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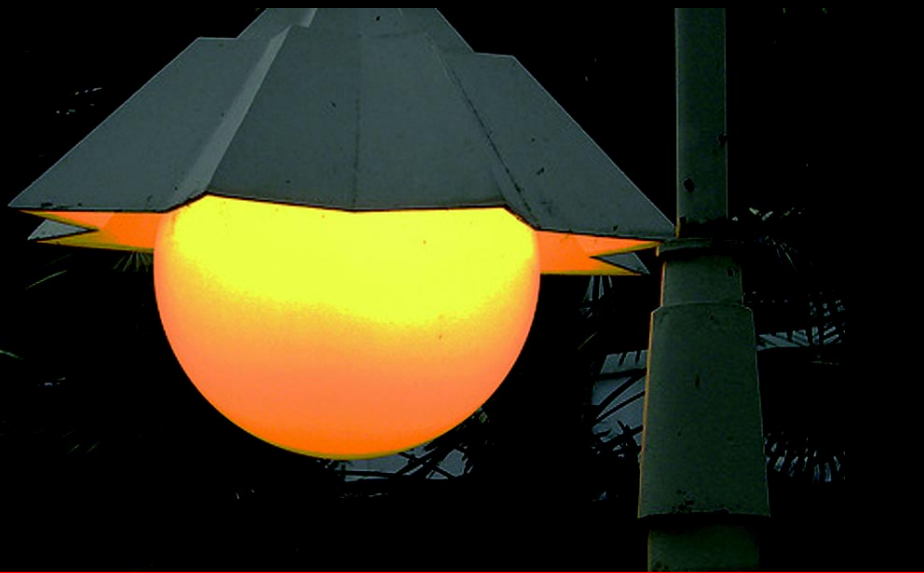
I am very grateful to Allah the Almighty for His guidance and infinite bounties. Without His generosity, inspiration and infinite bounties, I would be helpless.

My sincere thanks are due to those many people who helped in turning the compilation of this book into existence among whom are the one's below:

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## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this second edition of my book, Women's Rights: A Historical Perspective, to the man who was behind the publication of the first edition of this book. He is living in our world no more but his efforts in informing people about Islam are still very salient. I ask Allah to reward him abundantly for his great efforts and gather us with our Prophet in Paradise.*



## INTRODUCTION

Different societies have now been forced to take a position regarding the stakes of their women. It is hardly ever mentioned in the literature that Islam had addressed the subject of women's rights over 1400 years, long before it became a serious preoccupation in many other cultures, especially in the west recently.

The issue of women's rights received much attention in western and western-like societies for the past number of decades. Only prophet Muhammad (S.A.A.W.), through Divine revelation, was able to restore dignity and rights to women who were living in very degrading circumstances centuries before women in other nations were given parts of their rights.

Many feminist writers are enthusiastic in condemning the treatment of Muslim Women. Sometimes, they mix between the pure Islamic teachings and the irresponsible personal or cultural practices of some Muslims. However, some

may have been intentionally prejudiced due to the publicity their works receive and probably the high income they receive as revenues for the sales of their books. This business is prospering nowadays while the Islamic fundamental teachings are being unfairly attacked. Such works have not paid attention to the teachings of Islam on the subject. As a result, they make no attempt to distinguish between the behavior of some Muslims and of the religion of which they may be very ignorant.

Feminist scholarship would have done better by focusing on the miserable situation that women, children and the family are going through all over the world, including western countries. Regardless of the very tiring efforts by western women to win and secure their rights, recent statistics and academic research only expose frustrating results of molestation and discrimination against women and children. The unjust competition between men and women in a male dominated work world has had a negative result in the most important institution, the family. In modern societies, a woman is entitled to honor and respect only to the extent to which she succeeds in performing the functions of a man while at the same time exhibiting her maximum beauty and charm to the public. The result is that the role of the two sexes in contemporary societies is thoroughly confused<sup>1</sup>.

One of the main rationales behind assuming this search was the unjust misrepresentation of Islamic teachings regarding women by a number of writers. They only focused on excerpts that were taken out of both text and context. Or, they blamed unacceptable practices by some ignorant Muslims on Islam. Most of those writers have not objectively conducted serious objective comparative study regarding

1 - Maryam Jameelah. Islam in Theory and Practice. H. Farooq Associates Ltd: Lahore, 1983, p.85.

the position of women in the teachings of Islam and in other religions and ideologies. Via the information present in this research, the readers will be able to deduce by themselves the strong correlation between the genuine teachings of these sacred books and doctrines and the mistreatment that women have been experiencing in these societies over the ages. Simply, because women have been manipulated by man while being blamed on God; and therefore called 'Divine'. When it comes to Islam, the equation is reversed. The Islamic teachings are not reflected on the wrong practices by some Muslims' treatment of women. Nevertheless, they were blamed on Islam. Edward Said alluded to this unfair allegation by saying in reference to V. S. Naipaul's biased writings about Islam: "For Naipaul and his readers, 'Islam' somehow is made to cover everything that one most disapproves of from the standpoint of civilized and Western rationality."<sup>2</sup> Allah did not give man the full liberty to legislate. He instead, provided very well defined guidance to protect human beings from going astray and hence violating others' rights.

The purpose of this book is to provide a historical overview of the rights of women in the major religions of the world. More attention will be given to the status of women in contemporary western societies with comparison to the Islamic view regarding women. However, I do not intend to provide an extensive account of such a novel topic but rather present a general framework in which a complete picture regarding women in a historical perspective can be drawn. ●

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2 - Edward Said, *Covering Islam*. Vintage, 1997, p.8. Said has also mentioned that 'Assiduous research has shown that there is hardly a prime-time television show without several episodes of racist and insulting caricatures of Muslims and Islam in general.



## **A** Women in the Teachings of Hinduism

A recent report disclosed by the UN mentioned that women in India are facing a number of problems including malnutrition, poor health care and lack of education. This is reflected on the ratio of the number of men to women, 960 women for 1000 men<sup>3</sup>. Another problem is that men are demanding high dowry from the bride's family, which has put a lot of economical pressure on the bride's family<sup>4</sup>. Such unfair practice was one of the factors behind the escalating rates of infanticide. Female children face a higher probability of abortion at late pregnancy due to the ability to diagnose the sex of the baby via ultrasound. Selective abortion is also done because of preference to male babies. Female infanticide has become a common practice. As a matter of fact, the burning of the widow Sati alive after the death of her

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3 - BBC online, 2/7/2000

4 - Fred Plog and Daniel G. Bates. *Cultural Anthropology*. New York: Knopf, 1982, p. 209.



husband is part of the Hindu teachings that has been practiced against women through history. It was very prevalent in India until the British government prohibited it in 1930.

In his book *Modern Hinduism*, Wilkins (1975) asserted that Rashtra women in Hinduism would never acquire liberty whatsoever. Simply, because the highly respected teachings of the Hindu Avtar, Manu, that is called Dharma Shastra ordains that:

By a girl, or by a young woman, or by a woman advanced in years, nothing must be, even in the dwelling-place, according to her mere pleasure. In childhood, a female must be dependent on her mere father, in youth on her husband, her lord (husband) being dead, on her sons. A woman must not seek independence. (Dharma Shastra, Ch. V. pp. 162-3)<sup>5</sup>

According to Manu's teachings, there are certain types of beings who do not deserve any rights

Three persons, a wife, a son and a slave, are declared by law to have in general no wealth of their own. The wealth, which they may earn, is regularly acquired for the man to whom they belong.<sup>6</sup>

Women in Manu's teachings are even denied the right

5 - W. J. Wilkins, *Modern Hinduism*. London, 1975, p. 180.

6 - George Buhlerg, *The Law of Manu*. Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1982, p.326, Chapter VIII, verse 416.

to worship Hindu gods in their own name, they must pray in their husbands' names.

The wife is forbidden the comfort of approaching the gods in her own name. No sacrifice is allowed to women apart from their husbands, no religious rite, no fasting.<sup>7</sup>

They do not seem to have a personality of their own. They are just attached to man. They are also not allowed to read religious books. According to the Dharma Shastra of Manu,

For women no (sacramental) rite (is performed) with sacred texts, thus the law is settled; women who are destitute of strength and destitute of (the knowledge of) Vedic texts, (are as impure as) falsehood (itself), that is a fixed rule.<sup>8</sup>

In accordance with these teachings, The Dalit Voice, 1-15 of February, 1994 reported that Shankarachari of Puri Swami Nischalanda publicly stopped a woman from reciting verses of the Vedas at a gathering in Calcutta on January 16th, 1994.<sup>9</sup>

The strict caste system imposed by the Brahmins (the learned Hindu priests and upper caste) has resulted in the degradation of other castes. Women were affected the most, especially those of lower castes. Dr. Chatterjee (1993) re-

7 - Wilkins, p. 181.

8 - Buhlerg, p. 330, Chapter IX, verse 18.

9 - In M. J. Fazlie, *Hindu Chauvinism and Muslims in India*. Abul Qassim Publishing House: Jeddah, 1995, p. 51.

ferred to a report by the Times of India in which they referred to Devadasi system (religious prostitution) imposed by priests." Poor low-class girls, initially sold at private auctions, were later dedicated to the temples. They were then initiated into prostitution".<sup>10</sup> In another report The Times of India, in its issue of the 10th of November, 1987 has confirm the wide spread of Devadasi system. The system involves dedicating "young Harijian girls (Mahars, Mangs, Dowris and Chambhar) at childhood to a goddess, and their initiation into prostitution when they attain puberty continues to thrive in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and other parts of South India. This is due to social backwardness, poverty, and illiteracy".

The report mentioned that this system of prostitution flourishes as a result of conspiracy between the feudal class and the Brahmins. With their ideological and religious influence, they had control over the illiterate peasants and craftsmen, and prostitution was religiously sanctioned. The report referred to a study by two doctors from the Indian Health Organization that girls from poor families were sold after puberty at private auctions to a master who initially paid a sum of money to the families ranging from Rs. 500 to 5000.<sup>11</sup>

According to Vedic teachings, the women have no rights. They are just blessed to be subservient to their husbands.

Whatever be the qualities of the man with whom a woman is united according to the law, such qualities even she assumes is like a river (united) with the ocean.<sup>12</sup>

10 - Dr. M. A. Chatterjee, Oh You Hindu Awake! Indian Patriots Council. 1993, p.28.

11 - Chatterjee, p.29

12 - Buhlerg, p. 331, Chapter IX, verse 22.

In another verse the Vedic teachings of Manu give no value, whatsoever, to women.

Neither by sale nor by repudiation is a wife released from her husband; such we know the law to be, which the lord of creatures (Pragapati) made of old.<sup>13</sup>

Women according to authentic Hindu Vedic teachings are just like property that can be inherited and used by one's relative.

