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# THE THINGS WE THINK BUT ARE TOO AFRAID TO SAY

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*by*

## REASON ON FAITH

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An analysis of some of the theological and cultural issues with disturbing connotations & consequences which affect the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community and the body of establishment Islam in general, as seen within the context of modern and future times.

This document is an investigation and a quest—as told in the first person.

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The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself.

Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.

—*George Bernard Shaw*

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## PREFACE: 2019 RELEASE

The first draft of this book was written in 1992.

After several years of reflection and refinement, I finally presented it to Canadian officials of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in 1998.

No doubt, much has transpired and much has changed since that time.

A silver anniversary of sorts, this release represents the book's public debut. The only new content of a material nature is this very preface to the 2019 edition.

### CHANGES

Readers of the original release (people whom I can count on my fingertips) will notice that the following updates have been made with careful consideration to preserving the original words, style, arguments, strengths, and yes, even weaknesses.

1. **Formatting.** Fonts and styles have been updated for readability.
2. **Ordering.** The table of contents has been moved to the beginning of the book. The overly apologetic and stapled inserts prepared after the original release, have now been included inline as Appendix A.
3. **Grammar.** Minor improvements to grammar and punctuation have been made. These adjustments have been introduced both sparingly and reluctantly. Notably, these changes have only been applied where the original intent and tone could be preserved.
4. **Personal information.** References to my name, email address, as well as some age and date mentions, have been removed as this book makes the transition from private document to public dialogue.
5. **Diagrams.** These have been modernized from their original stick figure representations.
6. **Suffixes.** Islamic superscript suffixes for respect of holy personages have been removed for readability. For example, <sup>(pbuh)</sup> and <sup>(ra)</sup>. Prefixes of respect such as 'Holy' and 'Hazrat', have however, been left in to maintain the spirit and tone of the original work.
7. **Online references.** The original appendix (now Appendix B) contains references and citations, just as before. This appendix however, now also contains links to online versions of these same sources, where available.
8. **Public release.** My original intent was to keep this book rather private; available only to a select circle of Ahmadi Muslims, including the central leadership of the Jama'at. However, many years have passed since giving the Jama'at an opportunity to compose a written response that never came.

I now believe that it is time to bring these discussions into the public arena. It is time to normalize religious doubt and dissent.

Looking back, over 20 years have passed without a formal refutation attempted by the Jama'at. Nonetheless, the inability of Ahmadi Muslim leadership to answer the arguments and observations in this book, speaks loud and clear.

Simply put, *the emperor has no clothes*.

In 1998, the Jama'at's leadership advised me to just pray and to have faith. No doubt, this advice was conveyed with sincere compassion and concern. These well-meaning sentiments however, do not actually address the intellectual and moral challenges facing Islam today.

I'm sure that with this book's public release, the Jama'at's religious propagation machinery will divert its attention briefly, to formulate a response. A defensive and reactionary posture to try to hold on to converts and born-Ahmadi Muslims.

To my Jama'at brothers and sisters who hold out for such a refutation: please bear in mind that my limited religious questions and objections from 25 years ago are not the end of the story. My assessment that Islam/Ahmadiyyat does not hold up to scrutiny is based on so much more. [Scientific inaccuracies](#) in the Qur'an, for one. Incredulous attempts at turning [supernatural fables](#) into metaphor, for another.

I believe that if you evaluate Islam critically, you'll find a veritable ocean of incongruities and mental gymnastics at play. For the curious, you can keep up with the findings, analysis and discussion on the microblog: <http://ReasonOnFaith.com>.

I recommend that you start with the 4-part video series on Surah Al-Kahf, which I have made accessible in one place: <http://ReasonOnFaith.com/the-masked-arab>.

I am not the author of the videos in that series. I am merely the one providing a showcase for the amazing work of [The Masked Arab](#). He has made a powerful case against the indoctrination that most of us have received as Muslim children. Namely, that the Qur'an is perfect and that its author had perfect foreknowledge.

## LIMITATIONS

If written today, I would have approached some arguments in this book differently. My reference to concepts such as 'Absolute Truth', 'Overall Truth' and 'Truth' reveal the impressionable naivety of youth. Such language is also reflective of the sort of worldview that Ahmadiyya Islam instills.

Giving the book to Jama'at elders in 1998 was so emotionally distressing, as I was questioning the Community's religious foundations while not knowing anyone else who had ever done the same.

In my follow-up preface and insert from 1999, I took a conciliatory tone, hoping to encourage a written response. Truth be told, I was also scared of the social repercussions for my family and for myself. The reality of challenging the Jama'at just got real.

Some follow-up conversations about the book with learned members of the Community suggested alternate ways of looking at these issues. Even though such explanations hinged on violating Postulate One (the claim of universality—you'll read about that soon), I wanted so much to avoid the impending conflict with the Jama'at over my book.

Sadly, in the first few years after the book's release I numbed my intellect and compartmentalized my doubts, effectively self-administering an Islamic version of [Pascal's Wager](#). *My driving motivation?* First and foremost, to avoid an impending confrontation and social stigma. Secondly, to once again feel that I still belonged to the community that served as the common thread with my family and my longest running friendships. Without a community of support from like-minded individuals, I simply did not have the emotional strength to follow through with the social repercussions of publicly questioning the religion. But [now I do](#).

If writing this book today, several things about it would also be different. Here's a sample.

1. **Social observations.** I stand by many of my social recommendations for the Jama'at. However, I was clearly naïve in my questioning of why an older woman with a younger man would be perceived as much more unconventional than the reverse. Regardless of changing cultures and social norms, biological preferences for fertility will always influence human behavior—where older men with means will pursue younger women.
2. **Extreme punishments.** In Postulate One, I didn't question the Ahmadiyya Islamic view that the Qur'anic verse for cutting off a thief's hand could range from the literal to the metaphorical. For some circumstances, I gave the literal option a pass. This is an accommodation that I would no longer make.
3. **Overly apologetic.** Despite my post-release preface (see Appendix A), it is my contention today that the tone of this book is completely appropriate for the topic. Sometimes, it's important to call out the elephant in the room. Often, it is essential that we stop sugar coating. I'm particularly proud of my courage as a young man to question with incredulity, the mental gymnastics employed to sanitize the immoral—for example, the "[what your right hands possess](#)" of the Qur'an. Satire has a valid role in waking us up from our indifference. No longer do I apologize for that. We who question have tiptoed around notions of offense and blasphemy, for far too long. It is time to be unapologetically direct and [dismantle](#) revisionist apologetics and double-speak.



4. **Praise for Muhammad.** My questioning process began with an evaluation of the gender inequality in the Qur'an. As a teenager, almost everything that I had read on the topic of religion had come from Ahmadi Muslim sources. At that time, I had no idea that the biographies of Muhammad from Islam's earliest sources were not as [flattering](#) as the spotless picture portrayed by Ahmadiyya Islam. I did not realize that the re-packaged and sanitized biographies of Muhammad written by the Jama'at were derived from a serious cherry picking of the earliest Islamic records available.
5. **Theistic assumptions.** During my years of questioning, the existence of a personal deity was always assumed. So too, was the possibility that a divine organization existed; one which might represent "the one True Faith". I now reject the concept of a personal deity. To read more about my beliefs, see: <http://ReasonOnFaith.org/my-beliefs>.

This book is now public because everyone should be able to question inherited faith without intimidation—whether emotional or social. For those of you with an orthodox Muslim background, you too, should also be able to question without the risk of physical intimidation.

Our questioning process also needn't be curated by community elders from the very institutions and belief-systems that we are critically investigating.

There is in fact, a fascinating story about what transpired after the original release of this book. You can read about that and much more, in the companion article to this book's public debut: <http://ReasonOnFaith.org/the-things-we-think>.

**REASON ON FAITH**

Spring 2019

## PREFACE: 1998 RELEASE

This document is a detailed analysis of technical religious issues of controversy within Ahmadiyya Islam—and as a consequence and by definition—issues of controversy within Islam (generally).

The purpose of this writing is to request that those learned scholars on Islam—inside the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at and from within mainstream Islam—respond with a series of logical and plausible explanations to some of the controversial and contentious issues that I raise in this set of writings. In fact, it is my sincere desire to see the establishment of a forum for open dialog on these issues in order to foster a more thorough understanding of Islam—and of Ahmadiyyat; its reformation.

The latter few sections of this writing dealing with the Jama’at itself will likely only be relevant and comprehensible to members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, although other readers may find the opinions expressed in these sections of some interest.

It was not my original intention to circulate this document amongst Muslims not in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at, nor to actually circulate the document widely. Likely, I will still do neither. Over the years however, I have been advised by a few different people within the Jama’at whom I deeply respect, not to take the arrogant view that non-Ahmadi Muslims have no valid insight of their own to provide on these topics.

In a few sections of this document, I quote profusely from Professor Leila Ahmed’s *Women and Gender in Islam—Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*. I believe she has provided an excellent contribution to this area of study, and I quote from her work extensively in an effort for readers to absorb other points of view on these issues—angles rarely discussed within Jama’at literature itself. I almost feel compelled to have readers of these writings read those of Professor Ahmed’s. Consequently, I strongly encourage anyone interested in these writings, to read her book.<sup>1</sup>

Although I’ve always considered myself *spiritual*, I was also once more religiously grounded in Islamic theology and doctrine. I began this series of questions back in 1992—a full six years from the time that I write this address of my preliminary thoughts.

As I would often get very worked up about the issues I would write about, having to reach a deep state of clarity of mind and purpose, I could never work on these writings a few hours at a time. I required large blocks of time—two or three days in succession, at a minimum—before I could delve into a session of writing.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note that while I encourage readers to pick up Professor Leila Ahmed’s work, she has no connection, knowledge or endorsement of my writings.

As a consequence of this very restrictive style of writing and having been a university student constantly on academic term or cooperative work term, I would rarely have occasion to devote two or three days in succession to these writings—but it was something I always knew I had to complete.

Six years later, the same questions still trouble me, but I've completed a representative sample of them now. My one regret with having taken so long is that many readers may be expecting to find six years' worth of research, effort and depth in these writings—but that's not what this is. It is in fact, four or five solid weeks of full time effort—over the span of six years in time. If you read it with this fact in mind, I hope you will not be too critical of me.

In this light, much of the writing style stems from an earlier time, when I was 19 years of age. In an effort to finally complete this work however, I decided not to wait another year or two to deliver this document with an updated level and style of writing. Again, I apologize to those readers who are expecting a level of writing from a university graduate, only to find a style and a tone indicative of a much younger, but no less fervid writer.

When I began writing this document, I decided I should prepare some background on myself. Thus, in the winter of 1992, I wrote a small segment entitled *Some Background from the Writer*, which I've included here as an outline of where I'm coming from as a person (with regards to theology). I believe understanding the lens through which I saw, and not only seeing what I saw, will enable readers to better appreciate where I am coming from and why I ask the questions that I do. Those readers who can provide me with their insights, will be better equipped to do so—I believe—with some knowledge of from where my questions arose.

Admittedly, I have grown and changed considerably from the time of having written that background on myself as a preamble to this document.

I have many more questions on both theology and on culture which I do not address in this document—as a detailed treatment on all of these issues would take ten-fold the effort of that which I have already expended in completing this document. As a representative sample of the *real* issues troubling Islam and Ahmadiyyat, I am hoping that the feedback received concerning these questions will equip me with the tools and alternate frameworks within which to analyze the *host of other similar controversial and disturbing issues—both theological and cultural*.

As a clarification, it should be noted that this document focuses on issues of women, gender and social integration. In perhaps another writing, I will address questions I have on some intricacies and implications of the Ahmadiyya Muslim interpretation of prophethood and the role of religious state machinery.

Perhaps over the last few years, I've put less hope in finding a set of logical and agreeable answers to my queries within an Islamic framework. But I have always found peace in the knowledge that I was following my convictions. One of the most positive changes to come out of my experience with questioning the Faith—has been in my ability to appreciate other people more fully—and have a deeper respect for their teachings and way of life. There are many successful systems of religion and cultural integration that I think Muslims in general, would do well to adopt. Alas, I find it unfortunate, but I must admit that the typical Muslim mind (from my vantage point) has not yet evolved to a level of openness to really appreciate others. In our zeal to tout our own faith and to convert others, we seldom open our minds and hearts—truly—to the beauty of other ways and systems of belief. I sincerely hope this will change one day.

For lack of a better title, I originally named these writings *Questions That Require Answers*—although I knew I would choose something more appropriate when I finally finished the document. Like clockwork, it was only recently that the appropriateness of the title which I have now chosen, struck me. It was used in a Hollywood film (Jerry Maguire) about a man compelled to compose a document outlining what he felt, were problems in his organization of employment. He felt the need to express thoughts others in the organization had always been afraid to say, but which others in the organization had nonetheless, always felt. Giving credit where credit is due, I believe that this document is no less true to its title—*The Things We Think but are too Afraid to Say*.

Personally, I have never expected that true religion would satisfy one-hundred percent of the people one-hundred percent of the time; I've never pretended to be that naïve. But to a certain extent, religion must be accountable for its teachings.

I have had some incredible personal experiences beyond rational explanation and probability that have personally convinced me of the presence and power of God. These experiences, if anything, were *spiritual*, but not of the type that pointed towards any particular religion.

Islam is unique from other religions practiced today, in that there is a much greater emphasis and integration of scripture into a Muslim's life—especially given that the Qur'an is viewed as the pure and unaltered Word of God. As a consequence, there is a greater necessity for Muslims to find all verses of the Qur'an agreeable to them, if they and their children are to continue as practicing Muslims into the future.

In this light, I do not believe true peace can be found in a set of teachings which claims to have *all* the answers, but yet is itself inconsistent or incomplete. If one's questions are not resolved, I believe it is wiser to admit that one does not have an answer, than it is for one to blindly follow a system that one finds objectionable.

Admittedly, this stance of conceding that one does not have all the answers carries with it its own responsibilities and challenges—but I believe it to be the more honest approach.

I've learned that perhaps religion, its evolution and its purpose for humankind is not as clear cut as many would see it—and to this end—I believe that with honesty to our own hearts and minds, we will all reach that destination intended for our creation on this Earth.

May all of our journeys on this path be filled with knowledge, tolerance, hope, happiness and understanding. Amen.

**REASON ON FAITH**

Spring 1998

## WHAT IS BEING ASKED OF THE READER

For those readers with the knowledge and the time, I seek to acquire answers to the specific questions I raise in this document. These questions will appear in boxes like the following:

1.1	Do women really need to be safeguarded from appearing as witnesses?
1.2	Should we (as a society) accept it as a general rule that women not be called to attest a document recording a transaction?

The first number corresponds to the issue (in the above example, the first issue), while the second number (the one following the decimal), represents the number of the question within a particular issue / topic (sequentially numbered).

Passages of my own separated for emphasis, as well as my postulates, appear in type like this when presented in the main body of text.

Admittedly, I ask a number of questions in this document, and most are not trivial or simple to answer. I recognize that the most convincing answers, if at all, will come in the form of a book published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at itself, but until that time (if it ever comes), discussions with learned scholars in Islam at a detailed level, may provide some insights for me (I hope).

Those readers who may be able to present me with detailed written responses—I am deeply indebted to you for sharing your time and knowledge with me. I thank you in advance.

Some people have asked me, and I'm sure many more will in the future, why I haven't first sent all these questions to Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih<sup>2</sup> IV (the Khalifa of the time). My response is as follows: I recognize that the Khalifa is an extremely busy man. Likely, such a document will go to his assistants to answer, and such learned people we find all around the world within the Jama'at. It is my hope that other scholars can provide me with insight and perspective on some of these issues, and the remainder—those with which I am still not satisfied with—I can submit to the Khalifa, outlining the graduated approach I have taken in an attempt to resolve my questions.

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<sup>2</sup> The title given to the current spiritual leader of the world wide Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at.

I do however, intend to submit a copy of this document to the Khalifa when complete, so that if he chooses to, he may partake in directing me towards answers from the beginning of this process.

As far as my references go, they can be found in the appendix to this writing. The system of referencing I use and how to follow it, can be found at the beginning of that appendix section on references.

I have endeavoured to include more context to the passages that I quote, just so that the inquisitive mind can view the fuller context out of which I draw passages and verses in support of my stance.

The section on *Postulates* that precedes the actual series of issues, outlines the core axioms of truth on which I base my analysis. The axioms represent the traditional Muslim perspectives on Islam as I understand them. I also ask that readers provide their own opinions on where they believe these postulates to be flawed. Since my conclusions in the body of the document lead to critical and potential contradictions, either my analysis is flawed, or some of the postulates with which I use for analysis are flawed. In either case, I encourage feedback.

I do hope and expect that a few of the chapters (issues) in this writing will almost be trivial to answer (likely the questions regarding inheritance and divorce protocol). The issues surrounding polygamy, the witness ratio and the history of women in the Islamic past and present (cultural connotations and interpretations of the Faith) I fully expect to be more difficult to reach a clean closure and consensus on.

I do personally disagree with one of these postulates I have set forth, which I believe represents popular Muslim belief.<sup>3</sup> Most of the other postulates represent a mixture of my own personal axioms and those of popular Muslim belief fixated on absolute truth.

As for the immutable property of religious teaching held by the mainstream Muslim world—I believe that these traditional perspectives must be superseded in order for Islam to be self-consistent and agreeable, so I would be interested to learn of where scholarly minds would differ from what I believe to be popular belief with what they believe to be the correct set of axioms for analysis and scrutiny of the Faith.

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<sup>3</sup> This being the universality / comprehensiveness of the Qur'an (Postulate One).

## SOME BACKGROUND FROM THE WRITER

The writings contained herein are in response to a growing number of questions that I have had, which surfaced early in 1992 concerning women's roles in Islam, in the Qur'an and as members in our greater Jama'at Organization and Administration.

In 1989, I had become more interested and aware of Ahmadiyyat and religion in general. The divisions among Muslims and their persecution of us Ahmadi Muslims troubled me, and so throughout my remaining high school years, I dove into our religious books and would discuss Islam extensively with other Muslims and eventually as well, with Christians, Sikhs and Hindus at school.

I had a passion for Ahmadiyyat and religion in that from my exposure and research, I attributed to true teachings, the logic and the consequent peace of mind that Islam offered me. The prophecies of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad and the scientific references in the Qur'an for example, strengthened my faith as I appreciated that there needn't be a dichotomy between religion and science. Furthermore, logic and reason were not inconsistent with religion.<sup>4</sup> I loved this unique feature of Islam.

Although an active participant in religious activities and Ijtema<sup>5</sup> competitions as a young boy (especially religious tests), I had remained rather passive or indifferent during my early and mid-teen years to religion and prayers. I was no rebel (I did question some social institutions), but I was generally aloof of the real import of the Mission of the Jama'at—as are most kids at that age. My interest and thirst for Ahmadiyyat resurfaced when other Muslims at school - unaware of the sect to which I belonged, began discussing absurd stories about *Qadianis*.<sup>6</sup> I stepped in to clarify and to deny. It struck me that by association they were in fact, attacking me. With little knowledge of comparative Islam however, there was little that I could do besides brush the stories aside as ridiculous. As a high school debater, I realized that such a simple response was a weak defense. That gave me a zeal for religious study to have a more solid and factual stand. This got me started on learning more about the divisions in Islam and about religion in general.

The more I studied Ahmadiyyat, the more I loved it, and the more I participated in the general circle of the Jama'at.

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<sup>4</sup> At least not Islam. This common view that science and religion are inconsistent derives from Judeo-Christian inconsistencies made plain by the modern world in the last century. Unfortunately, these generalizations have hurt the name of religion, relegating it in most minds, to a relic of primitive beliefs incapable of withstanding the knowledge and discoveries of modern times.

<sup>5</sup> Religious camps.

<sup>6</sup> The name stems from the fact that the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Islam began his mission in Qadian, India. Mainstream Muslims who wish to avoid referring to Ahmadi Muslims as Muslims because of their hostility towards Ahmadis, use the term *Qadiani*, with full knowledge that the term is derogatory.



After a good couple of years of talking to people about the fulfillment of prophecies, the repercussions of a contradictory scripture such as the Bible, the story of Jesus, astronomy in the Qur'an and so forth, I realized that there was something incomplete. Having passages of the Bible, biblical contradictions and prophetic Hadith memorized was not enough. In the back of my mind, I knew there existed stereotypes and 'misconceptions' about women's roles<sup>7</sup> in Islam, but with the other aspects of faith so solid, I felt the subject too overwhelming to attempt to comprehend at that stage, and would confidently state to others who questioned:

Don't believe everything you see on TV. Besides, those countries in the Middle East and so on aren't practicing proper Islam vis-à-vis their womenfolk. There's a lot of misconceptions you know ... in reality, women and men in Islam are different, but equal.

This was satisfactory to me at the time, but later I realized it wasn't good enough to 'sell the package' to others. In all my discussions with non-Ahmadis early on, I realized an important truth which I have centered around ever since:

We owe our allegiance first and foremost to the Truth. It is because Truth is manifested and takes the form of a Divine Organization that we owe allegiance to that Organization, to that Institution.

If Truth ceases to be, or never was implicit in that Organization, then upon such realization, allegiance is no longer due to that Organization, but rather, to any Organization (if it exists) that does bond with the Ultimate Truth.<sup>8</sup>

I thought to myself that if Ahmadiyyat was not “true”, then I would see this through my study, and therefore, in defense of Ahmadiyyat, I used arguments that would convince me had I been on the other side of the table.

With an honest approach, scrutinizing myself all that I offered as evidence for the Truth of Ahmadiyyat, my conversations were persuasive and direct. I felt (and still

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<sup>7</sup> The women issue arose in my mind early on, as my goal was to show others the beauty in the faith that I followed (Islam). Knowing that Islam was often criticized on this issue, it was an issue that always sat in the back of my mind as something I had to solve if spreading the faith was to ever bear fruit with truly intelligent minds.

<sup>8</sup> When I speak of Truth here, I view it as the possible presence of something absolute and universal and not just in the context of relative and personal truths. In modern times, most people—and even some faiths have ceased to preach the notion of a divine and pristine religion with a blessed and sanctified institutional presence on Earth. As Ahmadiyya Islam does claim to be the divine organization placed on Earth for the benefit of humankind—I have grown to equate truth with the notion that there *can* exist an absolute ‘true’ path and that this *can* take the form of an institution / organization on Earth. It is this truth that I am willing to submit to **if** I were to find / confirm it with my own sense of personal truth. Admittedly, the belief in an absolute right answer in the history of humankind has caused much grief and hardship when one's ‘absolute truth’ clashed with the ‘absolute truth’ of another.

feel) that humankind should come under one banner, and to find the correct banner, we need only be (all of us), honest with our inner selves. If we each examined our inherited faiths with this critical eye, we would most surely come closer together.

With the above in mind, I realized two subjects I was very weak in, which Islam was most frequently attacked on:

- (a) The role and status of Women (in Islam).
- (b) Islam's alleged use of force and militancy in spreading the faith.

I had read some literature that briefly discussed controversial events in history (the militancy question), and had talked to some knowledgeable people about Islamic history on this point. Although I still had and have questions to organize and have answered, I am satisfied to a degree that the issue does not bother me.

The women issue however, with a multitude of questions, corollaries and repercussions, has put my faith in doubt to such a serious degree, that these questions I pose herein are in an honest effort to recapture and sustain the peace of mind I once had; peace of mind based on rational justification and fairness.

Over the years of active participation in the Jama'at, I delivered speeches at the monthly meetings and local meetings, wrote religious articles, helped with Atfal<sup>9</sup> camps and was active in Tabligh<sup>10</sup>. I once even wrote an article entitled "Misconceptions about Islam" where I dealt with the wars and women issues *in the areas that I understood*. I dealt a lot with polygamy, as I understood and accepted it based on basic necessities, such as population imbalances due to wars. I realized with that article however, that there were so many, so many questions left unanswered.

In a discussion at a local Jama'at meeting, I was talking about Tabligh and how the first stage was that of the removal of negative misconceptions, before one could successfully use positive proofs. At this stage I was just delving into the women issue myself. Having briefly become aware of some of the controversies I felt I would find answers to soon, I posed some tough questions to the members gathered, as hypothetical questions encountered during Tabligh (The De'een Ilallah<sup>11</sup> campaign had recently started).

To one member of the local meeting (much senior to myself), I posed the question about the two female witnesses for one male witness in 2:283 of the Qur'an. He didn't have an answer, nor did I, and I admitted that—citing it as an example of what we all needed to understand before Tabligh could be successful.

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<sup>9</sup> Young males under 16 within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at.

<sup>10</sup> Preaching of the Faith (spreading the message).

<sup>11</sup> Caller on to God. In the early 1990s, there was a strong campaign encouraging members to spread the faith.

The gentleman asked me back, "*Wasn't that for back then, can't it be taken differently today?*" (or words to that effect). I responded that according to my understanding (and the example of all the technical religious study I had done), that one could not change the meaning of the verse when it was so simple and so clear. I had a trust in the Qur'an, and didn't like to second guess verses which were especially simple and straightforward.

After this event, I dove deeper into our own literature concerning topics of women in Islam—and instead of consoling and educating me—the results of this process frightened me. The connotations implied by some of the passages in our literature, frankly speaking, *shocked* me. In a prior Majlis Irphan<sup>12</sup> session with Huzur<sup>13</sup> in 1991, a couple of such passages were explained and I was at peace. After this time however, there seemed to be so many such questionable passages, and ones such that no explanation was remotely (to my imagination) possible.

Many a time, with religious issues I did not understand, nor were there explanations available to my satisfaction, I would contemplate over, for many hours, sometimes over spans of months. Eventually, the answers—the rationale—would come to me, and I would feel a deeper sense of relief, comfort and peace. With every new issue or question, I would let it spin and spin in my mind, examining all the rationales possible until some logic fit, and picked the lock. With the questions that I have in this writing, more and more, I've spun them around in my head, for over a year, and none of them are clicking.

These questions are spawning more and more questions, and the confusion is rampant. In an effort to stay with and support the Truth,<sup>14</sup> I must admit that I am no longer certain of what exactly that is.

## **REASON ON FAITH**

Winter of 1992

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<sup>12</sup> A Question - Answer session with the leader of the Community.

<sup>13</sup> The affectionate name given to the leader of the Community by its members.

<sup>14</sup> Again, I'm referring to the presence of an absolute truth, an absolute right answer in the form of a divinely blessed earthly institution. Ironically, it is this sense of absolute truth instilled in me from childhood as an active Ahmadi Muslim, which strongly contributed to my resolve to question and understand to depths where others (troubled by similar issues) would simply accept passively, or rebel uninformed.

# POSTULATES

Assumed axioms upon which the discussion builds



The following six postulates lay down the fundamental reasoning used in the issues discussed in this writing. The issues are thought to be perplexing in that the postulates are assumed to be true, yet such an assumption leads to apparent inconsistencies in the discussed issues. It is hoped that both the postulates and the issues discussed are examined with detail, such that the true misunderstanding(s) in my chain of reasoning can ultimately be identified.

The other point to remember is that as a postulate, the explanations given under each postulate here only serve to illustrate the *spirit* of the postulate. To outline these postulates with complete technical and legal rigour would take volumes.

Thus, in the remainder of this document, these postulates serve as guidelines, as axioms to be taken in spirit. Viewed this way, I believe they will dutifully serve their purpose.

## POSTULATE 1: UNIVERSALITY

The Qur'an is final, universal and comprehensive.

This is to say that if one tried to explain a verse in the Qur'an that on the surface, appeals directly to times hundreds of years ago, it is not right to put it aside with the reasoning that "*...that was meant for those days, it's not for now...*".<sup>15</sup>

Traditional Islamic thought on such matters would be to assert that while on the surface certain elements of the Qur'an may appear dated, they in fact, are not. This is because:

1. The verses themselves have a deeper meaning and / or broader interpretation.
2. Other verses deal with the same / similar subject matter such that conclusive courses of action can vary widely with circumstance. This renders Qur'anic scripture a flexible framework for living in any current or future time.

How this works very well within Islam can be gleaned from an example—the punishment for theft.

On the surface, we're told by the Qur'an that those who commit theft face the punishment of having their hands cut off.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, the Qur'an provides an alternative recourse—retribution of an equal amount or forgiveness—or anything in between. Furthermore, the words used to describe *cutting off the hands* can also be interpreted in Arabic as *removing one's means*. While there was no concept of jails in 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabia where one could resort to imprisonment in order to eliminate the ability for criminals to repeat their crimes, we do have such a means commonly available today in most parts of the world.

Here we have an injunction that (at first glance) seems specific and perhaps dated—yet the Qur'an viewed in totality—has truly provided a framework that's flexible and legitimately viable for the foreseeable future (in this example).

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<sup>15</sup> While much confusion and controversy remains within the Islamic world in trying to cling to this wonderful ideal (postulate), I personally believe it is naïve in a changing world. The immutability it introduces manifests itself in many aspects of questionable cultural expectations, practices and norms that are expressions of the underlying theology. This is not to say that all change should be embraced, nor that all change is good. However, religious history has been about constant evolution. It would be short sighted to freeze time on something so spiritually organic—and that includes our scriptural framework and / or the ability to build on it in bold new ways.

<sup>16</sup> Please note that contrary to popular portrayal in the West, this is never to be undertaken when the theft is for food (a basic necessity for life), and is only to be enacted under severe circumstances. For the actual injunction, see Qur'anic verse 5:39.

The second point implicit in this postulate is that within the comprehensive and universal nature of Qur'anic Sharia,<sup>17</sup> everything should fit together in a reasonable<sup>18</sup> way. The Islamic way of life based on the Qur'an should never run counter to basic clear scientific truths.<sup>19</sup> *Of course, the unknown, or the little known is always debatable, but for that which is blatant, there should be no contradiction.* Admittedly, contention and controversy usually flower amidst the fog found between the extremes of that which is clear and that which is not.

The third point implicit here is that the wording of every teaching is the most perfect<sup>20</sup> and comprehensive rendering possible for that teaching.

Stated another way, a perfect book for all time and peoples must possess the property of lending itself to the extraction of all reasonable options (interpretations) in any valid situation that might arise.

For example, the verse concerning punishment of an equal amount—or forgiveness—implicitly allows varying degrees in-between those extremes. There's lots of flexibility in this scenario and thus, a greater chance that this teaching can be applied to different peoples in different times and different circumstances.

Clearly, the punishment—theft scenario given as an example in this postulate serves as a defining example. By definition, this postulate of universality only applies if it holds for *all* Qur'anic teachings.

Finally, the spirit of this postulate encompasses and extends to sayings and doings of the Prophet which practicing Muslims revere as relevant and valid, since the Qur'an alone does not constitute the entire Islamic framework of theology in practice.

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<sup>17</sup> The body of Islamic Law that includes (but also extends beyond) the Qur'an and deals primarily with social issues and punishments.

<sup>18</sup> While I fully concede what is reasonable to some may not be reasonable to others, this facet of the postulate will have to be taken in spirit if not in letter.

<sup>19</sup> Scientific truth can also be viewed with suspicion in that documented scientific truth is science as we humans understand it—and in this light, it is an interpretive, biased and selective discipline. However, I re-iterate that my postulate does not seek to split hairs at this level, but rather, take this in the spirit of "religion is consistent with the natural world".

<sup>20</sup> One may take the view that *perfection* in this context must necessarily be subject to the limitations of the form of communication employed—in this case—Arabic. If the language was perfect (and only if it was perfect) could one concede this requirement. By *perfect*, one would expect precision of meaning (at every level). Since language is necessarily an analog for communicative intent, an inherently discrete method, one would assume the expectation Muslims place in the language to be unrealistic and that a *perfect language* is an oxymoron given a non-infinite vocabulary. My position (and I assume that of most Muslims in this matter) would be to view language as the vehicle through which to lay down discrete markers (end points), defining the boundaries of any given matter. Consequently, this creates a continuum of points (infinite possibilities) between our discrete end points (words employed). In this way, expectations of perfection insofar as comprehensiveness is concerned, are not unrealistic.

This is the standard to which analysis of other Islamic teachings are benchmarked in these writings.

## POSTULATE 2: REASONABLE INJUNCTIONS

All commandments / injunctions for societies are based on reasoning agreeable to an open and objective mind.

This is to say, that a religious law / commandment should appeal to human reason.

True, the human intellect is not perfect, and the definition of objective can often be a subjective matter itself. Notwithstanding these problems, I believe there is a common moral and ethical code inscribed in all of our hearts which provides us a minimum benchmark of decency.

I believe all religious laws, if they are truly divine, would appeal to this inner level of decency, of truth, to those who would open their hearts and minds wide enough to reflect at this deeper level. This is a postulate that needs to be followed in spirit.

While almost all religious systems would pass this test at a basic level, the more complex social injunctions cannot so easily be reduced as subjectivity and cultural preferences detract from the process. However, if one probes inside even these more complex social injunctions and teachings, the underlying basic truths should be ascertainable and identifiable.

While it may very well be the exclusive domain of the Divine to create the *perfect* theological framework, it must be humanly possible to comprehend its inherent justice in order for the teachings to successfully be applied.



## POSTULATE 3: REPERCUSSIONS OF A FUNDAMENTAL NATURE

Commandments with repercussions of a fundamental nature are not dangerously ambiguous.

This is to say that injunctions on punishments and injunctions dealing with the status and rights of members of society *should* be clearly articulated in True Scripture.<sup>21</sup> There should not be an ambiguity present such that the abuse and deprivation of various members of society are somewhat supported by Qur'anic text. True Scripture should not plausibly lend itself to such a dangerous reading.<sup>22</sup>

To clarify, let's consider one hypothetical example, in this case, one that deals with punishments.

If it was said that everyone should personally kill those they in the slightest way suspected may have killed another person—lots of innocent people would be killed by “believers”. Articulating a provision for capital punishment so loosely<sup>23</sup>—something that has such fundamental repercussions—would not be the work of a Divine Intelligence that is All-Just and All-Knowing.

A corollary to this point is that there is little value in splitting hairs over artistic elements of little social consequence.<sup>24</sup>

For example, while the Qur'an claims itself to be a superior piece of work in the Arabic language (and all Muslims defend it as such), issues in this writing will not pull the poetic aesthetics of the Qur'an into examination—as that is of little relevance to the more fundamental issues of scriptural applicability and justice—the dominant themes this document seeks to examine. Qur'anic phraseology will be critiqued however, in the context of universality and best wordings.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> By True Scripture, I am referring to a Revealed Book in its pristine purity, whose contents are untouched by the interpolated hands and minds of human beings. In the Islamic world, this is synonymous with the Qur'an.

<sup>22</sup> While anything can be read from any scripture when sufficient liberties are taken, I am referring to that which is more readily apparent.

<sup>23</sup> Please note, and I emphasize this—the capital punishment example here is purely hypothetical—it is not presented like this in the Qur'an. I've purposely created a *bad* example to illustrate what good scripture is *not*.

<sup>24</sup> At least as far as I am concerned for the purpose of getting answers to my questions on issues of a social nature.

<sup>25</sup> This kind of analysis will take place more directly within the context of Postulate One concerning universality and comprehensiveness.

## POSTULATE 4: LIMITS OF INTERPRETATION

Interpretations must limit themselves to only being that. They cannot start attributing meanings to words which they are incapable of bearing.

It may be possible to explain one's way out of a controversial verse by adding all sorts of context to it that does not exist, and / or pulling out obscure meanings to words in the verse so as to construct an interpretation that is more agreeable to modern times.

However, if such a process results in ascribing meanings to words that they just do not lend themselves to, then we can no longer call the process an interpretation—we would have to admit to it being a *reconstruction*.

Such a manipulation of scripture does no one any good.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, True Scripture should not need this kind of speculative wizardry in order to absolve it from abhorrence (if for example, that's the nature of the accusation being leveled against a particular passage).

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<sup>26</sup> If we detract from a verse so markedly, yet ascribe our new position to the old words themselves, we might as well refrain from the interpretive acrobatics and start with a clean departure from the original—or else—stick to the original meaning and deal with the consequences.

## POSTULATE 5: OVERALL TRUTH

Overall Falsehood may contain Truths, but an Overall Truth, can only be composed of Truths.

This simply means that if we are to view an organized faith, hypothetically, one in its pristine purity, then *that* faith cannot be from God if in its doctrines is contained an untruth or an injustice. God is All-Truth and All-Just.

As reasonable and simple a goal as this seems to be, it introduces a subtle enigma: *how do we know that we've arrived at the ultimate and overall truth?*

To serve the functional spirit of this postulate, I propose the following approach likely familiar to most from elementary science and mathematics:

While we can prove the existence of something in the universe with tangible evidence, we cannot prove the *non-existence* of something in the universe.

In like manner, we may never reach full certainty that we've arrived at the ultimate truth (religious institution / organization), but we *do* have the capacity to determine that we *haven't reached it* if we come across falsehood within the scope of the purported overall truth.

In more general terms, a religious set of beliefs cannot be said to be pure and true if contained within its teachings are blatant injustices.

Furthermore, while both “blatant” and “injustice” are somewhat subjective notions, the spirit of my argument is such:

If questionable religious practices / beliefs / teachings were brought to definitive authorities on such and no reasonable and genuine answer could be given as a reply to these *and* such questionable items were to remain part of the faith—then one has evidence of a falsehood within that organization / faith.

While this may still be difficult (if not impossible) to assert at an absolute level, it dutifully serves the individual in arriving at their own personal concept of what is and what is not, Overall Truth.

While I believe establishment-Islam would agree with this concept of absolute truth (equating it with Islam), I'm doubtful they would be willing to put it to the same litmus test as outlined above, in the event that something truly objectionable in the Faith was brought to the surface.

## POSTULATE 6: THE BALANCE OF REALISM AND THE IDEAL

The system of an Islamic society based on Qur'anic law is one whose safeguards and protection mechanisms are in place because the Law must be realistic whilst simultaneously paving a road to the Ideal.

This can best be illustrated by examples.

When we look at the injunction concerning a physical component of modestly / veiling (purdah), we realize that although Muslims are not supposed to commit adultery, fornication and so forth, people cannot walk around naked and expect that such ideals will be unaffected. We cannot think that ideally, all Muslims are pure, and therefore we do not need any physical form of purdah (whatever one defines that to be), since this would be naïve. Rather, we must be *realistic*.

Likewise, in the Islamic ideal, no one would commit theft, but we still have punishments, because realistically, we know these things happen.

Thus, aside from the idealistic injunctions, a proper societal law must provide mechanisms to deal with the realistic tendencies (however unfortunate) of elements of society.

As another example, we know that many husbands from time immemorial have been dictatorial, violent and abusive to their wives, so in an Islamic society, in a society based on rules provided by an All-Just God, there should be a reasonable and just recourse for such imbalances, and others like it—the absence of which opens a system of incomplete jurisprudence to doubts of functionality and consequently places doubts on the source of such unjust and incapable laws.

