men's heads and draws attention, which is forbidden.

Also, mosques are for sincere worship not for watching the other gender. That is why it is forbidden for a woman to walk in the front, just to be seen by men or to see men. The same rule applies to men regarding women's lines. That is why there are many *hadith* that mentions that, 'the best lines for men are the front lines and the worst lines for men are the back lines and the best lines for women are the back lines and the worst lines for women are the front lines.' God wants His servants to be pious, polite, and safe from suspicions. That is why there should be a door that is allocated for women in every mosque to avoid that they be crowded with men at the same door. Omar Ibn Al-Khattab forbade men from using the women's door.

Ibn Hazm refuted the opinion that says that it is better for women to pray at home. He illustrated that it is a baseless opinion and its evidences are fabricated! He asked the following questions and gave the following comments.

Why would the Messenger let women pray in his mosque day and night, in the cold and in the heat, if it is better for them to pray at home? Is this consistent with his role as a teacher for the *Ummah*? Why would he, then, order them to come to the mosque on the condition that they do not wear perfumes? Isn't it easier on him to just ban them from coming?

The Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered people to accompany the women of their households to the prayer place in '*Eid*', even if they have their periods. He also ordered women who have no gowns to borrow gowns from their neighbors. How can this be consistent with the opinion that says that they should stay at home?

Some scholars said that, 'maybe he ordered them to attend the '*Eid* prayer just to show the enemies that Muslims are many ...' This is a big lie about the Messenger of God and a baseless statement! The Prophet explained in the very same narration why women should attend the prayer by saying, 'so that they witness good deeds and the supplication.' I really deplore the ones who deny what the Prophet, peace be upon him, said and fabricate some other arguments. The reason they gave, in addition to being a lie, is really silly! Why would the Prophet, peace be upon him, do that while there were no enemies there in '*Eid* time, except the hypocrites and the Jews who knew very well the reality of Muslims' army anyway ...

Therefore, forbidding women from visiting mosques is an innovation in the religion and a disaster that caused the Muslim society to be ignorant, uneducated, and an easy victim for the most unjust traditions. There is no solution except that Muslims return to the tradition of the honored Messenger and his early companions.

4.18. Is it then the judgment of the times of ignorance that they desire?

I saw a photograph of a huge rally in the streets of Paris. Big masses of men and women were calling for the return of capital punishment and deny the killers any right to live! I wondered whether the angry woman who appears in the photograph is the mother of the girl that was raped and killed by some criminal, who is now eating peacefully in one of the French prisons after being sentenced thirteen years or so! A man appeared in the same photograph waving his arms. I wondered whether he is the father of the cop who was killed while trying to arrest a thief. This killer must now be sharing the other killer's peaceful meal!

The laws that people invented, which ruled out capital punishment, caused bitter consequences. From a human point of view, these laws do not discriminate between good and evil and justice and injustice. From a religious point of view, these laws are denying God His right to put Laws for His people.

They say that if a person gets so angry momentarily and kills somebody, then there should be no capital punishment for this killer! There reason is that the killer did not think long enough about it, even if he did his crime purposefully!! This is the law that Muslim countries, unfortunately, copied from Europe at some point. Then, Europe decided to 'develop' its laws and cancelled capital punishments altogether! I heard some Arabic 'thinkers' calling for the same change in the Muslim countries' law and I wondered, 'No religion and no logic?'

The British Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher, called for the return of the capital punishment but the British Parliament voted against her! This is no surprise for the legislation system that legalized gay practices, as long as both partners agree! You will see more marvels in the near future because of all the mischief, disregarding the revelations, and following laypeople's desires.

For me, Jewish and Christian religious authorities are responsible for this serious moral degradation. They show no commitment to the Revelation or the Ten Commandments! And there is no recognition for the Holy Law that Jesus said that he is coming to confirm, which banned all sorts of mischief!

That is why the *Qur'an* said about the People of the Book, 'Why do not the rabbis and the doctors of Law forbid them from their (habit of) uttering sinful words and eating things forbidden? Evil indeed are their works.'¹

Now, some People of the Book, instead of calling for the Law, call upon Muslims to deny the authority of God! And when some Muslims call for the return of the application of the Divine Law in some Muslim country, some parts of Europe strongly protested and threatened to use force against 'the forces of backwardness.'