The wife of an elder brother is for his younger (brother) the wife of a Guru...<sup>14</sup>

Manu implemented a similar law regarding the inheritance of the wife of the deceased husband by his

If the (future) husband of a maiden dies after troth verbally plighted, her brother-in-law shall wed her ...<sup>15</sup>

The rigid and unfair caste system has favored the Brahmins at the expense of other castes. Women of lower casts and their offspring have suffered in many ways. Receiving unfair share of inheritance was only one issue. According to Manu's law;

The *Brahmana* (son) shall take four shares, the son of the *Kashatriya*



13 - Buhlerg, p. 335, Chapter IX, verse 46.

14 - Buhlerg, p. 337, Chapter IX, verse 57.

15 - Buhlerg, p. 339, Chapter IX, verse 69.

(wife) three, the son of the *Vaisya* shall have two parts, the son of the *Sudra* may take one share.<sup>16</sup>

Women according to Manu's Hindu teachings do not have the right to question their husbands or take legitimate measures to correct their husband's behavior.

She who shows disrespect to (a husband) who is addicted to (some evil) passion, is a drunkard, or diseased, shall be deserted for three months (and be) deprived of her ornaments and furniture.<sup>17</sup>

Unrestricted polygyny is legalized by Hindu teachings. Ram father has several wives in addition to many concubines.<sup>18</sup> Krishna, the hero of *Mahabharat* and an incarnation of *Vishnu* (Hindu god) had eight chief wives. He married another sixteen thousand and one hundred women on the same day.<sup>19</sup> Swami Vamdev of VHP, is in favor of issuing permission to Hindu males to have a maximum of 25 wives.<sup>20</sup>

**Unrestricted polygyny is legalized by Hindu teachings. Ram father has several wives in addition to many concubines. Krishna, the hero of Mahabharat and an incarnation of Vishnu (Hindu god) had eight chief wives.**

16 - Buhlerg, p. 358, Chapter IX, verse 154. Deciding the unfair share for the offsprings of non-Baramana continues in verses 154- 161. If this the fate of the sons, we can imagine the fate of the daughters.

17 - Buhlerg, p. 341, Chapter IX, verse 78.

18 - Dr. Babasaheb R. Ambedkar, **Riddle of Rama & Krishna**, Bangalore, 1988, p.8, in Fazlie 1995, p.107.

19 - **Ambedka Statistical**, p.25.

20 - Fazile, p.107.

In Hindu society, on the other hand, the life of women whose husbands have perished becomes unbearable to the extent that they have to commit suttee, a form of suicide. Gustave le Bon wrote about this aspect of the Indian society by saying:<sup>21</sup>

The immolation of widows on the funeral of their husbands is not mentioned in the Shastra, but it appears that the practice had become quite common in India, for we find references to it in the accounts of Greek Chroniclers.

This disdain for females is also seen in reports by the Indian media, which report that great numbers of young girls are buried alive because the females are viewed as an economic burden to their parents. **UNICEF** revealed that the phenomenon of infanticide is widespread in most of India's 60,000 villages where 70% of Indians live. 40% of girls at school age do not go to school. Thus, the vast majority of the 84% India's illiterate population is made of women.<sup>22</sup>

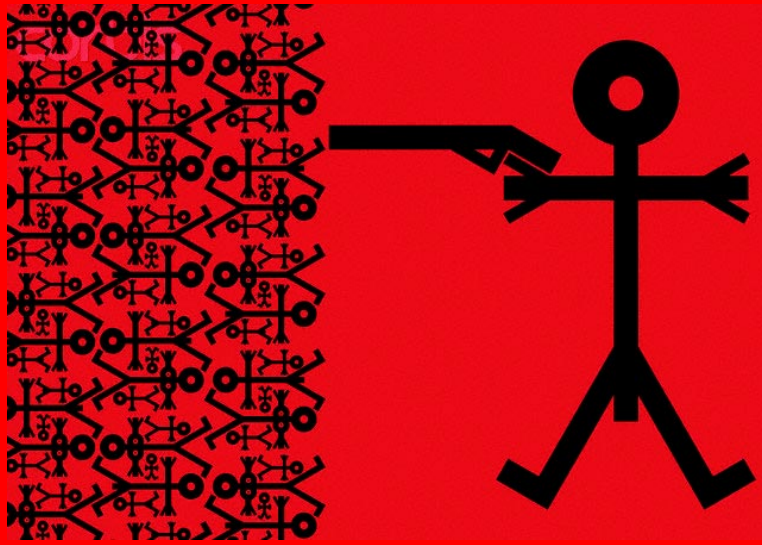
**The Times** reported the one-child-only policy applied in China nowadays has led many Chinese to desire a male child. Consequently, they abort female babies, kill their female toddlers or sell their older girls to mobile slave merchants. In this regard, the Chinese police have recently arrested 49 members of a gang whose job it was to buy, smuggle, and sell girls all over China. As a result of this savage treatment of female children in China, the Chinese Committee for State Planning reported that the number of males is 36 million more than the number of females.<sup>23</sup> O'Connell 1994 reported that

21 - Gustave le Bon. *Les Civilization de Inde*. P. 238.

22 - *Al-Ussrah*, No. 51, Jumada II 1418.

23 - *In The Family*, 15, September. P. 7.





**O'Connell 1994 reported that more than one million female babies were killed in China as a result of the one-child policy that was imposed by the state.**

more than one million female babies were killed in China as a result of the one-child policy that was imposed by the state. <sup>24</sup>

In this section, a general view of some aspects of the status of women in Hindu teachings was briefly introduced. The complex caste system that divides people into certain socio-economic categories with unequal rights has very much affected the position of women in the Hindu teachings. I am turning my focus on the image and status of women in the Old Testament. The following section will bring into perspective the way women are presented in the Old Testament.

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24 - In Zedrikly 1997, p20.



## **B** Women in the Old Testament

The image of women in the Old Testament is not flattering. Many Old Testament verses represent women in the most evil image. In one place, they are shown as the source of deception, which led to the calamities of mankind. Eve was blamed as the one who persuaded Adam to eat from the forbidden tree with the result that Adam and his progeny were banished from paradise. This sin of disobeying the orders of God has resulted in what is known as the Original Sin and the Christian dogma of redemption through Christ, 'the savior'.

This perception of Eve as temptress in the Bible has resulted in an extremely negative impact on women throughout the Judo-Christian tradition. All women were believed to have inherited from their mother, the Biblical Eve, both her guilt and her guile. Consequently, they were all untrustwor-

thy, morally inferior, and wicked. Menstruation, pregnancy, and childbearing were considered the just punishment for the eternal guilt of the cursed female sex. In order to appreciate how negative the impact of the Biblical Eve was on all her female descendants we have to look at the writings of some of the most important Jews and Christians of all time. Let us start with the Old Testament and look at excerpts from what is called the Wisdom Literature in which we find:

"I find bitterer than death the woman who is a snare, whose heart is a trap and whose hands are chains. The man who pleases God will escape her, but the sinner she will ensnare....while I was still searching but not finding, I found one upright man among a thousand but not one upright woman among them all" (Ecclesiastes 7:26-28).

In another part of the Hebrew literature which is found in the Catholic Bible we read:

"No wickedness comes anywhere near the wickedness of a woman.....Sin began with a woman and thanks to her we all must die" (Ecclesiasticus 25:19, 24).<sup>25</sup>

According to the OT, women have been punished for the sin of their mother, Eve, by carrying the burden of pregnancy and the pains of childbirth.

(Genesis3:16)

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25 - Dr. Sherif Abdel Azeem, in <http://www.twf.org/library/women ICJ.htm/>

16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. <sup>26</sup>

Such blame and sever punishment contradicts with the Qur'anic reporting of responsibility for people's actions regardless of their sex, male or female. As a matter of fact, The Qur'an never blamed Eve alone for eating from the forbidden tree.

Al-A'raaf : 22-23

So, he (Satan) misled them (Adam and Eve) with deception . . . . And their Lord called out to them (saying): "Did I not forbid you that tree and tell you: Verily, Satan is an open enemy unto you?"

They said: "our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If you forgive us not, and bestow not upon us Your mercy, we shall certainly be of the losers."

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26 - What I found very consistent is that in many places in the Bible offspring are taken for their ancestor's sin. I will only quote a few incidents.

Exodus 20:5

For I the Lord of thy God am a jealous God. Visiting the iniquity of the father upon the children unto the third and fourth generation. (Reiterated in Exodus 34:7)

Deuteronomy 23:2

A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to his tenth generation.

The Qur'an emphasizes that each Person is personally responsible for his/her deeds.

No person earns any (sin) except against himself (only), and no bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another. Then unto your lord is your return, so He will tell you that wherein you have been differing. (Al-An'aam: 164)

The concept of The Original Sin is totally foreign to Islamic and responsibility teachings because of three reasons. One, it contradicts the uniqueness of every human being. Two, it is unfair to blame and put wrath on the whole of humanity because of the wrong doing of a person. Three, the concept of the Original Sin was a pretext for finding another problematic teaching which links salvation to atonement through Christ. The Qur'an rejects the fatalist view of the destiny of human beings and urges people to assume responsibility for their conduct and choices.

Al-Israa': 14

Whoever goes right, then he goes right only for the benefit of his own self. And whoever goes astray, then



**The Qur'an rejects the fatalist view of the destiny of human beings and urges people to assume responsibility for their conduct and choices.**

he goes astray to his own loss. No one laden with burdens can bear another's burden. And We never punish until We have sent a messenger (to give warning).

Al-Nahel: 97

Whoever works righteousness, whether male of female, while he (or she) is a true believer (of Islamic Monotheism) verily, to him We will give a good life, and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportions to the best of what they used to do (i.e. Paradise in the Hereafter).

Kendath (1983) reported that Orthodox Jewish men in their daily prayer recite "Blessed be God King of the universe that Thou has not made me a women." On the other hand, women thank God every morning for "making me according to Thy will."<sup>27</sup> According to the Jewish Talmud, "Women are exempted from the study of the Torah." Swidler (1976) mentioned that Rabbi Eliezer said: "If a man teaches his daughter Torah it is as though he taught her lechery."<sup>28</sup> This prohibition is due to the unbelievable fabricated stories regarding daughters and wives of the prophets that they might find in the scriptures.

Jewish Rabbis listed nine curses inflicted on women

27 - Thena Kendath, *Memories of an Orthodox Youth*. In Susannah Heschel, ed. **On being a Jewish Feminist**. New York: Schocken Books, 1983, pp. 96-7.

28 - Leonard J. Swidler, **Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism**. Metuchen, N.J. : Scarecrow Press, 1976, pp. 83-93.

as a result of the Fall:

"To the woman He gave nine curses and death: the burden of the blood of menstruation and the blood of virginity; the burden of pregnancy; the burden of childbirth; the burden of bringing up the children; her head is covered as one in mourning; she pierces her ear like a permanent slave or slave girl who serves her master; she is not to be believed as a witness; and after everything--death."<sup>29</sup>

Contrary to the Biblical teachings, The Qur'an does not view childbirth and pregnancy as a punishment for women but rather as an honorable duty that the mothers should be appreciated for.