We should remember however, Perfect Guidance must point us towards the ideal, allow for its attainment, yet protect us from where we fall short of it. If this sounds divine—then our expectations are in the right place—because only something divine could supersede that which is humanly engineered.

An important subtlety is worthy of mention here concerning the relationship between *ideal* and *realistic*. An unjust status-quo as the ideal should not be the basis for a snap shot of human nature around which ‘realistic’ laws are formulated. While this may appear obvious, here’s a clarifying example<sup>27</sup> of how this might actually happen:

If one were to live in eighteenth century North America and observe that women were not voting or seeking employment outside of domestic work, one might naïvely assert that realistic laws would be those that include the restriction on women’s movement and voting rights. One might also view this societal framework as ideal, and then build

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<sup>27</sup> Admittedly contrived and simplistic, it serves its purpose of illustration well.

laws around it—asserting that, “Since there’s no need for women to vote, a realistic law would prohibit such from happening, and reduce the risk of disturbing the status-quo of what women’s roles ought to be.”

Clearly, the concept of *realistic* laws has been made subservient to the concept of the *ideal*. While this is a natural relationship between the two, it hinges on and assumes the presence of correct ideals to start with.

What can be gleaned from this relationship is that the *ideal* for the real world should be more widely encompassing than the simplistic and restrictive ideal as given in the example above.

Closer to actual content discussed within these writings, is the injunction for two female witnesses where one male witness is required.<sup>28</sup> This injunction may be defended by Islamic traditionalists as asymmetrical in application because of the “realistic fact of life that women can’t function equally well in the same context as men”. However, this ‘realism’ may very well be based on ideals that are narrow and unreflective of modern realities. Simply put, such ‘ideals’ might just be dated.

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<sup>28</sup> See Issue 1: Two Female Witnesses for One Male Witness

# ISSUE 1

## Two Female Witnesses for One Male Witness

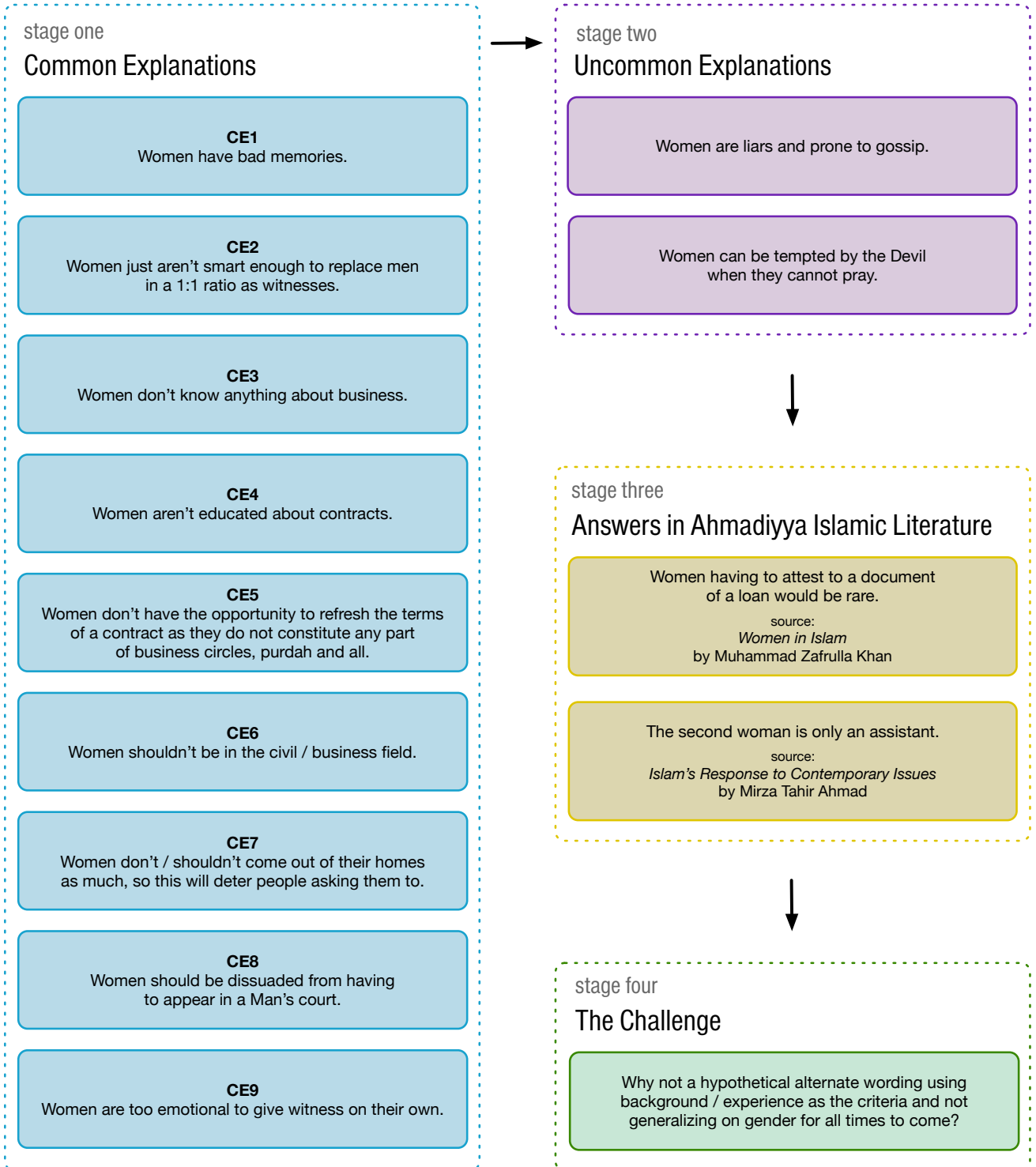


This chapter explores the reasons for the two females for one male witness injunction given in Qur’anic 2:283. The discussion highlights reasons why this injunction is no longer applicable and then seeks to understand how this conclusion fits into the Islamic concept of the universality of Qur’anic teachings for all time.

Various common (and uncommon) explanations are examined and eliminated in turn. The conclusion of this process underscores the apparent incoherence of this injunction—or alternatively—our expectations of Qur’anic Law.

# Two Female Witnesses for One Male Witness

A reference and summary of explanations and challenges.



In verse 2:283 of the Qur'an, it is recommended that (2) male witnesses be procured as witnesses for civil (loan) contracts, and that if two men be not available, then one (1) male and two (2) females. The entire verse runs as follows:

O ye who believe! when you borrow one from another for a fixed period, then write it down. And let a scribe write it in your presence faithfully; and no scribe should refuse to write, because Allah has taught him, so let him write and let him who incurs the liability dictate, and he should fear Allah, his Lord, and not diminish anything therefrom. But if the person incurring the liability be of low understanding or be weak or be unable himself to dictate, then let someone who can guard his interest dictate with justice.

**And call two witnesses from among your men; and if two men be not available, then a man and two women, of such as you approve as witnesses, so that if either of the two women should forget, then one may remind the other.**

And the witnesses should not refuse when they are called. And be not averse to writing it down whether it be small or large, along with its appointed time of payment.

This is more equitable in the sight of Allah and makes testimony surer and is more likely to save you from doubt; so write it down except that it be ready transaction which you make among yourselves on the spot in which case it shall be no sin for you that you write it not. And have witnesses when you sell one to another, and let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness. And if you do that, then certainly it shall be disobedience on your part. And fear Allah. And Allah teaches you and Allah knows all things quite well.

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [2:283](#)]

[bold emphasis and vertical spacing added are mine]

In this issue, as with others in this writing, there will always be two lines of reasoning used to discount my inquires at first glance. These approaches are typically voiced by those without much knowledge of the world *outside* their own particular faith. These are the people who cling to inherited beliefs. They are believers in the passive sense, in that they did not actively arrive at the conclusion that their faith is the Ultimate Truth. Born into another faith, they would have clung to that just as tightly.

Faced with a perplexing religious issue that explicitly or subtly can undermine their faith they respond with passive-believer-response number one:

The reason for this *2-women-for-1-man* requirement cannot be understood from reading the passage at face value. The justice and truth of this injunction is intricately woven beneath the words and with other verses taken together. It is too difficult for the average person to really understand or appreciate.

Now if you present detailed and systematic explanations, or even purport to, you instead get passive-believer-response number two:



You're going too deep into the matter. It's not meant to be dissected so. If you dismantle and analyze the verse so closely, you'll miss the point. Human beings are not meant to understand or make sense of it at those deeper levels.

Now if you respond to this latter view with a more superficial, face value reading of something contentious in Scripture, you are reverted back to the passive-believer-response number one. In the vernacular of computing, this is the infamous infinite loop problem. Attempting to discuss issues of religious controversy with such people is a situation of *heads you win; tails I lose*.

In the end, one of the above positions has to be generally truer than the other. Giving religion credit as a complex and comprehensive system that cannot always be understood at face value, I choose to examine issues of contention with somewhat more detail and rigour. This having been established, let us begin the investigation.

The first question that comes to mind is: why are two women substituted for the one male witness? I have thought of so many potential reasons, yet to each one, I can offer a response which renders that reason invalid grounds for such a statement.

Running out of reasons, one is inexorably drawn closer and closer to the conclusion that this 2-for-1 arrangement is not justified in the context of a universal law, justice and the dictates of reason.

To see how I've come to this conclusion, let us examine the common answers given for this injunction.

## 1.1 Common Explanations

The following is a brief list of explanations<sup>29</sup> cited for the 2-for-1 arrangement, some clearly unreasonable, the others weakly debatable by some:

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<sup>29</sup> These common explanations I've encountered over the years are from other Muslims, within the Jama'at and within mainstream Islam—both in conversation and in literature. This set of explanations is by no means exhaustive—but it is enough to prove a point and stimulate an awareness of the fact that a higher level of understanding and explanation is needed here.

No.	Common Explanation
CE1	Women have bad memories
CE2	Women just aren't smart enough to replace a man in a 1:1 ratio as a witness
CE3	Women don't know anything about business
CE4	Women aren't educated to know about contracts
CE5	Women don't have the opportunity to refresh the terms of the contract as they do not constitute any part of business circles, purdah and all
CE6	Women shouldn't be in the civil / business field
CE7	Women don't / shouldn't come out of their homes as much, so this will deter people asking them to
CE8	Women should be dissuaded from having to appear in a Man's court
CE9	Women are too emotional to give witness on their own

There are other sub-explanations to those given above when different avenues of the verse are explored, and these will be addressed in due course.

Introducing this very issue within his essay *Women in Islam*, Muhammad Zafrulla Khan states:

A direction designed to secure the preservation of testimony relating to civil transactions, which requires that they must be reduced to writing, is sometime **mistakenly seized upon as evidence of discrimination against females.** [4, 22]  
[emphasis added is mine]

He goes on to say that:

There is here not the **slightest trace** of discrimination. The normal rule is that **women should be safeguarded** against the contingency of having to appear as witnesses in judicial proceedings. Therefore, **normally a woman should not be called** upon to attest a document recording a transaction. [4, 22]  
[emphasis added is mine]

Based on this explanation, two questions arise:

1.1	Do women really need to be safeguarded from appearing as witnesses?
1.2	Should we (as a society) accept it as a general rule that women not be called to attest a document recording a transaction?

Before we answer these questions however, we should keep in mind an important principle Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II states in his comprehensive work, *Invitation to Ahmadiyyat*:

...[one] fundamental discovery about the Holy Quran...[is] that the Holy Quran never makes an assertion **unless it also points to the reason** for that assertion.

[3, [229](#)]

[emphasis added is mine]

So, what reason does the Qur'an point to for having two women (instead of just one) in place of one man? The Holy Qur'an points to the following:

...so that if either of the two *women* should **forget**, then one may remind the other.

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [2:283](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

The new questions which arise are:

1.3	Are women forgetful by nature?
1.4	Are there any reasons why, under the circumstances, a woman (and yet, not a man), would forget (to whatever significant degree) the terms of a transaction?

Question 1.3 above and Common Explanation CE1, are essentially one and the same, and if these are true, then the verse is justified.

No.	Status	Common Explanation
CE1	To be answered	Women have bad memories.

If we look back in Islamic history for an example everyone is familiar with, we need only look at the example of Hazrat Aisha, who reported a very large number of the Prophet's Traditions. If I'm not mistaken, it was second in number only to another Companion of the Prophet's. No precedent here for a conclusion of natural forgetfulness.

If one examines the traditional place of women throughout the ages, any disparity in memory or intellectual capacity was due to cultural roles and the limiting or denial of women to positions where such talents could be expressed, developed and demonstrated. Even during the educational process of those earlier times, most women learned only enough to get by with chores in the home. Higher study was not common among women.

Even in the last century, efforts have been expended in order to keep women away from such opportunities where these intellectual faculties could be developed and practiced, such as in Pakistan’s early years of existence:

So no one flinched when Begum Shaista Ikramullah tried to draw parliament’s attention to the government’s ‘retrograde and . . . reactionary policy’ towards women on the educational as well as the employment fronts. Not only was government slashing allocations for their higher education, but was ‘definitely taking steps to discourage and prevent women from taking their fair share in the Government of the country’. Women were beginning to secure better grades than men in most qualifying examinations. Yet they could not look forward to careers in a range of government departments, including the prestigious foreign service. To add insult to injury, those persuaded or coerced into liking marriage had to do so by lumping their jobs in government. [a, 91]

This leads us into an examination of current times, where in many parts of the world, women have been given the chance to learn as much as men, and apply the knowledge in a concrete way. If such an inherent property of women to forget was indeed present, would it not have surfaced under these conditions of equal opportunity? Even amidst the politically correct culture of the West, wouldn't such conclusions be found rumoring around? Had such a characteristic in women existed—it would have been noticed—somewhere.

Clearly then, the question of forgetfulness and memory (to any degree greater than men) is a non-issue, and thus, not one of the possible explanations for the 2-for-1 arrangement in 2:283 of the Qur'an.

Very closely linked with the issue of forgetfulness is Common Explanation CE2, that:

No.	Status	Common Explanation
CE2	To be answered	Women just aren't smart enough to replace a man in a 1:1 ratio as a witness.

Again, throughout time, one can downplay the skills of women as far as memory and intellect go *only* because of cultural repression denying them the opportunity to prove otherwise. Even the Commentator(s) of verse 4:35 were mistaken with their opinionated commentary that males possessed superior mental faculties (over females).

Here’s the entire commentary:

598. *Qawwamun* is derived from *Qama* and *Qama 'Alal-Mar'ati* means, he undertook the maintenance of the woman; he protected her. *Qawwamun*, therefore, means, maintainers, managers of affairs; protectors (Lisan). **The verse gives two reasons why man has been made head of the family, (a) his superior mental** and physical faculties; and (b) his being the bread-earner and maintainer<sup>30</sup> of the family. It is therefore, natural and fair that he, who earns and supplies the money for the maintenance of the family, should enjoy a supervisory status in the disposal of its affairs.

[1 - Commentary, [200](#)]  
[bold emphasis added is mine]

Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV stated in a Majlis Irphan session<sup>31</sup> that the explanation of *superior* mental / intellectual abilities of men over women was incorrect, and as such, this explanation should be changed.

Common Explanations CE1 and CE2 are thus eliminated. Returning to Question 1.4, which is:

1.4	Are there any reasons why, under the circumstances, a woman (and yet, not a man), would forget (to whatever significant degree) the terms of a transaction?
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To this question, one may propose Common Explanations CE3, CE4, CE5 and CE9:

No.	Status	Common Explanation
CE3	To be answered	Women don't know anything about business.
CE4	To be answered	Women aren't educated to know about contracts.
CE5	To be answered	Women don't have the opportunity to refresh the terms of the contract as they do not constitute any part of business circles, purdah and all.
CE9	To be answered	Women are too emotional to give witness on their own.

Common Explanation CE3, that '*Women don't know anything about business*' is based on the traditional positioning of women *only* at home. Now clearly, for women who are out in the work force, this sentiment is completely untrue. If women are involved in business, they're going to know about it, and surely enough to attest to a transaction.

<sup>30</sup> This commentary is inaccurate in that while men may have been the traditional bread-earners, women likely did most of the "maintaining" of the family unit.

<sup>31</sup> In response to a question that I asked on June 3, 1991, Paradise Banquet Hall, Toronto, Canada.

So as long as society allows women to partake in the workforce and have careers, this common explanation cannot be true. Briefly sidetracking, a new question arises:

1.5	Does Islam as a Faith, aspire to <i>create such a society</i> in which women would have <i>such a deficiency of knowledge about business</i> and its transactions that a 2-for-1 witness ratio would indeed be an indisputable necessity?
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If the answer to Question 1.5 is Yes, then it is the responsibility of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at to have over the years, drilled the following into our minds...

Don't let your women go to work, they should be dissuaded from being out of the home. They should not play and participate in men's affairs and the Man's World.

Of course, no policy statement of the kind have I ever explicitly heard. According to Ian Adamson's book [\*A Man of God\*](#), citing the advice of Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV, one finds the sentiments of the Khalifa indicating that we need our women to also become doctors, lawyers and so forth. This point may seem trivial, and indeed it is, but it must be noted nonetheless for those who would dispute it.

Having answered Question 1.5 with a positive *no*, this eliminates Common Explanations CE3, CE4, CE5, CE6 and CE7.

Now if one accepts that it is perfectly legitimate for a woman to hold a job, and that this is inevitably inclusive of jobs in the business sector, then of course, women will be educated enough to know about and be aware of business issues. The courts would not be the sole domain of men. Thus, Common Explanation CE8 can also be eliminated.

Common Explanation CE9, that 'Women are too emotional to give witness on their own' remains. Some books by mainstream Sunni Muslim men have emphasized, suggested and painted women as overly emotional and frail little creatures unable to do anything potentially cognitive. They've reduced women to mere *baby machines* for more men:

Now it is fitting to note that the reason why the Qur'an has restricted the woman's role in social affairs is because **it looks upon her as a means of procreating more people. Neither do we intend to argue to the contrary.**

[A, 24]

[emphasis added is mine]

This author goes on to imply that women have no place in government and the judiciary:

...man is physically and **intellectually different** from the **woman**, who **is more emotional**... If **emotions** are allowed to **permeate government** and **judgment**,<sup>32</sup> then the rights of many will be violated by the authorities in charge.

[A, 33]

[emphasis added is mine]

Now if as a society we've already established the legitimate right of a woman to work outside the home, then women must be given the rights that go hand in hand with their responsibilities. If women are employed in the work force, then they are obviously using their judgment, and if it was so seriously prone to emotional infractions, we would not see women holding their jobs for very long. Of course, women are naturally gifted with more tenderness, as can be seen in the mother-child bond,<sup>33</sup> but let's not paint her as an *emotional basket case* that lacks functional objectivity.

Could it be an historic superiority complex of male dominated society to legitimize and secure their domination? One cannot offer conclusions to such speculation,<sup>34</sup> but one can see that women have done fine as lawyers and judges.

Therefore, if we've deduced that working women<sup>35</sup> have just as sound a judgment and functional mental stability as men, the response painting women as emotionally dysfunctional to a degree requiring two women to be witnesses is stereotypical and can hold no weight in the court of human reason. It is clear then, that Common

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<sup>32</sup> This author is assuming that throughout the world, where men oversee the judicial and government systems, emotions / subjectivity do not play any role!

<sup>33</sup> I'm sure some feminists would not like the example I present here, but I find such feminist views at another extreme. I am not asserting that men do not possess a tenderness when with a child, but simply that in general, women are endowed with a higher **degree** of sensitivity here. I don't believe any scientist of human physiology would dispute that.

<sup>34</sup> Again, I'm sure many would view the male-domination-legitimization theory as fact, but since I'm introducing it within the larger context of the pious theological Islamic elite and their intentions, I will forego conclusions here concerning such.

<sup>35</sup> Note that I've restricted the explanation to women working outside the home to tighten the argument and comparison with working men. More closely examined however, it is important to note that **all** women work. One cannot elevate those who work outside the home as equipped with better judgement / stability. To do that, would be a devaluation of the work women do in the home. The home is a very abstract notion of division between the so-called public and private worlds, but in reality, those places cannot be divided so cleanly. Finally, the value attributed to paid labour, to work that is deemed 'worthy of recognition' by western economics is misleading and rather convenient. I use the comparison of men and women working outside the home in order to drive home my argument within the context of existing stereotypes to minimize the host of [valid] tangents that come into play when all women are considered in general.

Explanation CE9, that 'Women are too emotional to give witness on their own', can be eliminated.

Now that all the common explanations have been dealt with to a greater or lesser degree, it would be prudent to re-enforce some of those that did not receive as much coverage.

## 1.2 The Memory Refreshing Argument

Muhammad Zafrulla Khan *alludes* to an Islamic society being one where women are uncommon in business circles:

...**the female** witness, **under the Islamic social system**, as will presently be appreciated, would not normally have frequent occasion to meet the male witness to talk to him...

[4, [22](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

Now if a Muslim woman is working, then in any industry, in any workplace, there's going to be communication and dialogue among employees and affiliates. The purpose of purdah is so that sensible interaction<sup>36</sup> and communication can take place between men and woman.

Therefore, this statement by Muhammad Zafrulla Khan is not in harmony with the Khalifa's statements concerning women, Islam, and taking on professional roles.<sup>37</sup>

Nonetheless, let's assume an Islamic society modeled in such a way that the female witness would not normally have frequent occasion to meet the male witness to talk to him.

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<sup>36</sup> While very relevant to the argument, I seek not to bind the definition of 'sensible interaction' to a concrete notion / set of rules as that is somewhat a red herring. I do believe that readers will appreciate what I am trying to relay, and in this context, can interpret 'sensible interaction' to fit their own conception.

<sup>37</sup> Of course, this is my opinion on the two being somewhat out of concert.



To this line of reasoning, Muhammad Zafrulla Khan continues with the following explanation:

In the case of male witnesses their memory of a transaction that they attest as witnesses would be refreshed when they met socially and the transaction was recalled for one reason or another. In the case of a document recording a transaction, which is attested by one male and one female witness, the female witness, under the Islamic social system, as will presently be appreciated, would not normally have frequent occasion to meet the male witness to talk to him, so that **there would be little chance of her memory of the transaction being refreshed.** To overcome this **lack of opportunity of refreshing the memory**, it is wisely provided that where only one male witness is available two female witnesses may be called upon so that, in the very words of the text, one may refresh the memory of the other.

[4, [22](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

With the above explanation, an oversight has been made vis-à-vis the very grounds the passage attempts to justify the Qur'anic verse 2:283. In Muhammad Zafrulla Khan's vision of an Islamic society,

As much as the female witness 'would not normally have frequent occasion to meet the male witness to talk to him', he (the male witness) would equally **not** have frequent occasion to meet the female witness. As such, the terms of the contract can **neither** be "refreshed" in **his** memory!

When providing an explanation, we cannot, as the saying goes,

Make fair of one and foul of the other.

Secondly, the two women under Muhammad Zafrulla Khan's vision of an Islamic society would have better occasion to refresh *each other's* memories—more than the man himself—and would under this line of reasoning, serve as better (more reliable) witnesses as two women *alone*, without the *odd man out* who had *no one to talk to*. Would not this singular man need someone to assist him giving witness since he had no other male with whom the terms of the contract could be refreshed? Of course, this was the original problem—that is—not having the second male. The logical question that arises out of this situation as a consequence is: *why keep a male witness with an unrefreshed memory at all when you have two women who have a much better chance of refreshing each other's memories?*

Therefore, Common Explanation CE5, that 'Women don't have the opportunity to refresh the terms of the contract as they do not constitute any part of business circles, purdah and all' is invalid in light of the most rigid interpretations of purdah.

### 1.3 A Look at the book Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues

Looking towards Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV's brief rationalization of the subject in his lecture delivered at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre (London), we may refer to a book in English entitled *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues*. A passage reprints the Qur'anic verse 2:283, and then goes on to say the following:

It is important to remember that these verses have been completely misapplied and used entirely out of context by those **medieval minded scholars who insist that according to Islam a single woman's testimony is not sufficient**. They say that for each legal requirement, two women's testimony is essential in comparison to one man's wherever one man's testimony is sufficient. Having totally misconstrued the meaning of these verses, they have falsely envisaged the role of male and female witnesses in Islamic jurisprudence. They think that when the Holy Quran requires one man as a witness, the testimony of two women will be substituted in lieu thereof; where two men's testimony is required, four women's testimony will be required; and where four male persons are required as witnesses, eight women will be required to testify the same.

This concept is so unrealistic and alien to Quranic teachings that one is exasperated to see such medievalist stance on this important Judicial issue.

The following points should be noted regarding these verses:

1. The verses do not at all require both women to testify.
2. The role of the second women is clearly specified and confined to be that of an assistant.
3. If the second woman who is not testifying finds any part of the statement of the witness as indicative of the witness not having fully understood the spirit of the bargain, she may remind her and assist the witness in revising her understanding or refreshing her memory.
4. It is entirely up to that woman who is testifying to agree or disagree with her assistant. Her testimony remains as a single independent testimony and in case she does not agree with her partner, her's would be the last word.

[8, [165](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

Firstly, let us acknowledge and agree that to place two female witnesses on par with one male witness everywhere where one male witness is sufficient, amounts to a **medieval** way of thinking. Why however, do we in this *one* case accept an injunction that itself bears strong connotations of **medieval** minded thinking?

In what way would society suffer if one female witness was substituted for one male witness in *this* very verse (Holy Qur'an 2:283)?

One may retort with the counter question as to what does it really matter that an extra woman will be called for the witnessing of civil contracts for all time to come in Islamic societies?

I believe the answer to such a question is multifaceted and much more profound than such an indifferent and immature sentiment.

#### 1.4 A Logical and Reasonable Answer is Needed

Throughout my life, and most likely in well-over a hundred years, Islam has responded to Christian and other non-Muslim criticism about the plight and status of Muslim women under Islam and ‘Islamic cultures’ with the classic response that:

The woman issue in Islam is so misunderstood...there are so many misconceptions...the West doesn't appreciate nor understand the high status of Women in Islam...

I do acknowledge that Islam has done and has the inherent potential to do *great things* for the women of all societies.

Unfortunately, as there are many issues in Islam concerning women which have not been presented with convincing explanations, and the verse concerning witnesses is so easy for one to take exception to—it naturally follows that the availability of a solid explanation for verse 2:283 serves as a flagship symbol—a symbol of the integrity with which Islam can claim it is a just system towards women. If we cannot put convincing reason to the injunctions of 2:283, then it is our duty to honestly proclaim that the controversial issues concerning women and Islam are not misconceptions, but commandments that *neither we find logical* reasons for. If this be the case, then

I would like to have such a statement made public once and for all.

Of course, if we consider the explanation of *no explanation* as a position, then it must be realized that the analogy of such a stance is the following:

A defendant in a criminal trial stands in the witness box. Much circumstantial and empirical evidence is stacked against the defendant. On being posed a crucial make-or-break question that could substantially clear the defendant of wrong doing if they chose to answer convincingly, the defendant instead replies with "No Comment".

Now, would you as a juror be *more* inclined to judge this defendant as innocent after such a response? Of course not. The fact that there were no answers smells of a cover up, of guilt, of a sort of conspiracy.

In the same way, a convincing answer must be provided for the injunctions of 2:283, since without any solid reasoning, the integrity of Islam as the Ultimate Truth

quickly erodes, as there is very little room, if any, for Falsehood to exist with Truth and *result* in an Ultimate Truth. Postulate Five established this point, that:

Overall Falsehood may contain Truths, but an Overall Truth, can only be composed of Truths.

Also, many references can be made to Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II who both acknowledges the need for a convincing explanation to **all** Qur'anic injunctions, *as well* as to the availability of convincing explanations for such. The following quotations (from Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II) will make crystal clear the authoritative Ahmadiyya Muslim position on reason, logic and the claim that every verse of the Holy Qur'an appeals to such:

...[a] fundamental discovery about the Holy Quran...[is] that the Holy Quran never makes an assertion unless it also points to the reason for that assertion. [3, 229]  
...they [followers of Promised Messiah] found that thousands of assertions which were thought to be unsupported by rational demonstration, and which devotees of the Holy Quran were supposed to believe on authority as assertions of Almighty God, were found to carry their rational basis with them.

[3, [229](#)]

The advance of science and the general development of scientific methods have promoted in our time the **type of mind which accepts nothing on mere authority. It was therefore impossible for people in our time to accept statements in the Holy Quran unless they were accompanied by rational justification.**

[3, [229](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

The Holy Quran did not invite its readers to accept anything on mere authority. It invited them to accept beliefs and injunctions which **appealed to their intellect and conscience.**

[3, [229](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

No religion or philosophical system or thought which chooses to challenge Islam can overawe us. ***We can deal with it*** with the help of the Holy Quran. No objection or difficulty has ever been raised about **any single verse** of the Holy Quran, the reply to which has not been disclosed to us by the special Grace of God.

[3, [314](#)]

[bold-italic emphasis added is mine]

That indifference to this issue is unacceptable for the promotion and acceptance of Islam should now be clear. Let us then, continue with our investigation.

### 1.5 The Second Woman is only an Assistant?

In Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV's *Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues*,<sup>38</sup> several notes are presented concerning how verse 2:283 of the Holy Qur'an is to be taken—and how *not* to take it. When these notes were presented earlier, they were discussed in the context of *medieval minded scholars*. It is now appropriate to examine some of the explanations touched upon in this passage. The relevant notes from this passage are reproduced below:

The following points should be noted regarding these verses:

1. The verses do not at all require both women to testify.
2. The role of the second women is clearly **specified and confined to be that of an assistant**.
3. If the second woman who is not testifying finds any part of the statement of the witness as indicative of the witness not having fully understood the spirit of the bargain, she may remind her and assist the witness in revising her understanding or refreshing her memory.
4. It is entirely up to that woman who is testifying to agree or disagree with her assistant. Her testimony remains as a single independent testimony and in case she does not agree with her partner, her's would be the last word.

[8, [165](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

Now the first point made regarding only one woman needing to testify is fair enough. The other points in my opinion, are not inferred from the English rendering of the relevant verse (2:283). If the actual Arabic words point to nuances in the language which strongly imply the above points, then they should be stated and explained in Qur'anic commentaries.<sup>39</sup> The following discussion in this sub-section assumes that the English rendering of this verse is a good and fair representation of

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<sup>38</sup> This was cited earlier in a section devoted to the passage.

<sup>39</sup> Currently, both the one-volume red bound Qur'an with Commentary and the five-volume blue bound Qur'an with Commentary published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at **do not** shed light on the Arabic in this portion of the verse nor do they so much as acknowledge the at least initial controversy presented by the two-for-one arrangement. This is very much odd considering the preface of the five-volume set claims to refute and explain those items that Christian Scholars have criticized either from 'ignorance' or 'willful misrepresentation'. The silence in the Qur'anic commentaries for verse 2:283, however, does speak volumes.

the meaning and import of the actual Arabic. If this be not the case, then others must provide insight into the Arabic under which the following discussion can be revisited, to determine what conclusions can then be drawn.

Examining the second point:

The role of the second women is clearly **specified and confined to be that of an assistant.**

[8, [165](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

Nowhere in Qur'anic 2:283 is there any evidence that one of the females is the 'prime witness' and that the other is the 'assistant witness'. In the words of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at's translation:

...so that if **either of the two women should forget**, then one may remind the other...

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [2:283](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

This strongly implies that *either* of the two women could have given witness, and that in either case, the women not giving witness, could remind the one giving witness.

Where is it implied in this verse that only one of the women is designated as giving witness, and the other women is designated as being an assistant? If there isn't such a firm designation (and there doesn't appear to be one), then who is to say that they both cannot speak, adding tidbits to each other's testimony and in fact, act as full assistants to each other?

More specifically, the Qur'anic text speaks of *either of the women forgetting*. If it is argued that in this verse, one women is the prime witness and the other is 'clearly' an assistant, then of what need would there be in the *prime* witness reminding the *assistant* witness of an issue if *the prime witness is giving testimony*? Think about it. If this were truly the case, we would have expected the Qur'an to assert this need for two women *so that if the primary woman forgot, the assistant could remind her*. Why instead, do the Qur'anic words lend themselves to a translation for which the word "either" was chosen?

The Qur'an hints at *either* woman forgetting (implying equality between the two women), whereas the explanation in point two (see above) seeks to singularize the presence of both women by asserting that one is the prime witness who is actually doing the talking. These two positions appear to be at odds with one another.

Examining the third point:

If the second woman who is not testifying finds any part of the statement of the witness as indicative of the witness not having fully understood the spirit of the bargain, she may remind her and assist the witness in revising her understanding or refreshing her memory.

[8, [165](#)]

This rests on the assumption of a prime and assistant witness, which was argued above as not being implicit in the Qur'anic verse. Furthermore, if the two women's understandings / memories constitute only one testimony, who decides on who is the prime witness and who is the assistant? What if both the women disagree with each other before one of them testifies? Where is resolution for such disagreement in the text of the Qur'an?

Examining the fourth point:

It is entirely up to that woman who is testifying to agree or disagree with her assistant. Her testimony remains as a single independent testimony and in case she does not agree with her partner, her's would be the last word.

[8, [165](#)]

This fourth point is all fine and well, except, where is it implied that the prime woman witness's testimony is the last word, even under disagreement? Statements to this effect attempt to singularize the presence of the two women, yet such explanations cannot be inferred from the Qur'anic verse itself.

Furthermore, in an attempt to differentiate the Ahmadiyya Muslim position of this verse and its implications from those of some medieval minded Muslims, nothing is mentioned as to why the *prime* female witness needs an assistant in the first place (i.e. is it biological? Was it a temporal thing for 6<sup>th</sup> century Arabia? Do we have authority to override it?). For such an answer, one can only speculate—and explanations like those of the common explanations discussed earlier, come to mind.

## 1.6 Some Uncommon Explanations

The following explanations that I have heard are not prevalent, but deserve attention nonetheless. These explanations although uncommon, do seem implied in part when other, more common explanations are given. Let's examine these uncommon explanations.

### 1.6.1 Liars and Prone to Gossip?

The explanation that women are liars and prone to gossip may seem quite stereotypical, and indeed it is. What needs to be considered in this context however, is whether the stereotype holds in general, regardless of the fact that it is clearly politically incorrect.

It may be that Islam holds certain things to be eternally true (which really are true) that civilizations in time agree / disagree with in transitory phases. In no way should political correctness be taken as an ultimate judge in the validity of any particular precept.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, many good values have been adopted in cultures which then assume a political correctness within those cultures.

Now to the issue at hand. I believe it is morally incorrect to classify women as liars in general, just as it is incorrect to classify all men as liars. If lying was the basis under which women have been required to witness as a pair in civil transactions, then women should have been given a parallel law specifically for them, considering how being habitual liars, they would have many special needs and require specific guidance.

One might argue that women wouldn't need a parallel law, they would just need to be told that dishonesty is wrong, just as both men and women are exhorted in the Qur'an. Of course, if women were classified as habitual liars, this injunction wouldn't prove too fruitful, since honesty wouldn't even be a possible avenue for advancement, seeing as how it would be against nature.

Obviously then, both women and men have the capability for both honesty and dishonesty.<sup>41</sup>

Just as parties engaged in a civil contract can choose male witnesses that they approve of, they can choose female witnesses that they approve of. If one believes in the *women are liars* explanation, then this implies that Islam does not believe that it is likely that an honest enough woman would be found to pair with a man as a civil witness; the women would need a partner / assistant because of this 'lack of degree of honesty of females which all males in general do possess'.

Since the whole gossipy aura of a person develops based on cultural and social environmental conditions, and not biological ones, no Perfect Law can classify males or females categorically as gossipers, since this would not be comprehensive, nor

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<sup>40</sup> Please note that I do not personally subscribe to this theory (that all women are liars and gossips), and that the discussion in this section will get quite rhetorical, but only to ensure that the central point is made clearly.

<sup>41</sup> From this topic, I recall an assessment of human beings made by a scientist/philosopher who classified Man as the "Reasoning Animal" and whose classification was later modified by a British Scientist/Philosopher to the "Animal **Capable** of Reason".



universal (this would violate Postulate One on universality and Postulate Six on lowering our ideals).

Restating the conclusion here, no Perfect Law would use the categorical gossiping of males or females as a basis for a civil law, as such a basis would clearly be unfair, narrow and inaccurate.

On the topic of embedded stereotypes in scripture, I can recall a personal encounter with preachers from the *Nation of Islam* (the 'black Muslim' group) in 1990 who referenced allusions in the Qur'an (as interpreted by them) to support black supremacy and the inferiority of the white race.

The following verse of Surah Taha was referenced:

The day when the trumpet will be blown. And on that day We shall gather the **sinful** together, **blue-eyed**.

[1 - The Holy Qur'an, [20:103](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

The *Nation of Islam* interprets this as a classification of the Caucasian race (specifically those with blue eyes) as a race of sinners. The Qur'anic Commentary published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at has the following perspective on the issue:

1849. The allusion in this verse primarily seems to be to the Western Christian nations who have blue eyes and are spiritually blind and possess an undying hatred for Islam.

[1 - Commentary, [680](#)]

Now it is a serious thing that the physical colour of one's eyes has such a connotation, but Islam does not believe that all Caucasians can be categorized as sinners or the progeny of sinners. Islam doesn't ban Caucasians from being Imams or anything of that sort. Clearly the lesson here is that though a certain trend may have been prevalent among a group of people at given points in time, the entire group cannot be condemned, nor pre-judged, nor categorically classified.

Thus, if women are not biological liars nor biological gossipers, they cannot be placed in a two-for-one ratio in the witnessing of civil transactions because of transitory trends which have no basis in biology. Such a move would condemn the history of women (past, present and future) to a narrow view which they have already pierced. Clearly, a Perfect Law must be *realistic*, but in doing so, it should not thwart the potential for the ideal (Postulate Six).

## 1.6.2 Women tempted by the Devil when they cannot pray

This bizarre explanation I've never heard amongst Ahmadi Muslim circles, but since I have heard it amongst some Sunni Muslim circles, I thought it would be interesting to explore some of the implications introduced by this line of thinking. It also serves to illustrate how the Islamic theology can lend itself to very strange conceptions of gender and equality once some degree of inequality<sup>42</sup> is introduced into the religious framework.

The first question that arises when considering this uncommon explanation is the exact nature of what Islam considers to be the 'Devil'.

Is the Devil the 'devil inside us all', or is it just the tendency to fall short of the ideal, or is it an external conscious influence, an actual Being?