'Is it then the judgment of the times of ignorance that they desire?'¹ Yes, and nothing else!!

¹ Verse 5:63.

¹ Verse 5:50.

4.19. Marrying foreigners

I advised him, before he immigrated to a non-Muslim country, to marry a Muslim woman before he goes! I told him, 'This will help you protect your faith and honor from the sexual chaos that flooded Europe and America. No body there survives that chaos!'

He answered coldly, 'I don't think there is a problem in immigrating by myself and marrying some suitable woman there. I know many Muslims who married non-Muslim foreigners and lived happily ever after! Some of them even married Americans and hence, gained the American citizenship, which is a great accomplishment!'

I replied, 'There is no accomplishment in this. The scenario you are giving is a loss of both one's religion and worldly future! That is exactly what I was afraid you would do! Most Arabs and Muslims who immigrate to non-Muslim countries seeking a better life suffer from an inferiority complex! They think that any non-Muslim is more superior to them and they never deny them any request! Many of them eventually forsake their language, traditions, values, and Islam itself! After a little while, he/she would forget their faith and hardly remembers it!!'

He said, 'But there are practicing Muslims who survived. I know that Islam allows a Muslim man to marry a Jewish or a Christian woman from the People of the Book. There is no need to be concerned!' I said:

Yes. Islam allows a Muslim, who practices his religion very well, to marry a woman from the 'People of the Book,' according to certain conditions that do not apply to most European and American women today! You are immigrating just to make money and I am really concerned that if some American non-Muslim woman agrees – for some reason – to marry you, your children will not grow up praying, fasting, or even as believers in God and the hereafter. Your future wife will have a stronger position than you and she will use the pressure of the environment there so that the children do not embrace your religion.

The term 'People of the Book' does not apply to many non-Muslim men and women in Europe and North America today, whom the Torah and the Gospel have nothing to do with their daily life! For them, religion is practically nothing but a vacation on Sunday and Christmas, and then denigrating others in an amazing manner! Liquor is flooding. Nothing stops sex. Homosexuality is available for those who are bored enough of adultery! Who knows maybe you would return to us one day carrying the AIDS virus!

Marrying a woman from the People of the Book is lawful for a Muslim who is able to apply the Islamic teachings at his home and raises his children as Muslims. Is this possible today? My son, I appreciate the reasons behind your immigration and I respect your desire to have a bright future in a different land. However, never allow the worldly desires to make you forget your religion and never forget that Islam is your one and only honor!

4.20. Children of the oppressed for sale

I believe that modern civilization covers its heartless attitude towards people with different religions or people who are oppressed in poor countries with a thin and faked membrane of kindness and mercy! That is why I was not surprised when I read in the news about selling children from underdeveloped countries in some developed countries.

I read the following report in *Al-Sha'b* (The Nation) Algerian newspaper titled, *Third World Children for Sale*.

Frankfurt Municipality is considering outlawing a German organization from buying children from the Third World and reselling them in West Germany. The average cost of children coming from very poor countries is 7100 Dollar. (!) However, a child from the Far East would cost 8900 Dollars on average, which is half what a child from the Middle East costs on average. One can even buy German children for 26500 Dollars. Prices vary according to how much the mothers ask in compensation for their children.

Hummel and Keller Organization for Founding Families (!) announced that so far they succeeded in selling 8 children. The executive manager said that what his organization is doing is necessary and that those children would have been lost if they were not imported to Germany. (!) He further announced that he would continue with his mission despite of the Municipality's threat. (!)

The manager of this organization gets 200 Dollars for every child he sells. The rest of the cost is divided between the mother and the broker who gets her the buyer.

I remembered that the British law was allowing men to sell their wives in the nineteenth century. (!) The only constraint was a maximum price that is defined by the law so that men do not ask too much for their wives!

Is poverty behind these sad deals! How can those brokers use people's suffering to this inhuman extent?

The tradition of the Prophet, peace be upon him, is certainly against all of these practices. Abu Moussa said, 'The Messenger of God cursed those who differentiate between a mother and her child or between two brothers.' When Islam began to appear on this earth, slavery was part of life in the Indian, Greek, and Roman civilizations and was even endorsed by Judaism and Christianity. The Islamic Law gradually ended slavery in the East or, at least, reduced it greatly. However, at that time, European countries insisted on keeping slavery and widening its trade. Their fleets continued kidnapping thousands from Africa and selling them as slaves in Europe and America.