And We have enjoined upon man (to be dutiful and good) to his parents. His mother bore him in weakness and hardship, and his weaning is in two years - give thanks

to Me and to your parents, - unto Me is the final destination. (Luqmaan: 14)

29 - Leonard J. Swidler, Women in Judaism: the Status of Women in Formative Judaism (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1976) p. 115. (in Abdel Azeem).



**The Qur'an does not view childbirth and pregnancy as a punishment for women but rather as an honorable duty that the mothers should be appreciated for.**

By studying the verses from the Old Testament, the book in which both Jews and Christian believe, regarding the punishment of a rapist, one wonders who is really punished? Is it the man who raped the innocent woman or the woman who has been raped and violated? If this is the way dignity and chastity of women are perceived, what would prevent someone from looking for the best looking women in town, rape her, tell everybody about it, and then have the court force her to be his wife for the rest of her life? This is a quote from Deuteronomy regarding such a case.



**According to the Old Testament, daughters inherit their father only if they have no brothers. Widows, mothers, and sisters are deprived of inheritance.**

KJV Deuteronomy 22:29-30

29. Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the

damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

According to the Old Testament, daughters inherit their father only if they have no brothers. Widows, mothers, and sisters are deprived of inheritance.

KJV Numbers 27:6-10

6. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, 7. The daughters of Zelophehad speak right: thou shalt



surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them. 8. And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a man die, and have no son, then ye shall cause his inheritance to pass unto his daughter. 9. And if he have no daughter, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his brethren. 10. And if he have no brethren, then ye shall give his inheritance unto his father's brethren.

I have briefly reviewed some of the teachings of the Old Testament regarding women. In the course of my research, I kept wondering how it was possible for so many immoral stories to be attributed to God's noble envoys, the prophets (peace and blessing of Allah be upon them all).



## **C** Women in the Teachings of Christianity

In her book *Islam and Christianity*, Ulfat Azizusamad attributed the introduction of monogyny into Christianity, and hence admiring celibacy, to the negative attitudes many Christian religious leaders held towards women and marriage in general. St. Paul, the real founder of the current form of Christianity, regarded women as temptresses. He laid the entire blame for the fall of man and the genesis of sin on women. We find in the New Testament statements that underscore such negative attitudes towards women; among which are the following:

KJV 1 Timothy 2:11-15

11 Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. 12 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 13 For Adam was first formed,



then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 15 Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith, charity, and holiness with sobriety.

In order to understand the reason behind the contempt of women in the West for many centuries, we need to analyze the extreme position canonized saints of Christianity held against women. Some of these teachings are listed below:

"Woman is a daughter of falsehood, a sentinel of Hell, the enemy of peace; through her Adam lost Paradise." (St. John Damascene, P.79)

"Woman is the instrument which the Devil uses to gain possession of our souls." (St. Cyprian, P.79)

"Woman has the poison of an asp, the malice of a dragon." (St. Gregory the Great, P.79)<sup>30</sup>

The supreme engineer of the New Testament, St. Paul, addressed women with a much more severe language.

"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I don't permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For

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30 - Ulfat Aziz-us-sammad, Islam and Christianity, Presidency of Islamic Research: Riyadh, 1984, p. 79.

Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner" (I Timothy 2:11-14).

St. Tertullian was even blunter and more candid than St. Paul, while he was addressing his 'best beloved sisters' in the faith, he said:

"Do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the Devil's gateway: You are the unsealer of the forbidden tree: You are the first deserter of the divine law: You are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert even the Son of God had to die."

St. Augustine was faithful to the legacy of his predecessors, he wrote to a friend:

"What is the difference whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any woman.....I fail to see what use woman can be to man, if one excludes the function of bearing children."

Centuries later, St. Thomas Aquinas still considered

women as defective:

"As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence."

Azeem, as an expert in women rights alludes to some of the most prominent Christian reforms by stating:" the renowned reformer Martin Luther could not see any benefit from a woman but bringing into the world as many children as possible regardless of any side effects:

"If they become tired or even die, that does not matter. Let them die in childbirth, that's why they are there"<sup>31</sup>

Again and again all women are denigrated because of the image of Eve the temptress, thanks to the Genesis account. To sum up, the Judaeo-Christian conception of women has been poisoned by the belief in the sinful nature of Eve and her female offspring".

Understandably, many Christian monks preferred the life of celibacy to getting married to women. Marriage was

31 - For all the sayings of the prominent Saints, see Karen Armstrong (a former Catholic nun), *The Gospel According to Woman* (London: Elm Tree Books, 1986) pp. 52-62. See also Nancy van Vuuren, *The Subversion of Women as Practiced by Churches, Witch-Hunters, and Other Sexists* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press) pp. 28-30.

looked at as a practice, which is too worldly. It will divert the person from devoting his full time to God. In modern times, this system of worship has proved to be fraught with problems. Very few people today are willing to embrace celibacy and join the priesthood. The number of young people seen in nunneries and monasteries is dwindling.

Following the Jewish tradition as represented by the Old Testament and having in mind that Prophet Jesus (SAAW) never prohibited polygyny, early Jews and Christians were polygynous. It was given as an option for those who can carry the responsibility of marriage and family life not for those seeking the pleasures of sex. Some sects of Christianity still practice this tradition (i.e. the Mormons of Utah in the US). It is reported in the Old Testament that King Solomon (SAAW) had many wives.

KJV 1 Kings 11:1-8

1. But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites. 2. Of the nations concerning which the Lord said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not



**Very few people today are willing to embrace celibacy and join the priesthood. The number of young people seen in nunneries and monasteries is dwindling.**

go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. [Is it possible for the great prophet of Allah, Solomon, to disobey God in such an irresponsible manner?)<sup>3</sup>3. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 4. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6. And Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his father. 7. Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 8. And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods.<sup>32</sup>

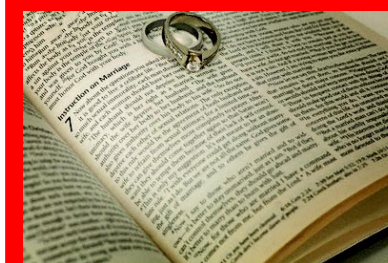
32 - Much of what is said about Prophet Solomon (SAAW) in this excerpt from the Old Testament is considered to be false by The Teachings of Islam. A prophet of Allah will never turn to idolatry. The Jews consider Solomon not as a great prophet of God but merely a king.

Prophet Abraham had two wives, Sarah and Hagar. Luther, on one occasion, spoke of polygyny with considerable toleration and was known to have approved the polygynous status of Philip of Hesse.<sup>33</sup>

So, why does current Christianity reject polygyny in contradiction with its holy books? Christian religious leaders who claimed certain prophetic powers and characteristics including revelation (direct verbal contact with God) intervened to change the laws of family relations for the benefit of men who did not want to bear the responsibility of marriage.

Another reason behind the negative attitudes of Christianity towards the practice of polygyny is related to the historical contact Christianity had with the more advanced philosophy of the Greek-Roman culture. Christianity was influenced by their concepts of bizarre kind of strange monogyny. The majority of the population was considered as slaves who could be used freely. So, there is no need for any form of polygyny that would restrict such liberty of men and impose certain rights for women in the society. Many Greek philosophers regarded utility and happiness as the sole criteria for morality. They waged a vicious war against ethics and values that stand in the way of full satisfaction and pleasure in life. Man to them should be left to seek as much pleasure as he wants. There-

33 - J. Jones and B. Philips 1985, p.3.



**why does current Christianity reject polygyny in contradiction with its holy books?**

fore, they perceived no value in Christian traditional demands for chastity.



**Islam is the only universal way of life that provides a pragmatic, universal, workable and natural system and solution to the world's current dilemmas.**

Bear in mind that the negative impact of different extreme approaches towards institutionalized polygyny in Roman-Christian society (free Roman bohemian sex and refrain from marriage and the negative attitude towards women by Christian clergy) resulted in today's social disasters. These social ills include: the alarming rates of single mothers, sexual harassment, teenage births, children born out of wedlock, etc. Islam is the only universal way of life that provides a pragmatic, universal, workable and natural system

and solution to the world's current dilemmas.

Though it was common that women, children and old people did not participate in war, according to the teachings of The Bible their right to live is not protected. The slaying of women and children of the Israelites' enemies was considered a normal practice. Many biblical verses described the practice:

KJV Numbers 31:15-24

17. Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.

18. But all the women children, that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

KJV Luke 19:26-27

27. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

KJV Ezekiel 9:4-7

4. And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. 5. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: 6. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.

KJV 1 Samuel 15:1-3

3. Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man

and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass.

KJV Isaiah 13:15-16

15. Every one that is found shall be thrust through; and every one that is joined unto them shall fall by the sword. 16. Their children also shall be dashed to pieces before their eyes; their houses shall be spoiled, and their wives ravished.

KJV Hosea 13:16

16. Samaria shall become desolate; for she hath rebelled against her God: they shall fall by the sword: their infants shall be dashed in pieces, and their women with child shall be ripped up.

Such verses probably have given the Serbs and the Zionists the legitimacy to kill women and children indiscriminately. The existence of such verses regarding the command to massacre even infants is what has hindered The Pope from renouncing the atrocities committed against Muslims women and children in Bosnia and Kosova.

No doubt those original Judeo-Christian teachings preached by prophets Moses and Jesus (peace and blessing be upon them) abhor such kind of practices and consider them acts of immorality, but unfortunately these principles of morality and chastity are not even implemented by people who claim teaching the word of God. Many have warned against the soaring of immoral practices under the

guise of personal freedom. At the time when we hear of homosexual priests and open marriages, anything can be expected since virginity and chastity are looked at as out of fashion and as characteristics of backwardness. I remember Edwin Cook's (a former American Surgeon General) re-

sponse to a question on radio about the best way to stop the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; "MORALITY!" was the answer. At a time when the feminists are proceeding to demand full equality between men and women, they have met with considerable opposition from many women who are not in favor of 'substantial changes in traditional sex role distinctions. Phyllis Schlafly, for example, is a vocal opponent of the Equal Rights Amendment and believes that women could actually lose certain important rights as a consequence. She also feels that women find their greatest fulfillment at home with family .<sup>34</sup>

Needless to say, the churches and their religious hierarchy have become corrupt and concerned with wealth and fame more than morality. They care more about quantitative evangelization through investing on the misery of the poor and the agony of the sick. Instead, they should focus their

34 - in T. Sullivan, K. Thomson, R. Wright, G. Gross and D. Spady, Social Problems: Divergent Perspectives. John Wiley & Sons: New York, 1980, pp.456-7.