Is there a Chief of Evil Spirits that is the analogy to Gabriel as the Head of Angels—an actual sentient being consciously bent on wreaking havoc? A Qur'anic Commentary footnote states on this matter:

951. Iblis was not an angel (18:51). He is the chief of the evil spirits as Gabriel is the chief of angels.

[1 - Commentary, [325](#)]

The Qur'an also refers to Iblis as one of the "Jinn":

And call to mind the time when We said to the angels, 'Submit to Adam,' and they all submitted but Iblis did not. **He was one of the jinn**; and he disobeyed the command of his Lord. Will you then take him and his offspring for friends instead of Me while they are your enemies? Evil is the exchange for the wrongdoers.

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [18:51](#)]

[bold emphasis added]

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<sup>42</sup> The types of inequality to which I speak are touched on in the various issues of this book (only as a representative sample). These are inequalities / special stipulations for women that I don't believe have to do with the *natural* differences between man and women, but the social roles imposed upon them by theology that perhaps, are outdated.

Some Qur'anic commentary, on the subject of the identity of the jinn has the following to say:

3139. As the word Rijal is used only with regard to human beings, the verse shows that 'a company of the jinn', mentioned in this and in Surah Al-Ahqaf were human beings and not any other species of creation. The Arabic word Jinn here may signify big or influential men and Ins lowly and humble ones who, by following the former and seeking their protection, increase their conceit and arrogance.

[1 - Commentary, [1268](#)]

900. The words, men and jinn, which occur in many verses of the Qur'an do not signify two different species of God's creatures, but two classes of human beings; "men" denoting the masses or the common folk, and "jinn" standing for the big people who often remain aloof from the common people and do not mix with them, practically remaining hidden from public gaze.

[1 - Commentary, [307](#)]

In the above two commentary passages and others like them, jinn are interpreted as being men, yet the scope of what jinn can also include is left open. So far, jinn can be aloof /distant men, and jinn can be someone like Iblis, Head of Evil Spirits. Can those evil spirits which Iblis is the head of themselves be considered jinn? If so, can these jinn influence human beings?

The point of all these rhetorical questions is this: it is put forth by some that one of the reasons women have been required in pairs for civil contracts (at least as witnesses, not necessarily during testimony) is because, women during menstruation being exempted from prayers, no longer have the spiritual protection that the shield of prayers provide.

This point of view in effect, holds that women for a large part of their lives are spiritually unprotected and susceptible to evil influences from evil jinn, and consequently, they cannot be trusted.

The chances that evil jinn will be able to get both women are slim, and thus, evidence has a better chance at being preserved with two women.<sup>43</sup>

Clearly, the salient questions which arise are:

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<sup>43</sup> Admittedly, I've never heard an Ahmadi Muslim conjecture such an explanation, but I have heard it from amongst Sunni Muslims.

1.6	Is there another creation of God that has the potential for evil that we know of, whose existence we attribute the nature of our laws / commandments to?
1.7	If such a creation exists, whom do they have the power to influence, and whom do they not?

Such a line of reasoning, one that adopts evil influences by the jinn in fact, opens up a proverbial can of worms. Should a woman, who can be influenced by evil spirits during menstrual periods, not be left alone with young children? Should a woman, who can be influenced by evil spirits during menstrual periods, not be allowed to prepare sensitive financial documents at the end of her company's fiscal year, lest she mess up because jinn got to her mind because she couldn't pray because she was on her menstrual period?

Should civil witnesses be checked out as to whether they're regular in their prayers before they can act as witnesses?

What about a Christian man living in an Islamic country with Qur'anic injunctions forming the nature of civil law wherever the Qur'an has touched upon such details. Would the Christian man be an invalid witness on his own because he only goes to Church once a week, and thus, is susceptible to influence from evil spirits? Would Islam judge Christian men and women on par?

Clearly, if women can be 'influenced by the devil', how far does this go, and what are the repercussions of women taking on any roles of responsibility and / or power? Is the Islamic Ideal a society where women will be politely and systematically stripped of civil and societal powers?

Clearly this explanation is untenable as it is riddled with problems and corollary questions. It simply cannot be the basis for explaining the injunction in Qur'anic 2:283.

Having touched on the issue of women's place in society sets the stage for reflection on the how it would be really nice to have a clear vision statement on the Islamic Ideal vis-à-vis some of these specifics, much as dynamic business organizations do. It gives the latter a vision and a goal. From this, a means to attain the vision is drawn up and implemented.

Said one Ahmadi Muslim writer in a *Review of Religions* article:

**A Muslim woman is an active member of the community. She takes part in all religious functions, performs all forms of worship and participates in all national enterprises.**

In the Holy Prophet's time and during the time of his succeeding Khalifas, Muslim women went to the mosque, performed the pilgrimage, observed fasting and gave charity in the cause of God from their personal property and income.

[5, 32]

[emphasis added is mine]

Unfortunately, as much as one may agree with this sentiment and this vision, it is not articulated in the structure of Ahmadi Muslim literature, nor in the nature of the institution that is the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at.

### 1.7 An Ambiguous Situation

An ambiguous situation can occur based on the wording of Qur'anic 2:283. The Qur'an instructs that initially, two male witnesses should be sought. What if initially, no males are available for witnessing, but an abundance of females are around. Do two women suffice? Do we need four women, two for each man that couldn't be there?

1.8	Does the Qur'an view it as an impossibility that anything to do with civil finance would ever occur unless there were men around?
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If the answer to Question 1.8 is a yes, then this implication triggers a further question in view of current times:

1.9	How does this view impact the Qur'an's universality, its "For All Time"-ness?
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### 1.8 A Look into Issues of Exceptions and Best Wordings

At this point, one might be inclined to state that some less discriminatory explanation is locked within the verse, and that the lock to such an explanation just needs to be picked. In taking such a stance, postulates three and four are worth repeating as a preamble to the evaluation of such a position.<sup>44</sup>

Postulate Three states:

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<sup>44</sup> It may be worthwhile reviewing any examples given for these postulates to understand the exact intent of their words.

Commandments with repercussions of a fundamental nature are not dangerously ambiguous.

Postulate Four states:

Interpretations must limit themselves to only being that. They cannot start attributing meanings to words which they are incapable of bearing.

If it is felt that the more direct and superficial meaning for verse 2:283 of the Qur'an was applicable in the Prophet's time, and that today, such an explanation must exist to acknowledge and legitimize the safekeeping of evidence with simply two female witnesses or one male and one female witness, a key question arises:

1.10	What criteria are reasonable grounds for a person (man or woman) to be considered a capable and reliable witness without the need for a 'double', or an 'assistant' or any other 'helper' to be present?
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To such a question, I suggest the following salient characteristics of a potential witness (not *all* necessarily a must, but definitely suitable as minimum criteria):

1. Honesty and integrity
2. An educated (intelligent) mind
3. A knowledge of business transactions and general legal issues

Now having already dismissed the female 'biological basket case theories', the criteria for good witnesses with the preservation of evidence in mind are the same for both men and women alike. The three qualities given above should definitely qualify a person who possess such, to be a good choice for a witness.

### 1.8.1 A Hypothetical Islamic Example

With these facts in mind, let us consider a *hypothetical* example:

Two Muslim parties wish to have a loan contract witnessed. They diligently follow the Qur'anic injunctions given in 2:283; they seek two (2) male witnesses.

It's lunch time at the office, and most everyone is out for lunch. The local janitor is spotted, he's been working at the office complex for years and is an honest, warm and good friend of all. The janitor is asked to be one of the male witnesses, and he kindly agrees to witness the transaction. To the dismay of the parties involved in the transaction, no other males are currently available.

The two parties both agree that under Qur'anic injunctions, two (2) women will do in place of the second man that could not be found. The parties ask the two women in an adjacent office (a respected legal firm) to act as witnesses. The two women kindly agree to witness the transaction. These women are in fact, senior partners in a legal firm they began many years ago. They are both well educated, having graduate degrees, no less. The transaction of the two Muslim parties is completed and witnessed by the male janitor and the two-female legal-firm partners.

Now what's *not altogether right* about the above scenario?

The first thing one should notice is that the credentials of the two female witnesses in this example out qualify those of the male witness in at least 2 of the 3 key areas identified above.<sup>45</sup>

The second thing that one should notice is that although the relative disparity in credentials illustrated in the above example is a scenario that appears *exceptional*, a point is trying to be made that holds for less exceptional scenarios, which are in fact, very *likely* scenarios today.

If there are no biological reasons, nor the common explanations reasons discussed earlier for why a male witness is preferred over two female witnesses, what did the male janitor in the above example possess that neither of the two female legal partners possessed on their own? If the male witness and the two female witnesses were all junior clerks in the office, each with a good education, would the reason for the 2-for-1 ratio be any different? Where do you draw the line? What's the real criteria?

Let us consider the view that:

The scenarios where the female witnesses supersede the male witness in credentials are exceptions, have been exceptions and forever will be exceptions.

Such a view is debatable, but let us assume it nonetheless, for argument's sake. I agree with the principle of jurisprudence which calls for practical laws to be created for all peoples in a society, and not for the inclusion of every permutation of all potential exceptional cases and circumstances. Obviously, a law or a rule which has provisions for every minor exception and variation would be impossible to compose and implement—it would simply be impractical.

However, could there not be a different choice of wording such that potential exceptions (and valid ones, mind you) can be extracted from the verse that contains the injunctions in question?

More specifically,

1.11	Is the portion in Qur'anic verse 2:283 that deals with the 2-for-1 ratio, and with the initial procurement of two (2) male witnesses, the best wording for a Universal Book that is to be completely valid for <b>all</b> Future Time?
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<sup>45</sup> The first criteria, that of honesty and integrity, could go either way. No honest profession is a guarantee of honesty and integrity—obviously, a judgment call is about as close as one can get here.

If one agrees that the common explanations discussed earlier are all incorrect explanations (which primarily deal with the inherent nature of women and their roles), then it is useful to consider the quality and implications of an alternate wording.

Current Wording

...And call two witnesses from among your men; and if **two men** be not *available*, **then a man and two women**, of such as you approve as witnesses, so that if either of the two *women* should forget, then one may remind the other...

[A portion of Qur'anic verse 2:283]

Hypothetical Alternate Wording

...And call two witnesses from among those of your people **with knowledge of such matters**; and if two such persons be not *available*, then one person **with such knowledge** and any two others, of such as you approve as witnesses, so that if either of the two *without such knowledge* should forget, then one may remind the other...

[Hypothetical Alternate Wording for the same portion of Qur'anic verse 2:283]

1.12	In what way is the above suggested alternate wording <i>inferior</i> to the current Qur'anic wording? More specifically, in what way is the Qur'anic wording <i>superior</i> to the suggested alternate wording?
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How is the Qur'anic rendering *more* inclusive of all valid future interpretations while still ensuring the preservation of evidence?

1.13	It is clear that the alternate wording is the more <b>inclusive</b> of the two wordings. The new question is: <b>why?</b>
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### 1.9 An Examination of Intermediate Questions Raised

In the above discussion, a few critical questions were raised as corollaries to potential answers that were left aside to pursue more directly applicable trains of thought. Those unanswered yet salient questions, will now be addressed.

The two questions left aside earlier were the following:

1.1	Do women really need to be safeguarded from appearing as witnesses?
1.2	Should we (as a society) accept it as a general rule that women not be called to attest a document recording a transaction?

These questions arose from the examination of a passage in Muhammad Zafrulla Khan's *Women in Islam* essay:



There is here not the **slightest trace** of discrimination. The normal rule is that **women should be safeguarded** against the contingency of having to appear as witnesses in judicial proceedings. Therefore, **normally a woman should not be called** upon to attest a document recording a transaction.

[4, [22](#)]

[emphasis added is mine]

Taking up the first question, why might a woman need to be safeguarded from appearing as a witness? Muhammad Zafrulla Khan has made a case of women not being able to refresh the terms of the agreement as men do, as the reason for the necessity of the second women; but in the above passage quoted, the issue of safeguarding and dissuading women from being witnesses arises.

The above passage almost implies that because women won't be coming out to witness contracts very often, there's really no discrimination in the two-for-one arrangement on the basis of its infrequency alone.

Obviously, if more women are in the work force, if more women are participating in the greater scope of society and its affairs, infrequency of participation in business circles is no longer a cover for *any* degree of discrimination.

So, let's address the safeguarding issue. Indisputably, women are more physically vulnerable to a physical attack on their persons than men are.<sup>46</sup> If witnessing a civil contract of a loan between two parties is considered potentially dangerous to a witness (physically), then yes, we would want to safeguard women from such dangers which men should carry. If we consider cases of witnessing a murder, rape or robbery, all witnesses are in potential danger. In such situations, women and men are on par as witnesses.<sup>47</sup>

Now men and women who have witnessed such crimes are both potentially in danger from criminals attempting to eliminate any traces of their crimes. However, evidence is evidence, and witnesses should come forward in the greater interests of society. If there is any greatest physical danger to women in being witnesses, it is in the case of them having witnessed criminal acts. So, if we allow testimony in such criminal cases from women, why safeguard them from being civil witnesses?

One may answer that in the criminal witness scenario, one cannot plan to not witness an event, it just happens. Whereas in the civil case, one can choose not to get involved as a witness. True, but the Qur'an points to an issue of forgetting the

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<sup>46</sup> I'm sure some feminists would take exception to this statement, so to be more technically precise, I should clarify that I'm not saying that no single woman is stronger any man in existence or that all women are physically weak. What I am asserting, is that in general, from our biological make up, the average man is physically stronger than the average female. This is indisputable and an obvious fact of nature.

<sup>47</sup> On par in the sense of a system that is truly Islamic, not the "Islamic Judicial" systems of Pakistan and others.

particulars of an agreement, not of safeguarding women from risk of a physical attack. If it was really deemed that being a witness to a civil contract posed such physical dangers to any women who were witnesses, is it wise to make two (2) women targets of a physical attack (along with the one man)? One could argue that by requiring two women instead of a second man, the involved parties are dissuaded from having to use *any* women, and thus, women on a larger scale, are physically protected.

If the real issue is of safeguarding from a physical attack, then firstly, all explanations should come out and state this clearly as the reason; and secondly, such explanations should not muddle with the memory-refreshing argument in the process.

The two explanations don't make much sense together, and we must remember the wise observation:

...[a] fundamental discovery about the Holy Quran...[is] that the Holy Quran never makes an assertion unless it also points to the reason for that assertion.

[3, [229](#)]

This passage of the Qur'an [2:283] in question points to the safeguarding of evidence ("...in case one should forget..."), not the preservation of human life.

By having two women as witnesses whom together, are more vulnerable as witnesses than a man from a physical attack, the preservation of human life directly correlates with the preservation of evidence. However, this is not the line of reasoning employed by the Qur'anic portion of the verse in question, which again, states:

...And call two witnesses from among your men; and if two men be not *available*, then a man and two women, of such as you approve as witnesses, so that if either of the two *women* should forget, then one may remind the other...

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [2:283](#)]

Clearly, the reason for two women in this verse is not that one of the female witnesses maybe killed, or that one of the female witnesses may be hurt, it is that one of the female witnesses may forget.

This leads us to the conclusion that although women may be putting themselves (voluntarily) physically at risk by witnessing a civil contract (possibly in some societies), this isn't the issue! *If* the physical safety issue *was* an issue, the Qur'an should have disallowed women witnessing civil contracts altogether, or at least pointed to the risk of loss of life as the *preferential* factor for male witnesses, *not* the risk of loss of memory of female witnesses. But the Qur'an does no such thing. Recall Postulate Four:

Interpretations must limit themselves to only being that. They cannot start attributing meanings to words which they are incapable of bearing.

We must keep in mind that the reason the Qur'an points to memory failure, cannot be ignored, and that wherever the Qur'an *does* point, is where an explanation must be found and built upon.

The safeguarding issue is only valid in societies in which witnesses to contracts in writing between two parties are in danger of being physically and / or mentally harassed.

If a woman is going to witness a contract, then having one woman or two women witness the contract, with respect to safeguarding, is irrelevant. In fact, by requiring two women to witness in place of the one man, puts two women in danger, instead of just one. Therefore, with regards to the safety of witnesses, having two women witnesses in place of one man, instead of one woman in place of one man, is pointless.

The Qur'anic statement with respect to safeguarding is the following:

...And have witnesses when you sell one to another, and let no harm be done to the scribe or the witness. And if you do *that*, then certainly it shall be disobedience on your part. And fear Allah. And Allah teaches you and Allah knows all things quite well.

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [2:283](#)]

Moreover, the safeguarding argument will not be valid in all societies and in all times. In fact, I would argue that such scenarios would be an exception.

Thus, a Universal Book for All Times and All Peoples to come cannot be based on transient circumstances, it can only provide verses for which the legitimate extraction of all valid interpretations lies in the perfect construction of its words, in which answers appropriate to a given people and time, will always apply.

The second question unanswered in the body of the arguments in this section, concerning women not being ordinarily called to attest a document regarding a transaction, is closely tied in with the whole safeguarding issue, and as such, is answered above. Also, this question touches on the issue of women participating in the work force and business circles. This issue of being outside the home and having a career has already been thoroughly dealt with in the common explanations section.

Therefore, all issues and corollary questions have now been addressed.

## 1.10 Concluding Thoughts

If one accepts that Islam and the Qur'an cannot be changed 'one iota' as the expression goes, the only answer to the controversy in 2:283 of the Qur'an fundamentally rests on the position that:

God must have intended the current Qur'anic rendering of verse 2:283 instead of something of the sort suggested by the hypothetical alternative produced above *with the specific intent that females do not give witness for civil transactions in a proportion even potentially equal to that of men*, and that the reason for such rests on an emphasis towards the preservation of evidence; such a preservation the like of which can never be as secure with women giving witness as equally as men for reason(s) of:

a) Some inherent female weakness.

and / or

b) An Islamic interpretation of society and the flow and recollection of knowledge that does not lend itself to women having an equal capacity with men to be reliable or have good memories in any current or future times to come.

The above explanations produce potential reasons and explanations the like of which resemble those dealt with under the section *Common Explanations*.

Thus, the discussion of this verse has now come full circle without a conclusive reason for why it should still apply. It can only stand if we allow Postulate One to fall.

# ISSUE 2

## Polygamy and Slave Wives



The role of polygyny, slavery and concubinage continues to be a source of controversy for Islam—whether it be in historical attempts to ascertain what actually happened in the past or what is and is not permitted today.

This chapter illustrates how even the Ahmadiyya Muslim concept for polygyny is ambiguous and incoherent. This foundation being laid, subsequent questions arise concerning references to slave wives and what exactly this means in Ahmadiyya Islamic theology.

Mainstream Islamic literature is brought in at this point to illustrate how varied a reading on this matter exists, further exacerbating the need for coherence and logic from within Ahmadiyya Islamic thought, if it is to assert a leadership role in these matters.

Finally, the thesis is put forth that polygyny is riddled with more problems for the modern age than solutions in the way that it has been left to the abuses, unfairness, excesses, and definitions of man.

I must admit that as a young teen, when I was old enough to understand what it meant, I strongly disagreed with the institution of polygyny. However, through my studies of Islam and the observation of human nature and the observation of history with 20/20 hindsight vision which we all possess, I was able to come to terms with it. Although not ideal, polygyny it could be argued, was sometimes a necessary institution. Under this assumption, a Truly Universal Law would have to make provisions for it, as the Qur'an does:

And if you fear that you will not be just *in dealing* with the orphans, then marry of other women as may be agreeable to you, two, or three, or four; and if you fear you will not be able to do justice, then *marry only* one or *marry* what your right hands possess. Thus it is more likely that you will not do injustice.

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [4:4](#)]

One of the main and primary reasons stated for need of the institution of polygyny<sup>48</sup> is that which occurs during times of population imbalances—the key example being the time of war. It is for this reason that I was able to come to terms with its existence.

It is only natural for both men and women to desire companionship. If a woman (or a man for that matter) cannot have a spouse of their own, there is a natural tendency to have someone else's spouse. Thus, the dangerous phenomena of transient extra-marital affairs begin, and all the problems associated with it.

## 2.1 An Issue of Gratification

Most people<sup>49</sup> are much more comfortable with the practice of monogamous marriages, which *should* be the societal norm. As such, knowing that times in the history of the world have arisen and do arise where our preferences must be superseded in pursuit of a higher necessity, polygyny in this light can be regarded as a sacrifice required by all involved.

It is in that sense that I agree with the following Qur'anic commentary on this important matter:

Polygamous marriages, **instead of being an outlet for the gratification of sexual passions as is mistakenly understood**, constitute a sacrifice demanded of men and women alike...

[1 - Commentary, [188](#)]

[emphasis added is mine]

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<sup>48</sup> As per Qur'anic commentaries and the popular conversational response with Islamic defenders of this practice.

<sup>49</sup> Including myself.

The above commentary comes from the single volume, red bound English Qur'an published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at. This commentary implies that polygamous marriages are **not** an outlet for the gratification of sexual passions, as is mistakenly understood. The words are so clear, they couldn't imply anything else.

If we look at the commentary from the five-volume, blue bound English Qur'an (much of which is composed of translated parts of *Tafseer-e-Kabir*<sup>50</sup>), published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, the following explanation is presented vis-à-vis polygyny and the gratification of sexual passions:

It is a hard fact which cannot be denied that there are persons whose **sexual instinct is too strong to be satisfied with one wife**. This is a physical necessity inherent in man and it is playing with fire to make light of this, the most powerful of all physical instincts. The only sane and proper course open to a man **whose sexual powers are abnormally strong** is to marry another, if one wife **does not satisfy him**.

[2 - Commentary, [II-495](#)]  
[emphasis added is mine]

In one commentary, it is said:

...instead of being an outlet for the gratification of sexual passions as is mistakenly understood...

and in the other commentary it is said:

...whose sexual instinct is too strong to be satisfied with one wife...whose sexual powers are abnormally strong...if one wife does not satisfy him.

The juxtaposition of these two explanations, even to the passive observer, is astonishing.

## 2.2 An Issue of Natural Issue

Another explanation cited for polygyny in commentaries and in many books published by Muslims (Ahmadis and non-Ahmadis alike), which I take strong exception to, is the following:

...Similarly, if she happens to be barren, the **natural and perfectly legitimate desire of the husband** to have an issue to succeed him and perpetuate his name remains unfulfilled in the absence of a polygamous marriage.

[1 - Commentary, [187](#)]  
[emphasis added is mine]

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<sup>50</sup> The large Qur'anic Commentary work in Urdu by Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II.

I completely disagree with this line of reasoning as an excuse for polygyny. Polygyny should only be allowed under the strictest of conditions. If a man's wife be barren and unable to bear *them* a child, that is unfortunate—but from time immemorial there have been orphans and poor children without homes nor hope—children that could have been adopted. It is very arrogant that a man would take another wife just because he wants an issue to succeed *him*. It is even more disappointing that (apparently) Islam appeases to such whimsical excuses for polygyny.

A man will not die if he cannot have a child naturally. Having children is a natural instinct, but it is not anything like food or carnal inclinations for which *no substitutes* can be found. Procuring a second wife just to have an issue is preposterous! Is the proposal to the second women conditional on a fertility test? Absurd!

My main contention with the explanation of the man's desire for an issue is (not surprisingly), the **total disregard** for mention of the woman's natural desires and wishes.

All a man has to do is drop his seed in the womb that will bear him a child—whereas only the mother of the child can ever feel the wonders of nature, as a new life, a new soul, grows inside her very self. Only the woman can experience the miracle of birth. Only the woman can nurse the child. If any partner in the marriage union is *missing out* because of the lack of *natural* children, it is the wife, not the husband. If one wishes to talk of the natural and legitimate desire to have a child, then one should *first* speak of the natural desire of women to have their own children.

If women have to sacrifice their natural desire for children because a husband cannot bear them a child, and they do not procure another husband for such a purpose, and the husband has an even weaker case for another wife than the woman for an extra husband, polygyny for this reason of natural issue should not be a qualifier for granting a man the provision to take another wife.

If you do not allow for the procurement of an extra husband for women, who have a stronger case for the *legitimate desire* to have a child naturally; then men, who have a weaker case for natural issue—should not be allowed to take on an additional wife on *this* basis.

Granted, a society with both polygyny and polyandry couldn't work, and society has been in need of polygyny at different times in history. However, we cannot allow polygyny on such grounds for which women have a stronger case. Muslims fast yearly and understand sacrifice and patience. If a man's wife cannot bear them a child, he should exercise the discipline and understanding that Islam has taught him, as his wife would do *had he been the infertile one*.

The other point that arises with respect to taking another wife to perpetuate one's name is the whole arrogant concept of the perpetuity of this worldly notion. If a



man only had daughters by his wife, and now she has grown barren, is it right that he takes on another wife to have a son to carry on his name? How would this man's daughters feel, if they were old enough to understand what their father was doing? In effect, the man would be taking on another wife to have a son, not just any child—because the concept of perpetuity of names is one that traditionally relies on male issue.<sup>51</sup>

Prophet Muhammad set an example of spiritual offspring, so the justifications for polygyny should not regress into unbalanced explanations of grotesque and worldly notions like the physical perpetuity of one's own name. Do women worry about issues of perpetuity of name? Typically, they don't. Women are more concerned with the healthy upbringing of their children.

This trait of perpetuity of names, in my opinion, is a symptom of arrogance and androcentric modes of thinking. It should not be cited as an explanation for the provision of polygyny. Such explanations raise serious concerns on whether this provision is all too easily abused, and as a consequence, more evil than good.

### 2.3 Marriage to a Slave Without Her Consent

In the commentary section for the verse allowing polygyny (Qur'an 4:4), lies a provision for a Muslim man to marry a slave girl in his possession, without her prior consent. Yes, you read that right, *without her prior consent*.

Here's that passage of commentary:

...Now, if a woman is taken prisoner in a war of the nature mentioned above and thus loses her liberty and becomes *Milk Yamin*, and she fails to get her release by the exchange of prisoners of war, and the exigencies of government also do not justify her immediate release as a mark of favour, nor do her own people or government get her ransomed and she does not even seek to buy her freedom by entering into *Mukatabah*, **and her master, in the interest of morality, marries her without her prior consent, in what way can this arrangement be regarded as objectionable?**<sup>52</sup>

[1 - Commentary, [188, note 561](#)]

[emphasis added is mine]

My answer: in *many* ways can this arrangement be regarded as objectionable!

Firstly, if prior or post consent is not an issue, if the slave girl welcomed the union with her 'owner', then why wouldn't any 'owner' obtain his slave girl's *prior* consent to

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<sup>51</sup> Incidentally, it is the man's chromosomes which determine the gender of a child.

<sup>52</sup> See references for full commentary passage with explanation of terms *Milk Yaman* and *Mukatabah*.

the marriage? The only reason he wouldn't obtain her prior consent is *if he feared she would say no!*

So, because he is the master and she is his slave girl, he gets to override her person. The 'in the interest of morality' phrase implies that the Muslim man was or felt he was physically attracted to his slave girl, and lest he do something unlawful in a moment of passion, felt he should make the opportunity for such moments 'legal'—by marrying his slave girl.

The question of no ransom and favourable releases, in a practical sense, provide no certainty. The only thing that might, is the *Mukatabah* arrangement, that of her working for her release. However, what likelihood is it that a fair arrangement that doesn't last for years and years will be presented to the slave girl whose Muslim Master wants her for himself?<sup>53</sup>

Now it was already established earlier that the scenario where the master marries the slave girl without her prior consent is the scenario where, more than likely, she disagrees with the union. As explained by the commentary cited above, the Muslim man did not marry the slave girl because he wanted her opinion on interior decorating...he married her in the 'interest of morality'.

So now we have the scenario where the Muslim man wishes to consummate the marriage. The slave girl rejects the union; but she has no choice—she's married to him.

2.1	If the slave girl did not want her Muslim Master touching her before the "marriage" (and that's why he arranged it without her prior consent), what's stopping the Muslim man from touching her now that they're "married", even when she objects?
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So now he is forcing himself on her (in the interest of morality of course) and she is screaming an unmistakable no!

This scenario purports to say that if the slave girl didn't enter the *Mukatabah* agreement, then she can legally be raped by her Muslim Master, in the interests of morality.

...The commentary asked the question:

...in what way can this arrangement be regarded as objectionable?

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<sup>53</sup> Here we have an incident where the Islamic provision for slavery causes problems of its own. It's one thing for a nation to have prisoners, but when they are made the *slaves of individuals*, these hideous situations of potential abuse arise which otherwise would not have. Of course, Islamic purists cite that Islam didn't condone the active procurement of slaves (other than prisoners of war). At the same time however, Islam did not ban slavery in one fell stroke of the pen, as it had the opportunity to do and did, with such things as the consumption of alcohol.

to which an answer has now been given for those with any compassion!

To conclude this sub-issue, we should note important questions which arose as corollaries.

2.2	In Islam, is there a concept of rape within marriage?
2.3	According to Islam, can a wife decline from intimacy when she is not up to it?
2.4	If a woman can decline intimacy with her husband, can he be held accountable if he forces himself on her (rape)?

## 2.4 Slave Girls without Marriage

Some mainstream Sunni Muslim literature strongly implies that Muslim soldiers can have sex with female prisoners who become their slave girls, without marriage.

An excerpt of one such passage is produced below:

(7) Guidelines regarding sex with slaves

"Can a slave-woman be forced to have sex with her owner? There are general instructions regarding slave women and sex in Islam. However, in this connection, it must be remembered that the case has absolutely no resemblance to what the people in the West believe about the Arabs and themselves practiced in the occupied territories during the war. It is a very controlled and regulated thing and Muslim soldiers fighting in a battle have no lawful right to have sex with any woman they may meet or hold prisoner during fighting, unless she is given to them by the lawful authority of the Islamic state. As there exist many misunderstandings in the minds of the people concerning slave-girls as prisoners of war, the following points should be carefully studied and kept in mind...

[A, 315]

The full passage is reproduced in the appendix to this writing.

On a different note, Ahmadiyya Muslim Commentary on this point says the following:

As regards establishing sexual relations with a female prisoner of war or a **slave-wife** without marrying her, neither this nor any other verse of the Qur'an lends any support to it whatever.

[1 - Commentary, [188](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

Although the two views disagree on the necessity of marriage before cohabiting with one's slave girl, the fact that the 'master' can have her without her prior consent (which translates into without *any* consent), means that he can have her to satisfy his lower desires, even if she howls and screams an emphatic no.

One question which arises out of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Commentary is the following:

2.5	What does an <i>unmarried</i> "slave-wife" mean in Ahmadiyya Muslim theology?
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## 2.5 Permission of the First Wife and Legal Certainty

In many texts that mention polygyny, there often arises the controversial question of obtaining the permission of the first wife (or current wives as the case may be) before other women may be added to the marriage. I have failed to see any mention of this important legal issue in the Qur'an, in the Jama'at's commentaries of it, or in various other literature widely published (in English) by the Jama'at.

In an essay on women in Pakistan, author Ayesha Jalal describes the legal situation (1980's) regarding a women's permission being required before her husband takes on additional wives:

The real cut for those who saw unfettered male supremacy as an immutable part of the Islamic way of life were the measured steps to **curb polygyny**.<sup>54</sup> In concert with Quranic Law, the Ordinance [Family Law Ordinance of 1961] did **not abolish** a man's right to marry more than one woman at a time; it merely stipulated that he **first** obtain the **permission** of his existing wife. Since even this could be construed as **too stringent** a restriction on the prerogatives of the Muslim male, the Ordinance inserted a convenient **loop hole**. In the event that a wife was unable or unwilling to give her husband permission, he could file an application at the local council whose chairman would set up an arbitration board to decide whether the man's reasons for taking another wife were '**necessary and just**'.

It is difficult to imagine how a handful of mortals could determine what was just or necessary for a Muslim man who until now had **divine sanction** to contract as many as four marriages. But if this were the poisoned arrow in the Ordinance's onslaught against diehard male chauvinism, its other provisions were no less biting. Men lured by the joys of polygyny had to maintain each of their wives 'adequately', while those preferring the simplicity of divorce had to pay the dower agreed upon at the time of marriage.

[a, 95]

[emphasis added is mine]

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<sup>54</sup> Note the different meanings for similar words:

**polygamy**: marriage in which a spouse of either sex may have more than one mate at the same time.

**polyandry**: the state or practice of having more than one husband or male mate at one time.

**polygyny**: the state or practice of having more than one wife or female mate at one time.

[See the Merriam Webster online dictionary at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com> for these definitions]

Another author, Leila Ahmed, in her work *Women and Gender in Islam—Historical Roots of a Modern Debate*, comments on the historical aspects of this issue:

Having two wives concurrently was not a new practice in that society, but it was new for Muhammad, leading some investigators to **speculate** that he may have had a marriage **contract with Khadija** specifying that during her lifetime she would be his **only** wife.

[b, 49]

2.6	What is the official policy of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at on the requirement of a man obtaining permission from his existing wife before contracting another?
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## 2.6 Consequences of the Discussed Content in Our Commentaries

In this question, *Polygamy and Slave Wives*, the topic of polygamous marriages and their explanations were discussed primarily in light of Ahmadiyya Muslim literature. More specifically, the issues of gratification, natural issue and marriage to slave girls were covered.

I acknowledge that although the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at's English commentaries of the Qur'an are primarily translations of the Urdu *Tafsir-e-Kabir*, not all chapters (noticeably Surah Nisa) are found in the Urdu original. As a result, contributing editors from the Jama'at put together the commentaries for chapters where none was present in the original.

The fact remains, that there is much material which anyone with an open mind would find serious objections to in the commentaries cited above.<sup>55</sup>

Some learned people in the Jama'at have commented on such material as opinions of the writers of the commentaries, and not necessarily the true position of the Jama'at on these matters.

Many also say that Islam, within limits, allows for individuals to have their own views and opinions on matters of this nature.

I find serious problems with this status quo approach. If the views on these issues discussed in this very document were published as another commentary on the verses touched upon, would the Jama'at support it? Although the Jama'at may allow a difference of opinion, it would be ridiculous to publish and support two *contradictory* explanations. Ultimately, only one can be sanctioned, or one disregarded and the new explanation embraced. This singularity of explanation, this singularity of vision in

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<sup>55</sup> Again, I concede here, that I'm making a normative assertion. It is my firm belief however, that this is a feeling very representative of Muslim youth in western nations.

fact, implicitly defines within narrow margins the official view and theological footing of the Jama'at. But then:

2.7	How can one legitimately hold a view in complete contrast to the official view of the Jama'at and still be a part of it?
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# ISSUE 3

Women as deficient, as gifts, and as objects acted upon by men



In this chapter, an historical example of women given as gifts between men is recounted. The implications of this in an Islamic context are explored in view of Postulate One.

Closely related to this matter, are references in Islamic literature to women as ‘deficient’ and the consequent limiting of their roles and power; creating a situation where they tend to be objects acted upon by the will of men.

What’s disturbing is that the cultural practices and values in which these norms flourish *do* find root in Islamic theology that lends itself to an androcentric reading.

This discovery violates Postulates One (Universality), Five (Overall Truth) and Six (The Balance of Realism and the Ideal).

Many objections raised against Islam as a religion stem from culture. Most religious cultures and customs however, stem from an interpretation of the religion itself. Consequently, making the distinction is crucial in understanding whether the religion gives credence to something highly objectionable—or whether it is the culture *alone* that is at fault.

### 3.1 Sayings of the Prophet and Establishment Islam

Although subject to debates of authenticity, much emphasis is placed on the sayings of Prophet Muhammad. Some sayings are clearly dated and culture specific, yet they are presented in a fashion which attempts to place them on equal footing with those sayings which do have merit. One such objectionable hadith (saying) is that which allows a woman's silence to act as her consent to marriage:

Abu Hurairah reported Allah's Messenger as saying:

"An orphan girl should be consulted about her marriage; if she says nothing, that indicates her permission, but if she refuses, the authority of the guardian cannot be exercised against her will." (Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud and Nasa'i).

He also reported Allah's Messenger as saying,

"A woman without a husband must not be married before she is consulted about it, and a virgin must not be married before her permission is obtained."

When asked how her permission was indicated, he replied that it was by her saying nothing. (Bukhari and Muslim).

[A, 146]

[paragraph spacing added is mine]

I recognize that the above passage is coming from a non-Ahmadi Muslim book (and mainstream Islamic literature is almost always more androcentric than that of Ahmadiyya Islam),<sup>56</sup> however this passage has a relatively more innocent tone on the surface than many hadith regarding women, and would easily have fit into a

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<sup>56</sup> While this observation may be disturbing for Sunni Muslims to read, this is my experience having sampled literature from various Islamic sects. This being said, I have made the observation that mainstream Muslims are generally polarized between the very conservative / fundamentalist persuasion and the more open minded and liberal persuasion. It is the latter group who would take exception to my observation on the literary comparison. However, almost all of what is published with any theological authority amongst mainstream Muslims, tends to be that which comes from the more conservative camp. While I concede that the more liberal segment of mainstream Muslims as a people would be generally less androcentric in their literature than even that of Ahmadi Muslims, this group of mainstream Muslims has no real theological voice—perhaps only a cultural one.



publication like *Gardens of the Righteous*, approved of by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at.

Furthermore, it appears to be backed up by some fairly reputable sources, as far as compilations go.<sup>57</sup> I personally do not doubt the authenticity of this hadith, nor would (I assume) the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at. But there is a deeper issue here, and it impacts how we are to view the sayings and doings of the Prophet for modern and future times. It *indirectly* relates to whether we are to believe that Postulate One should stand or fall.

Although Postulate One primarily deals with the Qur'an, the sayings and doings of the Prophet are considered next in line—the latter expound on the former. Perhaps not this very hadith, but many ahadith *like* this one get published so frequently, that to say that these do not carry significance any more is to be proven a liar by the sheer volume and presence of publications of these kinds of sayings in the body of literature within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at and within mainstream Islam.

If these hadith really aren't that important, why do they so frequently get published—with not so much as a footnote commenting on their relevance to an earlier period in time (and lack of relevance today)? They are instead presented as something the 'righteous people of today would do well to model in their own lives'.

Examining the particular hadith quoted above, why wasn't a positive *yes* asked for? I do concede that it is possible that in times long ago, and even not so long ago, shyness and silence were symbols of female chastity, where human speech was only used to object to something. However primitive this appears today, the observation most likely made sense in the society and time in which it was first made, but then:

3.1	Are these norms worth articulation into the corpus of religious scripture as behaviour to be considered progressive; norms for future generations to diligently follow and revere?
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Although many practices of "Islamic Culture" came from pre-Islamic Arabia, those aspects of civilization which were objectionable to Islam were changed where such a change was merited. The prohibition of alcohol is a prime example.

The disturbing point with the silence as consent for marriage issue is simply that this was a cultural practice that Islam did *not* curtail. The Holy Qur'an cannot be expected to comment on every matter, nor does one expect it to; but where a saying of Prophet Muhammad is concerned, one would hope that a comment on this issue

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<sup>57</sup> Bukhari and Muslim are commonly considered as the two most authoritative compilations of the sayings of the Prophet.

would be more progressive<sup>58</sup> than it is, if we are to accept it in view of Postulate One (universality).