It is remarkable how some of these people hide their sins and immorality and courageously defame Islam and Muslims in every occasion! Louis Bertrand wrote in his book, *The Oriental Illusion*, 'The Orient? You don't know its reality! It is dirt, theft, immorality, deception, rudeness, extremism, and foolishness. Yes. I hate The Orient. I

hate all of those who wear red caps and play with rosaries.' Robert De Troas in his book, *The Strange Orient*, 'Islam today is like a dry well. What can Muslims teach us? Maybe we are sick but I am sure that they are dying! They have a perished civilization and backward religion and language. The only lesson we can learn from Muslims is to work hard so that we never reach the miserable state they reached.'

Some of them see us through the above words and deal with us by selling our children! What do I say about this injustice! Or perhaps the question is how can we, Muslims, protect ourselves and the rest of the world from this injustice?

4.21. Muslim orphans?

No country on earth is without orphans. Death visits earth every second, day and night. Some people never see their fathers and some orphans need merciful sponsors to be able to go on in life. I always thought that Muslims have the largest number of orphans since they always fight in religious wars, whatever the reasons are. God Almighty said, 'Nor will they cease fighting you until they turn you back from your faith if they can.'¹

Then, I realized that unfair wars are all over this earth. Fifty million people were killed in the latest World War. Local wars all over earth are killing so many as well. The number of orphans is on the rise. Now earthquakes and floods are killing more people, leaving larger numbers of orphans and widows!

It is no surprise, then, when we learn that Islam made it an obligation to care for the oppressed and raise orphans, treat them kindly, and donate for them. In the *hadith*, 'I and the one who sponsor an orphan, whether the orphan is relative of his/her or not, as close as this in paradise (and he pointed to his middle finger and his forefinger).' Another narration says, 'The one who raises an orphan among a group of Muslims until the orphan decides he/she does not need that any more, will enter paradise, definitely!' Abu Umamah narrated that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'Whoever wipes an orphan's hair, only for the sake of God, he/she will be rewarded one reward for every hair he/she touches.'

A man came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, complaining about the stiffness of his heart. The Prophet said, 'Wipe orphans' heads and feed the poor.' Sharing with people their pains and miseries restores the emotional balance of those who are too busy with the worldly pleasures. However, individual efforts are useless in most cases, especially with large-scale disasters. In the countries that suffer from dryness, for example, tens of thousands become homeless and masses of people die. In the Iraqi-Iranian war, a countless number of people died! The wars in Lebanon, between Eritrea and Ethiopia, and between Middle African different countries, which were going on for the past ten years or more, have caused more than a million children to be orphans. The question is: What is happening to those children?

I know for fact that the Christian Missionaries swiftly helped them, opened schools and orphanages for them, and carried out the 'holy mission' to them! One rich Italian man, for example, sponsored one thousand of those Muslim orphans and even gave them his last name!!

What did Muslims do? Does their nice recitation of the verses that talk about kindness and mercy do any good to those hungry and endangered orphans? No. There has to be a continuous and intense group effort for rescuing those orphans and protecting their faith. Laziness and durable hearts lead people to loss, shame, and hellfire! 'And let those fear (in their behaviour toward orphans) who if they left behind them weak offspring would be afraid for them. So let them mind their duty to God, and speak justly.'²

¹ Verse 2:217.

² Verse 4:9.

4.22. About controlling the embryo's gender

God Almighty, glory be to Him, is The One who provides us with children, according to His wisdom and power. He mentioned in His Book, 'He bestows (children) male or female according to His will (and plan), or He bestows both males and females, and He leaves barren whom He will: for He is full of knowledge and power.'¹ "His will" is how we, Muslims, call the physical laws that govern this universe and all creatures that we know and do not know.

Scientists recently discovered some biological laws that govern inheritance and determines the gender of the baby. They can now control the gender of the baby, to some extent. I will address this issue after I highlight a certain moral crime that people commit, since the dawn of history and until now.