**Edwin Cook's (a former American Surgeon General) response to a question on radio about the best way to stop the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; "MORALITY!" was the answer.**





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message on combating immorality and re-instituting chastity and ethics. President Clinton's appeal for forgiveness after his denial regarding relations with the White House employee, Monica Lewinsky, is very similar to Rev. Jimmy Swagart's crocodile's tears to deceive more people and get more of

their money. Diane Sawyer had shown in a number of series in her Prime Time on ABC TV that many of these televangelists' aims were merely accumulating massive wealth at the expenses of the deceived faithful. These very dangerous systems are flooding larger parts of the world and being exported to other parts of the world under the guise of human rights and liberalism.

Can God, the Merciful, The Compassionate and the all Forgiving say such verses and give such vicious commands as referred to God and the Prophets of God in the existing Bible? Definitely NOT! Unless, His is not the same god that has directed Muhammad (SAAW) not kill a child, a women or an old man but only those who fight in the battle field and cause aggression. I would not be unfair to say that such unbelievable views against women in Hinduism, Judaism and Christianity were behind many of the miseries that women have been facing throughout history, which led to the extremes of today's immorality, liberalism, feminism and secularism. ●



## **D** Women in Contemporary Times

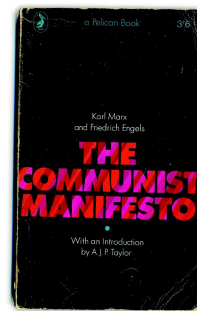
Maryam Jameelah reported that the first champions of the movement for women's 'emancipation' were no other than the very well known western thinkers, Marx and Engel. They were undoubtedly the founders of Communism that proved to be a disastrous system of life. Their communist Manifesto (1948) preached that marriage, home and family were nothing more than a curse which has kept women in perpetual slavery. Thus, they insisted that the women must be liberated from domestic servitude and achieve full economic independence through whole-time employment in industry. The main aim of those women liberation champions and other adamant supporters of feminism was to grant women as much freedom to indulge in illicit sex as the men through mixed education, employment outside the home side by side with men, social functions and courtship before marriage in semi-nude fashion, mixed social functions which include drinking, drug-taking and dancing.<sup>35</sup> This included

35 - Maryam Jameelah. **Islam in Theory and Practice**. H. Farooq Associates Ltd: Lahore, 1983, pp. 94-5.

the widespread use of contraceptives, sterilizations, and abortion to prevent unwanted pregnancies, at the expense of the women who carry the burden of emancipation. Families are broken. Children are neglected and abused. Morality has become an old unwanted commodity.

Many concerned intellectuals have openly uttered their concern regarding the unlimited personal freedom that has resulted in great damage to the society as a whole, and probably to humanity at large. Among those intellectuals is Max Lerner, an acknowledged American historian and columnist. In an article in the *Readers' Digest* as early as April 1968, he uttered his deep concern regarding the dramatic negative changes that took place under the guise of personal freedom by writing:

We are living in a Babylonian society, ... the emphasis is on the senses and the release of sexuality. All the old codes have been broken down. Until recently, the church, the government, the family and the com-



**The Communist Manifesto preached that marriage, home and family were nothing more than a curse which has kept women in perpetual slavery.**

munity have dictated what can and cannot be expressed in public. However, now these institutions have been overrun by the demands of a mass society that demands to see and hear everything. Across the United States of America, audiences pack art houses and neighborhood theaters to watch the multiple orgasms of a seldom-clothed young Swedish actress in *I, a Woman*. Italian director, Michelangelo Antonioni breaks the taboo against head-on, total nudity in *Blow-up*. In *Barbarella*, a film built around the endless seductions of a French comic-strip heroine, Jane Fonda hops from one nude scene to the next in celebration of the erotic life. *Portrait of Jason*, a remarkable voyage into the twisted soul of a black, male prostitute, compresses in less than two hours all the raw language and candid corners of life that today find free expression in almost every independent American film. The Jesuit theologian, Father Walter J. Ong, says: 'We are going to have to live with a degree of freedom much greater than anything we've known in the past...' <sup>36</sup>

36 - Max Lerner, *Our Anything Goes Society-Where is it Going*. *Readers' Digest*, April 1968.

In the following part of this book, I will be simply summarizing some of the consequences that today's unrestricted liberalism has caused to the family, the society and to the whole world.

## 1. Infidelity

Infidelity and extramarital sex are becoming part of individual personal freedoms in most western and westernized societies. Fidelity in today's marriages has become idealistic. Such extramarital sex practices have caused many problems in the society at large. Abortion rates are escalating; more children are born out of wedlock. Social and psychological traumas have severely affected the family as a heaven for its members. One factor behind such extramarital practices is related to the imbalance in the number of men and women in most western communities.

According to **The National Opinion Research Center** (1995), 25% of American married men had sex partner(s), (from one to six), beside their wives during the past twelve months. During the same period, about 15% of American married women had other sex partners beside their husbands (from one to six). During their lifetime, American men usually have an average of six sex partners.<sup>37</sup>

The Clinton-Lewinsky drama may take place with ordinary people but is not expected of the commander-in-Chief of the most powerful nation on earth. It involved very outrageous sexual acts and discussed in the most disgusting way that parents had to keep their children away from watching their TV sets or listening to the horrible details of such immoral relations. Why is this taking place in a society that is in great need of family ethics and morality and where fatal

37 - Reported in **The Macmillan Visual Almanac**, 1996, p.104

**The National Center for Health Statistics conducted interviews with 60,201 women in response to National Survey of Family Growth between January and October 1995. Only 10.5% of women interviewed did not have partners beside their husbands. The remaining 89.5% of women reported having extramarital relations.**

*Abstract of the United States 1998*

ity and chastity as radical, backward and abnormal. The National Center for Health Statistics conducted interviews with 60,201 women in response to National Survey of Family Growth between January and October 1995. Only 10.5% of women interviewed did not have partners beside their husbands. The remaining 89.5% of women reported having extramarital relations.<sup>38</sup>

## 2. Teenage Births

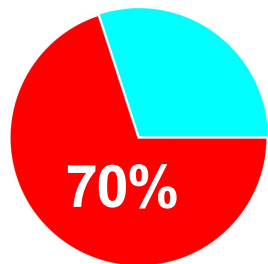
As long as programs like "Dr. Ruth Live" are unleashed to teach open sex on the air and other similar programs, only horrible statistics like the following are expected. In 1990 alone about, 67% of teenage births were to unmarried mothers; this is excluding abortions. What is more disastrous is

38 - Abstract of the United States 1998, 118th edition. Issue October 1998, p.86.

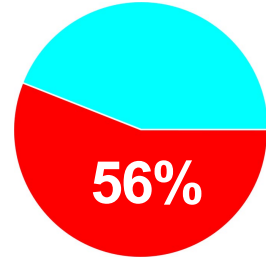
diseases like AIDS are serious threats?

The answer is very simple. These immoral practices are expected to happen in any society that has lost its divinely revealed values and morals, which control the fragile relationship between women and men. Infidelity and other unchaste practices are expected to become the norm in societies that perceive morality, virgin-

Macmillan Visual Almanac (1995) reported that



of American boys had had sexual intercourse before the age of 18



of American girls had lost their virginity before the age of 18

that in the majority of teenager births, the mothers are left alone to carry the financial and emotional responsibilities of raising the newly born babies. The males just abandon them both, and probably look for other easy preys. **Macmillan Visual Almanac** (1995) reported that 70% of American boys had had sexual intercourse before the age of 18, while 56% of the girls had lost their virginity by that age.

Men and women mix and mingle freely with one another with no reasonable restrictions in such a society where these kinds of relations between men and women are prevalent. Men and women could lock themselves alone in houses, offices or any other private locations; just as President Clinton did with Monica in the Oval office with the excuse that they were involved in serious work for the good of the nation. Western and western-like societies, have for long time, had blindly demolished moral principles to accommodate false values and principles deceived by the mirage of

modernization and liberalism which pushed men and women into dark tunnels of adultery and hypocrisy.

### 3. Sexual Harassment

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** stated that reported sexual harassment complaints by female employees were 10,578 cases during the year 1992. In 1993, the number increased to be 12,537 cases.<sup>39</sup> The problem is not only restricted to the USA, but rather a global one, especially in societies that put no restrictions in men/women relations. According to a recent report by the **International Labor Organization** (ILO), entitled 'Combating Sexual Harassment at Work', November 1992, thousands of women are victims of sexual harassment at the workplace in the industrialized world every year. Between 15-30 percent of women questioned in surveys by ILO say they have been subject to frequent, gross sexual harassment. Of all women surveyed in the United States, 42% of women reported some kind of sexual harassment. The report included countries like Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom. **The Labor Research Department** made a survey in 1987 in which 75% of women responding to the questionnaire reported that they had undergone some form of sexual harassment in their workplaces.<sup>40</sup> According to the Center of Health and Gender Equality (CHANGE) for Population Reports, 25% of women in Australia reported sexual abuse in the year 1997. The same percentage was reported in Switzerland during the year 1996. In Costa Rica, 32% of women surveyed reported some form of sexual harassment, while 8% of women studied in Malaysia reported that they had been sexually harassed.

39 - **The Macmillan Visual Almanac**, 1996 p.37

40 - The 1994 Information Please Almanac, InfoSoft Int'l, Inc.

### Sexual abuse against women reported in various countries

Country	Percentage (%)	Year
United States	42	1992
Australia	25	1997
Switzerland	25	1996
Costa Rica	32	1996
Malaysia	8	1996

#### 4. Single Parent Family

Single parenting was not a common type of human social relations throughout history. It was only during the later part of the last century that this type of family relations has developed. Escalating rates of divorce and the birth of children to unmarried mothers have been the major factors behind the emergence of single parenting. The decay of morality in western and western-like societies because of very alarming rates of children born out of wedlock has reached about 50 % of all births in a country like Sweden. A more proper term for such a family type should have been mother headed family. Mothers head more that 90% of these single parent families.

The UK has occupied the highest rank in the number of single parent families in the whole of Europe. The Times issue of the 27th of September

**Escalating rates of divorce and the birth of children to unmarried mothers have been the major factors behind the emergence of single parenting.**

1991, reported that the percentage of single parent families has doubled during the nineties; 16.7% in comparison to 8.3% during the early seventies. Women compose 90% of these families. Similar situations were also reported in Australia.<sup>41</sup> Jean Lewis (1992) has blamed the escalating number of single parent families on three emerging social changes: (1) fast increase in the number of working women outside the home, (2) escalating rates of divorce during the 70's & 80's and (3) the dramatic increase in the birth of illegitimate children.<sup>42</sup>

#### 5. Violence against Women and Children

Violence in the family against women and children in particular has greatly increased. Though such a problem is not confined to Western societies, it has become the norm of life. In the US, for example, more than two million women have reported to the police violent aggression by a husband or a partner. Aburdene and Naisbitt (1993) have also stated that four women are beaten to death on a daily basis in the US.<sup>43</sup> One in five women victimized by their spouses or ex-spouses report they had been victimized over and over again by the same person.<sup>44</sup>

The following report by National Crime Victimization Survey Report summarizes the magnitude of violence against women in the US.