3.2	Clearly, a stance of silence is not acceptable when giving witness in a court case, so why does Islam allow it with respect to marriage, especially that of a girl? Does not the evidence of a court case pale in comparison to deciding someone's matrimonial future?
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Of course, one could argue that if there was any objection, the girl would vocally object, and then that would be the end of the issue. One cannot deny the truth of this simple argument. However, the greater lesson lies in pondering the matter of why so many of these androcentric practices legitimized by Islam are enjoined upon Muslims as trinkets of virtue.

Many Muslims claim foul when Islamic culture and practices are attacked as misogynist and androcentric, claiming culture has ruined the exterior perception of Islam. But where did this culture come from? Furthermore,

3.3	If Islam is the 'true and universal' Faith, why did not Islam comment on these issues in a progressive manner, instead of in an androcentric manner?
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If Islam kept silent on these issues, then no criticism could be leveled, for the issues *would then be for people to decide*; but when a special ahadith was given and recorded, it would have been beneficial if the saying actually contributed to society in a positive fashion.

Time and time again, one cannot help but find misogyny justified in Islamic scriptures and institutions:

The fact that some people, such as the Kharijis, could "read" the same events or words as not intended to permit concubinage or marriage to nine-year-old-girls while the orthodox understood them as intending to permit either, makes clear the crucial role of interpretation. **Nonetheless, a misogynist reading was undeniably one reading to which Islam plausibly lent itself.**

[b, 87]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

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<sup>58</sup> It is a fairly common mistake to equate female timidity, silence and a submissive disposition with piety. Do these expectations really better society...or just make women easier for men to control? If these characteristics aren't looked upon as signs of piety in a man, the double standard deserves some serious reflection as to why we allow these facets of the status quo to perpetuate.

Here's an example from Ahmadiyya Islam, frequently published in pamphlets, and most notably, the compact compilation of hadith, *Gardens of the Righteous*:

**287.** Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet said: Had I ordained that a person should prostrate himself before another, **I would have commanded that a wife should prostrate herself before her husband** (Tirmidhi).

[9, [69](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

Certainly, many men must be pleased with this authority which the corpus of traditional scripture endows them. It is an excellent way to keep women subservient, obedient, and 'in check'. If women are not intellectually inferior to men, but God has simply placed man as head of the family because he is the traditional bread earner and maintainer of the family, does this warrant subservience to the husband one step short of prostration (worship)?

I am aware of the poetic concept of love so intense that it is akin to worship, but this latter interpretation is an expression of a concept about something which is *mutual*, and I do not believe that the hadith in question was alluding to a mutual intensity of love.

Generally, there are two ways to create a household that stays together:

1. An equality in the relationship based on love, understanding and respect (a mutual win-win situation).
2. A situation where one partner dominates the other into conformity through subjugation.

Many ahadith that I've come across continually emphasize this husband-is-master / obedient-is-wife paradigm. True, an equality in the relationship where both partners are each other's peers is more challenging than simply having the man dominate the woman.

Postulate Six outlined that a functioning faith should strike a balance between realism and idealism, trying to maximize both in each situation. From hadith such as this one, where a wife is almost prostrating to her husband, it appears that Islam views an equality in the marriage to be either undesirable or unrealistic—perhaps even both. But is this what we wish to tout as a virtuous example for current and future times?

3.4	Is this a healthy example for society? In what way would society be worse off had we not this hadith?
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Some mainstream Muslims even assert openly that Islam views women as inferior, and that Muslims should stop trying to cover up this facet of Islam.

Around the time of WWI, a member (Mustafa Sabri) of the Turkish *ulema* and co-holder of the office *Sheyh-ul Islam* held this very view. As Ayesha Jalal explains:

Mustafa Sabri emphatically rejected the views of apologists who maintained that women did not hold an inferior status in Islam:

'Muslim religion does not need such lying and ignorant defenders . . . To distort the truth and attempt to reconcile the views of the adversary, and thereby approve such views, is not a service to Islam but treason'.

[a, 32]

If you still doubt that Islam *plausibly lends itself* to a misogynist reading in subtle ways (my position), try reading the following passage from a Shiite Muslim book and see if you can spot how Islam lends itself to a misogynist reading in a very *candid* fashion:

#### **SERMON 79**

##### **After the Battle of Jamal, Amir al-muminin said about physical defects of women**

O' ye peoples! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence.

As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period.

As regards deficiency in their intelligence it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man.

As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share in inheritance being half of men.

So beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good. Do not obey them even in good things so that they may not attract you to evils.

[B, [204](#)]

[paragraph spacing added is mine]

The commentary to this passage reads as follows:

Amir al-muminin delivered this sermon after the devastation created by the Battle of Jamal. Since the devastation resulting from this battle was the out-come of blindly following a woman's command, in this sermon he has described women's physical defects and their causes and effects. Thus, their first weakness is that for a few days in every month they have to abstain from prayer and fasting, and this abstention from worship is a proof of their deficiency in Faith. Although the real meaning of *iman* (belief) is heart-felt testification and inner conviction yet metaphorically it also applies to action and character. Since actions are the reflection of Belief they are also regarded as part of Belief. Thus, it is related from Imam Ali ibn Musa ar Rida (p.b.u.t.) that:

*iman* (belief) is testification at heart, admission by the tongue and action by the limbs.

The second weakness is that their natural propensities do not admit of full performance of their intelligence. Therefore, nature has given them the power of intelligence only in accordance with the scope of their activities which can guide them in pregnancy, delivery, child nursing, child care and house-hold affairs. On the basis of this weakness of mind and intelligence their evidence has not been accorded the status of man's evidence, as Allah says:

...then call to witness two witness from among your men and if there not be two men then (take) a man and two women, of those ye approve of the witnesses, so that should one of the two (women) forget the (second) one of the two may remind the other...(Qur'an, 2:282)

The third weakness is that their share in inheritance is half of man's share in inheritance as the Qur'an says:

Allah enjoineeth you about your children. The male shall have the equal of the shares of two females... (4:11)

This shows woman's weakness because the reason for her share in inheritance being half is that the liability of her maintenance rests on man. When man's position is that of a maintainer and care taker the status of the weaker sex who is in need of maintenance and care-taking is evident.

After describing their natural weakness as Amir al-muminin points out the mishiefs of blindly following them and wrongly obeying them. He says that not to say of bad things but even if they say in regard to some good things it should not be done in a way that these should feel as if it is being done in pursuance of their wish, but rather in a way that they should realize that the good act has been performed because of its being good and that their pleasure or wish has nothing to do with it. If they have even the doubt that their pleasures has been kept in view in it they would slowly increase in their demands and would wish that they should be obeyed in all matters however evil, the inevitable consequence whereof will be destruction and ruin. ash-Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh writes about this view of Amir al-muminin as under:

Amir al-muminin has said a thing which is corroborated by experience of centuries.

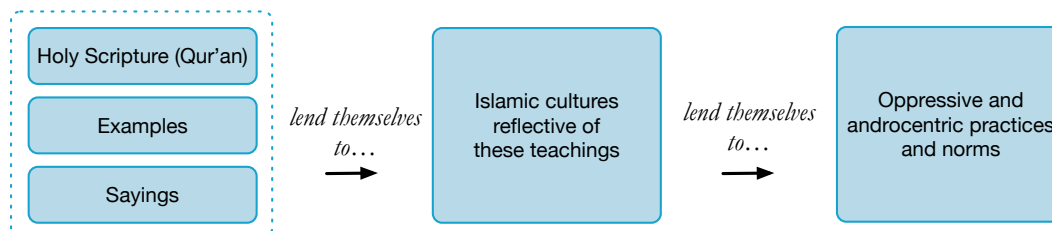
[B, [204-205](#)]

Admittedly, of all the interpretations of Islam that I've come into contact with where the people actually place a relevance to scripture in their lives, Ahmadiyya Islam is the most progressive. Of this I don't dispute. I know that Ahmadiyya Islam would find the Shiite Muslim passage quoted above as utterly absurd, and rightly so. My point for quoting that passage was to illustrate the connection between Islamic injunctions / commandments and how easily they can plausibly lend themselves to a very negative reading.

At the same time, Ahmadiyya Islam, being relatively much more progressive on these issues still does not absolve it from the responsibility to be agreeable and set the standard in an absolute sense.

Today, jockeying for position as 'the right path' does not mean one faith organization is *relatively* better than the other. The theological war between Islam and Christianity is over. The *real* challenge is between faith and the option of honestly saying "*I don't know*". Consequently, Ahmadiyya Islam being relatively better than other Islams as far as women's issues go, does *not* mean that the issue is not of pressing importance. Quite the contrary—a reinterpretation of these issues is the ticket to its legitimacy amongst questioning and seeking minds who have withdrawn from the theological battlefield altogether.

I believe the connection between religion influencing society, which in turn, influences culture, has now been amply illustrated.



On this topic of Sayings of the Holy Prophet, my experience is that its effect has been to program the general body of Muslims to be *molded* to a specific set of sayings, actions and verses—without stepping back to evaluate the concept and extract the principle. From my observation, Muslims in general seem to lack a greater awareness of responsibility outside the narrow confines of such and such verse or such and such saying. It is as if the Muslim psyche has become *mechanical*, too afraid to deviate from the corpus of detailed religious literature.

Consequently, you will find the common Muslim zealot particular about how to do ablutions prior to prayer and whether enough of their wrist was washed to

specification, but oblivious to their responsibilities to the environment, public activism, volunteering in their communities and to other things of this nature—which all fall within the wider scheme of social responsibility.

Religions emphasize two duties for people broadly defined, as I see them:

1. One's duty to God
2. One's duty to fellow humans

Outside of specific Qur'anic verses and Hadith, it is my observation that most Muslims don't know that they are responsible for re-defining and expanding what the second role entails. Consequently, I believe the way Muslims generally use scripture and the role we ascribe to it, is harmful to the development of a more progressive and responsible society.

Returning to this first issue of silence as consent to marriage, the notion of programming and embedding a mindset into culture are now somewhat more evident.

Be it the Qur'an or the Hadith, over and over again, the silence for consent issue is but one example of many where Islam plausibly lends itself to a misogynist reading.

3.5	Why did not Prophet Muhammad insist that society foster assertiveness for women, especially in matters of such significance to their own lives as marriage?
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If sayings such as the one regarding silence as consent are meant to only be taken for the time in which they were given, then there are a host of other sayings that fall into this category. Islamic propaganda however, would have Muslims believe that ahadith do not become dated this way. Perhaps some rigorous and reverse propaganda is in order?

It would be wise to footnote all such sayings in published literature, lest anyone get the wrong idea that these modes of thinking and culture represent values which are to be fostered, nourished and encouraged today. Unfortunately, this does not appear to be a priority on anyone's list, perhaps because the majority of Muslims don't see anything wrong with these sayings?

Just as the silence of the girl to be betrothed is interpreted as consent to the marriage, so is the silence of Muslims to these issues—as an indication of their consent to a status quo of androcentric values.

### 3.2 Slave Wives

Another disturbing aspect of Islamic history is how women were frequently treated as 'gifts', as if to possess little, if any autonomy, over their own beings.

At the time of the introduction of Islam, men and women were traded and exchanged as slaves in many parts of the world (quite wrongly, obviously). In this particular topic, the focus is on ‘respectable’ and ‘free’ persons being given as gifts to build bonds.

Invitations were sent to ten monarchs of different states for embracing Islam. This was the first step to introduce Islam as an international religion for whole of the humanity...Maqooqas [ruler of Egypt at the time] as a gesture of good will sent in return some gifts of gold, clothes, honey and two bondmaids, namely Seereen and Mary to the Holy Prophet (SAW) for strengthening the bonds of friendship between him and the State of Madina.

[C, 127]

It is recorded that Seereen and Mary were from respectable, if not royal families in Egypt. However, historians disagree as to when Mary the Copt became a “full” wife to Prophet Muhammad.

Although the Ahmadiyya Muslim viewpoint is that Prophet Muhammad *properly* married each and every wife, and never had a concubine or bondmaid at any time,<sup>59</sup> some mainstream Sunni Muslim literature refers to Mary the Copt as one of *slave-wife*, *bond maiden*, *slave* or *concubine*. Whatever the view, recorded history is cloudy on this matter.

Being a bondmaid at any time however, only re-enforces the stereotype of non-Muslim women as sexual objects under the control of their Muslim masters.

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<sup>59</sup> The foremost reason for this position being the assumption that one as virtuous as Prophet Muhammad would conduct his life no other way but to properly marry each wife; and that records to the contrary are later interpolations—perhaps by those wishing to muddy the waters for their own gains.



From the Merriam-Webster online dictionary

<https://www.merriam-webster.com>

**Main Entry: bond-man**

Pronunciation: 'bän(d)-m&n

Function: *noun*

Date: 13th century

**Main Entry: <sup>1</sup>slave**

Pronunciation: 'slAv

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle English *slave*, from Old French or Medieval Latin; Old French *esclave*, from Medieval Latin *sclavus*, from *Sclavus* Slavic; from the frequent enslavement of Slavs in central Europe

Date: 14th century

**1** : a person held in servitude as the chattel of another

**2** : one that is completely subservient to a dominating influence

**3** : a device (as the printer of a computer) that is directly responsive to another

**Main Entry: serf**

Pronunciation: 's&rf

Function: *noun*

Etymology: French, from Old French, from Latin *servus* slave

Date: 1611

: a member of a servile feudal class bound to the soil and subject to the will of his lord

- **serf-age** /'s&r-fij/ *noun*

- **serf-dom** /'s&rf-d&m, -t&m/ *noun*

**Main Entry: con-cu-bine**

Pronunciation: 'kä[ng]-kyu-"bln, 'kän-

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Middle English, from Middle French, from Latin *concupina*, from *com-* + *cubare* to lie

Date: 14th century

: a woman with whom a man cohabits without being married: as **a** : one having a recognized social status in a household below that of a wife

Let us accept the Ahmadiyya Muslim view that Mary the Copt was a properly married wife of Prophet Muhammad from the start. The issue of her having been exchanged as a ‘gift’ still remains.

Perhaps this observation stands correcting, but nowhere is it recorded that men of high status were exchanged between kingdoms as gifts, for the choice of females of the receiving land to pick. Does this not sound absurd?

This practice of females as gifts is based on androcentric modes of civilization. It belittles women as gifts to be exchanged for the strengthening of the kingdoms and the families of men.

3.6	It would be unthinkable for this scenario to be conducted with men as the gifts, so why the double standard?
3.7	Can anyone seriously root the <i>normative</i> legitimacy of this practice to the biological differences between the genders?
3.8	At so many turns, Islam and the Prophet of Islam had the opportunity to set an example of how practices of the time were not consistent with the status of women—especially given the responsibility of setting an example for all future generations—but some of these opportunities appear to have been set aside. Why?
3.9	Why does it always seem that women are ‘gifts’ between men? Why does Islam allow this?

Put another way, does the exchange or the giving of women in this fashion to other men / other states make women look less or more like objects? ...Exactly my point.

It is a commonly known incident in Prophet Muhammad’s time that a follower had responded to a query from the Prophet on where one would seek guidance after the Prophet’s death. The follower commented that a Muslim should first go to the Qur’an, then the Sunnah and Hadith of the Prophet, and where no specific injunction could be found, one should use one’s common sense.

Clearly, the Prophet knew that Muslims after him would use his life as an example. Therefore, to say that accepting the two Egyptian sisters from Maqooqas was necessary to pave the way for the Egyptians to accept Islam is short-sighted, given the resultant connotation affixed to women by accepting the offer from Maqooqas.

Prophet Muhammad had the opportunity to set a symbolic precedent of how women—including respectable ones—are not to be exchanged as gifts between men, families or kingdoms. But he didn’t take this opportunity, and that’s a disturbing fact of history.

Today, we would view these actions with much unease. This can only lead to the conclusion that at least some aspects of Islam are clearly dated. Of course, there are

those who refuse to accept this view, labeling those who limit aspects of Islam to a certain period of history as *apologists*.

In the Ahmadiyya Muslim publication *Review of Religions*, an article was written which was critical of a particular scholar who must have taken the view that Islamic teachings don't work all the time in all circumstances:

It seems that Dr. Mohammad T. Mahdi, **like some other Muslim scholars under the influence of the Western civilization, has adopted an apologetic attitude.**

Such scholars have actually **failed to understand** and appreciate the **power of Islamic teachings under all situations** and circumstances.

[7, 15]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

It is obvious that even in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, there are those who feel that all teachings work everywhere somehow, and do so for all time. This is completely in line with Postulate One,

The Qur'an is final, universal and comprehensive.

...which most Muslims are traditionally raised to believe. In spirit, this postulate doesn't limit itself to just the Qur'an, but encompasses the body of the much publicized and printed Sunnah and Hadith.

This amalgamation of everything as a complete package with inviolate teachings is a wonderful ideal, and one that is very difficult to let go of if held in one's possession.

However, it cannot be worth defending if it simply isn't true.

# ISSUE 4

## The right of the husband to beat his wife



In Qur'an 4:35, a man is given the right to beat his wife. While most Muslims claim foul when this verse is critiqued by non-Muslims as unjust, a clear and sensible explanation from the Muslim perspective has not been forthcoming.

This chapter explores Qur'anic commentary notes and other written passages from Ahmadiyya Muslim literature which attempt to address the controversy, but only produce confusion and ambiguity.

This state of affairs raises doubts on whether this Qur'anic injunction can withstand Postulates Four (Limits of Interpretation) and Six (The Balance of Realism and the Ideal).

There is much controversy with some Qur’anic verses which describe the relationship between husband and wife. One of the most contentious is the husband’s right to beat his wife.

Here’s the relevant verse from the Qur’an where permission is given to beat<sup>60</sup> one’s wife:

Men are guardians over women because Allah has made some of them excel others, and because *men spend on them* of their wealth. So virtuous women are obedient, and guard the secrets *of their husbands* with Allah’s protection. **And as for those on whose part you fear disobedience, admonish them and keep away from them in their beds and chastise them.** Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely, Allah is High *and* Great.

[1 - Holy Qur’an, [4:35](#)]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

Now the word chastise means to punish, especially by beating. The five-volume English and Arabic Qur’an published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at (reference item “2”) states in its commentary for this verse under the heading *Important Words*, that one of the meanings for the relevant word is *to beat*. Let there be no mistake with the word.

To start our analysis,

4.1	When does this injunction (permission) come into power, and why?
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One aspect of the commentary for this verse attempts to soften the permission to beat one’s wife with the mention of two very famous sayings of Prophet Muhammad:

601. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that if at all a Muslim has to beat his wife, the beating should not be such as to leave any mark on her body (Tirmidhi & Muslim) but the husbands who beat their wives are not the best among men (Kathir, iii).

[1 - Commentary, [201](#)]

Perhaps the English translation misconstrues the Arabic, but the verse does not even clearly explain for what reason the husband has the right to beat his wife. The words “fear disobedience” must clearly be a poor translation, for these words imply that nothing wrong has happened yet, and that the husband has the right to use beating as a *preemptive* measure for an unspecified ‘crime’ on the part of the wife.

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<sup>60</sup> In this translation, “chastise” is the word used.

The commentary for 4:35 which relates to the stages after the admonition is as follows:

600. The clause may signify, (a) abstention from conjugal relations; (b) sleeping in separate beds; (c) ceasing to talk to them. These measures are not to remain in force for an indefinite period, for wives are not to be left *like a thing suspended* (4:130). Four months, according to the Qur'an, is the maximum limit for abstention from conjugal relations, i.e., practical separation (2:227). If the husband deems the affair to be sufficiently grave, he will have to observe the conditions mentioned in 4:16.

[1 - Commentary, [201](#)]

To one who can read the verses, but is not a Qur'anic scholar, it is extremely difficult to determine what sort of crime the wife would have to commit in order for the husband to have a 'legitimate' reason for beating her. The commentary above refers us to verse 4:16 if the affair (we still don't know what it is yet) is sufficiently grave:

And such of your women as are guilty of *any* flagrant impropriety—call to witness four of you against them; and if they bear witness, then confine them to the houses until death overtakes them or Allah opens for them some other way.

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [4:16](#)]

If the conditions of 4:16 are to be observed, the 'affair' must be of the nature of the sin discussed in 4:16, which is that of a *flagrant impropriety*. So, if the impropriety is really grave, we must call four witnesses against the wife.

4.2	Why is it that there are an abundance of verses outlining what to do with a wife guilty of improprieties, while nothing is addressed to women about what to do with the improprieties of their husbands?
4.3	The commentary for 4:35 states that the conditions mentioned in 4:16 would be followed, but then what?
4.4	How does one arrive at verse 4:16 from the beating clause of verse 4:35?

In the absence of supporting evidence and analysis, this connection between verses 4:35 and 4:16 appears very weak, if not arbitrary.

4.5	Notwithstanding the weak 4:35 to 4:16 connection, are we to assume then, that if the affair is sufficiently grave, <sup>61</sup> four witnesses must bear witness of the flagrant impropriety and <i>then</i> and only then the husband has the right to beat his wife?
4.6	If the husband can beat his wife without obtaining four witnesses bearing testimony of a flagrant impropriety on her part, then how do the conditions of verse 4:16 come into play?

Recall Postulate Three,

**Commandments with repercussions of a fundamental nature are not dangerously ambiguous.**

Here's the Commentary on 4:16, which explains when it comes into effect:

576. *Fahishah* as used in the Qur'an (7:29; 33:31, 65:2) does not necessarily mean fornication or adultery for which punishment is prescribed in 24:3. The word refers to any glaringly improper conduct which may disturb social relations and may lead to breaches of the peace. The women referred to in this verse, as the men in the next in which similar offence with an undefined punishment is mentioned, are those guilty of foul or immoral conduct short of fornication or adultery. This is the view also of Abu Muslim and Mujahid. Such women should be prevented from mixing with other women until they reform themselves or get married, marriage being the way opened for them by Allah. As the offence mentioned is a serious one, four witnesses are considered necessary lest injustice be done to women reported against.

[1 - Commentary, [194](#)]

The commentary for 4:35 is unclear, in that when it refers the reader to 4:16, it is not clear if the conditions in 4:16 are to be used as a basis for the permission to beat one's wife in 4:35, or as the next step after the beating has taken place. If it means the latter, then one would naturally follow the injunction that accompanies the conditions, which is to:

...confine them to the houses until death overtakes them or Allah opens for them some other way.

[1 - The Holy Qur'an, [4:16](#)]

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<sup>61</sup> Note that the commentary gives the husband the right to judge what is 'grave' [1 - Commentary, 201]. Looking again at question 4.2 which I pose above, it's clear that the husband is viewed in the Islamic framework as the best judge of etiquette, protocol and righteousness / chastity—since the wife has no counter-balancing authority to these same matters. I do not know of any biological reasons for why we are to assume women by nature exercise poor judgement in these spheres—requiring that their husbands have the 'divine' authority to judge and punish them in this asymmetric fashion.

So, we wait for these women to die, or Allah opens some other way for them. On the topic of this “other way”, the commentary explains:

Such women should be prevented from mixing with other women until they reform themselves or get married, marriage being the way opened for them by Allah.  
[1 - Commentary, [194](#)]

Now we cannot remarry married women, so these women have to reform themselves, in isolation from other women. This same commentary mentions that the next verse [4:17] deals with a similar offence committed by men, but for which no specified punishment is stated:

...The women referred to in this verse, as the men in the next in which similar offence with an undefined punishment is mentioned...  
[1 - Commentary, [194](#)]

The commentary for the next verse alludes to the import of the verse possibly pointing to an *unnatural offence*, which cannot be taken to mean anything else but homosexuality.<sup>62</sup> This explains why the commentary on explaining the punishment for women, states that such women should be prevented from mixing with other women.

So, what was the point of this discussion about the verses and commentary for 4:16 and 4:17 all for? ...to simply illustrate that we still cannot be sure of what offence the wife has committed to legitimize beating, and apparently, nor do the commentators, for the reader has been sent chasing *homosexual red-herrings*.

Returning to the central issue at hand, a few important questions now surface.

4.7	What recourse does the wife have if she <i>fears disobedience</i> on the part of the husband?
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If this question seems odd, it is because it appears that a husband cannot be disobedient to his wife if he is the one in charge! Perhaps now the impropriety has become clear. It appears that the only crime the wife has committed is that of

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<sup>62</sup> Homosexuality is shunned in Islamic theology as an unnatural abomination (See Qur’anic passages: 26:166-167, 27:55-56, 4:16-17). Many issues of controversy within Islam are open to discussion, new interpretation and evolution. Homosexuality however, is not presented in Islam as one of those issues even remotely up for interpretation. While factions of Christianity have accepted it, the Islamic view of a perfect and pristine book for all time (see Postulates One and Four) precludes homosexuality from ever having a legitimate place within Islam. It is not my intention to delve into a discussion of morality and homosexuality, but merely to point out the clear Islamic verdict on this issue so that with respect to my current discourse, my chain of deduction is clear concerning the ‘unnatural offence’ mentioned in the commentary.



standing her ground on a disagreement. In a disagreement, either party could be right (or neither).

4.8	The Qur'an has placed the husband as the authority figure in the marriage, but is this authority the basis for ultimately beating one's wife because of a disagreement?
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Muhammad Zafrulla Khan comments on the chastisement issue, but does not expand on it or provide any explanation as to why it is justified:

If the wife is persistently recalcitrant so that the peace and harmony of the household are put in peril, the husband should admonish her. Should that prove unavailing, he may temporarily withdraw from the marital bed. In the last resort he may have recourse to light chastisement. (4:45) [sic]<sup>63</sup>

[4, 12]

From the Merriam-Webster online dictionary

<https://www.merriam-webster.com>

Main Entry: **re-cal-ci-trant**

Pronunciation: -tr&nt

Function: *adjective*

Etymology: Late Latin *recalcitrant-*, *recalcitrans*, present participle of *recalcitrare* to be stubbornly disobedient, from Latin, to kick back, from *re-* + *calcitrare* to kick, from *calc-*, *calx* heel

Date: 1843

**1** : obstinately defiant of authority or restraint

**2 a** : difficult to manage or operate **b** : not responsive to treatment

Now what do most Sunni Muslim scholars have to say on this point? Well, what you read below from Afzular Rahman in his work *Role of Muslim Women in Society*, is typical:

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<sup>63</sup> Note that the reference given at the end of the quotation of (4:45) is a misprint in the original and was actually meant to refer to (4:35).

The enemies of Islam have also made a lot of fuss about the verse of the Qur'an which suggests a sharp reprimand as a last resort in the form of light punishment to a wife in cases of defiance and ill-conduct on her part (4:34)

...this is seen as the ultimate weapon where necessary to maintain peace and solidarity in the family

...All the sex experts agree that there are some abnormal women who would not mend their ways but would keep their attitude of hostility and defiance toward the husband unless they were given a light beating.

They remain sexually unsatisfied for various reasons and become defiant and hostile to the husband. They are called masochistic by the sex psychologists and need light beating for their sex satisfaction. However, it may be mentioned here that these women are exceptions and very few cases would fall under this category. The majority of men and women are normal and this would not apply to them.

The Qur'an therefore recommends conciliatory and honourable treatment of women in general. Even this harsh treatment to the defiant and hostile women was only reluctantly permitted by the Prophet, and he did not like it.

[A, 427-428]

[paragraph spacing added for readability]

So, it now appears that we have a special permission to beat one's wife, which is divinely sanctioned in the rare circumstance that she's disobedient to the husband because she's masochistic.

It is a common trait in most religions that those things which do more harm than good are shunned, and those which do more good than harm are embraced.

Postulate Six stated that

The system of an Islamic society based on Qur'anic law is one whose safeguards and protection mechanisms are in place because the Law must be realistic whilst simultaneously paving a road to the Ideal.

The question is now:

4.9 (a)	Knowing the realistic tendencies inherent within man, does not this permission for a man to beat his wife seem like something that in the history and in the future of humankind, is likely to do more damage through its abuse, than the "good" it would accomplish through its "proper" application?
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Stated another way:

4.9 (b)	How would society be worse-off without this “trump card” up the husband’s sleeve to ensure “obedience” in the family?
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I have read many articles over the years concerning women and Islam in the monthly *Review of Religions* journal published by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at, but have failed to find an article that addresses this issue. Most articles in attempting to ‘clear away myths’ *don’t even want to go near* Qur’anic 4:35—and most do not.

Unfortunately, it seems an unending saga in which Muslims will write articles about women in Islam where they *fail to address the real contentious issues*. The articles are written as if in an attempt to destroy the myths about Islam in the West, and pave the way for the conversion of people in the West. The problem is, people of the West interested in religion do not want to read sugar-coated verses and articles. Every religion has a rosy side. People do read books with critical, searching minds. They want answers—real answers—to the *real* questions.

Of course, the Qur’an speaks with an ethical and egalitarian voice in many verses, but the silence in Ahmadiyya Muslim literature on the contentious verses speaks for itself.

Muhammad Zafrulla Khan’s *Women in Islam* booklet is subtitled *A clarification of the myth in the West about the status of a Woman in Islam*—but the ‘myths’ are not clarified—they’re just restated.<sup>64</sup>

The fact that the generic Muslim scholar fails to recognize the point of contention that wife beating is just plain wrong—a little or a lot—is an insensitivity that is a reflection on Islam as a religion. The natural feeling which follows is that Muslims cry foul and misunderstanding, but can never address the ugly issues because Islam hasn’t given them the faculties to even realize what is so glaringly pugnacious. From this point, one can only concede that trying to reason with a Muslim on these issues is futile.

4.10	Isn’t it time that these verses were explained with real skill or else, acknowledged as no longer applicable?
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The status quo only erodes the integrity of the entire Faith as a holistic system of Truth.

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<sup>64</sup> I personally believe Muhammad Zafrulla Khan was sincere in his effort to explain something which he believed to be true and just, although unfortunately, I do not believe this subject matter lends itself to an agreeable explanation.

# ISSUE 5

## The Qur'anic inheritance ratio



Generally speaking, Islamic inheritance requires that the share of inheritance for a male is equal to twice that apportioned to females. It is said that since female income and assets are a woman's alone and she is not responsible for the finances of the family, the Islamic system of inheritance works out favourably for females.

In a hypothetical alternate system, I propose equal shares for both male and female, but require that the female submit one-third of her share to the family, keeping the other two-thirds for herself. This ensures equality yet still benefits the female in the event that she is alone, widowed, etc.

This hypothetical alternative is more comprehensive than the Qur'anic version, yet provides the same protection to both the family and the female. Consequently, and in this light, Postulate One is challenged.

Several verses in the Qur'an lay down the rules and portions allotted for inheritance. One of which is the following:

Allah commands you concerning your children;

a male shall have as much as the share of two females; but if there be females *only*, *numbering* more than two, then they shall have two-thirds of what the *deceased* leave; and if there be one, she shall have the half.

And his parents each of them a sixth of the inheritance, if he have a child, but if he have no child and his parents be his heirs, then his mother shall have a third; and if he have brothers and sisters, then his mother shall have a sixth, after *the payment* of any bequests he may have bequeathed or of debts.

Your fathers and your children; you know not which of them is more beneficent to you. *This* fixing of *portions* is from Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [4:12](#)]

[vertical spacing added for readability]

Muhammad Zafrulla Khan summarizes these inheritance ratios and provides a commentary:

...the general rule being that the share of a male is double that of a female in the same degree of relationship. In this there is no discrimination against female heirs in view of the obligation of the male to provide for his family, while the female has no such obligation. In practice the rule works out favourably for female heirs.

[4, [21-22](#)]

Many verses in the Qur'an relate to inheritance and how the ratios are split up, with the general rule being that the male receives twice the share of a female, as articulated above.

The question here is whether this apportioning of inheritance shares is the most equitable for all times, peoples and circumstances as Postulate One would require.

Perhaps the interaction of all the various inheritance injunctions has not been understood by myself in their inter-working with the rest of the Islamic system. At first glance, providing the female with one-third while the male receives the other two-thirds seems discriminatory.

It is pointed out by Muslim scholars that this larger share for the male is due to the burden of providing for the family having been placed on *his* shoulders.

Furthermore, money received by a female is hers alone, she is not required by Islam to contribute financially to the wealth of the family.

5.1	But what of widows, divorcees and single mothers...do they still receive one-third while the males in the inheritance receive twice as much?
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If such women, being widows, divorcees or single mothers received an inheritance, would it not in most circumstances, all be directed to family finances?

Even today, in the Western world, where many Muslim women work outside the home, how many families can afford not to have the wives contribute to family finances? This is now a common fact of life. Muhammad Zafrulla Khan commented that in practice, the rule works out favourably for females. Perhaps this is so in places like Pakistan, where the segments of society that are well off enough to receive inheritances don't require the money to help run the household. However, most of the world is moving away from the houses-with-servants paradigm.

In North America, what percentage of wives earn an income and keep it all to themselves? Should we now critique the North American style of double incomes, and say that in an Islamic system, only the man would be working, so all these women should go home so that there wouldn't be an issue to discuss?

Clearly in circumstances like those of North America, which are by no means exceptions around the world, it would be more just to give male and female *equal* shares.

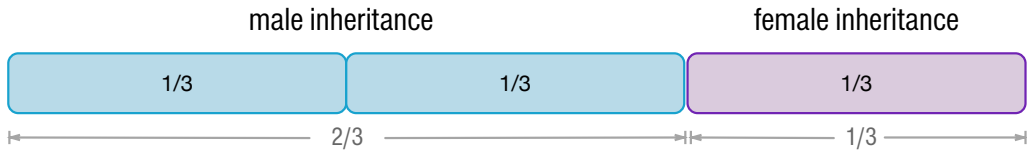
Consider the following hypothetical inheritance ratio allotment.

- Each share is divided into sixths instead of thirds as done in the Qur'an.
- Male and female receive an equal share, so each receive three-sixths (3/6) of a share.
- The original Qur'anic injunction had the male receiving two-thirds (2/3) of a share, all of which was to go to the family. This two-thirds (2/3) is the same as four-sixths (4/6).
- In my hypothetical scenario, the male is obliged to provide his full share of three-sixths (3/6) to the family finances, and the female will provide one-sixth (1/6) to family finances.
- Since the female received three-sixths (3/6) as well, she is keeping two-thirds (2/3) of her inheritance for herself, and contributing (1/3) of her inheritance to family finances.

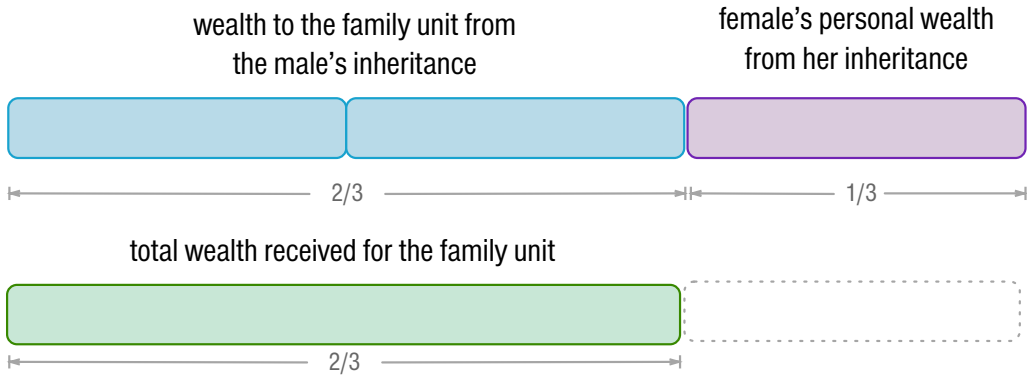
Let's look at an illustration to clarify what's proposed.

## 5.1 The Qur'anic System

In the Qur'anic system, here is what the inheritance would look like, 2 shares for the male, 1 share for the female:

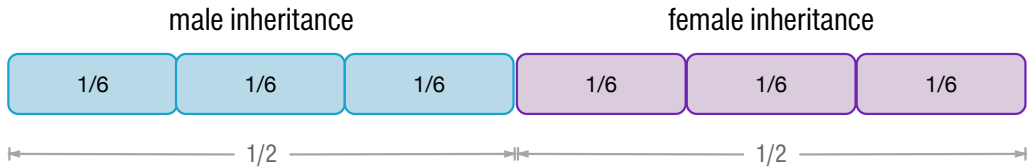


As far as responsibility to the family is concerned, only the male provides, while the female gets to keep her inheritance income for her own personal use:

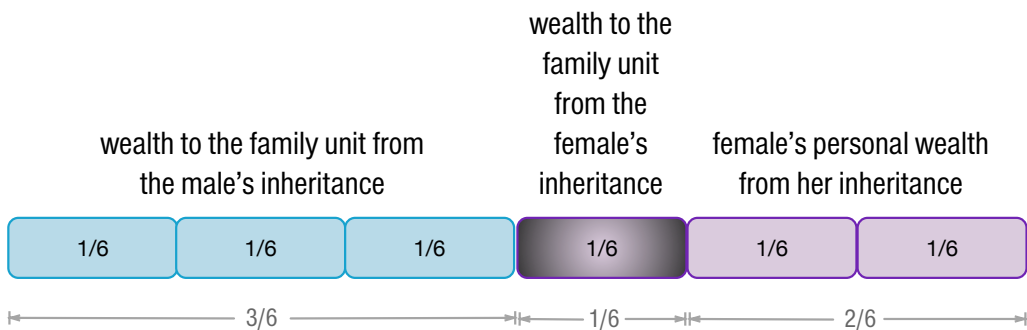


## 5.2 The Hypothetical Alternative System

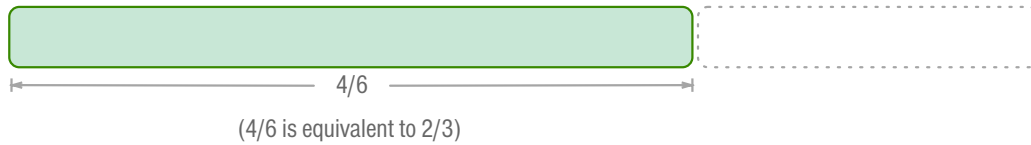
In my hypothetical alternative system, here's what the inheritance shares become:



As you can see, both the male and female inherit equal amounts in my alternate system. As concerns the wealth provided to the family and to the female (wife), here's how my system achieves the *same* result as the Islamic system:



### total wealth received for the family unit



In the end, the female keeps one part out of three for herself (which is the same as two parts out of six), just like in the Qur’anic system. Also, the family ultimately gets two parts out of three of the inheritance, just like in the Qur’anic system.

The difference however, is that unlike the Qur’anic system, the female receives the protection of an equal share *from the start*, and depending on her situation, may be obliged to contribute to the family, and yet, still keep her representative personal share.

## 5.3 A Concrete Example

Let’s put some numbers to the above example to ensure the point is clear.