This moral crime is that people hate to have a baby girl, prefer to have a boy, and even disguise the wife who always bears girls! I still remember a poem, in which an Arabic woman was complaining about her husband, Abu Hamzah, because he married another woman just because she always gives birth to girls. The poor woman said that she only produces what her husband gives her, which is very true!

People hate girls because girls are weak. Why don't they realize that girls are weak because they are simply always oppressed and banned from what would make them strong!

I witnessed the days when educating girls in Muslim countries was considered a crime and their visit to a mosque considered a sin!! Those who claimed to be religious used to transgress against girls' rights publicly without shame! There are still some remnants of those ignorant ones who misunderstand what Islam is all about, spoil Islam's reputation on all fronts, and slander me unsympathetically for criticizing them!

The strange thing that preferring boys over girls is still common everywhere on earth and was a motivation behind research to control the baby's gender using genetic engineering!

Scholars now know for fact that the man is the one who carries male or female sperms and hence defines the gender of the baby! Women are just receivers of what men give them! In addition, there are numerous factors that scientists talked about that affect the gender of the embryo. Experiments were carried out, successfully, to increase the possibility of having a boy or a girl. However, scientists are not able, yet, to reach definite results!

The following is a quote from the report of the International Health Organization (the Local Mediterranean Section) on a special session on controlling the gender of animal and human embryos.

¹ Verse 42:49, 50.

Numerous experiments were carried out on animals after extracting a large volume of sperm fluids, processing them, and separating male-babies sperms and female-babies sperms.

And using artificial fertilization, scientists were able to raise the probability of males, or females, according to what is desired, to 70% instead of 50%. So far, we are not able to achieve a definite separation of the two kinds for many complicated reasons.

The question now is: What is the Islamic Law opinion on using this technology for humans? Is it lawful to control the baby's gender according to the parents' desires? And what about applying this technology on a large scale?

It is technically difficult to extract a large volume of sperms from a man to carry out the experiment, but it is possible. Moreover, artificial fertilization is different from the normal process, in which mercy and love are nurtured.

The attendees of that session discussed the above issue and tried to answer the above questions on whether it is lawful or not to control the gender of the embryo.

One question was whether this control is against God's will or not? The answer to this question is obviously that everything happens according to God's will anyway. 'But you will not, except as God wills; for God is full of knowledge and wisdom.'¹

After a lot of discussions, the session concluded with the following statement.

There is a consensus that controlling the gender of the embryo is not lawful, if it is done on a national scale. However, it is lawful, according to most of the scholars who participated in this session, on an individual level, if the husband and wife decide to use this technology to get a baby boy or girl. The scholars who thought that it is not lawful were concerned about a domination of one of the two genders.

My opinion is: If we leave this process to laypeople desires to have boys and used this technology only to get boys, what is going to happen? The world will perish gradually!

We, humans, should master moral values instead of mastering genetics! We should understand the saying of God Almighty, 'And should The Truth follow their low desires, surely the heavens and the earth and all those who are therein would have perished.'²

¹ Verse 76:30.

² Verse 23:71.

4.23. Your neighbor has a right

If this report was not in all Egyptian newspapers and serious investigations were carried out, I would have never believed it! The report says that a woman died on her bed in her apartment in a huge apartment building and remained on her bed for years! No body discovered her death except when part of the building went on fire one day and firemen had to evacuate the whole building using their ladders!! The deceased woman's skeleton was discovered and this is how they finally buried her after a long and full life!

I wondered how no body asked about her for 'years'!! How come no neighbor felt that she was absent! Is this what the modern civilization is teaching us? That no body should care or pay attention to anybody else! A neighbor goes to work and returns, or even never returns, and the other neighbor never realizes or cares!

If we are Arabs, this is against the Arabic traditions, and if we are Muslims, this is also against the Islamic teachings! There is a plague that converted our Muslim nation into animals!

Even in the ancient 'Dark Ages' before Islam, every neighbor had a feeling of responsibility towards his/her neighbors. Arabs illustrated in their poetry how proud they were to support their neighbors

According to Islam, a neighbor is like a relative or an in-law! In the Holy *hadith*, the Prophet said, 'Gabriel advised me to take care of my neighbors until I thought that neighbors will be among one's inheritors.' (!!)

Sometimes, there is a wedding party in one apartment and a funeral ceremony in the neighboring apartment, a person is laughing and his/her neighbor is crying, as if both neighbors have nothing to do with each other!!