A study of violence against women shows that two-thirds of these at-

41 - Prof. Shatha S. Zedrikly, **Muslim Women and Contemporary Challenges**. Majdalawi Press: Amman, 1997, p. 95.

42 - Zedrikly, p. 95.

43 - In Zedrikly, p.97.

44 - The Basics of Batterer Treatment, Common Purpose, Inc., Jamaica Plain, MA



tacks were committed by someone the victim knew--such as a husband, boyfriend, other family member or acquaintance--a much higher figure than for men.

The survey, conducted by the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics, found approximately 2.5 million of the nation's 107 million females 12 years old and older were raped, robbed or assaulted in a typical year, or were the victim of a threat or an attempt to commit such a crime. Twenty-eight percent of the offenders were intimates, such as husbands or boyfriends, and another 39 percent were acquaintances or relatives . . . . The findings were drawn from more than 400,000 interviews conducted between 1987 and 1991.

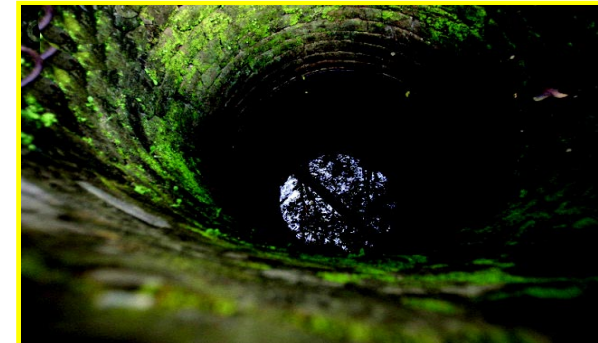
The report pointed out that although violent crimes against males have decreased since the Bureau of Justice Statistics started its annual victimization surveys in 1973, the rate against females has remained relatively constant . . .

Although black females were more than twice as likely as were white females to be robbery victims, there were no significant racial differences

in per capita rates among female victims of rape or assault .<sup>45</sup>

Senator Joseph Biden reported that nationally, 50 percent of all homeless women and children are on the streets because of violence in the home.<sup>46</sup> Bennett and La Violette (1993) estimated around four million women report experiencing some kind of physical assault yearly. This takes place at a time where only half a million car accidents take place. Seventy five percent of violence takes place because the woman asks for divorce.<sup>47</sup>

According to United Nations' 1991 Report on Women in India, the social custom that the bride's family should pay dowry to the bridegroom has proven to work against promoting harmony in the marriage. Many men demand high dowry and valuable gifts even after marriage. When the families of poor women cannot meet the demand of the greedy husbands, they face brutal and sometimes deadly assaults. In the year 1987 alone, about 1786 women



**In India about 1786 women were killed because of falling short of meeting the dowry demands of their husbands, in the year 1987 alone.**

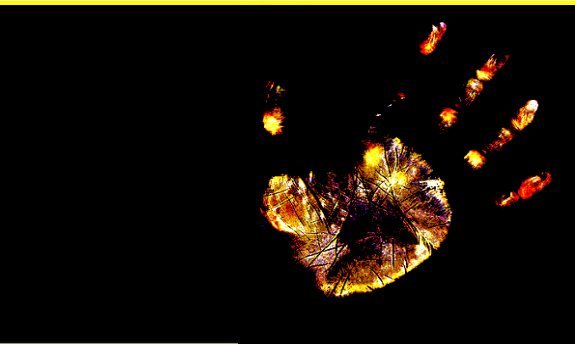
45 - Single copies of the BJS National Crime Victimization Survey Report, "Violence Against Women" (NCJ-145325)

46 - Senator Joseph Biden, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Violence Against Women: Victims of the System, 1991.

47 - In Zedrikly, p. 97.

were killed because of falling short of meeting the dowry demands of their husbands.<sup>48</sup>

The social problem of violence against women in such very large and increasing scales is not peculiar to the US



**It is estimated that 88% of the cases of violence against women went unreported.**

but rather a common phenomenon in other western and western-like societies. In Austria, 59% of divorce cases were blamed on violence within the household during the year 1984.<sup>49</sup> During the year 1992, Aburdene and Nasibit (1993) mentioned that 50% of women were killed in England by their husbands or partners.<sup>50</sup> All these reported atrocities taking place made only 22% of the abused women in the same year. It is estimated that 88% of the cases of violence against women went unreported.<sup>51</sup>

According to Russian government records, in the year 1993 alone, "14,500 Russian women were murdered by their husbands. Another 56,400 were disabled or seriously injured." Domestic violence statistics of crimes against women in England and the United States are alarming." According

48 - The United Nations Report on women in India, 1991.

49 - Zedrikly, p. 97.

50 - Zedrikly, p. 97.

51 - **Population Reports**, Vol. XXVII, No.4, Dec. 1999.



**The treatment of women and children in present secularist societies - whether in America, Europe, India, Russia, China or even Muslim societies that does not apply Islam in their lives- is very similar to that of the pre-Islamic society (jahiliyah). Islam came to abolish the abuse of women and children and to restore dignity to women, young and old alike.**

to Home Office Research, 18 percent of homicides in England and Wales are of wives killed by their husbands, with a quarter of all recorded violent crimes blamed on domestic violence."<sup>52</sup>

The treatment of women and children in present secularist societies - whether in America, Europe, India, Russia, China or even Muslim societies that does not apply Islam in their lives- is very similar to that of the pre-Islamic society

52 - James Meek. "Moscow wakes up to the toll of violence in the home" **The Guardian**, Thursday, June 22, 1995.

(jahiliyah). Islam came to abolish the abuse of women and children and to restore dignity to women, young and old alike.

Because of the social chaos that is taking place in many societies of the world, abuse is not only directed towards the weak members of the society as indicated above but rather towards those in charge of educating and disciplining. Based on a report by the Carnegie Foundation, the percentage of teachers in the U.S. who say that they have been verbally abused was 51%. As for those who have been threatened with injury, the proportion was 16% but those who have been physically attacked were 7%.<sup>53</sup>



## **E** Islamic View of Women

The Muslim view of women has been so misrepresented in the West that it is still a prevalent idea in Europe and America that Muslims think that women have no souls! In the Holy Qur'an no difference whatsoever is made between the sexes in relation to Allah; both are promised the same reward for good, the same punishment of evil conduct.<sup>54</sup>

"Verily the men who surrender (to Allah) and women who surrender, and men who believe, and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who are sincere and women who are sin-

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53 - **The Macmillan Visual Almanac**. 1996 (PP. 367)

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54 - Marmaduke Pickthall. .The Relation of the Sexes 1925 lecture on the "pitiful condition of Muslim womanhood" in [www.islam for today.com](http://www.islam for today.com)

cere, and men who endure and women who endure, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who are modest and women who are modest, and women who remember (Him), Allah hath prepared for them pardon and a great reward." [Qur'an 33:35]

It is only in relation to each other that a difference is made - the difference which actually exists - difference of function. In a verse which must have stupefied the pagan Arabs, who regarded women as devoid of human rights, it is stated:

"They (women) have right like those (of men) against them; though men are a degree above them. Allah is Almighty, All-Knowing." [Qur'an 2:228]

Aburdene and Naisbitt (1993), two prominent feminist researchers, were astonished to discover that the Qur'an does not consider women of a lower status than men; as is the case in all other religious writings. They have come to realize that male-practices against women in the Muslim World are basically based on non-Islamic social customs or misinterpretation of Islamic teachings.<sup>55</sup> Carroll (1983) admitted that she was surprised to find out that the Muslim woman is the first woman in the universe to be recognized for her economical and legal rights. She also added that the family system in Islam was legislated 1400 years ago in or-

55 - Zedrikly, p. 97. Zedrikly, p. 39.]

der to protect the corner stone of the society, the family.<sup>56</sup> Reference to the role of men and women along with their rights are detailed in The Qur'an and in the teachings of prophet Mohamed.

### 1. Women in the Qur'an

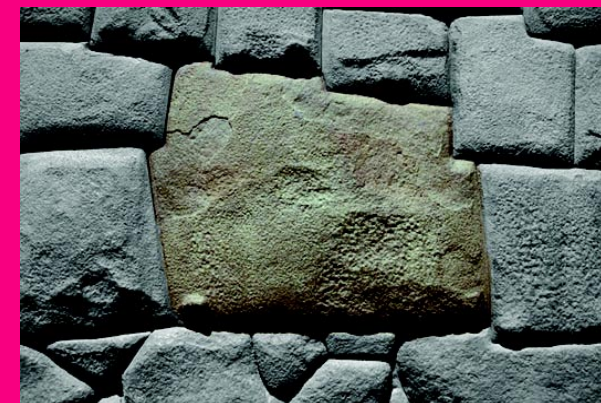
The Qur'an spoke of the different roles women play in life. It, for the first time in history, established women's rights to inheritance, respect, and dignity. The Qur'an spoke of women's role in supporting the truth, in giving birth to prophets and in suffering. The Qur'an has also spoken about the agony of women at the different walks of life and through history. Below are only very few excerpts that show to what extent such rights have been recognized in Islam.

The Qur'an introduces the Pharaoh's wife as an example for the faithful person who accepted all types of suffering for the sake of Allah.

Al-Tahrim: 11

And Allah has set forth an example for those who believe: the wife of

56 - Zedrikly, p. 97.



**Carroll (1983) admitted that she was surprised to find out that the Muslim woman is the first woman in the universe to be recognized for her economical and legal rights. She also added that the family system in Islam was legislated 1400 years ago in order to protect the corner stone of the society, the family.**



Firaun(Pharaoh), when she said:  
"My Lord! Build for me a home with  
You in Paradise, and save me from  
Firaun(Pharaoh) and his work, and  
save me from the people who are  
oppressors.

The Qur'an narrated in detail the story of Mary and her miraculous birth of Jesus Christ and how she responded to her people's (the Jews) accusation of being unchaste. In deed, a whole chapter of the Qur'an is named after her. Another long chapter of the Qur'an is titled 'The Women', An-Nisaa. The Qur'an has talked about the role of women in repentance and accepting the truth. For example the repentance of al-Aziz's wife regarding her accusation of Prophet Joseph. (Yusuf: 51-53). The Queen of Sheba's acceptance of Prophet Solomon's (SAAW) invitation to Islam was also mentioned in details in the chapter of An-Naml: 44.