To simplify the math and illustrate the equivalence of shares, we’ll assume that a male’s share of inheritance in both the husband and the wife’s family<sup>65</sup> is \$4000.

Using a model with homogeneous economic agents, this means that each deceased parent has left an inheritance where the share of one male heir is \$4000.

Let’s look at a married couple (family), where one grandparent on each side has passed away, each with an identical estate, number of children and so forth (the homogeneous economic agent simplifying assumption).

### 5.3.1 The Islamic Scenario

Following Qur’anic injunctions, this is how the scenario plays out.

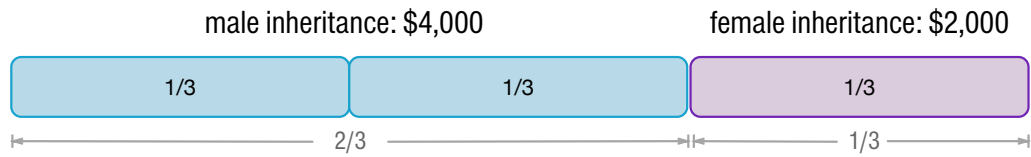
The share of a female heir is \$2000, per Qur’anic injunctions.

Assuming a hypothetical scenario where a wife’s parent has passed away and the husband’s parent has also passed away, the husband receives \$4000 and the wife receives \$2000. The \$4000 which the husband has received goes to the wealth of the family (family finances), while the \$2000 the wife has received she spends on jewelry, clothes, investments of her choosing, etc.

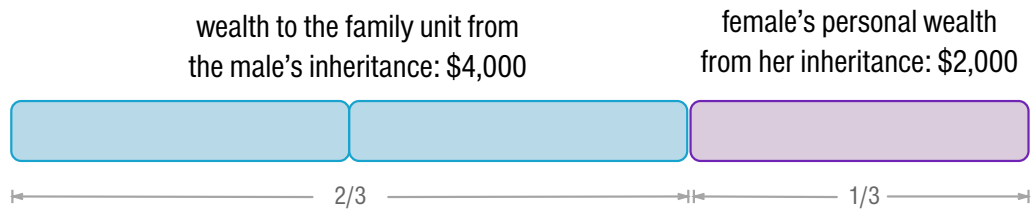
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<sup>65</sup> Note that in reality, what constitutes a share amount in one family (deceased’s estate) is unlikely to be identical to another, so a rich woman receiving a lower proportion of a parent’s estate could conceivably inherit more in absolute terms than her husband from his deceased parent’s estate. These individual circumstances are irrelevant to the verses as injunctions to society in general. For analysis of equity, homogeneous ‘economic agents’ are best suited for our model to illustrate the point in the simplest possible way.

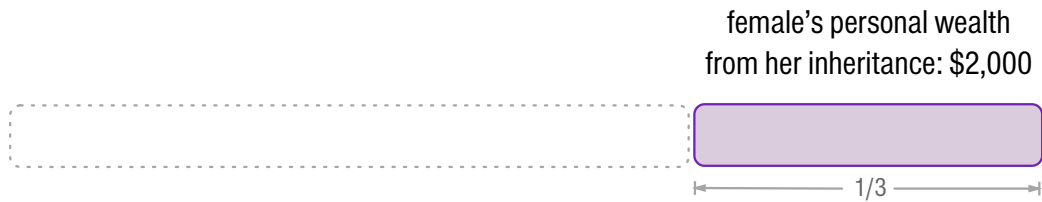




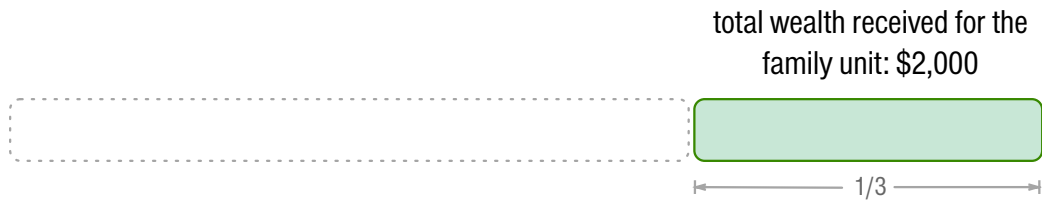
Continuing with the Islamic system, this means the following as concerns family and personal wealth:



Now let's say the woman is divorced or widowed but she still has a family to support. From my understanding of the inheritance scheme, this is how things look:



And since she's single, she won't be spending the money frivolously on herself—it goes to feeding her family. Thus, what we really end up with is:

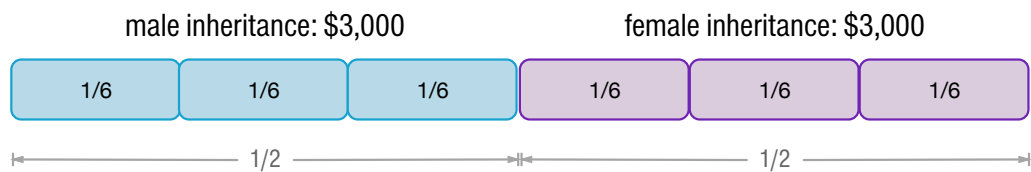


### 5.3.2 The Hypothetical Alternate Scenario

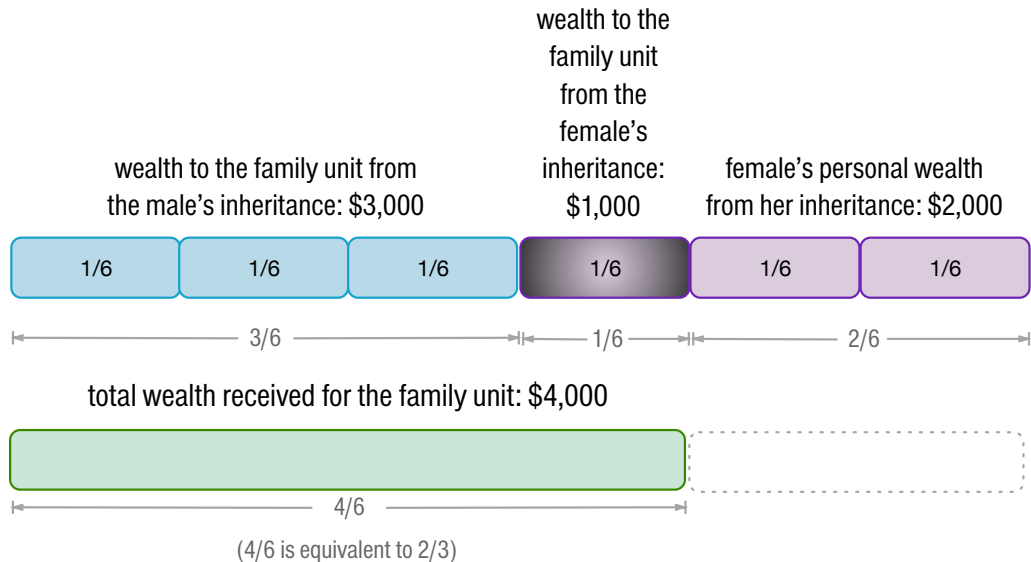
Using the rules, which I presented above as a superior system of inheritance distribution, here's how the example plays out.

The shares are not two-for-one between males and females. The \$4000 share for the male and the \$2000 share for the female are now instead, a \$3000 share for each.

Again, assuming that one parent of the husband and one parent of the wife (in our hypothetical couple) have passed away, each with identical estates, number of children and so forth, we arrive at the following inheritance flowing down to the couple:

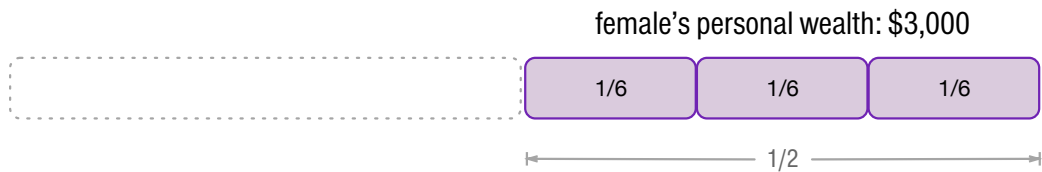


We can view the male's inheritance as three units of \$1000, and likewise, the female has inherited three units of \$1000. With both husband and wife alive, here are the results with my hypothetical system:

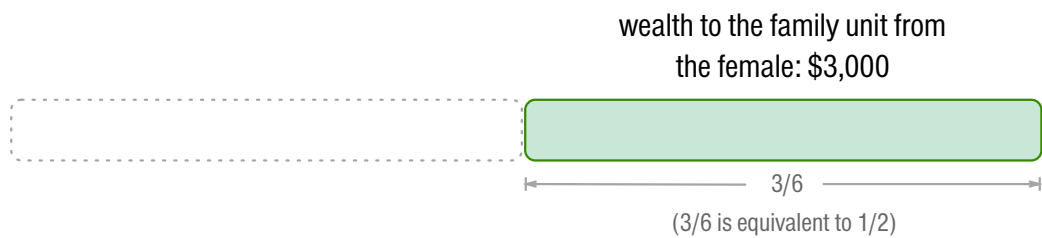


In my hypothetical system, the female (wife) has contributed  $1/3$  of her inheritance to the family's wealth (\$1000). Combined with her husband's \$3000 share, a net wealth of \$4000 is allocated to the family, while the woman still has \$2000 for her own personal use.

Now if the woman is single (widowed, divorced, etc.) with a family, she gets \$3000 to put towards family finances (her full share).



Since the woman is single but with family, everything she receives she can put towards the family. In the hypothetical system, she now receives the protection of \$3000, while in the Islamic system, she would have only had \$2000.



The hypothetical system mimics the Qur'anic system in giving the woman a share for herself, but protects her an extra degree in the event that she does not have a husband (perhaps she is divorced or widowed).

If my example is not flawed, (i.e. there are no other verses which clearly come into play in this special circumstance), then the presence of my hypothetical alternate violates Postulate One on the grounds of universality.

True, removing a third of the woman's inheritance and placing it into the family pot may have complications as regards to the difficulty of splitting items in an estate—but the Qur'an in several verses has sixths of shares being allotted—so this difficulty of splitting is a very weak rebuttal.

5.2	Comparing the Qur'anic system of ratio allotment and the hypothetical inheritance ratio allotment, which one seems more universal, more comprehensive and inclusive of a wider range of circumstance, now and in the future, as Postulate One would require?
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# ISSUE 6

## The difference in divorce protocol



This brief chapter seeks to draw feedback on why the divorce protocol differs for men and women in Islam vis-à-vis the woman's requirement to involve a judge.

Specifically, beyond the issue of separation of property, why should a woman be required to obtain the permission of a judge to grant the actual divorce, in contradistinction to the lack of such a requirement for men?

It is not disputed that both men and women have the right to initiate a dissolution of marriage in Islam. What is peculiar however, is that the procedure for women (*Khul'*) is different than the procedure for men (*Talaq*). Here is the main Qur'anic verse laying down the crux of the divorce procedure:

Such divorce may be pronounced twice; then either retain them in a becoming manner or send them away with kindness. And it is not lawful for you that you take anything of what you have given them (your wives) unless both fear that they cannot observe the limits prescribed by Allah. But, if you fear that they cannot observe the limits prescribed by Allah, then it shall be no sin for either of them in what she gives to get her freedom. These are the limits prescribed by Allah, so transgress them not; and whoso transgresses the limits prescribed by Allah, it is they that are the wrongdoers.

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [2:230](#)]

The commentary for this verse is as follows:

282. If, however, it is the wife who demands separation, technically known as *Khul'*, she must get it through a *Qadi* or judge as the words "you fear," in the plural number, hint.

In this case she has to part with, in full or in part, her dowry as well as the gifts she might have received from her husband, as agreed upon by the parties or decided by the judge.

The case of Jamilah, wife of Qais bin Thabit, provides a good illustration of the exercise of the right of *Khul'* by women. She demanded separation from her husband Qais, on the ground that she did not like him, *i.e.*, their temperaments being different she could not get on with him. She was granted *Khul'* by the Holy Prophet, but she had to return to her husband the orchard he had given her (Bukhari).

[1 - Commentary, [95](#)]

[vertical paragraph spacing added for readability]

So, the difference is that the woman has a judge grant the divorce, while there is no such requirement placed on the man...but why? Afzular Rahman in his book, the *Role of Muslim Woman in Society* claims:

The procedure in the case of the wife is longer merely to allow any emotional disturbance and commotion, such as anger, time to cool down and let her reflect on this matter carefully in saner moments...

[A, 154]

6.1	So, the man does not require time to cool down, but the woman does?
6.2	How is it possible that the procedure for the wife is longer, when a man who pronounces divorce can't obtain it until his wife waits for three of her courses (menstrual periods)?

Here's the Qur'anic verse which lays down the required waiting period:

And the divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three courses; and it is not lawful for them that they conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day; and their husbands have the greater right to take them back during that period, provided they desire reconciliation. And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity; but men have a degree of *advantage* above them. And Allah is Mighty *and* Wise.

[1 - Holy Qur'an, [2:229](#)]

From the commentary, it appears the judge is deciding on who gets what, which is fair, given that the wife having initiated the divorce should remit that which was given to her as a dower and as gifts, and if the man initiated the divorce, he has no right to ask for the return of the dower (nor the gifts). What is peculiar, is that the judge is not viewed as one who decides only on the distribution of property, but one who *grants* the actual divorce.

It is often said that if the judge does not grant the divorce, the woman has a right to go to another judge and obtain her divorce.

The ultimate question is:

6.3	Why put the woman's own welfare and independence in the hands of some third party beyond the issue of the separation of property?
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# ISSUE 7

## The marriage of Hazrat Aisha and precedent



This chapter looks at Prophet Muhammad's marriage to Hazrat Aisha seeking to juxtapose the Prophet's burden of precedent and his example (Sunnah) with Postulates One, Two and Three as they reverberate on universality, reasonableness and repercussions of a fundamental nature for future generations.

A deep probing of early Islamic disagreement on the role of the legalistic and cultural aspects of Islam in the Prophet's time are explored for their meaning to modern day Islam and the scope of its role in our lives on issues as sensitive as marriage and the independence of women as persons.

As Muslims for centuries all over the world have studied the life of Prophet Muhammad to gain insight into how to live their own lives, what Prophet Muhammad did is very important to an understanding and appreciation of Islam.

Muslims look to the Sunnah for practical guidance on what is acceptable and what is not. However, Prophet Muhammad's marriage to Hazrat Aisha sets a mysterious and controversial precedent on what is acceptable.

That girls and boys in pre-Islamic Arabia were married in childhood is more of a cultural and temporal phenomenon that is not being taken exception to here. What is disturbing, from my perspective, is that although not unusual for the time, marriage with such a large discrepancy in ages was sanctioned by Islam, knowing full well the precedent this would set.

Leila Ahmed, in her book *Women and Gender in Islam—Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* recounts how the marriage proposal took place:

Aisha's case was different. She was the six-year-old daughter of Muhammad's closest and most important supporter, Abu Bakr. Khawla took the proposal to Umm Rumman, Aisha's mother, who deferred the matter to her husband. He said that because Aisha was already betrothed, he would first have to release her from that commitment. There is no suggestion that anyone thought the marriage inappropriate because of the discrepancy in their ages, though Aisha's prior betrothal was evidently to a boy.

[b, 49]

Farzana Hasan, in her work *The Wives of the Holy Prophet* provides a table of the ages of all the wives of Prophet Muhammad and the age of the Prophet at the time of marriage. Hazrat Aisha was married in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Hijra when she was 9 years old, and Prophet Muhammad was 54 years old. [C, 131] This means that Prophet Muhammad was, astonishingly, **six times older** than his bride at the time of consummating the marriage!

When a marriage is conducted with such a disparity in ages, it is clear that the older spouse will die off so much earlier than the younger spouse. Has it not been the goal of people throughout history to aspire for a lifelong relationship?

7.1	Why did Prophet Muhammad feel it necessary to ask for the hand of someone so young, knowing that she would outlive him by so many years?
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Some may argue that Prophet Muhammad was a special case, and that he would teach her much, and that these teachings could be passed on to followers who would also learn from these experiences. This argument is valid, but could not this purpose



be served with wives of a more appropriate age with respect to the age of Prophet Muhammad?

One may argue that Hazrat Abu Bakr was eager to build a stronger bond with the Prophet, but this line of thinking is the basis for the objections raised in *Issue 3—Women as Gifts and Objects*, found earlier in this document.

Not one much for television (nor talk shows for that matter)—I was once flipping through channels when something caught my attention.

In 1993, an American talk show episode centered around a 17-year-old boy who was in love with his ex-girlfriend's mother (who was 43). The general response from the audience to this situation was that the whole arrangement was absurd, and that their plans to get married were even more absurd. The most interesting comment however, was one from a lady in the audience who said words to the effect that:

Had it been a 17 year old girl and a 43 year old man, no one would have complained; there wouldn't have even been a show about it.

This is simply an observation of mine, but I believe that it is true that society would generally turn the other way if the situation were reversed. Why? Why the double standard?

Returning to Hazrat Aisha's story, Leila Ahmed recounts how it progressed:

Aisha later recalled that she had realized she was married (that is, that the marriage agreement had been concluded) when her mother called her in from her games with her friends and told her she must stay indoors, and so "it fell into my heart," she said, "that I was married." She did not, she recalled, ask to whom (Ibn Sa'd, 8:40). Muhammad thereafter continued his regular daily visits to Abu Bakr's house, but the marriage was not consummated until after the Muslims had migrated to Medina. [b, 50]

When 'Aisha was no more than nine or ten, Abu Bakr, anxious no doubt to create the further bond of kinship between Muhammad and himself, asked Muhammad why he was delaying consummation of the marriage. When Muhammad replied that he was as yet unable to provide the marriage portion, Abu Bakr forthwith provided it himself (Ibn Sa'd 8:43). Thereafter, the marriage was consummated in 'Aisha's father's house in Sunh. As 'Aisha recalled the occasion:

My mother came to me and I was swinging on a swing.... She brought me down from the swing, and I had some friends there and she sent them away, and she wiped my face with a little water, and led me till we stopped by the door, and I was breathless [from being on the swing] and we waited till I regained my breath. Then she took me in, and the Prophet was sitting on a bed in our house with men and women of the Ansar [Medinians] and she set me on his lap, and said, "These are your people. God bless you in them and they in you." And the men and women rose immediately and went out, And the Prophet consummated the marriage in our house.

'Aisha became, and remained Muhammad's undisputed favorite, even when he had added beautiful, sought-after women to his harem. Her most recent scholarly biographer, Nabia Abbott, stresses Muhammad's tender care and patience with her; he joined even in her games with dolls. [b, 51]

Surprisingly, one can find today, biographers of Hazrat Aisha, such as Nabia Abbott (referred to in Leila Ahmed's book), who do *not* feel the disparity in ages was the relevant matter as regards the relationship:

To modern sensibilities, however, such details, like 'Aisha's recollections of her marriage and its consummation, do not make the relationship more comprehensible. If anything, they underscore its pathos and tragedy.

Nevertheless, **Abbott is right to assume that the relevant matter is not the sensibilities of other ages but rather the accurate representation of the relationship.** Consequently, other aspects, such as their apparent emotional equality and their mutual dependence, should also be noted.

These are suggested by, for instance, Muhammad's sullen, wounded withdrawal following the famous necklace incident: 'Aisha was left behind at a campsite because she had wandered off looking for the beads of her necklace. Returning the following morning, her camel escorted by a young man, she was suspected by the community, and finally by Muhammad, of infidelity. Muhammad's distress over the matter became so intense that his revelations ceased for the duration of their estrangement; his first revelations at the end of that period were the verses declaring her innocence.

Complementarily, 'Aisha must have felt reasonably equal to and unawed by this prophet of God, for his announcement of a revelation permitting him to enter into marriages disallowed other men drew from her the retort, "It seems to me your Lord hastens to satisfy your desire!" (Ibn Sa'd, 8:112).

In other words, in all its aspects their relationship was defined by the particular social context—not only in the sense of the mores of the society but also in the sense of the ways in which the mores of a society shape the inner psychic and emotional structures of its members.

[b, 51-52]

[bold emphasis and vertical spacing added is mine]

The details of 'Aisha's betrothal and marriage indicate that parents before and around the time of the rise of Islam might arrange marriages between children, male or female, and their peers or elders. They indicate too, that for girls betrothal entailed control and supervision of their sexuality, some form of seclusion ('Aisha understood she was married when told she had to stay indoors).

A patriarchal notion of marriage and sexuality then, already pertained in 'Aisha's childhood environment. Similarly, the arrangements for Muhammad's simultaneous betrothal to women were represented in the literature not as innovatory but, again, as ordinary.

It is, however, possible that the reports, coming from the pens of Muslim authors, do not accurately reflect late Jahilia and early Islamic practices but rather conform to a later Islamic understanding of marriage.

[b, 52]

[vertical spacing added for readability]

Now independent scholars may feel that the disparity in ages was not the relevant issue, but indeed it is when looking at the big picture—especially when the repercussions of Sunnah are considered.

7.2	How many young girls throughout the ages have likely been married to older men several times their age, not knowing what they were getting into, all under the legitimate guise of Sunnah as a cover?
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The Prophet did have nine wives simultaneously at one point in his life, and it was made clear that this was a special exception for him, and that other Muslims could only marry up to four wives simultaneously. However, in terms of marrying young girls, no such clarification was made. In fact, after the Prophet's death, much divergence of opinion on these issues arose:

From the beginning there were those who emphasized the ethical and spiritual message as the fundamental message of Islam and argued that the regulations Muhammad put into effect, even his own practices, were merely the ephemeral aspects of the religion, **relating only to that particular society at that historical moment**. Thus, they never intended to be normative or permanently binding for the Muslim community. Among the groups that to some degree or other took this position were the Sufis, the Kharijis, and the Qarmatians (Qaramita)...their views on women and their rules and practices pertaining to them differed in important ways from those affirmed by Islamic establishment; implicit to all of them was the idea that the laws applicable to the first Muslim society were not necessarily applicable to or binding upon later ones. **The Kharijis and the Qarmatians, for instance, rejected concubinage and the marriage of nine-year-old girls (permitted by the orthodox)**, and the Qarmatians banned polygamy and the veil.

[b, 66]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

To give one instance of a "religious" divergence with clear social implications for women, the Kharijis rejected concubinage and the marriage of nine-year-old girls, even though Muhammad had owned a concubine and had married Aisha when she was about nine. They argued that God had allowed his prophet privileges not permitted to other men. **Orthodox Muslims, in contrast, accepted both concubinage and the marriage of girls who were about nine, arguing that Muhammad's practice established a precedent for all Muslim men.** These examples of radically different readings of the import of Muhammad's actions and words, and of the Quran, by passionately committed Muslims illustrate how matters merely of emphasis and interpretation in relation to the same acts and texts are capable of **yielding what are in effect, for women, fundamentally different Islams.**

[b, 71]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

The fact that some people, such as the Kharijis, could "read" the same events or words as not intended to permit concubinage or marriage to nine-year-old-girls while the orthodox understood them as intending to permit either, makes clear the crucial role of interpretation. Nonetheless, a misogynist reading was undeniably one reading to which Islam plausibly lent itself.

[b, 87]

Muslims are taught to love Prophet Muhammad as the greatest and most perfect man that ever lived and will ever live. Undeniably, Prophet Muhammad did many exemplary and selfless things in his life, but for those who take exception to things such as the necessity for him to have married someone so young like Hazrat Aisha, this consuming love is difficult to attain. This is because, when one perceives what to them appears to be a character flaw, it is hard to view the whole character as perfect.

Thought of another way:

7.3	If a modern-day Muslim society / community objected to a Muslim family giving their 9-year-old daughter into marriage to a pious 54-year-old Muslim man, would the Sunnah of the Prophet be a legitimate defense by the family giving away their young daughter in such a marriage?
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For those readers with nine or ten-year-old daughters—would you give their hand in marriage to a 54-year-old who was very pious and religious? If the thought feels absurd and awkward, then that is the precise sentiment that is trying to be conveyed in the examination of this issue—it does not make sense in what is meant to be a universal culture with no temporal limitations.

7.4	How could a Prophet who came to set an example for all time be a party to something like this which future generations would hold as something so distasteful?
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The ultimate question with this entire affair thus boils down to:

7.5	How are we Muslims embarking on the 21 <sup>st</sup> century to view this kind of marriage arrangement—in terms of its legitimacy—for times other than the Prophet's, such as our own?
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# ISSUE 8

The Jahilia period and change—then and now



This chapter explores Leila Ahmed's *Women and Gender in Islam* to support the thesis that pre-Islamic Arabia did possess some advances and liberties which the onset of Islam diminished for hundreds of years thereafter.

This realization poses the question of whether modern day Islam in the West would have achieved its balance (which few modern-day Muslims would deny it), had it not been influenced by positive aspects of Western thought and culture.

Much literature written by Muslims paints Islam as the first religion to give women rights “hitherto unknown” in the society in which it was revealed. For instance, the Forward to Muhammad Zafrulla Khan’s *Women in Islam* by Shaikh Mubarak Ahmad, Imam of the London Mosque proposes that:

In many societies, a woman is still regarded as a second-class citizen and deprived of various basic rights enjoyed by the male population. Deeply resenting this discrimination, they have championed a fight to obtain for themselves an equal status which unfortunately to date eludes them in the more modern Western states. Whereas the pendulum has swung to the extremes and has opened the way to licentiousness in the modern society, the West has often regarded Islamic women as being backward in a male dominated world.

On the contrary, **Islam was the first religion formally to grant the women a status never known before...**

[4, 3]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

Other literature on the subject goes so far as to claim that women in pre-Islamic Arabia (the *Jahilia* period) had few rights at all.

Leila Ahmed’s work *Women and Gender in Islam* provides exceptional insight into the Jahilia and early Islamic periods. As such, it is quoted extensively to articulate important details of history.

To start, let us look at the issue of female inheritance:

Medina's being an agricultural community presumably made the new inheritance law, involving the division of land, more complex in its consequences than for commercial Mecca, where property was in herds and material goods and where **even before Islam it was apparently the custom for women to inherit.**

[b, 53]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

It also appears that some women did have greater freedom of movement and independence before Islam:

Furthermore, some Arabian women at the time of the institution of Islam, and not only priestesses, doubtless understood and disliked the new religion's restrictions on women and its curtailment of their independence.

[b, 60]

History is also conspicuously silent on how women of the era themselves view the before and after lifestyles with regards to Islam. It is surmised by many that the written history and religious material that has been passed down through the generations has been censored to suit a chauvinistic male agenda:



...The consistent silence on such issues now speaks eloquently. Given the harsh suppression at Hadramaut, there can be little doubt that the guardians of Islam erased female rebellion from the pages of history as ruthlessly as they eradicated it from the world in which they lived. They doubtless considered it their duty.

[b, 61]

Leila Ahmed recounts the capacity in which women participated in Jahilia society:

...and we have seen the participation and independence of women in the society in which Islam arose and the diminution of their liberties as Islam became established. Jahilia women were priests, soothsayers, prophets, participants in warfare, and nurses on the battlefield. They were fearlessly outspoken, defiant critics of men; authors of satirical verse aimed at formidable male opponents; keepers, in some unclear capacity, of the keys of the holiest shrine in Mecca; rebels and leaders of rebellions that included men; and individuals who initiated and terminated marriages at will, protested the limits Islam imposed on that freedom, and mingled freely with the men of their society until Islam banned such interaction.

[b, 61-62]

...Jahilia women participated actively in society, a habit that necessarily carried over into early Muslim society; after all, these were the people who, by conversion and by conquest, became the first Muslims. Until the latter years of Muhammad's ascendancy, and perhaps later for women other than his wives, women mingled freely with men; even in the last years of Muhammad's life they were not veiled, except for his own wives.

[b, 68]

Then came seclusion and submission, which was not the Jahilia norm:

In transferring rights to women's sexuality and their offspring from the women and her tribe to men and then basing the new definition of marriage on that proprietary male right, Islam placed relations between the sexes on a new footing. Implicit in this new order was the male right to control women and to interdict their interactions with other men. Thus the ground was prepared for the closures that would follow: women's exclusion from social activities in which they might have contact with men other than those with rights to their sexuality; their physical seclusion, soon to become the norm; and the institution of internal mechanisms of control, such as instilling the notion of submission as a women's duty.

[b, 62]

Polygyny, marriage to very young girls and slaves was however, part of Arabia before Islam:

Marriage as sanctioned or practiced by Muhammad included polygamy and the marriage of girls nine or ten years old. Quranic utterances sanctioned the rights of males to have sexual relations with slave women (women bought or captured in war) and to divorce at will.

[b, 62]

Thus, while there can be no doubt that in terms of its pragmatic rulings Islam instituted a hierarchical type of marriage that granted men control over women and rights to permissive sexuality, there can be no doubt, either, that Islamic views on women, as on all matters, are embedded in and framed by the new ethical and spiritual field of meaning that the religion had come into existence to articulate.

[b, 63]

Leila Ahmed contends that there is a dichotomy in Islam, where the ethical side has more to offer the future than the technical side has given the past:

There appear, therefore, to be two distinct voices within Islam, and two competing understandings of gender, one expressed in the pragmatic regulations for society...the other in the articulation of an ethical vision. Even as Islam instituted marriage as a sexual hierarchy in its ethical voice—a voice virtually unheard by rulers and lawmakers—it insistently stressed the importance of the spiritual and ethical dimensions of being and the equality of all individuals. While the first voice has been extensively elaborated into a body of political and legal thought, which constitutes the technical understanding of Islam, the second—**the voice to which ordinary believing Muslims, who are essentially ignorant of the details of Islam's technical legacy, give their assent—has left little trace on the political and legal heritage of Islam.**

[b, 65-66]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

The unmistakable presence of an ethical egalitarianism explains why Muslim women frequently insist, often inexplicably to non-Muslims, that Islam is not sexist.

[b, 66]

From the beginning there were those who emphasized the ethical and spiritual message as the fundamental message of Islam and argued that the regulations Muhammad put into effect, even his own practices, were merely the ephemeral aspects of the religion, relating only to that particular society at that historical moment. Thus, they never intended to be normative or permanently binding for the Muslim community. Among the groups that to some degree or other took this position were the Sufis, the Kharijis, and the Qarmatians (Qaramita)...their views on women and their rules and practices pertaining to them differed in important ways from those affirmed by Islamic establishment; implicit to all of them was the idea that the laws applicable to the first Muslim society were not necessarily applicable to or binding upon later ones. The Kharijis and the Qarmatians, for instance, rejected concubinage and the marriage of nine-year-old girls (permitted by the orthodox), and the Qarmatians banned polygamy and the veil. Sufi ideas, moreover, implicitly challenged the way establishment Islam conceptualized gender, as is suggested by the fact that they permitted women to give a central place in their lives to their spiritual vocation, thus by implication affirming the paramountcy of the spiritual over the biological. In contrast, the legal and social vision of establishment Islam gave precedence to women's obligations to be wives and mothers.

[b, 66]

It appears that the further from the Prophet's death Islamic society marched on, the more misogynist and androcentric the society and its interpretations of Islam became:

...I contend first, that the practices sanctioned by Muhammad within the first Muslim society were enunciated in the context of far more positive attitudes toward women than the later Abbasid society was to have, a context that consequently tempered the androcentric tendencies of Islamic practices; those tendencies were further tempered by the emphasis the religion placed on spiritual egalitarianism.

Second, I argue that the decision to regard androcentric positions on marriage as intended to be binding for all time was itself an interpretive decision, reflecting the interests and perspective of those in power during the age that transposed and interpreted the Islamic message into the textual edifice of Islam.

Finally, I argue that the social context in which this textual edifice was created was far more negative for women than that in Arabia, so the spiritually egalitarian voice of the religion would have been exceedingly difficult to hear.

The practices and living arrangements of the dominant classes of the Abbasid era were such that at an implicit and often an explicit level, the words *women*, and *slave*, and *object for sexual use* came close to being indistinguishably fused. Such practices, and the conceptions they gave rise to, informed the dominant ideology and affected how Islam was heard and interpreted in this period and how its ideas were rendered into law.

[b, 67]

[vertical spacing added for readability]

It is further surprising that Al-Ghazali, considered a Mujjaddid<sup>66</sup> of his Age, would have written the statements concerning women's spiritual and material faculties, that blended in with the primitive views around him at the time.

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<sup>66</sup> In the mainstream (Sunni) branch of Islam, holy reformers were prophesied (in sayings of the Prophet) to appear at the head of each century (sometimes more than one person). Muslims have generally been in agreement as to whom these people were. Al-Ghazali was one of the most famous of these Mujjaddideen. As with many facets of mainstream Sunni Islam, the Mujjaddideen are also something shared by Ahmadiyya Islamic theology.

Within ten years of Muhammad's death...societies were more restrictive toward women and more misogynist; at least their misogyny and their modes of controlling women by law and by custom were more fully articulated administratively and as inscribed in code. These differences ... are suggested by the contrast between the Quranic verses *addressing* women and unambiguously declaring the spiritual equality of men and women and certain remarks of the supreme theologian of the Abbasid age, al-Ghazali (d. 1111).

Al-Ghazali prefaces his account of eminent religious women with the following advice to readers, whom he presumes to be male: "Consider the women who have struggled in the path of God and say, 'O my soul, be not content to be less than a woman, for it is despicable for a man to be less than a woman in matters of religion or of this world.'" That is, in the spiritual (as well as in the material) realm, the most ordinary of men should expect to surpass the most gifted and perceptive of women.

[b, 67-68]

[vertical spacing added for readability]

Now having established what occurred in the Jahilia and early Islamic periods, we cannot make blanket statements that Islam was the first to give rights to women, or that women enjoyed more freedoms after the introduction of Islam. It is true however, that Islam did remove some ugly customs of the Jahilia period from Arabia, such as female infanticide.

## 8.1 A Reflection on the Changes

From a generally open and free Jahilia society, it appears that after the Prophet's death, given the chance to reach an equilibrium, Islam became increasingly rigid and misogynist in its interpretation and implementation.

It has been observed that:

...a misogynist reading was undeniably one reading to which Islam plausibly lent itself.

[b, 87]

It is disturbing that this sort of equilibrium seems not only plausible, but inevitable—especially given some of the issues raised in this writing. I surmise that had 'modern day' Islam not encountered some of the positive aspects of Western culture and values, it still would not have been as tempered as it is today. This is not to say that Western culture represents the ideal, but merely that there are many very positive elements of Western culture that Eastern (i.e. Islamic) culture would do well to fuse with.

This is such an important point, that it deserves some reflection. Balancing out the judiciary with female judges, having female doctors and lawyers that other females in

society can feel comfortable conferring with...having professors of history and anthropology examine humanity's journey from something other than a male-dominated filter...having female politicians speaking up for the concerns of women in government...these are all positive contributions to society. They all better serve women in the community and society at large.

While we Muslims in the West may take these opportunities and realities for granted, positive aspects of Western culture have shaped this present-day reality not enjoyed to nearly the same degree in Muslim majority countries. In deeply Islamic societies where segregation has intimately embraced every facet of daily living, would women get equal and fair access to professors—or would they have to learn through videotaped lectures? What about the scholarly Ph.D. student—could she become head of her faculty and teach others who are male, or would such high-exposure positions be off limits for women? Then what of the natural consequences of women aspiring to personal heights with no other women as role models? Certainly, we have very visible political leaders in Muslim societies that are female—once mother, daughter, sister or wife of an influential male figure—but when do we see a woman making it of her *own* talents the way men have done? Why must that be off limits to women?

I submit that some of the differences in social policy and the implicit cultural signals generated in Muslim societies which differ from those in the West,<sup>67</sup> are actually very subtle. We must however, consider the point articulated in the following simile:

If you misalign a compass needle by 15 degrees from true north, it makes little difference as you navigate across your residence. This is like the difference of a generation of travel. However, after many generations of travel over vast distances, one will have seriously veered off course by this small misalignment. These small measures and small moves make a world of difference in the society that results over time. In the Present lies our responsibility to the Future.

If we believe the presence of women in education, politics, law, science and health is a positive thing, then we must ask ourselves how it is that we got here. If we cannot clearly visualize how an Islamic society<sup>68</sup> could evolve on its own to that point, then

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<sup>67</sup> Of the sort which even Muslims of the West would find no fault with.

<sup>68</sup> Take Pakistan as an example. Can one honestly see women in that society reaching the same heights and making the same kind of contributions to society as say, Muslim women in Canada? If the latter is a more desirable state of affairs, does Islamic culture foster and allow the kind of latitude that is going to make this evolution possible? For greater contrast, substitute modern day Pakistan in the above example with Saudi Arabia or any Islamic nation not much influenced by modern democracies.

there is something inherently lacking in it. This has repercussions with Postulates One (Universality), Five (Overall Truth) and Six (Balance of Realism and the Ideal). Everyone will have their own opinion, but a crucial question arises:

8.1	If there wasn't a merging with (influence from) the West, would a <i>just</i> Islam have been able to inherently produce some of the needed cultural changes which distinguish modern day Islam with that of medieval times? If not, what does this say about the comprehensives of the Islamic system, literature and philosophy?
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### 8.1.1 Examples from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at

Many would look upon some of the members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at and their orthodox views as just plain bad Pakistani culture, something independent of Islam. However, how much can we attribute to culture?

Take for example, one of the books published by the Jama'at as a translation of a compilation of Hadith just a few centuries old. It is a faithful translation of the compilation *Gardens of the Righteous*. Yet nowhere does it include disclaimers on questionable hadith. For instance, section 35 of this work and other similar publications by the Jama'at, contain a popular ahadith recorded by Bukhari and Muslim (Hadith 283):

Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet said:

**When the husband calls his wife to his bed and she does not come and he spends the night offended with her, the angels keep cursing her through the night.** (Bokhari and Muslim)

Another version is:

**When a woman spends the night away from her husband's bed, the angels keep cursing her through the night.**

Still another version runs:

The Holy Prophet said: By Him in Whose hands is my life, **when a husband calls his wife to his bed and she refuses him, He Who is in heaven is offended with her** till her husband is pleased with her.

[9, 68]

[bold emphasis and vertical spacing added is mine]

Most members of the Jama'at read such disgusting and twisted hadith as valid, without so much as questioning it. This passive and indifferent display of Islamic acculturation is shocking!

True, Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV in a Question-Answer session in 1991 clarified that such a saying could not be attributed to Prophet Muhammad as it was against his nature,<sup>69</sup> and that the saying passed down and recorded must have changed and / or completely lost its full context.<sup>70</sup>

What's extremely disturbing is that these kinds of sayings are continually published in Jama'at literature, without so much as a second thought. The entire Jama'at cannot be religiously blinded by culture. Many of the office bearers and religious Ulema of the Jama'at must come into contact with these kinds of writings...and yet not a word of protest for change! Albeit unintentional, one cannot help but make the observation that most of the influential elite of the Community simply lack the sensitivity to take notice of these issues. Is it perhaps the common folk who question our leadership concerning this insensitivity that are in error—hoping that Islam could ever really 'clear the myths'?