In the society of Medina, at the time of the Prophet, peace be upon him, there was dryness in the relationship between the Muslim and Jewish communities. However, the right of the neighbor was stronger than religious disputes! Mujahid narrated that the family of Abdullah Ibn Amr slaughtered a lamb. Abdullah said, 'Did you give part of it as a gift to our Jewish neighbor? (Abdullah repeated this question twice.) I heard the Messenger of God saying, 'Gabriel advised me to take care of my neighbors until I thought that neighbors will be among one's inheritors.'"

Anas narrated that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, said, 'By The One who controls my soul, a person who claims to be a believer is not a believer until he/she loves for his/her neighbor what he/she loves for his/herself.'

Actually, the best way to form a strong community is to foster every person's relationship with his/her neighbors. Isn't the community, and the whole nation, a group of neighbors! If every citizen takes care of his/her neighbor, no body will get lost! To foster these relationships, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, 'A person who eats until he/she is full, sleeps at night, and knows that his/her close neighbor is hungry does not believe in me.' (!) In another narration, he said, 'The one who is full while his/her neighbor is hungry is not a believer.' (!)

I wonder how the Prophet would describe the person who never felt that his neighbor died until years later when somebody found her skeleton by accident!! What a disaster!

We actually have a lot of social disasters that we have to cooperate to wipe out. There is one *hadith* that highlights our disasters in the most true way. It says, 'Three disasters: A ruler who never appreciates people's good work and never forgive their faults, an evil neighbor who disregards his neighbors good deeds and only announces their evil deeds, and a wife who betrays you when you are absent and insults you when you return.' (!!)

We seek God's refuge from all that!

4.24. Lost singers

When a popular singer sings an immoral poem, lots of mischief happens! Not long ago, Abdel-Wahab¹ sang a song titled; *The whole world is a cigarette and a cup of wine*. This song had a really bad impact on the Egyptian society to the extent that the Egyptian authorities decided to ban it!!

But there are still singers who praise liquor. In the song titled, Cleopatra, the drunken singer says, 'Our whole night is liquor!' He also described his lost lover as, 'the one with a dark forehead like the color of liquor in bright light.'

Before Kamil Al-Shennawi² died, he gifted Abdel-Wahab with the song that said, 'A foolish destiny!' This shows, of course, how strong of a believer Kamil was!! Another similar song said, 'I am here but I do not know where I am coming from? I only found a way ahead of me. So, I walked!' Abdel-Wahab repeated the same meaning in his last song that he sang before he died, 'We came to this world but we don't know why? We don't know where are we heading? We don't know what do we want?' (!)

So, the lost Egyptian singers do not know where they are, why they exist, and what they want! However, Israeli singers know very well why they exist and they answered the above questions most eloquently. Israel prevailed over the lost Arabs and the Israeli singers and poets hail Israelis as they move towards their objectives. On the Arabic front, however, brokers import and encourage all sorts of immoral songs and arts!

Calling for Islam is now among the list of crimes in the Arab countries! The list of crimes recently included also any caller for honor, seriousness, or saying the truth! Now the secular people in the Arab world are pleased!!

I said one day in a public speech: Aren't those Muslim singers capable of presenting something that supports the heroes of the Intifadah³ or those who struggle against Russia in Afghanistan? I know several poems in the Arabic poetry that can be possible material for these songs.

Poetry needs serious singers. A serious singer is not necessarily a man but he/she has to be moral and persistent in defending his/her values and nation. Do we have any singers of this kind?

I hope we could find a good poem, that a Muslim woman can sing, that shows how she is deeply touched by the defeat of her nation, do we have any female singer who can perform such a song? Unfortunately, all Muslim female singers are singing about their beloved ones who forsake them for so long!! Singing, especially in the Arab world, is an evil profession, except for those very few artists whom God protected.

It is strange that the thinkers and writers in these fields sold their souls to Satan and are cooperating with him to defame Islam and cause people to forget God, every pure moral

¹ A late Egyptian singer.

² A late Egyptian poet.

³ The Palestinian civil unrest against the Israeli occupation.

value, and every honored piece of history! They are plotting to kill the Muslim nation, in the name of secularism, the nation that can only live under the shade of faith, away from atheism and adultery!