Mary was accorded great respect in the Qur'an. In fact, a whole chapter was devoted to her fascinating story in contrast to the blasphemous accusations mentioned in the Talmud about her and her son,<sup>57</sup> Prophet Jesus peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.

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57 - R. Papa observed: This is what men say (regarding Mary), she who descended of princes and governors played the harlot with a carpenter 5.... Did the children of Israel sly with the sword among them that [referring to Jesus] were slain by them? ... [The Babylonian Talmud, The Soncino Press, London, p. 725 (106a-106b)].

"It is the tendency of all these sources (The Talmud and other Jewish sources) to belittle the person of Jesus by ascribing to him illegitimate birth, magic, and shameful death ... All of the Toledo editions contain a story of dispute which Jesus carried on with the scribes, who on the ground of that dispute declared him to be a bastard." The Jewish Encyclopedia (p.170).

#### Al-Imraan: 35-37

(Remember) when the wife of Imran said: "O my Lord! I have vowed to You what (the child that) is in my womb to be dedicated for Your service (free from all worldly work; to serve Your Place of worship), so accept this from me. Verily, You are the All-Hearer, the All-Knowing."

Then when she gave birth to her [child Maryam(Mary)], she said: "O my Lord! I have given birth to a female child,"-- and Allah knew better what she brought forth,--"And the male is not like the female, and I have named her Maryam(Mary), and I seek refuge with You (Allah) for her and for her offspring from Shaitan(Satan), the outcast."

So her Lord (Allah) accepted her with goodly acceptance. He made her grow in a good manner and put her under the care of Zakariya (Zachariya). Each time he entered Al-Mihrab to(visit) her, he found her supplied with sustenance. He said: "O Maryam (Mary)! From where have you got this?" She said, "This is from Allah." Verily, Allah provides sustenance to whom He wills, without limit.

The Qur'an recognizes both men and women as spiri-





**The Qur'an recognizes both men and women as spiritually equal in terms of their responsibilities towards their actions and their reward in the hereafter.**

tually equal in terms of their responsibilities towards their actions and their reward in the hereafter.

Al-Nisaa: 124

And whoever does righteous good deeds male or female, and is a (true) believer {in the oneness of Allah (Muslim)},

such will enter Paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a speck on the back of a date-stone, will be done to them.

Al-Hadeed: 12

On the Day you shall see the believing men and the believing women: their light running forward before them and by their right hands. Glad tidings for you this Day! Gardens under which rivers flow (Paradise), to dwell therein forever! Truly, this is the great success!

Ar-Rum: 21

And among His signs is this that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you

affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect.

## 2. Women in the Teachings of the Prophet

Prophet Muhammad confronted many unjust practices that were institutionalized by the pre-Islamic society against women. Men of that society were benefiting greatly from the roles they have prescribed for women. When the Prophet started preaching against the male treatment of women, the Quraishi's adamantly opposed him. Nevertheless, it was Divine Revelation that he had to pass onto people regardless of their unjust interest.

Abu Hurairah reported that Prophet Muhammad said:

"Let him be a loser, let him be a loser, let him be a loser." Someone said, "Who is he, Oh Messenger of Allah? He said, "The one who has lived to see his parents or one of them and did not enter paradise."

Jabir said I heard the Messenger of Allah saying:

"The one who is deprived of kindness is deprived of goodness."<sup>58</sup>

Anas Ibn Malik said that the Messenger of Allah had said:

"Whoever brings up two daughters, he and I will come side by side in the Day of Judgment..."<sup>59</sup>

58 - Narrated by Muslim, 1758, P. 469.

59 - Narrated by Muslim, 1761, P. 465.

### 3. Women and Education

Right to Education in Islam was granted hundreds of years ago while most prestigious schools of the world denied it.



**Seager and Olson 1986 reported that most universities in western countries waited very long before admitting female students. Madam Curie was refused membership in the French Academy of Science, though she was the first female professor in The Sorbonne in 1911.**

universities in western countries waited very long before admitting female students. Madam Curie was refused membership in the French Academy of Science, though she was the first female professor in The Sorbonne in 1911. We have got to bear in mind that she was awarded the Noble Prize in 1903.<sup>61</sup>

60 - Narrated by Al-Bukhari, **The Book of Knowledge**, Hadeeth # 87, p. 97.

61 - McGrayne, 1993 in Zerekly 60-61

Abu Saeed Al-Khudri reported that some women requested the Prophet to fix a day for them as the men were taking most of his time. On that he promised them to devote a day for teaching them...<sup>60</sup>

In another hadeeth, it was reported that the Prophet had said: "Seeking knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim"

Seager and Olson 1986 reported that most

### 4. Polygyny in Islam

People sometimes talk as if polygyny were an institution of Islam. It is no more an institution of Islam than it is of Christianity (it was the custom in Christendom for centuries after Christ) but it is still an existing human tendency to be reckoned with, and in the interests of men and women (women chiefly), to be regulated. Strict monogamy has never really been observed in Western lands, but for the sake of the fetish of monogamy, a countless multitude of women and their children have been sacrificed and made to suffer cruelty. Islam destroys all fetishes, which always tend to out-cast numbers of God's creatures. In Europe, side by side with woman worship, we see the degradation and despair of women.

In Arabia, the lot of poor widows was particularly hopeless prior to the coming of Islam. The Holy Qur'an sanctions the remarriage of widows. It legalizes divorce and marriage from another husband, thus transforming marriage from a state of bondage for the women to a civil contract between equals, terminable by the will of either party (with certain restrictions, greater in women's case for natural reasons, intended to make people reflect seriously before deciding upon separation) and by death. The Prophet, when he was the sovereign of Arabia, married several windows, in order to destroy the old contempt for them and to provide for them as ruler of the State.<sup>62</sup>

Islam is the only religion limiting the number of permissible wives to four. To this fact John Esposito, a renowned professor of religion and international affairs and Islamic studies at Georgetown University, writes:

62 - Pickthall, [www.Islam for today.com](http://www.Islam for today.com)

Although it is found in many religious and cultural traditions, polygamy (or more precisely polygyny) is most often identified with Islam in the minds of Westerners. In fact, the Qur'an and Islamic law sought to control and regulate the number of spouses rather than give free license. In a society where there no limitations existed, Muslims were not told to marry four wives but instead to marry no more than four. The Qur'an permits a man to marry up to four wives, provided he can support and treat them equally. Muslims regard this Qura'nic command (4:3) as strengthening the status of women and the family, for it sought to ensure the welfare of single women and widows in a society whose male population was diminished by warfare, and to curb unrestricted polygamy.<sup>63</sup>

The idea of limited polygyny was introduced by the Qur'an as a solution to social dilemmas like the increased number of widows and fatherless orphans following wars. It also plays a great role satisfying the natural needs of a large sector of people, especially in societies where the number of women is exceeding that of men.

An-Nisa: 3

"And if you fear you will not be just to

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63 - John L. Esposito. Islam: The Straight Path. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p.97.

the orphans, then marry what is good for you among the women—two, three, or four. But if you fear that you will not be just [to them], then only one, or whom your right hands possess. That is more likely that you will not do injustice."

**The idea of limited polygyny was introduced by the Qur'an as a solution to social dilemmas like the increased number of widows and fatherless orphans following wars. It also plays a great role satisfying the natural needs of a large sector of people, especially in societies where the number of women is exceeding that of men.**

When this regulation regarding polygyny was firstly introduced, it was in reality a restriction to the unlimited polygyny the pre-Islamic Arabs used to practice. Though, the regulation gives men the right, for good reasons, to practice polygyny but they should adhere to the strict conditions and responsibilities behind it. Polygyny was restricted by Islam and not fully banned to satisfy the polygynous nature of men

while restricting and severely punishing men who seek extramarital relations. Islam, by restricting polygyny and decreeing strict conditions regarding its practice, took a moderate stance between the unrestricted polygyny of the Old Testament and the practice of Romans, Persians and pre-Islamic Arabs and the unobserved celibacy that some latter Christian saints preached.

Therefore, to solve the problem of fatherless households, the Qur'an is encouraging men who can bear the re-

sponsibility and be just to take into their care the destitute families by marrying the eligible widows and female orphans who are victims of tragedies. One rationale behind this measure is to save the society in general from indulging into immoral practices either because of poverty or the natural sexual desire on the part of the unmarried women.

Open-minded people can accept natural and reasonable solutions to their problems while recognizing full right and legitimacy to the women and their children. In his book **Struggling to Surrender**, Jeffrey Lang, (1995), reported on a program aired on Public Television at that time investigating whether or not men were innately polygamous and women innately monogamous. In 1987, the student newspaper at the University of California, Berkley, polled a number of students, asking whether they thought men should be legally permitted to have more than one wife in response to a perceived shortage of male marriage candidates in California. To the surprise of many feminists, almost all of those polled approved of the idea. One woman even stated that a polygamous marriage would meet her emotional and sexual needs.<sup>64</sup> A segment of the Church, the Mormons, which has become one of the established churches in the United States, propagates polygyny among its increasing members.<sup>65</sup>

Jane Goodwin (1994), an American sociologist, thinks that many American women would prefer the status of a second wife rather than living a lonely life in a gloomy apartment in New York or Chicago in the society of *freedom*.<sup>66</sup> As a matter of fact, males in general continue to be protected

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64 - Jeffrey Lang. **Struggling to Surrender**. Beltsville, Maryland: Amana Publications, 1995, pp. 162-3.

65 - T. Sullivan, K. Thomson, R. Wright, G. Gross and D. Spady, p. 658.

66 - in Zerekly 1997, p.80

by monogamy, especially in a society that does not punish extramarital practices, while prostitutes, call girls, mistresses, secretaries, models, actresses, store clerks, waitresses and girl friends remain their playground. In reality, polygyny is vehemently opposed by the male-dominated western society because it would force men to adopt fidelity.

Regardless of my opinion towards the issue of polygamy, Dr. Le Bon advocates: "A return to polygamy, that natural relationship between sexes, would remedy many evils; prostitution, venereal diseases, Aids, abortions, the misery of the illegitimate children, the misfortune of the millions of unmarried women and widows, resulting from the disproportion between the sexes and wars, even adultery and jealousy."<sup>67</sup>

The Islamic system, when completely practiced does away with the dangers of seduction, the horrors of prostitution and the hard fate which befalls countless number of women and children in the West, as the consequence of unavowed polygyny. "Islam's basic principle is that a man is held fully responsible for his behavior towards every woman, and for the consequences of his behavior. If it does away likewise with much of the romance which has been woven round the facts of sexual intercourse by Western writers, the romance is an illusion, and we need never mourn the loss of an illusion.