8.2	Does this sort of androcentric indifference not reflect poorly on the level of conscience of members in the Jama'at to these issues?
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Let us look at another issue—that of women showing up to their own Nikah ceremony of marriage (where they are legally married and a sermon is read). Until the early 1990s, most women of the Jama'at<sup>71</sup> understood or felt pressured *not* to be present at their own Nikah ceremony, even though they were to sit amongst all the women in the women's section of the gathering. It was felt that a woman should show shyness on this day—so much so that she doesn't even show up for her own (religious) marriage ceremony! Many people dismissed this behaviour as just bad Pakistani culture...but where did this culture come from?

When Islam places so much emphasis on and condones submission to one's husband, seclusion, veiling, silence as an acceptance to a wedding proposal and behaviour of this type, is it so hard to imagine what Islamic Culture, influenced by the Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet, will look like?

I surmise that 'cherished' cultural values like a woman not showing up to her own Nikah ceremony are influenced by a culture which is itself influenced by Islam.

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<sup>69</sup> This line of reasoning is fine for those who are already Muslims and are convinced of Prophet Muhammad's inherent goodness. For those taking a strictly academic approach to the issue, this reasoning is only speculation.

<sup>70</sup> A potential context was provided to illustrate that the saying may have been valid, but was stripped of some very important details. For instance, if the wife was having extra marital affairs, and continued to withdraw from her husband's bed because she was being satisfied elsewhere, then for her adulterous behaviour, the angels would curse her. Of course, this is all a hypothetical context—no one knows for sure what the whole story was here.

<sup>71</sup> At least in the Canadian Jama'at, as far as I can tell—although presumably this practice is common wherever a Pakistani majority is in place amongst Jama'ats around the world.



Many would refuse to make this connection, but when it is observed over and over again, in scenario after scenario, aren't we left with no other alternative but to look inwards with honesty and ask the following question...

8.3	Can one continue to turn a blind eye to this pattern—the strong correlation present between controversial Islamic scripture and philosophy (some of which was expounded in this document) and the almost universally prevalent culture systems in the 'Islamic world' which implicitly value silence, invisibility and subordination of women to men? <sup>72</sup>
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Granted, in the larger scheme of things, each individual example of these 'trinkets of virtue' which are peddled as good culture can be trivialized as very insignificant. However, when one packages these patterns and incidents together—like droplets of water amassing into the same pool—one is eventually left with an ocean to contend with.

Commented Leila Ahmed after examining issues regarding the origins and practice of veiling and seclusion:

My argument here is not that Islamic societies did not oppress women. They did and they do; that is not in dispute.

[b, 166]

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<sup>72</sup> Remember that we're not talking about an isolated country or two. These "Islamic" nations, to a greater or lesser degree, share these traits with each other much more than with any Western nation. Thus, the common rebuttal that "such and such country isn't practicing Islam" loses substance when these androcentric characteristics are the very things these nations have in common. The parable "By their fruits ye shall know them" comes to mind.

# ISSUE 9

## Administrative institutions and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at



The limited role of women in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at's administrative machinery and their limited presence on influential and mixed committees raises questions as to whether the Jama'at can serve as a model society for the world.

We explore the reasons why women's roles and participation are so limited, raising questions along the way regarding the validity of these policies.

Throughout this analysis, the unconscious impact of these policies on youth is conjectured.

Much of the discussion in this issue will be presented informally as it relates to personal experiences for which I do not have footnotes and documentation. Perhaps certain aspects of the administration have changed since I last participated actively in Jama'at affairs.<sup>73</sup> It may be that the reasons for why things are the way there are, have been dealt with in Jama'at writings or in various sermons of Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV. If so, I would be very grateful if those who have read my concerns could point me to the material and references where my queries have already been addressed.

### 9.1 Banning Mixed Committees

I recall in 1991 or 1992 having been assigned to a "Special Study Group" within the Toronto Jama'at to look at religious and cultural issues. It was a group Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV had requested be set up in Jama'ats worldwide.

This group would meet about once a month, and we had, perhaps three or four meetings. On the morning of one of the scheduled meetings, we received a call which my father took. That morning's Special Study Group meeting was canceled, and the entire group dissolved, apparently because Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV did not want any *mixed* committees. Our committee had perhaps 5-7 male members, and 3 female members, who always sat behind a large partition, fully done up in a *burqa* too. It would be very difficult to have called that committee a *mixed* committee!

Most likely, something had occurred in one of the Jama'ats internationally, and Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV gave the general order to dissolve all mixed committees around the globe.

It is not an administration I run, so perhaps it is not for me to say, however, I find it disturbing that organizational bodies assigned to various functions and tasks can be disassembled so easily simply because they contain both male and female members.

Allow me to explain and expand.

It is my understanding that modesty and purdah (whatever one defines that to be for the time and place) are mechanisms that allow for the sensible interaction and cooperation of men and women in society.

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<sup>73</sup> I was extremely active in Jama'at activities, preaching, education, speeches and other functions up till the Spring of 1992, when I first began to have questions the like of which are articulated in this document. I tried to continue my search and stay active and involved at the same time, but when some of my basic queries were presented through the higher tiers of administration and authority in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at and the response was "there is no answer at this time", I knew that continued activity within the Jama'at would be mentally impossible for me.

If the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at wishes to win hearts to Islam the world over, to convert the entire world to Islam, then it is implicitly setting an example for the entire world to see. Whether it is intended or not, the nature of the Organization today is a strong message to all Ahmadis and non-Ahmadis alike that “this is the framework upon which we wish to run the world.”

It is hard to take an Organization seriously which views the participation of women in its administrative and governing bodies as an option or as an after-thought...but this is precisely the message being sent to the rest of the world about the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at.

It seems quite hypocritical that Ahmadi Muslim women and men cannot be on the same committees within the Jama'at, but can interact with other men and women in the workforce in secular committees. Perhaps the Jama'at should sound the general call for all women who must interact with men in their vocations to terminate their employment?

9.1	Does there not appear to be a double standard here?
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I've heard that “the Jama'at is not ready for mixed committees” and comments of this nature. I've also heard comments to the effect that “most of the women in the Jama'at are not at the level where they can meaningfully contribute”. These sorts of comments can even be taken together to point to the same phenomena, and it may even be true right now, but:

9.2	How is this ever going to change if the administration doesn't open up to the change?
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It was said in the past that Muslims should not clap, since clapping was a sign of praise, and praise is only due to Allah. Only in the last few years has this been relaxed within the Jama'at. Of course, those living in Western countries for years, always knew that they were not giving divine praise whenever they clapped—they were merely being polite. Being instructed *not* to clap was mentally quite confusing. Throw a few more of these absurd dogmatic restrictions at people, and you successfully erode the integrity and legitimacy of the Jama'at as a source of guidance and authority in peoples' lives.

Perhaps the international administration of the Jama'at is not ready for mixed committees, but I am certain that many parts of the world are and have been for some time. However, these societies which have been ready for such changes are likely being killed off slowly as they mentally struggle with the fact that they have no place as decision makers. Perhaps the problem will go away as more and more people

fail to understand why ‘Islam’ has destined a marginalized role for women in positions of authority.

#### 9.1.1 Female Youth and their Interest Level in the Jama’at

Many envision that as the next generation of educated Ahmadi Muslim youth grow up, they will be in a position to assist in running the organization in a smoother fashion, with new energy and ideas.

I’m no expert, but I perceive that very few Ahmadi Muslim female youth here in Canada, who have been raised here, take an active role and interest in the Jama’at. And why do you suppose that is?

- Perhaps because there are no strong and independent role models for them?
- Perhaps because they do not see a place where they can make real decisions and a real difference?
- Perhaps because women are not encouraged to show and stand up for independent thought within the organization, explicitly or because of the implicit powers of community pressure and socialization?
- Perhaps because the role of women in the central and overall affairs of the Jama’at appears to be a marginal one?

Perhaps all of the above?

This is not to say however, that the participation of male youth born in Canada is significantly better.

#### 9.1.2 A Symposium with a Special Permission Mixed Committee

Not too long after mixed committees had been (temporarily?) banned, I found myself helping out with an interfaith symposium organized by the Mississauga branch of the Jama’at in 1992. There were a few women in the main committee who brought their own unique skill, talents and efforts to the event, without which, the symposium would not have been the success that it was.

I recall how those in the main committee would meet at someone’s residence as we worked on organizing the event. Apparently, that we had women as heads of certain functions, and thus, on the central organizing committee, was only by special permission. So as the majority of the committee were men, we would take the living room of the residence we were meeting at, and the women would sit in the kitchen down the hall. They had their *dupatas* and *burqas* on, but we couldn’t push our luck, as this mixed committee was by special permission only. Communication was terrible. Even when things were repeated, I know that I missed half of the important details.

You cannot run a committee let alone a society, like this.

Stepping back and reflecting on the whole situation does not make it any more comprehensible; in fact, it only seems more absurd to me now.

Unless the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at wishes to develop a society like some androcentric and misogynist regimes of the middle east (God forbid), any society is going to require that men and women interact, collaborate and work in teams to achieve a goal; to serve a function.

9.3	If the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at fails to take women's contributions seriously, how can the world take the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at seriously?
9.4	How can the members of the Jama'at, who ponder these issues diligently, take the Jama'at seriously?

Looking at the marginalized participation of women in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at today and projecting the status-quo into the future only conjures up images of societies run like some oppressive regimes of the middle east and other countries<sup>74</sup> throughout the world who label themselves as Islamic.

9.5	We require some big changes, and we need them now...so what are we waiting for?
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## 9.2 Women not allowed on the National Shura

For a couple of years circa 1990, I helped out at the Annual National Shuras of the Jama'at, punching away at a computer keyboard with other male youth to take minutes. It was a very interesting experience as a teenager. I learned much about the Jama'at's administrative machinery.

One observation I did make, was that the National Shura was comprised of delegates from local Jama'ats all around Canada including Ansar and Khudam (the men), but no Lajna (the women). I asked why this was, to one learned and respected member of the Jama'at. He replied that the Lajna had their own Shura, which was true. However, another learned and respected member of the Jama'at pointed out that the Ansar and Khudam sub-organizations also had their own Shuras. It was then

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<sup>74</sup> While Ahmadiyya Islam is not currently the dominant religious and established faith-organization of any country, practices limiting women's involvement in the Community do provide a basis for speculation on how an entire society would evolve and what it would look like. What's so disturbing about some countries in the middle east and other Islamic regimes around the world? Well, there's the restriction on women operating a car in Saudi Arabia. There's the fact that clergy and police that are men have direct control over a women's dress and deportment in Iran and Pakistan [a, 14]. There's compulsory veiling, the barring of women from the judiciary, segregation in transport and many public places in Iran. [a, 50] There's the need to adopt the veil in order to legitimize any public presence [a, 18] and the widespread abolishment of independent women's organizations in many of these countries. [a, 13] Of course, these only begin to scratch the surface.

felt that if everyone had their own Shuras, then the National Shura should be inclusive of *all* sub-organizations within the Jama'at, including the women's Lajna organization.

To my knowledge, this has not happened, likely because male and female interaction in any kind of conference or committee or delegation is 'un-Islamic'. Of course, women can come and watch, and even ask questions from the balcony, so they aren't completely shut out of the process. Just the most important parts.

Any woman in real politics would certainly have to be part of committees, delegations and conferences, and these would inevitably include men.

9.6	Does this then imply that Muslim women shouldn't be allowed to enter politics?
9.7	Is it not odd then, that at the Annual National Conventions (Jalsas) of the Jama'at, female politicians are invited? Are they not the very symbols of what the Jama'at secretly hopes to eradicate?
9.8	Should we not come forward publicly and openly state our view that we feel it rather primitive that women be allowed to work with men on the same committees?
9.9	Does not the status-quo of no-women on the National Shura (or International Shura for that matter) seem a trifle outdated? Is this the "clarification of the myth in the West about the role of women in Islam" that we're trying to assert?

### 9.3 Women not co-holders of offices with men

I recall from the time of participating on the organizing committee of the symposium mentioned earlier, that the Jama'at did not allow:

1. A woman to oversee any committee that contained men
2. A woman giving an instructional Islamic lesson to be videotaped<sup>75</sup>

Now if women held the same posts as men, they would inevitably be in charge of groups and committees that included men, so the real issue is that women are not co-holders of offices (positions) with men.

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<sup>75</sup> Unless in a full burqa (chador) with coverage that could be likened to that of a Ninja.

9.10	It is commonly said that Islam in its glorious equality allows a woman to be prime minister, but does this not contradict how we run our own Administration, where no women oversees any committee that contains a man?
9.11	We also don't let a woman giving an instructional lesson be videotaped, so how would we sanction the behaviour of a woman in the Jama'at who was campaigning for a political election outside of the Jama'at?
9.12	Would the Jama'at ostracize her if she gave a public speech which was aired on the six o'clock news for Muslims and non-Muslims all over the nation to record onto video tape?
9.13	Given that you can't run a campaign effectively with silence, does this mean she should stay at home? If so, why don't we hear this unambiguously? Is this not a bit hypocritical?

#### 9.4 A Concluding Question

In summary, women aren't allowed to participate constructively in committees where there are men, they are not allowed on National nor International Shuras, and they are not allowed to be co-holders of offices with men.

9.14	What kind of intellectual equality is this? How can this be justified in this day and age?
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It is one thing to say women *should be* on the committees, and it is another to open the doors and the avenues for them to become participants. I think all that needs to be done is for the avenues to be made open and then let the women decide for themselves, whether they wish to participate or not.

One problem I foresee even with this suggested approach however, is the social pressure to conform to the status quo. It is like an oppressive communist regime asking a citizen how they personally feel about the institution of democracy. I don't mean to at all paint a comparison of the Jama'at with communism, but simply to illustrate a point. It simply isn't in any one individual's social interest to speak up and speak out (given the inevitable social stigma that would ensue).

Speaking about how the development of early Islamic practices and norms have affected our ability to adapt and grow in today's time, Leila Ahmed comments:

The consequence, of course, is that the vision of society, the understanding of the nature of justice, and the view of the proper relationship that should pertain between men and women that were developed by the men of that age have been consecrated as representing the ultimate and infallible articulation of the Islamic notion of justice and have, ever since, been set in stone.

[b, 90]



# ISSUE 10

## Youth and the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at



Ahmadi Muslim youth having lived most or all of their lives in European or North American contexts are no doubt affected by the conservative policies and Pakistani dominated culture of the Jama'at.

This chapter explores the effects this steady-state of androcentric Pakistani culture imparts on the Community and how consequently, it is rarely in anyone's interest to vocalize their opinions.

One of the pressing issues for the Jama'at is to realize that there are technical points of theology which are simply difficult to accept. No framework exists for dealing with these issues unless one is willing to risk the stigma and controversy, sure to follow.

Traversing cause and effect, we arrive at a thesis on what is most likely to occur to youth in the Jama'at, given the status quo.

In this section, I do not have questions to ask (except perhaps rhetorical ones), but rather, observations to make. Those of you curious as to why our youth think the way that they do, or wonder what exactly is going through their minds, will likely find my hypothesis on this matter of interest.

Have you ever heard people ask, “Why can’t we get the young people involved in the Jama’at?” or “What topics can we talk about and what programs can we have that would interest the young people?”

I have heard such questions, over and over again. I’m sure you have too.

The common answers we hear in reply to these queries, especially from the youth, do not at all provide the real answer. Our social network that is the Jama’at simply doesn’t allow for this kind of honesty to surface. Allow me to explain with an example of female youth and the notion of speaking up.

### 10.1 Youth Speaking Up

Being an Ahmadi Muslim male, I don’t have real occasion to assess the thoughts and issues troubling female youth in the Community, but I do have an ability to infer a situation by observing the things which are *not* said and the things which do *not* happen. This claim you may find untenable at first glance; but consider this:

When the spokes of a wheel project outward from the hub, one does not need the rim of the wheel to tell you that you have a circle forming. It can be inferred.

Perhaps my intuitions and conjectures are off the mark. You be the judge. I however, believe that my intuitions on this subject hit the nail on the head.

In the current predominantly Pakistani culture that presides over the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at, arranged marriages within the Jama’at all share, to some degree, a vulnerability of the individual to the view held by the social network that is the Community.

The *honour* of an individual in the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at among those people who matter most, rests with that body of people that is the social network of the Jama’at. This is true of any community based organization. The degree to which the position of individuals is vulnerable to the views of others, is directly correlated with the importance placed on a community by its members.

Since Ahmadi Muslim youth (predominantly) marry within the Community, any action which could jeopardize one’s status within the Community, is avoided. In any social network, bad news and hot gossip can travel fast.

I believe this phenomenon plagues the young women in our Jama'at more than the male youth, for two primary reasons, and these focus on jeopardizing marriage opportunities:

1. The majority of proposals, for cultural reasons, are initiated by men. Women have less opportunity to really take control of their own destinies. They must wait to be acted upon, instead of being culturally empowered to take initiative in marriage matters.
2. A woman in Pakistani culture, compared to men, is socialized to be passive and obedient. Any bold vocalization of discontent or disagreement with the status quo is implicitly viewed by the majority of women as disrespectful and too modern. When most of the status quo is established by men, the vocal complaints of a woman implicitly translate into the questioning of some man's authority.

You might feel that my analysis is a bit harsh, perhaps somewhat overstated, but I feel that if one asks "why?" several times, you'll see these minute connections of cause and effect whose spirit I've tried to capture above.

I've even asked hypothetical questions to women who are mothers amongst circles of family and friends, with regards to their daughters speaking up concerning any contentious issues in the Jama'at that affect them.

The consensus is always that it would be safer to just keep quiet, and not say anything, lest the girls subsequently have a negative connotation attached to them.

If anything, perhaps it would be more appropriate for a girl's mother to raise an issue amongst elders, but it would be risky for a young woman (i.e. unmarried) to speak up on her own.

Note that by speaking up, I'm not talking about complaining that there's no volume coming from a relay speaker at a gathering. I'm talking about critical and touchy questions regarding our theology and the administration.

As alluded to earlier in this document, I asked a question to Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV concerning women appearing at their own *nikah* ceremonies. Of course, this question was relatively trivial, but its impacts were not. I am certain that it was much easier for a male to pose such a question than it would have been for any young unmarried woman within the Community. The cultural socialization that we are all a part of within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at that perpetuates this phenomena and disparity, should trouble us all.

Male youth in the Community are vulnerable to the same phenomena, but I believe less so, for two reasons:

1. Men run the majority of the administrative Jama'at machinery, so it is somewhat more acceptable for them to be critical. Socially, it is less awkward for one male to question another, directly or indirectly.
2. Men marry outside the community more easily. Whereas an Ahmadi Muslim female will be ostracized if she were to marry a Muslim male that was non-Ahmadi, the same is not true for an Ahmadi male. This reality places more autonomy in the hands of the Ahmadi Muslim male, such that he has (relatively) more options in the event that his status in the Community was compromised.

I believe that I've now provided some insight on one of the primary reasons why youth in the Jama'at don't speak up as to what they are troubled with or dislike about Islam or the Jama'at.

I believe another major reason for not speaking up, is the generation and culture gap. Many of the elders and parents within the Community simply don't understand the issues.<sup>76</sup> Given their own limited exposure to different views and thought. Given the nature of their own time and cultural context, most elders in the Community have acquired a simple view of society and religion that cannot appreciate the subtleties and intricacies of modern society.

It's the difference in a society that was raised with the precept of "believe this because I say it is right" with newer modes of thinking which assert "I only believe this because I understand that it is right".

Those who have grown to think like the latter group (the youth) cannot successfully articulate the subtleties and nuances of their thoughts to the former group (the elders).

The view that *if everyone was good Muslims we wouldn't have generation and culture gaps* is simply naïve. I'm not talking about something youth willfully impose between themselves and their elders. I'm speaking of differences in education, awareness, logical thinking, experiences, language and exposure that have fostered a more open-minded approach to issues among youth than that possessed by most of our elders.

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<sup>76</sup> Marriage is a classic example. How long ago was it that a photo and second-hand descriptions of a person were deemed sufficient for a man or woman to accept / reject a proposal? Most parents of today would reject this as a bit extreme, but the *parents* of those parents likely saw nothing wrong with it. Likewise, most of today's parents cannot make the analogous mental leap. This is an example of the generation gap. Back to the photo-is-sufficient paradigm—this may have actually been fine many years ago, but today's realities bring with them the fact that even people within the same community can vary enormously when their distinctive interests, nature, preferences, educational and cultural backgrounds are taken into consideration. To downplay these aspects of one's person is to reduce men and women to simple objects. This reduction invites disaster in today's more diverse and complex world. Yet, how many parents in the Community are willing to let parties interested in the possibility of marriage the chance to determine suitability for themselves—beyond a few constrained words across lines of purdah at a dinner gathering?

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### 10.2.1 Technical Religious Beliefs Which are Hard to Accept

I am not claiming that a significant number of the youth actually delve into the technical details of religion as I have in this document of questions, but I believe that most have encountered questionable and controversial aspects of the Faith that they've *never* felt comfortable with.

When you cannot believe in something completely, when you cannot believe in it whole-heartedly—it is hard to believe in it at all.

Granted, if many of the youth put their questions to learned people within the Jama'at, many controversial aspects of the Faith could have been explained to them. However, when there appears to be an abundance of issues actually rooted in the religion—like the things I've discussed earlier in this document—the problem presents itself as too overwhelming to deal with. Subconsciously, one's mind leans towards a pre-disposition to accept that something is wrong here.

I'm not just speaking of problems with 'backward' cultural practices. This is another completely independent deterrent in its own right that intensifies the technical controversies of the actual religion. Combined, the two form a unified body of objectionable beliefs and practices. In this section, I'm trying to convey that there's actual problems with the theology, and not just our cultural implementation of these aspects of Faith.

Growing up, too often hoping to hear controversial issues addressed, I must say that I have been disappointed. In my early years of religious enthusiasm, I knew such controversies existed, and I intentionally stayed clear of them, hoping to solidify my understanding of the non-controversial aspects of the Faith first.

With this approach, I hoped that I would be well rooted in Islamic philosophy and scripture to understand these issues at a later point in time.

When I did finally face these issues after a number of years, I was still disappointed. Whatever I heard and whatever I read, seemed like lip-service around the real issues. I don't believe that this was ever intentional. I have just come to believe that we don't address these issues convincingly and head on; and I believe that this is simply because Islam just does not have a very compelling defense to offer on these issues.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> No compelling arguments on these issues in the way that Islam is being presented by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at. I believe that until and unless we're willing to re-interpret the whole religion for modern times, we will never be able to provide a convincing framework within which these controversial issues can be put to rest. However, given the structure of the Jama'at with its unified vision under one Khalifa, such a radical departure from the past 1400 years cannot come from the bottom up. If it is legitimate, it would have to come from the top and then filter downwards.

Professors of Religion who were once Ahmadi Muslims and who are now atheists, underscores this lack of answers and technical rigour in our belief system.

In my active days with the Jama'at as a youth, I was once taking minutes at a meeting of the Jama'at's main national committee. The topic of the afternoon concerned long term strategies for conveying the message of Ahmadiyyat and Islam in western nations. One committee member suggested that the Community encourage select young students to become professors of religion. Here, their influence as knowledgeable authorities on the subject of religion, combined with their personal belief in Ahmadiyya Islam, would surely be a beacon to those in academia searching for role models and links into a theological framework for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As compelling a strategy as this seemed to be, another committee member explained why this approach was not a good idea. This idea was unlikely to succeed in the future, the committee member relayed—for it had already failed in the past. These professors had become atheists.

While I do not believe the natural progression of questioning will necessarily lead youth to the extremes of atheism,<sup>78</sup> I do believe this example is a warning to the Jama'at that the scientific and questioning mind of today's and tomorrow's youth will increasingly demand logical answers to those theological and cultural questions our socialization has encouraged us to suppress (the things we think but are too afraid to say).

This is one of the toughest problems we face as a community. Many technical aspects of the Faith—specifically those which relate to Ahmadiyyat—are quite solid and compelling. However, not all aspects of the Faith are as *air-tight* and compelling as others. I believe there is a danger here in that all too often, Ahmadi Muslims (and Muslims in general) have developed a superiority complex. This complex blinds people from being able to actually open their minds and hearts and see an issue from another perspective, I mean *really* see it from another angle. Consequently, a large part of the problem is that our cultural atmosphere does not allow for us to be truly critical of our own theology and admit to the presence of unpleasant aspects of the Faith, to actually admit to ourselves that there are problems.

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<sup>78</sup> I believe there is a growing body of literature and thought outlining that belief in a Creator is consistent and hinted at by the science of the universe. For an example, see Patrick Glynn's *God: The Evidence: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason in a Post Secular World* (Prima Publishing, 1997; ISBN: 0761509410). The book's primary focus is compelling evidence for the "anthromorphic principle": the idea that there is an intelligent guiding hand at work. Granted, the existence of a Creator does not automatically solve the problem of which (if any) faith system is the absolute truth intended for all of humankind to follow.

Obviously, with a lack of youth involvement, especially amongst those who've grown up outside of Pakistan, members of the Jama'at are aware that there is a problem; but most see it as a problem of participation, and fail to realize that the lack of participation is actually the *symptom* of a much deeper problem that our superiority complex will not allow us as community, to ever put our finger on.

As a community, we are grasping and snatching into thin air, trying to capture a shadow—when we should be focused on the obstacles that have created the shadow.

True, questions are often asked of Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV at various Majlis Irphan<sup>79</sup> sessions, but many question do not lend themselves to an oral question-answer format.

It is common for Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV to defer questions at gatherings for written submission, because the written format is more suitable at times. I believe many of the pressing questions, in order to be answered convincingly, require a more detailed treatment than a question-answer session could accommodate. They require a book.

Most certainly, questions regarding women and gender have always been contentious issues within Islam. Sura Al-Nisa of the Holy Qur'an contains many of the controversial verses, yet commentary for those chapters of Qur'ans published by the Jama'at have always been deferred to contributing editors and assorted Ulema of the Jama'at. The *Tafsir-e-Kabir* commentary written by Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II did not cover the entire Qur'an, as he passed away before he could write commentary for all chapters of the Qur'an. Sura Al-Nisa of the Qur'an, along with many others, was left for other scholars in the Jama'at to complete.

I have continually found questionable explanations in such commentaries, which learned members of the Jama'at would always point out as having been the opinion of such and such a scholar or contributing editor, and not really an official Jama'at position. As mentioned earlier, with regards to one of these commentary passages, Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV at a Majlis Irphan session indicated that the written commentary was incorrect, and should be changed.<sup>80</sup>

What's troubling, is that decades have past, and books by the Jama'at have been written about many things, but no one has dared write a book to tackle these

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<sup>79</sup> Gatherings organized by the Jama'at specifically as a Question-Answer period with the leader of the Community.

<sup>80</sup> The original question was in reference to Qur'anic 4:35, and was asked on June 3, 1991, Paradise Banquet Hall, Toronto, Canada.



contentious issues.<sup>81</sup> Even so, on these matters which I've discussed in this document, if anyone other than the Khalifa of the time were to write it, it would necessarily be speculation, unofficial, evasive, and indecisive. Any fault or objection with such a writing could quickly be swept aside as opinions of the author, and there would be no real precedent, no real benchmark, and no real accountability by the Community if such a writing were done by anyone other than the Khalifa of the time.

I recognize that the Khalifa has many obligations, many pressing issues that deserve his time, be they in person, in speech or in writing.

Nonetheless, the fact that Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II was not able to provide a detailed commentary on Sura Al-Nisa, and no Khalifa since has done a comprehensive coverage of this chapter, cannot but lead the searching mind to the conclusion that such a needed work is missing because the controversies in question simply cannot be quelled.

That is to say, there is no way out of the problem without resorting to a system of interpretation that would start attributing meanings to the Qur'anic words which they are incapable of bearing. Recall Postulate Four:

Interpretations must limit themselves to only being that. They cannot start attributing meanings to words which they are incapable of bearing.

All too often, we listen to speeches entitled "Women in Islam", where someone talks at length about how great Islam was to women 1400 years ago, and quotes some very nice verses of the Qur'an emphasizing the spiritual equality of men and women in Islam—but that's it. To think such a speech has put a questioning mind at ease is naïve. No one ever goes near the real controversial verses. You cannot quell a controversy by quoting the rosy passages. You must explain the verses which most find difficult to swallow. But nobody ever seems to do that.

As stated earlier in this writing,

Islam is unique from other religions practiced today, in that there is a much greater emphasis and integration of scripture into a Muslim's life—especially given that the Qur'an is viewed as the pure and unaltered Word of God.

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<sup>81</sup> None that I've ever come across. If there are such book(s), I would be most grateful if someone could point them out to me. I would be pleasantly surprised to know that my understanding of a deficiency of relevant literature was premature.

As a consequence, there is a greater necessity for Muslims to find all verses of the Qur'an agreeable to them, if they and their children are to continue as practicing Muslims into the future.

I believe that if a poll were conducted of all Jama'at youth in North America, and they were presented with the technical issues I've raised in this document, more than 90% of them would admit to not having a convincing explanation in their own hearts and minds for at least half of the issues I've raised.

With the need for logical explanations in light of the scientific mind that Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih II recognized, it is not difficult to project the course most of the youth are on with regards to Faith. True, most of the current generation will probably stick around with the Jama'at in a distant kind of way. Without any changes however, it would be naïve to even hope that their children ever will.

### 10.2.2 Cultural Practices and Rigidity in the Community

Not to belittle the theological issues that trouble the youth in the Community, I do believe the majority of problems center around regressive cultural practices and norms. The bright side of this reality is that there's hope we may grow out of them. The flip-side to this reality is that we will have alienated many, many people, before we ever do grow past these issues. This is because our reaction time is so slow, if present at all.

The example I provided in an earlier section about women not going to their own nikah ceremony, is just one of many cultural practices that exist and persist exclusively among the women in the Community. Strangely, many of these practices are not even known to men within the Community.<sup>82</sup>

I've already alluded to things like not clapping at the end of a speech in a previous section.

I believe our policy of what 'modesty' entails when a woman in a video is having her picture broadcast over MTA<sup>83</sup> is also a reflection of imbalance.

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<sup>82</sup> I myself did not know that it had been considered "dishonourable" for a girl to show up at her own Nikah until one of my sisters was to have her Nikah ceremony. The day before her ceremony, I realized that my sister was not planning to attend for these very reasons. I could not help but be shocked at the absolute imbecility of some of these cultural practices and the social vice-grip to which members of the Community were victims. That my sister knew from the start that this practice was unfair and unfortunate, but also knew that its social repercussions were far more jeopardizing than the benefits of any act of protest, only underscores the tragedy of the women in our own Jama'at and how they police each other into a downward spiral of conservatism. [Please note that while my sister (and Hazrat Khalifat-ul-Masih IV) disagreed with this cultural practice, other views expressed in this writing are strictly my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of my family; immediate or distant.]

<sup>83</sup> MTA is the 24-hour international satellite broadcast station, Muslim Television Ahmadiyya.

All you see is a woman in full flowing-style burqa. I don't believe this sets a positive example for the women in our Jama'at, especially those in the West. I believe most Muslim women in the Jama'at who grow up in the West practice modesty by dressing on the conservative side of regular Western attire. It is my belief that this is a healthy practice for the individual and serves to build the kind of character that ultimately, Muslims desire for society.

However, I can only imagine the long-term impact of the examples I see on MTA on the minds of young women in the Jama'at, growing up in the West. My intuition tells me that those young women who see that kind of dress and honestly believe that it represents the expectations placed on them, will gradually and subconsciously lose a sense of belonging with the Jama'at, and will eventually adopt a dress closer to the other end of the spectrum.

The problem we face is one of *balance*. There's no role model or precedent for balance. As individuals, we try to create it in our own lives, only to be at odds with the greater Community.

At a subtle level, there's a tug-of-war taking place. Eventually, the youth who are searching will stop pulling—they'll just let go of the rope and walk away.

What is wrong with our culture, is that all too often, conservatism is implicitly applauded—even to an unnatural extent. Being bold or outspoken can invite disrepute—but you can never err being too conservative! This imbalance, coupled with the social network that is the Community, sets off a self-perpetuating snow-ball effect where more and more conservatism is embraced.

Yet, to those growing up in the West, trying to develop an identity and an understanding of Faith in their own lives, this pursuit of greater and greater degrees of conservatism only seeks to alienate them further.

Instead of producing a body of youth with a balanced outlook on life and religion, we do a very fine job at alienating the majority of the youth completely. Until we can swallow the bitter pill of change, I don't believe this trend of alienation will change.<sup>84</sup>

The degree of segregation in the Community is also a bit of a paradox. I believe it robs us of our sense of wholeness as a Community. We meet members of society who are of the opposite gender in our daily lives, except those who are in our very own Community.

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<sup>84</sup> Again, the dangerous thing here, is that we likely don't even see the magnitude of the alienation and confusion today, simply because our social network doesn't allow discontent of the degree of which I speak, to manifesting itself plainly.

Male youth in the Community form friendships with male and female youth in their academic institutions and at their places of work, as do female youth in the Community. However, as our numbers are so sparse, the friendships they form with the other gender are often never within their own Community. You cannot successfully impose segregation in a Community where 90% of the time or more, they live in a desegregated world. You arrive at a mental contradiction.

Under pressure, the unending winds of contradiction and confusion snap the branches of faith and patience.

As more and more youth find the contradictions too hard to bear, they will cease to succumb to the social network of Community cohesion and expectations.

Consequently, they will begin to marry outside the Community on their own. This may take place so subtly, that it will not raise an alarm at its initial phases.

And to whom do you suppose the youth will choose for marriage? They will look to the people that they know. And whom will they have encountered in their lives, growing up, whom will they know? Well, everyone but Ahmadi Muslims, of course.

The famous words of wisdom that you ‘reap what you sow’ are no less true for us as a Community.

I believe these changes are coming and will inevitably arise within 40 or 50 years. In my opinion however, it really isn’t a question of when, it’s really an issue of how many people we’re willing to lose before we open up to the changes.

There are many more issues that I could delve into and reflect upon. What I have discussed thus far, should serve as an indication of the cultural aspect to the overall problem.

### 10.2.3 Youth in Universities and Academia

It is prudent to make the observation here that many parents may feel that ‘western’ influences have turned their children away from religion and that universities and academia especially, are responsible for a lack of religious zeal within their children.

While I do not doubt that these influences may be at play in some cases, I believe the changes in thinking arise at a certain age regardless of whether a child goes away to university or not. I believe that going away for university actually forces a person to take responsibility of their own lives earlier than they might normally, and that this accelerates the maturity process in one’s life.

I believe that as youth in the Jama’at (and generally within the body of Islam) obtain a university education, they are forced to expand their modes of thinking, to open

their minds. Education doesn't always breed logical and critical thinkers, but often, it is a catalyst in this positive process.<sup>85</sup>

Unfortunately, as it is my belief that Ahmadiyya Islam, and Islam in general for that matter, cannot yet (if at all) stand up to the rigor of some logical and valid questioning, newer generations of Muslims will continually place less of their trust and faith in it.

More precisely, I'm issuing a disclaimer here that this phenomenon is not a result of 'evil-western education', but rather, a natural consequence of the evolution of an intelligent society that demands real answers to real questions.

With the superiority complex I spoke of earlier, traditional Muslim programming and scripting would have the Community act out the role of automatically condemning the society in which we live, without first looking inwards at our own hearts and minds—to see if they are truly satisfied.

I know that in my first year at university away from home, I was actively visiting various faith groups talking about Islam and Ahmadiyyat with much enthusiasm and zeal. In an effort to anticipate questions and objections, and do so with an open mind and honest heart—I researched aspects of the Faith that disturbed me. Ironically, it was in my effort to be so spiritually involved and sincere at the same time, which led me to question matters.

Consequently, I don't believe a university education away from home is anything a parent in the Community should fear on the grounds of their children drifting. Rather, I believe it will only enable an inevitable process of growth, whatever that might be, to rise to the surface at an earlier stage.

#### 10.2.4 Demographics and Proportional Involvement

I believe one of the other problems we face as a Community is in the realization that there will always be a significant portion of the Community that does not have an interest in religion.

Just as there are tall and short people in society, just as some people are interested in music while others do not like sports; some people are simply not religiously inclined.

How many Catholics are there in society—and how many of them are actually 'active'? True, Islam aspires to have a higher degree of participation because it carries a strong sense of inherent truth with it that can dismiss the lack of

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<sup>85</sup> That's not to say that there are no narrow-minded people amongst the educated. Many people achieve PhD's only to remain closed mentally with respect to social and religious issues.

involvement amongst Christianity as a result of a poorly held together theology. Notwithstanding this, there is always going to be a fragment of the Community that just won't be interested in getting involved.

Admission of this reality is likely hard for the Community to swallow, as participation in Pakistan likely seemed to yield higher numbers. A higher proportion of involvement. I believe this was due to the social network implications I discussed earlier. I believe these implications in Pakistan are simply more encompassing and more pervasive. Thus, in the West, the people who actually get involved are those who *want* to, while in Pakistan, I believe that this is not the case to the same degree.

### 10.3 How to solve the problem

Creating a higher level of participation and involvement within the Jama'at, especially among young people, in open and democratic societies that emphasize understanding and rational thinking, will require several initiatives.

Whether these steps are appropriate for the Jama'at or not, is not for me to decide, but I do submit my thoughts, intuitions, theories and beliefs on the subject as a matter of opinion for consideration.

#### 10.3.1 Answer the tough questions

Simply put, we must tackle the really controversial issues. Perhaps certain passages of the Qur'an and traditional Islamic practice just do not hold for today's times.

Perhaps we have to re-evaluate the common postulates that we've carried all our lives and admit that the Qur'an is only a starting point, and that we're free to build on it in *different* directions.

Perhaps we have to be willing to admit that certain verses and institutions are dated, and that our current practices must necessarily be built in bold new directions.

Both the more radical forms of Sufism and the Qarmatian movement diverged in their interpretation of Islam from orthodoxy in particular in that they emphasized the ethical, spiritual, and social teachings of Islam as its essential message and viewed the practices of Muhammad and the regulations that he put into effect as ephemeral aspects of Islam relevant primarily to a particular society at a certain stage in its history. [b, 95]

I have often heard that Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, in his claim as the Islamic Messiah, asserted that he did not come to change 'one iota' of the Faith, but merely to revive it. I wonder however, if some of the necessary changes are beyond revival, and if these necessary changes inescapably require *real change* of several iota.