Take the most widely read modern European literature, and you will find the object of man's life on earth is depicted as the love of women (i.e., in the ideal form as the

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67 - Suayman A. S. A-Shaqasy." How Islam Elevated the Status of Women - III" A paper presented at the Muslim Sisters' Convention, Mombasa, and December, 1990. Published in Al-Islam 1991, Vol. 15, No. 4, p. 38.

love of one woman, the elect, whom he discovers after trying more than one). When that one woman is discovered, the reader is led to suppose that a "union of souls" takes place between the two. And that is the goal of life. That is not common sense - it is rubbish. But it is traceably a product of the teaching of the Christian Church regarding marriage. Woman is an alluring but forbidden creature, by nature sinful, except when a mystical union, typifying that of Christ and his Church has happened, thanks to priestly benediction".<sup>68</sup>

### 5. Who is Benefiting from Monogamy?

In polygyny, as presented by the Islamic family system, it is the husband who bears the full financial and other

social responsibilities towards his wife or wives. Therefore, strict monogamy as practiced in western societies is in the interest of men. Jones and Phillips (1985) indicated that "some males self-righteously assert that monogamy is maintained to protect the rights of women. But, since when has the western male been concerned about women's rights? Western society is

riddled through and through with socio-economic practices, which oppressed women and led to the upsurge of women's liberation movements in recent years, from suffragettes of the early nineteen hundreds to the ERAs of today. The real-

68 - Pickthall, www.Islam for today.com

ity is that monogamy protects the males' right to play around without any responsibility, since the incidence of infidelity among them is usually much higher than among females."<sup>69</sup>

Although many western women were caught up in the so-called sexual revolution, they are the ones who suffer the most from the side effects of contraceptives, the trauma of abortion and the shame of childbirth out of wedlock. In The United States alone, in every one thousand births forty-five were born to unmarried women between the ages of 15-44, in 1991 alone. This costs taxpayers more than \$ 25 billion dollars in welfare payments.<sup>70</sup>

Mrs. Jones and Mr. Phillips (1985) talked about other logical reasons for the need of an institutionalized Polygyny. They mentioned that the preponderance of females in the world is an established fact. Infant mortality rate is much higher among boys. Women on the whole tend to live longer than men; not to mention the large number of young men who die daily in the various wars around the world. "However, the ratio varies from one country to another, women still outnumber men. Hence, there are more females competing for a diminishing number of males. Consequently, there will always remain a large segment of women unable to fulfill their sexual and psychological needs through legitimate means in monogamous societies. Their presence in an increasingly permissive society also contributes to the break down of western family structure."<sup>71</sup> From the brief discussion we had about the issue of polygyny, women seem to have a vested interest in legally institutionalized and rec-

69 - J.Jones and B. Philips. Plural Marriage In Islam. 1985, p. 5

70 - National Center for Health Statistics, in **The Macmillan Visual Almanac**, 1996, pp. 320-322

71 - J. Jones and B. Philips 1985, pp. 6-7.



ognized polygyny as acknowledged by Islam because of the obvious socio-economic protection it provides, as well as, the real life problems it deals with to satisfy both sexes.

## 6. Separation is Better

If it is true, as life experience suggests (and the advocates of woman's rights in Europe and America are never tired of declaring that women's interests are separate from those of men) that women are really happier among themselves in daily life, and are capable of progress as a sex rather than in close subservience to men, then the Islamic rule which makes the woman the mistress in her sphere does not discord with human nature. While every provision is made for the continuation of the human race, and while the relation of a woman to her husband and near kinsfolk is just as tender and as intimate as in the West, the social life of women is among themselves. There is no 'mixed bathing,' no mixed dancing, no promiscuous flirtation, no publicity. But according to the proper teachings of Islam, there ought to be no bounds to woman's opportunities for self development and progress in her own sphere. Therefore, there is nothing to prevent women from becoming doctors, lawyers, professors, preachers, merchants, ... etc, but they should graduate in women's colleges and practice on behalf of women.<sup>72</sup>

Separation between men and women has been recognized to be of great benefit for women. As a matter of fact, this principle was adapted by The Pentagon as a solution to many problems including sexual harassment, without giving credit to Islam as the system of life that is propagating this practice to maintain morality and social peace and security. Nevertheless, Prince Charles has emphasized the great contributions Islam can provide the non-Muslim societies to over-

72 - Pickthall, www.islamfortoday.com

come their most serious moral and social problems, during a number of his speeches on Islam and the West.

**William Cohen**, American Secretary of Defense, announced the first phase of a comprehensive plan to maintain a reasonable level of morality among male and female soldiers. The plan stressed the importance of constructing permanent partitions to separate male and female soldiers in the current mixed buildings. This is only a temporary solution until newly separate buildings are constructed. The Navy also issued a number of strict instructions that prohibit the presence of female and male navy officers behind closed doors. These instructions were presented as rules that should be respected by all soldiers, especially on board Navy ships. The Defense Secretary emphasized that the rationale behind such measures was to provide a reasonable level of privacy and security for members of the different sectors of Defense. Among these new regulations, the restriction of sleeping while wearing underwear or naked and those doors should be tightly locked during sleeping hours. They also forbid watching pornographic films in the presence of female soldiers, and imposed clearly detailed regulations regarding the type of clothes to be worn when swimming or when sun bathing.<sup>73</sup>

The question that we raise here is this: why are such regulations (that many would look at as radical and anti-modernization) imposed by the most modern country in the world? The answer is very simple: sexual harassment has reached an unbelievably alarming level and has become a threat to national security and morality. Thousands of complaints of sexual harassment by female employees rang an alarming bell. The American and other lawmakers around

73 - The Family, June 1998, Issue No. 59,p.3

the world should think seriously about imposing similar regulations at all governmental offices, including the White House, especially in the aftermath of the Clinton-Monica affair.

McGrayre, 1993<sup>74</sup> addressed the fact that separation in education is for the benefit of female students who experience unbearable harassment and pain at the hands of boys. Eight out of the nine female scientists who were awarded Nobel Prize were graduates of female only high schools.

**The New York Times** published, in May 1993, a report which was entitled *Separation Is Better*.<sup>75</sup> The report was written by Susan Ostrich who herself was a graduate of one of the few women's colleges in the U.S. It was a shock to most Americans to find that girls in female colleges achieve better academically than their counterparts at mixed colleges. She supported her claim with the following statistics:

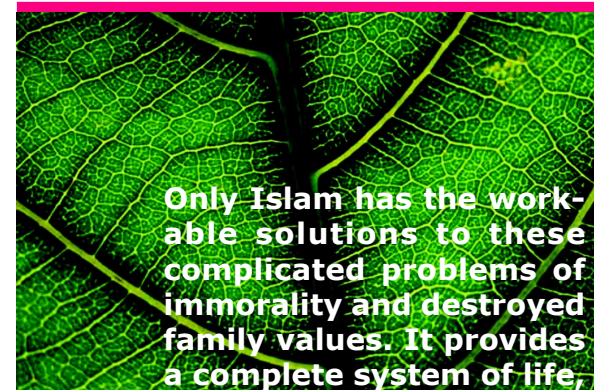
1. Eighty percent of girls at female only colleges study science and math for four years, in comparison to two years of study in the mixed colleges.
2. Female school students achieve higher GPA than the girls in mixed schools. This leads a higher number of female students to be admitted to universities. In fact, more Ph.Ds were acquired by such female students.
3. According to Fortune Magazine

74 - in Zedrekly, 1997,72

75 - **The Family**. August, 1994, 14, P. 7.

one third of the female members in the boards of trustees in the largest 1000 American companies are graduates of female only colleges. To realize the significance of this number, we need to know that graduates of female only colleges make only 4% of the number of female college students graduating every year.

4. 43% of female professors with Ph.Ds in math and 50% of female professors with Ph.Ds in engineering were graduates of female only colleges.



**Only Islam has the workable solutions to these complicated problems of immorality and destroyed family values. It provides a complete system of life, which grants dignity and happiness to all members of society by taking human needs into consideration and satisfying them in the most honorable and respectable way.**

This is another evidence from the Western world itself that lends support to the validity and applicability of Islamic principles as universal laws guiding or regulating human behavior. The Indian politician and reporter, Kofhi Laljapa, concluded:

No other religion but Islam has the ability to solve the

problems of modern life. Islam is indeed unique for that ... <sup>76</sup>

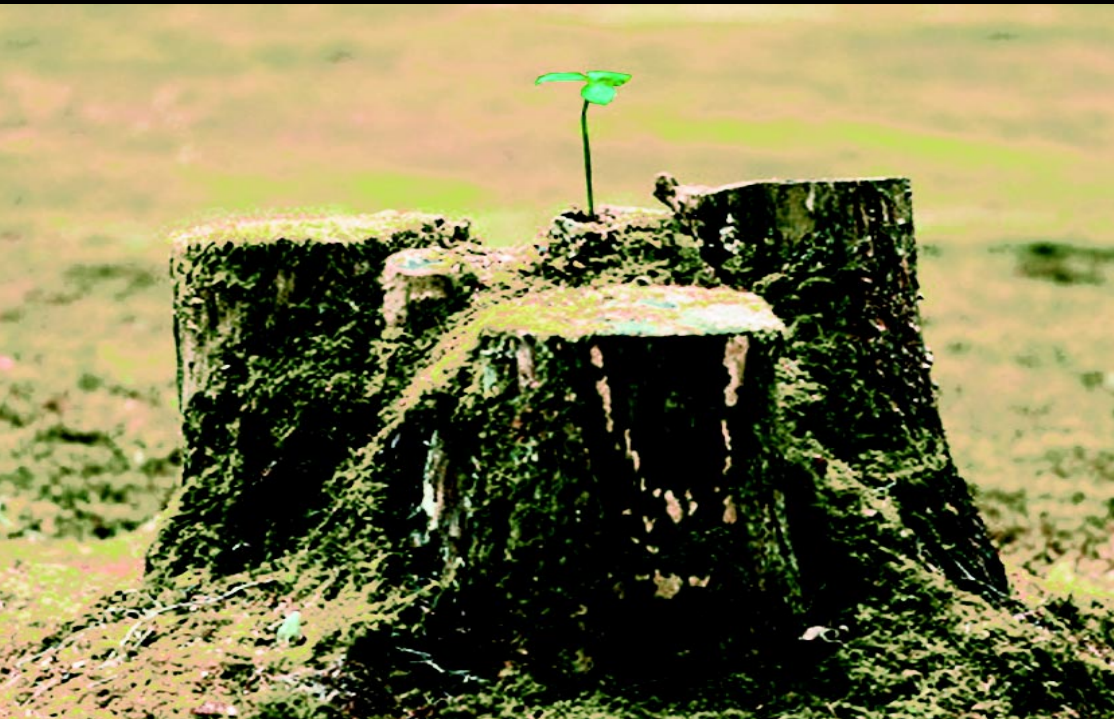
Only Islam has the workable solutions to these complicated problems of immorality and destroyed family values. It provides a complete system of life, which grants dignity and happiness to all members of society by taking human needs into consideration and satisfying them in the most honorable and respectable way. This complete system is not subject to man's manipulation in order to satisfy his temporal interest, but rather Divinely proposed to take into account human nature. In so doing, Islam sets clearly and strictly defined rules and rights for all members of the society, regardless of their race, sex and religion, based on a just system of mutual responsibilities and authority. Nevertheless, Islam is avoided and even looked at with suspicion because of a number of reasons: (a) the Jewish controlled media has great interest in picturing Islam as a savage religion that was not even good for the middle ages. *Jihad in America* and *The Siege* are only specimens of what the movie industry does to distort the image of Islam in the minds of people who have no true knowledge about Islam. Experts in Middle Eastern studies like the orientalist Bernard Lewis, Daniel Pipes and Judith Miller played an irresponsible role in inducing wrong attitudes about the genuine message of Islam in the minds of people who are in great need of its way of life. Nevertheless, many intellectuals were not deceived by this propaganda and were able to find their way to the truth, after a long search and after overcoming many hurdles. Jeffrey Lang (Professor of Mathematics at Kansas University) and M. Hoffman (the German Ambassador to Morocco)

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76 - Emad Khalil. **They Said About Islam**, 1994, in *The Islamic Future*, 27, May 1994. P. 12.

are good examples. (b) A minority of Muslims enhances the already distorted image of Islam by their un-Islamic malpractices, which is greatly exaggerated and generalized by the already biased media. (c) The inability of concerned Muslims to present Islam in an attractive manner to the world and to clarify misconceptions and misunderstandings about its universal teachings.

Women of the West have had to agitate for themselves in recent years for simple legal rights, such as that of married women to own property, which has always been secured for women in Islam. They have had to wage a bitter fight to bring to the intelligence of Western men the fact that women's interests are not identical with those of men (a fact for which the Sacred Law makes full allowance.) Women in the West have had to agitate in order to obtain recognition of their legal and civil existence, which was always recognized in Islam. Their men secured the rights of women in Islam, and men will champion and secure what further rights they may require today in order to fulfil the spirit of the Shari'ah. In this emancipation, there will be no strife between the sexes. Therefore there is really no analogy with the case of women in the West.



## **F** Western Women Accepting Islam

Regardless of the vicious politically motivated attack by some subjective western media against Islam (especially in issues related to the treatment of women) *The Daily Mail*, Dec. 2, 1993, p. 39, reported that more than 20,000 Britons were estimated to have accepted Islam as their way of life by that time. Most of them were middle class educated women. Why would these women accept Islam if they believed what the media was propagating? One of them reported that:

"Becoming a Moslem has transformed my life and brought me a lot

of peace and contentment ... I do not see what I'd done as going backwards, I see it as liberation."<sup>77</sup>

Another revert who is a writer and the daughter a nuclear plant supervisor said in relation to the role of separation between men and women and the wearing of hijab:

"Unlike the confused messages of Western culture - which encourages women to look sexy, yet condemns them for provoking men to rape- *hijab* gave out a clear signal that women are not put on this earth to flaunt themselves."<sup>78</sup>

When Mrs. Sisly Catholy an Australian lady who embraced Islam along with her daughter was asked: "Why did you embrace Islam?" She responded by saying:

"First, I would like to say that I embraced Islam because I was a Muslim inside myself without knowing it. Since I was a child, I had lost my faith in Christianity for reasons. The most important one was that whenever I asked a Christian whether he is one of those called the clergy or the public about anything of the church. "You have to believe in them." At the time of believing in Christianity, I was influenced by what has been said to us that Islam was

77 - The Daily Mail, the 2nd of December 1993, p. 39

78 - *The Daily Mail*, the 2nd of December 1993, p 42



a joke. But when I read about it, the wrong ideas went away. It was not long when I started to look for some Muslims to ask them about the issues which were not clear to me. Here, the barriers between Islam and me were torn away. Whatever question I had, I received a convincing answer, the very opposite of that ... which I used to hear when I asked about Christianity. After a long reading and study, I decided, along with my daughter, to embrace Islam, and we named ourselves Rashidah and Mahmoudah."<sup>79</sup>

Lady Avenin Zainb Cophand, an English woman, was also asked for the reason she accepted Islam. She reported:

"... as my study and readings about Islam increase, my certainty that it is very distinctive from other religions increases. It is the most suitable religion for practical life and it is the most able one to lead humanity to the path of happiness and peace. So, I did not hesitate to believe that Allah, the Almighty is one, and that Moses, Jesus, Muhammad (peace be upon them) and those before were prophets who received revela-

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79 - Bawani, 1984, pp. 134-6, in Khalid Al-Qasim. **A letter to a Christian**. Dar Al-Watan: Riyadh, 1995, p. 76.

tions from their Lord. ..We are not born sinful; neither do we need someone to take away our sins or to mediate between us and Allah, the Almighty. ... It does not have any of the complex heavy theological doctrines.... "<sup>80</sup>

Margaret Marcus, a former Jewish American intellectual and writer, candidly explained the rationale behind her acceptance of Islam after discussing her Reform Jewish upbringing in a totally secular society by saying:

I did not embrace Islam out of any hatred for my ancestral heritage or my people. It was not a desire so much to reject as to fulfill. To me, it meant a transition from a moribund and parochial to a dynamic and revolutionary faith content with nothing less than universal primacy.

Each new Muslimah has gone through a trial and accepted many challenges to surrender to Allah. Amira, an American girl from Arkansas is just one of them.

I was born to American Christian parents in Arkansas in the United States and that is where I was raised also. I am known as white-American to my Arab friends but alhamdulillah that Islam knows no color, race, or nationality. The first time I ever saw

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80 - Bawani, 1984, pp. 130-1, in Khalid Al-Qasim. **A Letter to a Christian**. Dar Al-Watan: Riyadh, 1995, p. 75.



a Muslim was while I was in college at the University of Arkansas. I will admit that at first I stared at the strange clothing the Muslim women wore.... and could not believe that they covered their hair. But I am a curious person so I introduced myself to a Muslim girl in one of my classes the first chance I had. It was a meeting that would change the course of my life. I will never forget her. Her name was Yasmine and she was from Palestine. I would sit for hours and listen to her tell me about her country, culture, family and friends that she loved so much, but even more so was the love that she had for her religion, Islam. Yasmine had an inner peace about her like no one I had ever met. She would tell me stories of the Prophets (pbwt) and about the one-ness of Allah (swt). This was when I learned that they didn't worship some other God; it was just that in Arabic, Allah meant God. Everything she told me made so much sense to me and was so pure. ...

In a report by the staff writer for the Christian Science Monitor, Peter Ford, titled "Why European women are turning to Islam?" a French woman explained her *raison d'être* for accepting Islam:

Islam demands closeness to God. Islam is simpler, more rigorous, and it's easier because it is explicit. I was looking for a framework; man needs rules and behavior to follow. Christianity did not give me the same reference points.<sup>81</sup>

Haifa Jawad, a teacher at Birmingham University, indicates that some of the reasons behind European women acceptance of Islam are:

- a. A lot of women are reacting to the moral uncertainties of Western society.
- b. They like the sense of belonging and caring and sharing that Islam offers.

Karin van Nieuwkerk, who has studied Dutch women converts to Islam, argues that "there is more space for family and motherhood in Islam and women are not sex objects."

Sarah Joseph, an English convert to Islam, argues that "the idea that all women converts are looking for a nice cocooned lifestyle away from the excesses of Western feminism is not exactly accurate."<sup>82</sup>

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81 - Peter Ford. "Why European women are turning to Islam?" **Christian Science Monitor**, December 27, 2004 edition, p. 1.

82 - Ford., 2004, p.1



## CONCLUSIONS

In the previous discussion, I tried to draw a general picture regarding the way women were viewed by major religions and ideologies that have been having a great influence in the life of humanity. By doing so, I thought, we can have a historical as well as analytical framework through which we can have a better understanding of women's rights. The research relied on original sources of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam in order to investigate their teachings regarding the roles women were assigned and the treatments they deserve. I also touched upon the dramatic consequences as a result of misunderstanding the very essential role women play in maintaining a balanced and a healthy family and society. The harmonious and integrative roles of men and women have resulted in a fierce competition and individualist aspiration in fulfilling egocentric desires, out of which women turned out to be the great losers.

Women's emancipation through extreme feminism

and liberalism has backfired, caused more calamities, and added suffering in a world that is controlled by men. Indeed, it was those men who deceived women by pulling them out of their homes and cutting their family ties to be mistreated in low paying and unwanted jobs. They were given added burdens to bearing and rearing children and taking care of the family to be forced into cheap labor and to be forced to support themselves and their families. Margaret Marcus (now Maryam Jameelah) has reiterated such consequences by stating that:

...Yet this same propaganda insists that the emancipated women's primary duty is still her home! In other words, this means that the modern woman must bear a double burden! In addition to earning her own living in fulltime employment outside the home, she must at the same time somehow perform the near-impossible task of fulfilling all her obligations to her husband and children and keep a spotless house single-handed! Is this justice?<sup>83</sup>

When alluding to the catastrophic status the family had reached in Western and Western-like societies, especially in relation to the family and the type of abuse against women and children, I do not mean that other societies who follow the same pattern of unleashed liberty, dissolution from morality and rejection of authentic teachings of the Creator are immune against such ills. The cheap slogans of women's rights, emancipation and progress only serve as a smokescreen to obscure its real intentions. The movement

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83 - Maryam Jameelah, 1983, p. 97.

for female emancipation in the Muslim world cannot but lead to the same catastrophe that has already happened elsewhere. Universal indulgences in illicit sexual affairs shock the wild beasts of the jungle. The inevitable results have been the destruction of home and families and indeed, the whole social framework, an epidemic of juvenile delinquency, crime and an atmosphere saturated with violence, unrest and lawlessness. The history of civilizations of the past is sufficient proof that when vice and immorality run rampant, no society can longer happily survive.<sup>84</sup>

I invite the respected readers to investigate by themselves the teachings of Islam at their original sources; not regarding women only but in encompassing the human life in general. Islam is the system of life that was designed by the Creator to provide guidance for humanity and to attain happiness in this life and in the hereafter.

This book is concluded with an excerpt from Prince Charles' speech about 'Islam and the West' at the Oxford Center for Islamic Studies:

Another obvious western prejudice is to judge the position of women in Islam by extreme cases. The rights of Muslim women to property and inheritance, to some protection if divorced, and to the conducting of business were rights prescribed by the Qur'an 1400 years ago. In Britain, at least some of these were novel to even my grandmother's generation.<sup>85</sup>

84 - Maryam Jameelah, 1983, p. 99.

85 - Prince Charles, "Islam and the West." **Arab News**, October 27, 1993. In R. Hill Abdulsalam. **Women's Ideal Liberation**. Abul-Qasim Publishing House: Jeddah, pp. 41-3.

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