Every time a new teaching came, people rejected it. Could it be that we are making the same mistake again? Deep down, it's hard to believe that of all the periods of human history, the one that has changed the most (i.e. that last 1400 years) is the one that would not bring about a new chapter in the continual evolution of religion. I realize that such a position would not be popular among mainstream Muslims, but generally speaking, allegiance to the Truth is usually never a popular thing at its inception.

I'm only openly speculating here—but what I am convinced of—is that if the current framework of religion that we have in Ahmadiyya Islam can solve today's real issues, then we need to start diligently addressing those issues. I do sincerely hope that this can be done.

### 10.3.2 Adopt Progressive Measures within the Administration

We need to involve the Lajna (women) in our administrative bodies and processes. I'm not suggesting a female Khalifa—but I am talking about having women in the National Majlis Shura as participants in sub-committees, and not just as tokens seated in the balcony.

I also believe that we need to stop denying a woman's existence in the Community.

I recall an incident back in the early 1990's, helping out with organization of that year's Jalsa Salana (Annual Convention). I was at the Bait-ul-Islam Mission House, and overheard a discussion about some organizational issues that required contacting someone on the women's side about certain provisions for the convention.

Apparently, the roster of the women volunteering and in what capacity, was *intentionally* not available to the men. Of course, the organizational hierarchy for male volunteers was displayed clearly on the wall so that matters on the men's side could be taken care of with efficiency. I couldn't help but overhearing that apparently, it was customary to not make available (even to organizers that were men!) the organizational chart of women in charge of various functions for the convention.

I can only speculate as to why this might have been done. Perhaps it was thought that this would 'ensure the safety of the women' from men in the Community. Perhaps women in the Community should be advised to remove their names from the organizational charts in their respective companies of employment, just to be safe.

If safety really is an issue here, and yet, it isn't in the corporate world of developed countries, then we have a serious lack of maturity in the Jama'at relative to mainstream society that we must contend with. In the meantime, what are we doing

as a Jama'at trying to preach to mainstream society? Perhaps it is our own Community that could first use some of the preaching?

This same phenomenon I've heard of with regards to MTA, where a woman's voice of religious hymns would be presented, only with visual scenery of the outdoors being displayed, but her name was asked to be removed from the video, so as not to identify her voice.

For clarification, I am not stating that I knew from which level of the Jama'at these orders came—to not make available the women's organizational duty chart and to not place an identification of a women's voice on a video—but from whatever level of authority they arose, these practices are disturbing. I am certain other youth share my frustration here. Perhaps not in these specific instances, but in these types of occurrences.

In a mature society, I don't believe these issues and measures are necessary from a 'safety' point of view.

I believe that in our Community, we create our own problems, and then we feed them with our Pakistani culture. As they grow and flourish, we feed them more.

The two examples given above are just the tip of the iceberg. Incidents like these and others seem to point to an underlying pattern of an effort to eliminate a woman's identity from society. It's as if the invisibility of women was the goal. In my readings on Islamic history, it appears however, that the views and participation of women seemed to be stricken from the pages of Islamic history, as if to serve a male agenda.

...The consistent silence on such issues now speaks eloquently...there can be little doubt that the guardians of Islam erased female rebellion from the pages of history as ruthlessly as they eradicated it from the world in which they lived. They doubtless considered it their duty.

[b, 61]

I cannot help but make the connection, that perhaps out of these traditional Islamic practices from hundreds of years ago, have developed cultures that we have never let go of—cultures that support these modes of thinking. I cannot help but make the connection that what we see with the Jama'at today, is only an extension of an androcentric interpretation of Islam. By removing women's functional identity and presence within the Community, a woman's subsequent opportunity for power and influence is diminished.

I'm sure the more I would have visited the administrative offices of the Jama'at, the more frustrating cultural incidents I would have occasion to recall and relate.



However, I merely seek to illustrate the existence of a phenomena. I am not attempting to describe it entirely. That would take far too long.

### 10.3.3 Provide a Vision Statement of the Ideal Society

Many corporations provide a vision statement for their organization, outlining the things that they would like to achieve. It gives members of the organization a sense of purpose and direction. You know what your objective is.

More than the elder generation, youth need to have a vision. Especially in modern times. We need to visualize what type of society we are actually trying to create.

Asking the youth to get more involved without a sense or description of what kind of society we are trying to create is like asking someone to drive down a highway faster, without informing them of the destination.

True, as a way of life, religious benefits arise out of the journey, but who would take that journey whole heartedly without knowing where they were trying to end up? I'm not suggesting we go to the extent of Jehovah's Witnesses with magazines distributed with beautiful paintings of wild animals sitting with humans eating pomegranates. But I do believe that we need to describe the society which we seek to create.<sup>86</sup> Different visions of Islam can create radically different realities, especially for women, as was alluded to earlier:

These examples of radically different readings of the import of Muhammad's actions and words, and of the Quran, by passionately committed Muslims illustrate how matters merely of emphasis and interpretation in relation to the same acts and texts are capable of **yielding what are in effect, for women, fundamentally different Islams.**

[b, 71]

[bold emphasis added is mine]

Unfortunately, I must concede that I am pessimistic that we will ever see the desired social equilibrium for the near future described. In my experience, we are more prone to *not* post the 'speed limit'. We have everyone guess what it is, and then we retroactively attempt to enforce it. That is to say, what is 'acceptable' to the Community isn't always outlined—but it is enforced when someone has crossed the invisible line.

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<sup>86</sup> To do this with abstract ethical principles alone is ambiguous. It is the day to day technical, practical and tangible side of Islam that's causing everyone to trip up. Defining this is the challenge.

#### 10.3.4 Ease Restrictions on Marriage

To remove the consequences of speaking up and taking initiative, some of the negative aspects of a highly interdependent social structure must be dismantled.

As described earlier, opportunities for marriage and the hesitancy to act or say anything that would affect a person's chance of finding a suitable and honourable marriage partner work to immobilize people in the Community from really taking initiative where it matters most.

If this aspect of interdependency is eased, then this aspect of the reluctance to speak up would be removed. Thus, by openly allowing marriages for men and women within the Community to Muslims outside the Community, I believe there would be more courage within the Community to get involved without fearing negative consequences.

Of course, the repercussions of such an openness by the Jama'at would have to be weighed with the benefits here. I won't speculate on what the best decision is, but I did want to make the observation on how factors such as marriage can contribute to our complex social network.

Some more immediate issues concerning marriage and excommunication are dealt with in Issue 11.

#### 10.3.5 Make Community Gatherings Feel Like a Real Community

I've mentioned earlier how attempting to segregate in a desegregated society is to fight a losing battle—but it's not just about stopping something negative. I believe relaxing some of the segregation at social functions (not necessarily the religious ones) is a way to create something *positive*. Allow me to explain.

I recall participating as a volunteer once at a mainstream (Sunni) Islamic function for children to celebrate Eid many years ago. I wanted to learn more about other Muslim communities—perhaps even begin a dialogue. The idea was actually presented to me by another member of the Jama'at who organized a few of the youth—men and women—to go down to this event and help out. I believe it was a learning experience for us all.

That day, I noticed how although most of the girls and women from the mainstream Islamic community wore a hijab (and no additional veiling apparatus), they volunteered freely and side by side with the men.

Just to know that the people and surroundings weren't all composed of men gave me a sense of real community, of being whole. Till that point, I had never had *that* feeling within my own community. I really envied those other Muslims. They choose to have a simple veiling for the women and full integration with the men—and it

worked beautifully. Our Jama'at however, has typically chosen a more excessive veiling (when it is adopted), and 'interaction' behind solid walls and partitions. I used to feel a sense of pride with Ahmadiyya Muslim teachings relative to the theology of mainstream Islam. When I was placed in that social setting however, my reverence for Ahmadiyya Islam was humbled.

I've observed people from many communities, and have friends and acquaintances from a variety of backgrounds. I am particularly impressed with how some Hindu communities have been able to keep a cohesiveness and interest amongst their youth (as well as their elder members).

In many Hindu communities, youth have opportunity to interact at the Temple and at social functions, which I believe creates a sense of wholeness. Some people may brush aside this interaction and criticize it—claiming that young men only get involved in the community to have opportunity to look at the women and vice versa. Although I believe that an element of such will always exist within any community, I believe the benefits are greater and wider than such negative costs. I believe there is a greater sense of brotherly-sisterly synergy and completeness that is created. It is complimentary on a larger scale. That kind of synergy creates a sense of belonging—and I believe it is a crucial element missing that even most of the youth in the Jama'at wouldn't be able to identify. Though, they suffer from its absence, and know not from where their emptiness comes.

In the early 1990s, I did go to a Jalsa of the Jama'at taking place in Detroit. There was one sunny afternoon between sessions where men and women from the Community were enjoying the warm weather and sunshine outdoors on the campus of a university where the convention was being held. At that time, there were pockets of men and pockets of women scattered all over the campus enjoying the afternoon, talking in their various circles. This wasn't just Pakistanis present; there was some real diversity. It may seem trivial to some, but this picture I paint was more peaceful than the words I use to describe it now. Language is only so limited.

With the men and the women outside together on that particularly lovely day, for the only time in my life, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at gave me a real sense of belonging and completeness.

Since that time, I slowly began to realize how important this aspect was to a sense of being whole. Since that time, I've come to realize what this synergy is that we have been missing. Since that time, I could see the steps that we could take and the kind of Community we *could* have—if only we could make the changes.

# ISSUE 11

## Marriage and administrative policy: a double standard



This chapter deals with the issue of why men within the Community are permitted to marry Muslims outside the Community without excommunication, while women who attempt to do so, are excommunicated.

It is argued that the original reasons for these administrative policies no longer hold everywhere in the world and as such, the rules need to be revisited immediately so that the inequality is not allowed to persist.

Finally, the implications of imbalances in the marriage pool and strict segregation are shown to only underscore the difficulty for women in finding a partner.

In the present day Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, permission to marry outside the Community is the sole prerogative of males. While both men and women alike are strongly enjoined by the Jama'at to marry within the Jama'at, men who marry outside the Community are not excommunicated—but females are.

The entire emphasis on marrying within the Jama'at has intensified at various points in its history as other Muslim factions have mounted greater hostility to the dynamic missionary sect that is Ahmadiyyat, which gained growing popularity in its first century of formation. Understandably, the Community needed to polarize together to protect itself from hostile factions that would seek to dismantle it.

Notwithstanding the need for the Jama'at membership roster to stay 'pure' and homogenous in its tender stages, what does not make sense is the *asymmetry* with which rules of the Administration have been applied concerning men and women. While I cannot do this topic justice here, I believe it important enough to discuss the salient points.

Generally, this issue of marrying outside the Community arises in the scenario where an Ahmadi Muslim wishes to marry a Muslim not from within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at. If a man from within the Community wished to do so, he would be strongly encouraged to have the woman convert to Ahmadiyya Islam—however—he would not be excommunicated if she chose not to. A woman in the Community entertaining the same idea would be allowed to marry the non-Ahmadi Muslim *only* if he converted prior to the marriage. If she did not obtain a conversion but instead proceeded with the marriage (even if he was Muslim), she would be excommunicated from the Jama'at. The woman's parents would also be subject to the same treatment if they conceded to the marriage given that the man did not convert.

While I believe there can be some benefits to opening up the Community (as discussed elsewhere in this writing), what is at issue here is the *inequity* of this administrative policy of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at. Either *both* men and women should be excommunicated if they choose to marry outside the Community, or *both* should be allowed to do so. The present day double standard only seeks to underscore the thesis of this writing that Islam and Ahmadiyyat are inexorably androcentric.

Having heard reasons for the double standard over the years, what's strange is that I've never talked to anyone in the Jama'at who has expressed the view that this policy has validity or logic to it for application in western nations. Those with whom I would discuss the issue, would concede my point, but out of respect for Jama'at policy, would not openly encourage or agree with my position. Whatever the reaction, I believe most (if not all) members personally do not agree with this double standard, though they feel obliged to accept it in submission to authority.

While more in-depth treatment of this topic would require discussions on the Qur’anic concept of ‘People of the Book’, I will not engage those more general issues at this time. Since Ahmadi Muslims would frequently marry non-Ahmadi Muslims in the early years of Ahmadiyyat, the discussion on equality is really an issue of Jama’at policy—and can be analyzed independent of the underlying theological backdrop of ‘The People of the Book’ (in this particular case).

### 11.1 Common Explanations

The common explanations given for this double standard are recited all the time. Here’s a list of the typical explanations<sup>87</sup> put forth to justify the asymmetric policy:

No.	Common Explanation
CE1	The man is head of the household. If he is not Ahmadi Muslim, then the children will not be and the wife will eventually be overpowered and will also lose her Ahmadi Muslim identity.
CE2	A woman leaves her home to join the home of her husband. Thus, her in-laws and dominant surroundings after marriage are non-Ahmadi Muslim. In this hostile environment, the children will certainly not grow up as practicing Ahmadi Muslims.
CE3	Men are more domineering, so a woman is likely to follow her husband’s belief, than vice-versa, all else being equal.

While I still have to obtain audio / videotapes of the Khalifa’s explanation on this administrative policy position, I believe the common explanations above would capture all salient facets of the ‘official’ explanation. As always, I am open to correction on this matter.

#### 11.1.1 The Case for Pakistan

I believe that all common explanations cited are valid for *Pakistani cultural norms*. Women do let the man lead the family in all matters. In-laws can be vicious and hostile in matters of religion and factional differences. I don’t see this changing in Pakistan for some time.

It is my understanding that at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were no such marriage restrictions as hostilities towards the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama’at were not as intense as they are and have been in the last 50 years in Pakistan. Most likely, when hostilities began to intensify, mistreatment of Ahmadi Muslim women by their non-Ahmadi Muslim family members was not uncommon.

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<sup>87</sup> To simplify references and increase readability, I am re-using the CE<n> notation to list common explanations. These common explanations are always limited in scope to the chapter in which they appear, and are not to be confused with the common explanations introduced in earlier chapter(s).

For Ahmadi Muslim women, not to place themselves in such a precarious position, made good sense. Once these hostilities which afflicted families became manifest, I believe it wise for the Jama'at to have *recommended* that members in the Community marry amongst themselves, but I don't believe it appropriate to have *instituted* such common sense as an administrative policy.

While some mainstream Muslim families in Pakistan are hostile to Ahmadi Muslims, there are decent, open minded and gentle folk in all nations. I believe a woman and her family should be empowered to make the decision in this matter (in light of the manifest hostilities) of whether a given man and his family are of the decent type or not.

While the Jama'at as a whole cannot make this judgement on a person by person basis, those Ahmadi Muslim families faced with the choice are certainly in the best position to judge decency and suitability for themselves. I believe they should be allowed to make this choice on their own behalf. If the woman's family cannot judge the man's family very well, or does not really know them, then they should exercise common sense and not pursue the matter. If this seems unreasonable, then the practice of marrying into a family of total strangers is at fault.

#### 11.1.2 The Case for Western Nations

The line of reasoning expounded in the case for Pakistan and individual thought are much more applicable in western nations. What we have here is a situation of elderly first generation Pakistanis in western nations making policy decisions for second and third generation Pakistanis in the western world to whom the Pakistani cultural norms do not apply.

This practice is like someone taking a young boy's sweater and forcing it on a grown man. The sweater will be ripped and stretched in the process and the grown man is going to be somewhat annoyed by this attempt to constrict him with a child's clothing.

Whereas most would agree that the common explanations cited are valid concerns in Pakistan, there isn't a large 'fundamentalist' population of mainstream Muslims in places like the USA or Canada.

If families choose (wish) to marry their children outside the Community, it is usually with people they know *very well*. I believe the Jama'at is overstepping its authority by overriding the personal choice of individual families to make their own judgement call on the suitability of a man (and family) for their daughter by threatening excommunication.

Most second and third generation Pakistanis in western nations don't fit in with any of the common explanations. This population is one for whom the nuclear family

applies. This population is one for whom women are just as assertive and educated as their male counterparts, and think for themselves.

Further, it's commonly said that since children spend more time with their mother at their more impressionable years, they tend to adopt the beliefs and values of their mother. Sound familiar? Thus, in nuclear families of the western world, if anything, Ahmadi Muslim *men* should be excommunicated for marrying outside the Jama'at, as their non-Ahmadi Muslim wives can be biasing the children towards a non-Ahmadi Muslim understanding of Islam. Sure, a man can *state* that his children will become Ahmadi Muslims, but what's to stop them from denouncing it as they grow older and the subtler influences of their mother manifest themselves?

Painting the world population with a Pakistani cultural brush is naïve and disconcerting to those for whom it patently does not apply.

## 11.2 The Global Community and Pakistani Norms

In attempting to fit a western nation's triangular block into a Pakistani square socket, social policies in the Jama'at are riddled with incoherence and inequity. While the need for a universal position on matters for the Jama'at can be understood and appreciated, I believe the correct choice to exercise here is that of empowering the membership to exercise common sense and good judgement.

Religious communities like the Baha'is pride themselves in being global not by setting up groups of Persians in hundreds of countries, but by having successfully converted the locals, wherever they go. In contrast, most communities of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in western nations tend to be of Pakistani origin. The mistake here, is to apply policies aimed at Pakistani cultural norms on Pakistanis who've lived most of their lives in these western nations. For these Ahmadi Muslims, some of the negative aspects of Pakistani culture which Jama'at policies seek to protect its membership from, simply do not apply.

Failure to acknowledge this is failure to become truly global. And the answer to becoming global yet universal is to empower the individual to make choices when geography and / or diverse culture comes into play.

## 11.3 Imbalances in the Marriage Pool

If despite the discussion above, it is still felt that Ahmadi Muslim women would be ill-advised to marry non-Ahmadi Muslim men as a general rule and as an act of Jama'at policy, then Ahmadi Muslim men must also be denied this privilege on the basis of equality. The law should be symmetrical—allow it for both—or allow it for none. The asymmetry that is the status quo only seeks to aggravate the androcentric undertones of the Faith.



What's even more at issue is that the resultant asymmetry causes imbalances in the marriage pool, further aggravating the plight of women in the Jama'at. There are proportionately less men to marry within the Jama'at, yet the women are restricted from looking outside the confines of the Community in search of a suitor for their daughter.

How blatantly unfair.

For both men and women, finding a suitable match is difficult enough, given that at every event and function (private and public), every possible precaution is taken to segregate youth of the Community from each other, even at opportunities where this can take place in a controlled setting. While Islamic scripture seems to have left issues of courtship and introductions purposely ambiguous for the societies of the future to define, I seek not to enter this discussion to any depth at this time.<sup>88</sup>

I merely seek to contrast this reality for our Jama'at with that of other communities and the day to day interactions<sup>89</sup> of Ahmadi Muslim youth with youth from every other community and walk of life but their own.

Some minority communities in North America that fear their youth will marry outside the Community (as they are so small in number), organize events to have their youth develop a sense of community and know one another, so as to avoid their youth marrying outside their respective communities. Contrast this with our Jama'at that goes out of its way at every step, to ensure that the youth of the Community do *not* know one another.

While this may not have caused much alarm as of yet, as second and third generation Pakistanis in western nations grow and develop their own individuality and identity, merely finding 'a boy' for one's daughter will not be enough. If not already, the young woman will demand someone whose interests, education and personality is compatible with her own. We select from that which we know. The same applies to the young men in the Community, and this is probably already evident on a larger scale today.

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<sup>88</sup> I've heard how various Islamic societies around the world employ their own customs and cultures for youth to meet each other. While I'm no authority on the matter, what I am *not* advocating is Western style dating with 'no-holds barred'. To suggest this as the only other alternative, I'm sure, would be the position of narrow minded conservatives who would fail to use creativity to arrive at a middle ground. I am sure an amicable middle ground exists, but as a Community, we do not yet even entertain it. Applying Pakistani norms, expectations and stereotypes to everything only seems to exacerbate the situation for Jama'at youth outside of Pakistan.

<sup>89</sup> This could be school, university, places of employment and amongst friends. Then there are social events, weddings and dinners with friends *not* in the Community. Ample opportunity to meet people outside the Community and no opportunity for the same within the Community to balance it out. It is a simple question of 'doing the math'.

For an example in history, we can take the case of U.S. President Truman who was only too eager to recognize the State of Israel as it was formed after WWII. When asked why he was so accommodating to the Israeli position, the President replied with an insightful admission to the effect that *'There are no Arabs in my constituency'*.

Why must we wait 40 years for the situation to change? We will have already lost so many disenfranchised youths by then, only to concede that these changes were needed, but having been decades too late in rectifying the matter.

While I suspect most Ahmadi Muslim women currently marry within the Community, if the status quo on marriage restrictions and strict segregation is maintained, it is my belief that the majority of youth will eventually opt for marrying amongst those youth whom they know. And whom might that include? Why, everyone *but* people from within the Community, of course.

# EPILOGUE

## Concluding Thoughts and the Search for Truth



Some final thoughts on issues of theology and culture raised in this document.

My suggestions for addressing these issues and a recapitulation of my original intent conclude these questions and observations in search of my own personal truth.

In this document, I've spanned six years of questions and observations that were somehow always buried within. As stated in the beginning of this writing, my requirement to understand arose from my drive to share Islam with others and at the same time, to be totally honest with all people, including myself. These two motives brought me to a paradox and you to this page.

While I believe Islam still has a volume of holy scripture, literature and practice that has yet to be addressed successfully for modern times (some aspects of which I presented here), I do believe the intentions of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at are devoted and sincere. Nonetheless, the overwhelming influence that Islamic theology has on popular Eastern culture, and the influence this culture has in turn on the majority of the Jama'at, is what I believe to be the reason why few in positions of authority are even cognizant that there are pressing issues to address, especially for youth.<sup>90</sup>

I believe that most Ahmadi Muslims, and most Muslims in general, have such strong faith in their scripture and beliefs, that a superiority complex has developed. While Christianity has gone through painful realizations and embarrassments, such as the Church against Galileo, scriptural integrity and Biblical literalism; Islamic belief has yet to be bruised in any deeply scientific or rigorous way. While it is certainly desirable for a faith to be able to withstand scrutiny of its coherence with natural law and for its scriptural antiquity and integrity, this inevitably leads to an (albeit unconscious) superiority complex on all other dimensions of that faith—regardless of whether this superiority complex is independently justified or not.

It is this complex which I believe inhibits Muslims from objective self-assessment on social issues. We 'dare not question', unless we can come to the accepted and popularly established traditional Islamic view. Here also, the more rigid and conservative the conclusion without contradicting the texts, the greater such theories and views are applauded and embraced.

In my search for the truth and composition of questions, I learned through a painfully difficult personal process that neither Islam nor the Jama'at was perfect. It has been a difficult mental point to cross and that is why I suspect many Muslim readers are going to find my questions and analysis difficult to accept. Many will retort with defensive mechanisms as opposed to reason, with responses like:

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<sup>90</sup> I emphasize youth here not because they are more questioning because they are more 'naïve', 'undisciplined' or 'corrupt' (none of which I believe to be generally true), but because I believe relative to the Pakistani majority, we've grown up in an era of greater emphasis on scientific thinking and belief through understanding, and not simply obedience through rhetoric and ingrained mechanical behaviour.

These things aren't important. We're not meant to understand these things.

Yet, when it's convenient, the same person may approach the Christian with missionary zeal and technical challenges like the typical:

If God the Father is the father of Jesus, and Mary his mother, did God first marry Mary, or was Jesus conceived out of wedlock? If Mary was married to God the Father, then did she divorce Him or did He divorce her when she married Joseph?

In order to evolve, we must set aside this theological superiority complex. While the antiquity and integrity upon which this complex arose is one of the strong reasons I was originally attracted to Islam, I believe it hinders most from objectively critiquing the social interpretation and implementation of Islam.<sup>91</sup>

Whether or not we are confident in the origins of our faith, let us not be afraid to ask why these undesirable aspects are present, from where they arose and whether they have further relevance to us. As alluded to in an earlier issue, survival is only possible through understanding—and understanding is only possible if and when the really tough technical and awkward social issues are addressed.

As Muslims view Islam as the final religion for humankind, it is difficult to 'point a finger' at Islam, as this would imply a weakness that an All-Just God would not allow to persist—leading to a contradiction. Yet at the same time, if any era of humankind has seen the most spectacular and far reaching changes of human history, it has been the era that has transpired *since* Islam came into being—i.e. the last 1400 years. If *any* time in human history deserved a new law or a Divine 'refresh', it is our era. I believe this paradox only aggravates the unwillingness for the world of Islam to come to grips with the inquiries and needs of today's society.

While my strong opinions and observations may have come across at times as somewhat fervent or forceful, I do believe I've provided a factual basis and logical motivation for all that I have raised in this writing. I apologize to any readers who may have been taken aback by my frankness and my theories. Further to this, my observations and suggestions should in no way detract from the primary purpose of this writing—the original questions on theology and culture that started this journey of examination for me *in an effort to come to an understanding of Islam that I can live with*. Perhaps along the way, others will benefit from my journey.

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<sup>91</sup> I am **not** proposing that we let go of faith acquired through solid foundations in order to be objective. On the contrary, I **am** proposing that we seek solid foundations for **all** aspects of faith (i.e. social in addition to technical)—not allowing the presence of a good foundation in one facet to preclude us from questioning the other which is not so well endowed and explained.

If through serendipity other youth find answers for their own respective journeys, I know this effort and search of my own was all the more a worthwhile endeavour to have pursued.

I thus end my questions, analysis and observations with a very important quotation cited earlier, in which I place great expectations:

No religion or philosophical system or thought which chooses to challenge Islam can overawe us. ***We can deal with it*** with the help of the Holy Quran. No objection or difficulty has ever been raised about any single verse of the Holy Quran, the reply to which has not been disclosed to us by the special Grace of God.

[3, [314](#)]

[bold-italic emphasis added is mine]

Recall, these words were written by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifat-ul-Masih II, in his book, *Invitation to Ahmadiyyat*.

Let us hope that this assertive readiness to provide answers can still be found within the Jama'at for issues that most clearly present themselves to society and truth-seekers both today and in the future.

# APPENDIX A

## Subsequent Preface and Insert



Following the original release and with pressure bearing down upon me (and my family) from officials within the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at, I endeavored to find a way to be as conciliatory as possible; to find a way to take any half-baked answer and view it as a good enough answer. Without a support system of other ex-Muslims, I felt so alone.

As such, in the few times following the original release that I would present the book to other senior members of the Jama'at, I had included a stapled-in supplementary preface. I even tried to tone down some of the rhetoric in that follow-up printing.

Anything to take the pressure off. Anything for Jama'at officials to not dismiss the book out of hand and realize that my purpose was not to attack them, but for them to defend the religion with some skill.

In what now appears clearly overly-apologetic and desperately conciliatory, you can read my inserts from January 1999 and May 1998 in this appendix.

Note that this 2019 edition is taken from the original release manuscript. It retains all of the arguments from my original release.

**REASON ON FAITH**

Spring 2019

## PREFACE TO JANUARY 1999 VERSION

After more than half a year from my initially completing this document of questions, I wanted to revise and update. While I have not formally heard back from the Jama'at at this time (I anticipate it won't be much longer) and while I've not even distributed the document within close circles (having reclaimed any copies that I had originally given out) – I still ponder and discuss the general issues of the document with people from different backgrounds in hope of perspective.

Further to the preface I prepared on May 13, 1998 – I feel the few eyes that have seen the original document have taken the inquiry in the wrong way – missing the spirit in which it was intended. Perhaps the detached (but logical) approach set a tone compatible with pure academia but not that of the Community.

Since my original intention was not to agitate and inflame, but rather to provide a sense of importance and a source of reflection and insight into the searching mind (mine) – I believe revising the original in a more conciliatory tone is the most appropriate thing to do.

Hopefully, my goal in relaying my questions and observations will not be lost, while the sensitivity of the Community and belief system will be more carefully respected.

Further, some progress (not yet complete) has been made in my understanding of some issues. Consequently, I have included a section at the end of every chapter outlining and discussing any new progress. This should assist in narrowing in on an answer that would work for me.



## PREFACE TO POST-RELEASE MAY 13TH 1998

Before you read my composition *The Things We Think but are too Afraid to Say*, and once again after you read it, I implore you to read what I have to say below in this prologue.

It has been brought to my attention—and now I believe it as well—that I have been too strong in my composition. I now realize that my words, tone and approach may antagonize readers and that my style has been inappropriate. I sincerely apologize for having come across as a series of negative observations, disrespectful tones and a potentially insensitive style of questioning.

While I will never complete my composition if I were to re-write it in its entirety with a more suitable tone, and as I've already given a select few copies out already, I hope that my questions can still be extracted from the main composition and my true intentions and purpose gleaned from this prologue I write here.

In my wanting to package up a series of questions so that the issues I have would be given some weight and careful attention, I've taken six years instead of six months to put things together. In this time, I have no doubt grown frustrated with the confusion and absence of concrete answers to the questions in my mind. I believe that this is why as the issues progress in the composition, they have a less conciliatory tone and one that is more confrontational and uncompromising. I apologize for the potential interpretation of a disrespectful tone here, and if anything, I believe it is a reflection of how much the issues mean to me that I've become emotional in my writing and quest.

Just before my questions arose, Islam and Ahmadiyyat were the highlight and center of my life. In hindsight, I believe that with a lack of answers at the level I needed, I felt a sense of betrayal from the system and from here, my at-times confrontational tone, arose.

### **A Balance of the Positive and Negative**

For a person not familiar with myself, some may be at a loss as to why the composition appears so overly negative. Here, I must bring you back to the reason I wrote the composition in the first place—to have questions answered. To state the positive aspects of Islam or all the good things generally, was superfluous to each question at hand because these I have no issue or problem with. It is the more controversial / awkward / negative aspects I took issue with, and that's why I focused on those things. Taken in series, my composition looks like a sequence of complaints, filled with frustration and constant negativity. That is why I write this prologue now—to set right those wrongs.

While setting out those problem areas (as I see them) in the Jama'at and the underlying theology, I've been unfair in that I've not given due treatment to all the pluses and benefits that Islam and Ahmadiyyat possess and have to offer. While this rounded approach is outside the scope of the composition's purpose, I believe the fact that its absence would cause confusion nonetheless, is reason enough for me to clarify and apologize to those readers feeling an unbalanced treatment was done. Let there be no doubt that my questioning arose from wanting to be more effective in spreading the faith and to be completely honest to others and myself about 'the big picture'.

In fact, my successes in life can largely be attributed to my upbringing as an Ahmadi Muslim. So often in life I've come across people less fortunate than I or those who didn't make the best choices given the same opportunities, merely because they lacked the discipline and purpose (to the degree) that Ahmadiyya Islam had instilled in me. As a human being, I have my many flaws, but my upbringing has ensured that the negative effects of such shortcomings were minimized as best as could be hoped for under the circumstances.

I am very fortunate to live the life that I do and to have grown up with the family and community that I have. I recognize fully how the absence of these things has robbed many youths in western nations and impeded people from reaching their fuller potential.

Sometimes, I see the formula in front of me so plainly, that I wonder why others have not come to the same conclusions for themselves. Then I realize—it's practically impossible to achieve without the structure of a community to make it happen. While the Ahmadiyya Muslim community is poised to bring this social dominance and positive set of values to the west and to the world; it must first address the typical road blocks in the minds of western thinkers.

I believe the questions I pose in my composition is a good sample of what once addressed, would clear major and numerous hurdles on the path to the wider acceptance of Islam for those in whose lives answers and direction are sought.

While I do believe that for a religion to build a superiority complex is a dangerous thing, in all my study of religion, I have found none closer to addressing the needs of all of humankind as I have found within the sphere of Islam. Further, if Islam is to have any chance of influencing the hearts of the world, I can only envision this under an organization with the integrity, compassion and strong prophetic / scriptural foundation possessed by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at. We simply need to address the hot questions in a systematic, cohesive and logical way.

## **My Audience**

Some of you who have read or will read my preface may be concerned about who will receive this composition, for a variety of reasons. Please allow me to clarify my position and put your minds at ease. I have decided to severely limit the audience of these questions to a select few elders and office bearers in the Jama'at and select members (a handful) of close family and friends within the Jama'at. The latter can give me a perspective from their own generation. I am not giving this composition to younger members in the Jama'at with little religious background who would have overly impressionable minds.

Those outside the Jama'at to whom I've shown earlier versions of my composition were a select handful of close friends that would help proofread for readability. These persons know not to discuss the works with others and neither are they in any way antagonistic to Ahmadiyyat or Islam. I am also asking the few persons I do give a copy to, to keep the composition confidential and private so as not to stir a controversy amongst those minds that might not have yet explored these issues and questions in their life.

## **Passages on the Prophet**

In Issues 3 and 7 I touch upon events surrounding Prophet Muhammad and question the implications these situations have for modern times. Essentially, these deal with the circumstances around the marriages of Mary the Copt and Hazrat Aisha. In issue three, I comment on how the marriage of the Prophet to Mary the Copt is a 'disturbing fact of history' in that Mary the Copt was a gift from another kingdom and that perhaps those circumstances set a precedent that would be misunderstood and abused by others in the future in how women are looked upon. Similarly, I don't understand nor do I agree with the position of marriage in general for strengthening bonds between men, and likewise felt (and feel) uncomfortable with history on the age disparities between Prophet Muhammad and Hazrat Aisha.

In tying these two aspects together, I seek answers to whether these arrangements were necessary and appropriate given Prophet Muhammad's high stature and preeminent responsibilities of setting precedents for the future. Muslims are taught that all prophets are sinless and perfect, the perfection more so intense in Prophet Muhammad. A person can only develop a deep love and these powerful concepts of perfection if their mind is at ease with the personality, the teachings and the events surrounding that persona.

While difficult for most Muslims to contemplate (and for me to ask), I need to come to terms with these events so that I can view Prophet Muhammad with the same love and unwavering allegiance as others do. I apologize to all readers if in my composition my questions regarding circumstances in the Prophet's life is awkward

or too frank. I am caught between being too plain in my questioning and unintentionally offending some and between the position of being so delicate in my question that the import of what I'm seeking clarification on, would be lost. Here, I apologize to those readers who would interpret these questions as disrespectful. I hope these words here will put in the clear why and how I ask the questions I do on this sensitive topic.

Finally, on the issue of Prophet Muhammad's marriages in these two instances, my issue is with disparity in age but more so, with the 'gifting' of women between men. I do not have an issue with Prophet Muhammad's character as a benevolent, moral human being, spiritual leader or devotee of God, etc. In my passages on these subjects, I have not been fair to the wider facts of history surrounding the Prophet of Islam. Again, while the intention of the composition is to focus on the deltas between where I'm comfortable and where I'm not with regards to theology, I feel the potential misunderstandings too great for me not to say something here.

As a man of the highest moral standing, Prophet Muhammad proved himself on the issues of marriage in that his first marriage was at the age of 25 to Hazrat Khadija who was a 40-year-old widow. Likewise, most of his other wives were previously married and not very young at the time of marriage. I never questioned why the Prophet had nine wives at one time given the (later) injunction to limit the number to four wives—I understand the circumstances. I go back to my earlier point that my issue here isn't with the Prophet's morality (that is wholesome and clear to me), but rather to some specific choices that (to me) set dangerous precedents of women as 'gifts'.

If we are to strike down postulate one on universality (as I've presented it), and we can state that cultural specifics around the Prophet's time are not examples for us today, and that we are allowed to view them differently for different times—then I have no problem here. I'm trying to come to grips with extrapolating events from 1400 years ago to modern times because 'universality' and 'timelessness' of the teachings and examples is what I've been taught from childhood regarding how to view Islam.

### **Other Communities**

Finally, I wish to clarify references I make to other communities in the final chapters of the composition. While I've not actively engaged in activities and cultures from other religions, I've observed many ways of life / cultural systems and keep an open mind about the world in which we live. Since my composition as mentioned before, was to outline problems in order to pose questions to arrive at answers, backgrounding each issue with a balanced treatment of the positive served little purpose to my reader if they are answering / providing feedback to me. They *already* take the positives for granted—discussion of the nice things is a moot point in this

case. Again, so that any readers not be confused, I feel it necessary to clarify my position on a few matters.

First, while I do believe there are positive elements in other communities in the areas I feel the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at could improve upon (in my humble opinion), I know the balance goes both ways. Specifically, in all the communities with positive aspects I point out, I know there are serious negatives they possess and potentially more serious challenges than Ahmadiyya culture faces. And conversely, there are other great aspects of community life and structure within Ahmadiyyat that other cultures and communities lack.

As stated earlier, my personal journey in life where I took a disciplined and pragmatic approach to the choices around me, was largely due to the Ahmadi Muslim culture and community in which I grew up.

To conclude this prologue, I only wish to ask that you re-read this prologue again after having read my composition so that you have no misunderstandings as to who I am, what I seek and that I'm deeply sorry if I've come across disrespectful or forceful in my composition. I seek the truth and I sincerely hope your feedback and responses to this composition will provide me with insights and answers on this journey of knowledge.

# APPENDIX B

## References to Cited Passages



This document made use of Ahmadi Muslim sources, mainstream (non-Ahmadi) Muslim sources, as well as academic sources.

Lest anyone feel quotations were pulled out of context, longer passages are produced in this chapter in cases where shorter excerpts were cited.

Where available, links to online versions have been provided in this 2019 edition.

## 13.1 Reference Notes

In this writing, unless explicitly stated, references will be contained in square brackets, like: [#, #].

The first number/letter contains the reference number (book, magazine, documentary etc.); while the next number(s) references the page(s) within that reference. Scriptural verses are an exception, where the chapter and verse replace the page numbers after the comma in the reference.

### 13.1.1 Qur'anic Verse Numbering

Ahmadi Muslims consider the opening verse of each chapter of the Qur'an (In the Name of Allah, the Gracious the Merciful) to actually be the first verse of the chapter. In contradistinction, most other Muslims begin numbering verses after the opening verse of each chapter. The result is that Qur'anic references from Ahmadi Muslim sources will offset by one as compared to references from most other Islamic sources.

The Arabic original of course, is the same irrespective the denomination within Islam.

## 13.2 Reference Codes

Reference numbers that are actual numbers, like [1, x], are references to Islamic literature from the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at.

Reference numbers that are capital letters, like [A, x], are references to Islamic literature from non-Ahmadi Muslims.

Reference numbers that are lower case letters, like [a, x], are references to literature from academic sources.

### 13.3 References: Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at

Ref. #	Source	Purpose
1.	<p><b>Holy Qur'an, Single Volume (Red Cover) with Commentary.</b></p> <p>Edited by Malik Ghulam Farid</p> <p>© 1988 Islam International Publications</p> <p>ISBN: 1-85372-007-0</p> <p>Note: The online version of this book (based on the 2002 publication) has page numbers that are offset by varying amounts from those cited in my book (which makes use of the 1988 publication of the Ahmadi Muslim Qur'an with Commentary).</p> <p>Online: <a href="#">2002 Edition</a></p>	<p>For references of Qur'anic verses.</p> <p>To juxtapose commentary with commentary in other Edition (Blue 5 volume set).</p> <p>To cite objectionable commentary (i.e. slave wife issue, gratification based reasoning for polygyny).</p>
2.	<p><b>Holy Qur'an, Five (5) Volume (Blue Cover) with Extended Commentary</b></p> <p>© 1988 Islam International Publications</p> <p>ISBN: 1-85372-045-3</p> <p>Online: <a href="#">1988 Edition</a></p>	<p>For references of Qur'anic verses</p> <p>To juxtapose commentary with commentary in the other single (red) volume of the Jama'at's English Qur'an with commentary.</p> <p>To cite objectionable commentary (i.e.: slave wife issue, gratification based reasoning for polygyny).</p>
3.	<p><b>Invitation to Ahmadiyyat</b></p> <p>by Hazrat Mirza Bashir-ud-din Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifat-ul-Masih II</p> <p>Routledge &amp; Kegan Paul. London, Boston and Henley.</p> <p>© 1980 The London Mosque</p> <p>First published in Urdu (original) as <i>Dawat al-Amir</i> - in 1926</p> <p>ISBN: 0 7100 0119 3</p> <p><a href="#">Online</a></p>	<p>To cite that a Khalifa of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at not only supports but acknowledges that criticisms to Qur'anic verses can and must be explicable for today's logical mind.</p>



Ref. #	Source	Purpose
4.	<p><b>Women in Islam: A clarification of the myth in the West about the status of a Women in Islam</b></p> <p>by Muhammad Zafrulla Khan</p> <p>© 1988 Islam International Publications, Ltd. (Second Printing 1991)</p> <p>ISBN: 1 85372 035 6</p> <p>This is a pamphlet.</p> <p><a href="https://www.alislam.org/library/WOMANINISLAM.pdf">https://www.alislam.org/library/WOMANINISLAM.pdf</a></p>	<p>Attempts to clear misunderstandings, but apparently has a flaw in its presentation of the reasoning for the civil 2-for-1 witness ratio in Qur'an 2:283.</p> <p>The Forward alludes to Islam being the first to give women real rights.</p>
5.	<p><b>Role and Status of Women in Islam</b></p> <p><u>Review of Religions</u></p> <p>Professor Mrs. Shamim A. Azam</p> <p>February 1993, Vol. LXXXVIII, No. 2.</p> <p>This is an article.</p> <p>Online: Not currently available at the <a href="#">official archives</a>.</p>	<p>For quotation that a woman takes part in all national enterprises and is a full member of the community. The nature of the wording used doesn't mesh with the realistic implications of current Jama'at organizational structures and policies.</p>
6.	<p><b>Women in the Quran</b></p> <p><u>Review of Religions</u></p> <p>Maha Dabbous</p> <p>February 1992, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 2.</p> <p>This is an article.</p> <p>Online: Not currently available at the <a href="#">official archives</a>, but available on <a href="#">Scribd</a>.</p>	<p>Portrays positive aspects of Women in the Qur'an, but <i>doesn't</i> even touch on Qur'an 4:35 or slave wife issues, the controversial stuff where all the discussion is.</p>

Ref. #	Source	Purpose
7.	<p><b>Rights of Women Under Islam</b>  <u>Review of Religions</u>            Ata Ullah Kaleem            June 1992, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 6.            This is an article.            Online: Not currently available at the <a href="#">official archives</a>.</p>	<p>For "Ahmadi" opinion that other Muslim scholars which are taking an apologetic attitude towards women in the Qur'an have failed to see the beauty of the Qur'anic universality in all circumstances.</p>
8.	<p><b>Islam's Response to Contemporary Issues</b>            Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad            Islam International Publications Ltd.,            1992, Islamabad, Sheephatch Lane,            Tilford, Surrey GU10 2AQ            ISBN: 1 85372 498 X            Online: <a href="#">2007 Edition</a> (pdf)</p>	<p>Touches on Qur'an 2:283 as an aside, admits to medieval thinking of others who use 2-for-1 witness ratios everywhere.</p>
9.	<p><b>Gardens of the Righteous</b>            A translation of Imam Nawawi's  <i>Rihadh as-Salihin</i>            by Muhammad Zafrulla Khan            Curzon Press, 1975, London.            ISBN: (US) 0 87471 650 0            Online: <a href="#">2006 Edition</a> (pdf)</p>	<p>Contains a hadith on a man's right to call his wife to his bed or else have God offended with her.</p>

### 13.4 References: Islamic (non- Ahmadiyya)

These are distinguished from Ahmadiyya Muslim sources, to help the reader contrast the differences in interpretation between Ahmadiyya Islam and mainstream Islam.

Ref. #	Source	Purpose
A.	<p><b>Role of Muslim Woman in Society</b> by Afzular Rahman, Seerah Foundation, London England. First Edition, December 1986 ISBN: 0 907052 4 27 4 (P.B) <a href="#">Amazon.com</a></p>	<p>For the portrayal of women as mere baby machines and other very controversial statements concerning roles and abilities relating to judgment.</p>
B.	<p><b>NAHJUL BALAGHA</b> (Peak of Eloquence) “Sermons, Letters and Sayings of Imam Ali ibn Abu Talib” Tahrike Tarsile Qur’an, Inc. P.O. Box 1115 Elmhurst, Corona, New York 11373 Fifth U.S. Edition 1986 ISBN: 0-940368-43-9, 0-940368-42-0 <a href="#">Amazon.com</a> <a href="#">Online</a></p>	<p>For portrayal of Women in Shia Literature and how controversial verses and commandments have taken on a medieval twist</p>
C.	<p><b>The Wives of the Holy Prophet</b> by Farzana Hasan, M.A. translated into English by Farooq Gilani February 1989 Published by: Ashfaq Mirza, Managing Director Islamic Publications Limited 13-E Shah Alam Market, Lahore <a href="#">Amazon.com</a></p>	<p>For information on who was considered a “bondmaiden” and who was considered a “regular” wife as per mainstream Muslim literature.</p>

### 13.5 References: Academic

These works are published from university printing houses, typically having academic affiliations.

Ref. #	Source	Purpose
a.	<p><b>Women, Islam &amp; the State</b> Essay: <i>The Convenience of Subservience: Pakistan</i> by Ayesha Jalal Edited by Deniz Kandiyoti, © Deniz Kandiyoti 1991 Temple University Press, Philadelphia <a href="#">Google Books</a></p>	For a range of current legal ordinances and minority views relating to the plight of women in modern day Pakistan.
b.	<p><b>Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate</b> by Leila Ahmed © 1992 Yale University Press ISBN: 0-300-05583-8 <a href="#">Goodreads.com</a></p>	For a range of history and observations concerning marriage, roles in society, androcentric attitudes and a breadth of other startling gender revelations.

### 13.6 Quotations from Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Literature

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[1, 1080]  <a href="#">p.1016 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 46:30]</p> <p><b>Note 2733.</b> The party of jinn referred to in this verse were the Jews of Nasibin, or, as some say, of Mausai or Nineveh in Iraq. Being apprehensive of the Meccans' opposition they met the Holy Prophet at night after listening to the Qur'an and to the Holy Prophet's discourse, they became converted to Islam and carried the new Message to their people who also readily accepted it. (Bayan, vol. 8). See also 72:2.</p>
<p>[1, 1268]  <a href="#">p. 1187 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 72:7]</p> <p><b>Note 3139.</b> As the word <i>Rijal</i> is used only with regard to human beings, the verse shows that 'a company of the jinn,' mentioned in this and in Surah Al-Ahqaf were human beings and not any other species of creation. The Arabic word <i>Jinn</i> here may signify big or influential men and <i>Ins</i> lowly and humble ones who, by following the former and seeking their protection, increase their conceit and arrogance.</p>
<p>[1, 187]  <a href="#">p. 182 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 4:4]</p> <p><b>Note 560.</b> ...Similarly, if she happens to be barren, the natural and perfectly legitimate desire of the husband to have an issue to succeed him and perpetuate his name remains unfulfilled in the absence of a polygamous marriage...</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[1, 188]  <a href="#">p. 183 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 4:4]</p> <p><b>Note 561.</b> The expression, <i>Ma Malakat Aimanukum</i>, generally signifies, women prisoners of war who are not ransomed and who are in the custody and control of their Muslim captors because they had taken part in a war which was waged to destroy Islam and thus had legitimately deprived themselves of their freedom. The term has been used in the Qur'an in preference to '<i>Ibad</i> and <i>Ima'</i>' (slaves and bondwomen) to point to a just and rightful possession, the expression <i>Milk Yamin</i> signifying full and rightful possession (Lisan). It includes both slaves and bondwomen, and it is only the context which determines what the expression signifies in a particular place. Much misunderstanding prevails as to what the expression "their right hands possess" signifies, and what are the rights and status of the persons to whom it applies. Islam has condemned slavery in unequivocal terms. According to it, it is a mortal sin to deprive a person of his or her liberty, unless, of course, he or she renders himself or herself liable to deprivation of it by taking part in a war waged to destroy Islam or an Islamic State. It is also a grievous sin to buy or sell slaves. Islamic teaching on this point is quite clear, unequivocal and emphatic. According to it a person who makes another person his slave commits a grave sin against God and man (Bukhari, <i>Kitab al-Bai' &amp; Dawud</i> as quoted by Fath al-Bari). It is worthy of note that when Islam came into the world, slavery was an integral part of the human social system and there existed a large number of slaves in every country. It was, therefore, not feasible, nor even wise, to abolish with a stroke of the pen, an institution which had become so inextricably interwoven into the whole texture of human society without doing serious injury to its moral tone. Islam, therefore, sought to abolish it for the speedy and complete abolition of slavery: (1) Prisoners can only be taken after a regular battle. (2) They cannot be retained after the war is over, but (3) are to be set free either as a mark of favour or by exchange of prisoners (47:5). Those unfortunate persons, however, who, may fail to gain their freedom through any of these means, or should choose to remain with their Muslim masters, can purchase their emancipation by entering into a contract called <i>Mukatabah</i> with them (24:34). Now, if a woman is taken prisoner in a war of the nature mentioned above and thus loses her liberty and becomes <i>Milk Yamin</i>, and she fails to get her release by the exchange of prisoners of war, and the exigencies of government also do not justify her immediate release as a mark of favour, nor do her own people or government get her ransomed and she does not even seek to buy her freedom by entering into <i>Mukatabah</i>, <b>and her master, in the interest of morality, marries her without her prior consent, in what way can this arrangement be regarded as objectionable?</b></p> <p>[emphasis added is mine]</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[1, 188]  <a href="#">p. 183 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 4:4]</p> <p><b>Note 561.</b> ...As regards establishing sexual relations with a female prisoner of war or a slave-wife without marrying her, neither this nor any other verse of the Qur'an lends any support to it whatever...</p>
<p>[1, 188]  <a href="#">p. 183 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 4:4]</p> <p><b>Note 560.</b> ...Polygamous marriages, <b>instead of being an outlet for the gratification of sexual passions as is mistakenly understood</b>, constitute a sacrifice demanded of men and women alike...</p> <p>[emphasis added is mine]</p>
<p>[1, 194]  <a href="#">p.189 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 4:16]</p> <p><b>Note 576.</b> <i>Fahishah</i> as used in the Qur'an (7:29; 33:31, 65:2) does not necessarily mean fornication or adultery for which punishment is prescribed in 24:3. The word refers to any glaringly improper conduct which may disturb social relations and may lead to breaches of the peace. The women referred to in this verse, as the men in the next in which similar offence with an undefined punishment is mentioned, are those guilty of foul or immoral conduct short of fornication or adultery. This is the view also of Abu Muslim and Mujahid. Such women should be prevented from mixing with other women until they reform themselves or get married, marriage being the way opened for them by Allah. As the offence mentioned is a serious one, four witnesses are considered necessary lest injustice be done to women reported against.</p>
<p>[1, 200]  <a href="#">p.195 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 4:35]</p> <p><b>Note 598.</b> <i>Qawwamun</i> is derived from <i>Qama</i> and <i>Qama 'Alal-Mar'ati</i> means, he undertook the maintenance of the woman; he protected her. <i>Qawwamun</i>, therefore, means, maintainers, managers of affairs; protectors (Lisan). The verse gives two reasons why man has been made head of the family, (a) his superior mental and physical faculties; and (b) his being the bread-earner and maintainer of the family. It is therefore, natural and fair that he, who earns and supplies the money for the maintenance of the family, should enjoy a supervisory status in the disposal of its affairs.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[1, 201]  <a href="#">p.196 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 4:35]</p> <p><b>Note 600.</b> The clause may signify, (a) abstention from conjugal relations; (b) sleeping in separate beds; (c) ceasing to talk to them. These measures are not to remain in force for an indefinite period, for wives are not to be left <i>like a thing suspended</i> (4:130). Four months, according to the Qur'an, is the maximum limit for abstention from conjugal relations, i.e., practical separation (2:227). If the husband deems the affair to be sufficiently grave, he will have to observe the conditions mentioned in 4:16.</p>
<p>[1, 201]  <a href="#">p.196 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 4:35]</p> <p><b>Note 601.</b> The Holy Prophet is reported to have said that if at all a Muslim has to beat his wife, the beating should not be such as to leave any mark on her body (Tirmidhi &amp; Muslim) but the husbands who beat their wives are not the best among men (Kathir, iii).</p>



Citation	Excerpt
<p>[1, 25-26]  <a href="#">p. 26 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 2:35]</p> <p><b>Note 67.</b> The word Iblis is derived from Ablasa which means, (1) his good or virtue decreased; (2) he gave up hope or despaired of the mercy of God; (3) became broken in spirit; (4) was perplexed and unable to see his way; and (5) he was prevented from attaining his wish. Based on the root meaning of the word, Iblis is a being which contains little of good and much of evil and which, on account of its having despaired of God’s mercy owing to its disobedience, is left perplexed and confounded and unable to see its way. Iblis is often considered identical with Satan, but is in some cases different from him. Iblis, it must be understood, was not one of the angels, because, whereas he has been here described as disobeying God, the angels have been described as ever ‘submissive’ and ‘obedient’ (66:7) God was angry with Iblis because he too was commanded to serve Adam but he disobeyed (7:13). Moreover, even if there were no separate commandment for Iblis, the one for angels must be taken to extend to all beings because angels being the custodians of the different parts of the universe, the commandment given to them automatically extends to all beings. As stated above, Iblis is really an attributive name given, on the basis of the root meaning of the word, to the Evil Spirit opposed to the angels. He has been so named because he possesses the attributes enumerated above, particularly the quality of being deprived of good and of being left bewildered in the way and of despairing of God’s mercy. That Iblis was not the Satan spoken of in 2:37 is apparent from the fact that the Qur’an mentions the two names side by side wherever the story of Adam is given, but everywhere a careful distinction is observed between the two. Wherever it speaks of the being who, unlike the angels, refused to serve Adam, it invariably mentions the name Iblis, and wherever it speaks of the being who beguiled Adam and became the means of his being turned out of the “the garden” it mentions the name ‘Satan’. This distinction, which is most significant and which has been maintained throughout the Qur’an, in at least ten places (2:35,37; 7:12, 21; 15:32; 17:62; 18:51; 20:117, 121; 38:75) clearly shows that Iblis is different from the ‘Satan’ who beguiled Adam and who was one of Adam’s own people. Elsewhere, the Qur’an says that Iblis belonged to a secret creation of God and, unlike the angels, was capable of obeying or disobeying God (7:12, 13).</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[1, 26-27]  <a href="#">p. 27 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 2:36]</p> <p><b>Note 69.</b> The first two clauses of the verse mean that a satanic being enticed Adam and his spouse from the place in which they were placed and thereby deprived them of the comfort they enjoyed. As explained in 2:35 the being who beguiled and brought trouble on Adam was <i>Shaitan</i> and not Iblis, who is spoken of as refusing to serve Adam. So <i>Shaitan</i> does not here refer to Iblis, but to someone else from among the people of Adam's time who was his enemy. The inference is further supported by 17:66 according to which Iblis could have no power over Adam. The word <i>Shaitan</i> is of much wider significance than Iblis, for whereas Iblis is the name given to the Evil Spirit who belonged to the jinn and refused to serve Adam, thereafter becoming the leader and representative of the forces of evil in the universe, <i>Shaitan</i> is any evil or harmful being or thing, whether a spirit or a human being or an animal or a disease or any other thing. Thus Iblis is a 'satan', his comrades and associates are 'satans', enemies of truth are 'satans', mischievous men are 'satans', injurious animals are 'satans' and harmful diseases are 'satans.' The Qur'an, the Hadith and Arabic literature are full of instances in which the word 'satan' has been freely used about one or all of these things.</p>
<p>[1, 307]  <a href="#">p. 294 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 6:113]</p> <p><b>Note 900.</b> The words, <i>men and jinn</i>, which occur in many verses of the Qur'an do not signify two different species of God's creatures, but two classes of human beings; "men" denoting the masses or the common folk, and "jinn" standing for the big people who often remain aloof from the common people and do not mix with them, practically remaining hidden from public gaze.</p>
<p>[1, 311]  <a href="#">p. 298 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 6:129]</p> <p><b>Note 910.</b> The verse provides another proof of the fact that by the word "jinn" is here meant only a class of human beings, viz., the great and the powerful, for it is only one class of men that exploits another class, jinn as being different from men have never been found to exploit men, neither are Divine Messengers known to have ever been raised among them.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[1, 325]  <a href="#">p. 311 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 7:12]  <b>Note 951.</b> Iblis was not an angel (18:51). He is the chief of the evil spirits as Gabriel is the chief of angels. The incident mentioned here is in no way connected with the first progenitor of the human race, who may be called the first Adam. It is only with the latter Adam (who dwelt in this earth about six thousand years ago and from whom Noah and Abraham and their posterity were directly descended) that the present account deals.</p>
<p>[1, 680]  <a href="#">p. 639 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 20:103]  <b>Note 1849.</b> The allusion in this verse primarily seems to be to the Western Christian nations who have blue eyes and are spiritually blind and possess an undying hatred for Islam.</p>
<p>[1, 95]  <a href="#">p. 93 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 2:230]  <b>Note 282.</b> If, however, it is the wife who demands separation, technically known as <i>Khul'</i>, she must get it through a <i>Qadi</i> or judge as the words "you fear," in the plural number, hint. In this case he has to part with, in full or in part, her dowry as well as the gifts she might have received from her husband, as agreed upon by the parties or decided by the judge. The case of Jamilah, wife of Qais bin Thabit, provides a good illustration of the exercise of the right of <i>Khul'</i> by women. She demanded separation from her husband Qais, on the ground that she did not like him, <i>i.e.</i>, their temperaments being different she could not get on with him. She was granted <i>Khul'</i> by the Holy Prophet, but she had to return to her husband the orchard he had given her (Bukhari).</p>
<p>[1, 18:51]  <a href="#">p. 585 online</a></p>	<p>And <i>call to mind the time</i> when We said to the angels, 'Submit to Adam,' and they all submitted but Iblis <i>did not</i>. He was <i>one</i> of the jinn; and he disobeyed the command of his Lord. Will you then take him and his offspring for friends instead of Me while they are your enemies? Evil is the exchange for the wrongdoers.</p>
<p>[1, 2:229]  <a href="#">p. 91 online</a></p>	<p>And the divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three courses; and it is not lawful for them that they conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day; and their husbands have the greater right to take them back during that period, provided they desire reconciliation. And they (the women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them in equity; but men have a degree of <i>advantage</i> above them. And Allah is <i>Mighty and Wise</i>.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[1, 2:230]  <a href="#">p. 92 online</a></p>	<p>Such divorce may be pronounced twice; then either retain <i>them</i> in a becoming manner or send <i>them</i> away with kindness. And it is not lawful for you that you take anything of what you have given them (your wives) unless both fear that they cannot observe the limits <i>prescribed</i> by Allah. But, if you fear that they cannot observe the limits <i>prescribed</i> by Allah, then it shall be no sin for either of them in what she gives to get her freedom. These are the limits <i>prescribed</i> by Allah, so transgress them not; and whoso transgresses the limits <i>prescribed</i> by Allah, it is they that are the wrongdoers.</p>
<p>[1, 2:35]  <a href="#">p. 25 online</a></p>	<p>And <i>remember the time</i> when We said to the angels, 'Submit to Adam,' and they <i>all</i> submitted. But Iblis<sup>67</sup> <i>did not</i>. He refused and deemed himself too big; and he was of the disbelievers.</p>
<p>[1, 2:37]  <a href="#">p. 27 online</a></p>	<p>But Satan<sup>70</sup> caused them both to slip by means of it and drove them out of the state in which they were. And We said, 'Go forth hence; some of you are enemies of others and for you there is an abode in the earth and a provision for a time.'</p>
<p>[1, 20:103]  <a href="#">p. 639 online</a></p>	<p>The day when the trumpet will be blown. And on that day We shall gather the sinful together, blue-eyed.<sup>1849</sup></p>
<p>[1, 4:12]  <a href="#">p. 187 online</a></p>	<p>Allah commands you concerning your children; a male shall have as much as the share of two females; but if there be females <i>only, numbering</i> more than two, then they shall have two-thirds of what the <i>deceased</i> leave; and if there be one, she shall have the half. And his parents each of them a sixth of the inheritance, if he have a child, but if he have no child and his parents be his heirs, then his mother shall have a third; and if he have brothers and sisters, then his mother shall have a sixth, after <i>the payment</i> of any bequests he may have bequeathed or of debts. Your fathers and your children; you know not which of them is more beneficent to you. <i>This</i> fixing of <i>portions</i> is from Allah. Surely, Allah is All-Knowing, Wise.</p>
<p>[1, 4:16]  <a href="#">p. 189 online</a></p>	<p>And such of your women as are guilty of <i>any</i> flagrant impropriety—call to witness four of you against them; and if they bear witness, then confine them to the houses until death overtakes them or Allah opens for them some other way.</p>
<p>[1, 4:35]  <a href="#">p. 195 online</a></p>	<p>Men are guardians over women because Allah has made some of them excel others, and because <i>men spend on them</i> of their wealth. So virtuous women are obedient, and guard the secrets of <i>their husbands</i> with Allah's protection. And <i>as for</i> those on whose part you fear disobedience, admonish them and keep away from them in their beds and chastise them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely, Allah is High and Great.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[1, 4:4] <a href="#">p. 182 online</a></p>	<p>And if you fear that you will not be just <i>in dealing</i> with the orphans, then marry of other women as may be agreeable to you, two, or three, or four; and if you fear you will not be able to do justice, then <i>marry only one</i> or <i>marry</i> what your right hands possess. Thus it is more likely that you will not do injustice.</p>
<p>[1, 46:30] <a href="#">p. 1016 online</a></p>	<p>And <i>call to mind</i> when We turned towards thee a party of the jinn<sup>2733</sup> who wished to hear the Qur'an and, when they were present at its recitation, they said <i>to one another</i>, 'Be silent and listen,' and when it was finished, they went back to their people, warning them.</p>
<p>[1, 6:113] <a href="#">p. 294 online</a></p>	<p>And in like manner have We made for every Prophet an enemy, the evil ones from among men and jinn.<sup>900</sup> They suggest one to another gilded speech in order to deceive. And if thy Lord had <i>enforced</i> his Will, they would not have done it; so leave them alone with that which they fabricate.</p>
<p>[1, 6:129] <a href="#">p. 298 online</a></p>	<p>And on the day when He will gather them all together, <i>He will say</i>, 'O company of jinn! You won over <i>to yourselves</i> a great many from among men.' And their friends from among men will say, 'Our Lord! We profited from one another, but <i>now</i> we have reached our term which Thou didst appoint for us.' He will say, 'The Fire is your abode, wherein you shall abide, save what Allah may will.' Surely, thy Lord is Wise, All-Knowing.<sup>910</sup></p>
<p>[1, 7:12] <a href="#">p. 311 online</a></p>	<p>And We indeed created you <i>and</i> then We gave you shape; then said We to the angels, 'Submit to Adam;' and they <i>all</i> submitted. But Iblis<sup>951</sup> <i>did not</i>; he will not be of those who submit.</p>
<p>[1, 72:7] <a href="#">p. 1187 online</a></p>	<p>And, indeed, some men<sup>3139</sup> from among the common folk used to seek the protection of some men from among the jinn, and thus they increased <i>the jinn</i> in arrogance.</p>
<p>[2, II-495] <a href="#">p. 495 online</a></p>	<p>[Commentary on 4:4] ...It is a hard fact which cannot be denied that there are persons whose <b>sexual instinct is too strong to be satisfied with one wife</b>. This is a physical necessity inherent in man and it is playing with fire to make light of this, the most powerful of all physical instincts. The only sane and proper course open to a man <b>whose sexual powers are abnormally strong</b> is to marry another, if one wife <b>does not satisfy him...</b>  [emphasis added is mine]</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[3, 229] <a href="#">online</a>	[from: Argument 9 - Gift of Special Knowledge] The <i>second</i> fundamental discovery about the Holy Quran...[is] that the Holy Quran never makes an assertion unless it also points to the reason for that assertion.
[3, 229] <a href="#">online</a>	[from: Argument 9 - Gift of Special Knowledge] ...they [followers of Promised Messiah] found that thousands of assertions which were thought to be unsupported by rational demonstration, and which devotees of the Holy Quran were supposed to believe on authority as assertions of Almighty God, were found to carry their rational basis with them.
[3, 229] <a href="#">online</a>	[from: Argument 9 - Gift of Special Knowledge] The advance of science and the general development of scientific methods have promoted in our time the type of mind which accepts nothing on mere authority. It was therefore impossible for people in our time to accept statements in the Holy Quran unless they were accompanied by rational justification.
[3, 229] <a href="#">online</a>	[from: Argument 9 - Gift of Special Knowledge] The Holy Quran did not invite its readers to accept anything on mere authority. It invited them to accept beliefs and injunctions which appealed to their intellect and conscience.
[3, 314] <a href="#">online</a>	[from: Argument 12 - Life-giving Powers] No religion or philosophical system or thought which chooses to challenge Islam can overawe us. We can deal with it with the help of the Holy Quran. No objection or difficulty has ever been raised about any single verse of the Holy Quran, the reply to which has not been disclosed to us by the special Grace of God.
[3, 326] <a href="#">online</a>	[from: Part III - Invitation] I say truly that nobody can find God today outside Ahmadiyyat. Everybody outside the fold, if he searches his heart, will admit that he does not have that certainty of belief in God and His promises which one should have in indubitable realities. Equally will he fail to find in his heart the light by which he can see the Face of God. This certainty, this conviction, and this light you will not find outside the Jama'at of the Promised Messiah.
[3, 189] <a href="#">online</a>	[from: Argument 6 - Divine Help] It is as impossible for God to support a pretender and not hold him answerable for his pretense, as for a liar and pretender to go about misleading God's creatures with success.

Citation	Excerpt
[4, 12] <a href="#">online</a>	If the wife is persistently recalcitrant so that the peace and harmony of the household are put in peril, the husband should admonish her. Should that prove unavailing, he may temporarily withdraw from the marital bed. In the last resort he may have recourse to light chastisement. (4:45)
[4, 21-22] <a href="#">p. 25 online</a>	...the general rule being that the share of a male is double that of a female in the same degree of relationship. In this there is no discrimination against female heirs in view of the obligation of the male to provide for his family, while the female has no such obligation. In practice the rule works out favourably for female heirs.

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[4, 22-23]  <a href="#">p. 25 online</a></p>	<p>A direction designed to secure the preservation of testimony relating to civil transactions, which requires that they must be reduced to writing, is sometime mistakenly seized upon as evidence of discrimination against females. The direction is as follows:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Procure two witnesses from among your men; and if two men be not available, then one man and two women, of such as you like as witnesses, so that if either of the two women should be in danger of forgetting, the other may refresh her memory.” (2:283)</i></p> <p>There is here not the slightest trace of discrimination. The normal rule is that women should be safeguarded against the contingency of having to appear as witnesses in judicial proceedings. Therefore, normally a woman should not be called upon to attest a document recording a transaction. This rule may be relaxed in an emergency. But then another difficulty would arise. In the case of male witnesses their memory of a transaction that they attest as witnesses would be refreshed when they met socially and the transaction was recalled for one reason or another. In the case of a document recording a transaction, which is attested by one male and one female witness, the female witness, under the Islamic social system, as will presently be appreciated, would not normally have frequent occasion to meet the male witness to talk to him, so that there would be little chance of her memory of the transaction being refreshed. To overcome this lack of opportunity of refreshing the memory, it is wisely provided that where only one male witness is available two female witnesses may be called upon so that, in the very words of the text, one may refresh the memory of the other.</p> <p>This provision is concerned only with the <i>preservation</i> of evidence, and does not deal with the <i>weight</i> to be attached to the testimony of a male or female witness. An illustration may help to clear up any doubt on the matter. Assume that a transaction recorded in a document attested by one male and two female witnesses becomes the subject of a dispute which comes up for judicial determination. It is then discovered that one of the two female witnesses has in the meantime died. The male witness and the surviving female witness are examined in court and the judge finds that their respective accounts of the terms of the transaction are not entirely in harmony; but he feels very strongly that taking every relevant factor into consideration the testimony of the female witness is more reliable than that of the male witness. In such as case it would be his plain duty to rely on the testimony of the female witness in preference to that of the male witness. There could be no question of discrimination in favor of or against a woman.</p>



Citation	Excerpt
<p>[4, 3] <a href="#">online</a></p>	<p>[Forward by Shaikh Mubarak Ahmad, Imam, London Mosque]</p> <p>In many societies, a woman is still regarded as a second-class citizen and deprived of various basic rights enjoyed by the male population. Deeply resenting this discrimination, they have championed a fight to obtain for themselves an equal status which unfortunately to date eludes them in the more modern Western states. Whereas the pendulum has swung to the extremes and has opened the way to licentiousness in the modern society, the West has often regarded Islamic women as being backward in a male dominated world.</p> <p>On the contrary, Islam was the first religion formally to grant the women a status never known before. The Holy Quran, the sacred scripture of Islam, contains hundreds of teachings which apply both to men and women alike.</p>
<p>[5, 32]</p>	<p>To summarise, <b>a Muslim woman enjoys equal status with men</b>. The object of her creation, her duty to God and her <b>duty to fellow human</b> beings are the same. A <b>wife's rights are at par with the husband</b> and as a parent her status is higher than that of the father. The Holy Prophet said that a man's primary duty is to his mother and that paradise lies at the feet of the mother.</p> <p><b>A Muslim woman is an active member of the community. She takes part in all religious functions, performs all forms of worship and participates in all national enterprises.</b> In the Holy Prophet's time and during the time of his succeeding Khalifas, Muslim women went to the mosque, performed the pilgrimage, observed fasting and gave charity in the cause of God from their personal property and income.</p> <p>[emphasis added is mine]</p>
<p>[7, 13]</p>	<p>The opinion expressed by Dr. Muhammad T. Mahdi, the Secretary general of the 'National Council on Islamic Affairs' on behalf of the Council on the question of the <b>rights of women under Islam, seems to be apologetic rather than to be authoritative as propounded by the Holy Quran</b> and elucidated by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of God be upon him) in his Traditions. It should be well understood that it is the religion of Islam which confers rights on women and not the society which has afterwards been evolved by it as is the case with other religions.</p> <p>[emphasis added is mine]</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[7, 15]	<p>It seems that Dr. Mohammad T. Mahdi, <b>like some other Muslim scholars under the influence of the Western civilization, has adopted an apologetic attitude. Such scholars have actually failed to understand</b> and appreciate the <b>power of Islamic teachings under all situations</b> and circumstances. They have taken progress to mean Westernization and in this they are utterly wrong. Modern Westernization with its emphasis on materialism and immorality is a force of destruction for the real social and moral progress. Islam aims at reforming society in every way, therefore, it can never come to terms with this concept of progress. However, Islam opens up the avenues of advancement for humankind. A good example of this paradox is provided by the Islamic teaching versus the attitude of Western civilization on the issue of chastity.</p> <p>[emphasis added is mine]</p>
[7, 16]	<p>Western scholars object to the Quranic teachings granting males double the share for females and secondly that the financial responsibility of maintaining the family rests entirely upon the husband which is a sort of special position. <b>Husbands should not ask their wives to contribute towards the expenses of the home. Whatever wives earn or possess is their own over which husbands have no control.</b> As it is the husband's responsibility to provide all the needs for his wife and home it is not unfair that his share of inheritance should be double.</p> <p>[emphasis added is mine]</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[8, 165]  <a href="#">p. 197 online</a></p>	<p>[Holy Qur'an 2:283-284 is quoted, then:]</p> <p>It is important to remember that these verses have been completely misapplied and used entirely out of context by those <b>medieval minded scholars who insist that according to Islam a single woman's testimony is not sufficient</b>. They say that for each legal requirement, two women's testimony is essential in comparison to one man's wherever one man's testimony is sufficient. Having totally misconstrued the meaning of these verses, they have falsely envisaged the role of male and female witnesses in Islamic jurisprudence. They think that when the Holy Quran requires one man as a witness, the testimony of two women will be substituted in lieu thereof; where two men's testimony is required, four women's testimony will be required; and where four male persons are required as witnesses, eight women will be required to testify the same.</p> <p>This concept is so unrealistic and alien to Quranic teachings that one is exasperated to see such medievalist stance on this important Judicial issue.</p> <p>The following points should be noted regarding these verses:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The verses do not at all require both women to testify.</li> <li>2. The role of the second women is clearly <b>specified and confined to be that of an assistant</b>.</li> <li>3. If the second woman who is not testifying finds any part of the statement of the witness as indicative of the witness not having fully understood the spirit of the bargain, she may remind her and assist the witness in revising her understanding or refreshing her memory.</li> <li>4. It is entirely up to that woman who is testifying to agree or disagree with her assistant. Her testimony remains as a single independent testimony and in case she does not agree with her partner, her's would be the last word.</li> </ol> <p>[emphasis added is mine]</p>
<p>[9, 68]  <a href="#">online</a>  <a href="#">sunnah.com</a></p>	<p><b>Hadith 283.</b> Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet said: When the husband calls his wife to his bed and she does not come and he spends the night offended with her, the angels keep cursing her through the night. (Bokhari and Muslim)</p> <p>Another version is: When a woman spends the night away from her husband's bed, the angels keep cursing her through the night.</p> <p>Still another version runs: The Holy Prophet said: By Him in Whose hands is my life, when a husband calls his wife to his bed and she refuses him, He Who is in heaven is offended with her till her husband is pleased with her.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[9, 69] <a href="#">online</a> <a href="#">sunnah.com</a>	Hadith 287. Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet said: Had I ordained that a person should prostrate himself before another, I would have commanded that a wife should prostrate herself before her husband (Tirmidhi).

### 13.7 Quotations from Islamic (non-Ahmadiyya) Literature

Citation	Excerpt
[A, 146]	<p>Abu Hurairah reported Allah’s Messenger as saying: “An orphan girl should be consulted about her marriage; if she says nothing, that indicates her permission, but if she refuses, the authority of the guardian cannot be exercised against her will.” (Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud and Nasa’i). He also reported Allah’s Messenger as saying, “A woman without a husband must not be married before she is consulted about it, and a virgin must not be married before her permission is obtained.” When asked how her permission was indicated, he replied that it was by her saying nothing. (Bukhari and Muslim).</p>
[A, 154]	<p>The procedure in the case of the wife is longer merely to allow any emotional disturbance and commotion, such as anger, time to cool down and let her reflect on this matter carefully in saner moments, as explained elsewhere in this volume.</p>
[A, 24]	<p>Now it is fitting to note that the reason why the Qur’an has restricted the woman’s role in social affairs is because it looks upon her as a means of procreating more people. Neither do we intend to argue to the contrary.</p>
[A, 31]	<p>Revelation does not err in the least, So anyone who considers himself a Muslim and who believes Islamic injunctions to be defective and inadequate in meeting society’s needs, or that they are relevant only at a certain time or place, is either definitely ignorant of the fundamentals of Islam, or lacks the intellect for its understanding.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[A, 315]	<p><b>Guidelines regarding sex with slaves</b></p> <p>“Can a slave-woman be forced to have sex with her owner? There are general instructions regarding slave women and sex in Islam. However, in this connection, it must be remembered that the case has absolutely no resemblance to what the people in the West believe about the Arabs and themselves practiced in the occupied territories during the war. It is a very controlled and regulated thing and Muslim soldiers fighting in a battle have no lawful right to have sex with any woman they may meet or hold prisoner during fighting, unless she is given to them by the lawful authority of the Islamic state. As there exist many misunderstandings in the minds of the people concerning slave-girls as prisoners of war, the following points should be carefully studied and kept in mind:</p> <p>“(1) “It is not lawful for a soldier to have sex relations with a prisoner of war as soon as she falls into his hands. The Islamic Law requires that such women should be handed over to the government, which has the right to set free or to exchange them with Muslim prisoners in the hands of the enemy or to distribute them among the soldiers. It is lawful for a soldier to cohabit only with that woman who has been formally given to him by the government.</p> <p>“(2) Even then, he must wait for one monthly period before he can cohabit with her in order to ensure that she is not pregnant; otherwise, it shall be unlawful to cohabit with her before delivery.</p> <p>“(3) It does not matter whether the female prisoner of war belongs to the people of the Book or not. Whatever her religion, she becomes lawful only to man to whom she has been given.</p> <p>“(4) None but the one to whom the slave-girl is given has the right ‘to touch her.’ The offspring of such a woman from his seed shall be his lawful children and shall have the same legal rights as are given by the Divine law to any of one’s children. After the birth of a child, she cannot be sold as a slave-girl and automatically becomes free after her master’s death.</p> <p>“It is narrated that the Prophet said: ‘When a man’s slave girls bears him a child, she becomes free at his death.’ (Darimi).</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[A, 316]	<p>“(5) If the master marries his slave-girl to another man, he forfeits his conjugal rights to her, but retains other rights, such as the right to service from her.</p> <p>“(6) The proprietary rights over a slave, male or female, as given to a person by the government, are transferable, like all other legal proprietary rights.</p> <p>“(7) The handing over by the government of the proprietary rights over a slave-girl to a man formally makes her, as such, lawful for him, just as is giving of the hand of a free woman to a man by her parents or guardian by means of the marriage ceremony (nikah). Therefore there is no reason why a man who does not hold marriage in detestation should hold intercourse with a slave-girl in detestation.</p> <p>“(8) Once the government hands over a female prisoner of war to someone, it has no right whatever to take her back from him, just as the parent or guardian has no right to take her back after a woman is handed over to a man through marriage (nikah).</p> <p>“(9) It should also be noted well that if a military commander temporarily distributes female prisoners of war among the soldiers for sexual relations for the time being, such an act shall be unlawful and there is absolutely no difference between this act and fornication, and fornication is a crime according to the Islamic Code.” (Abul A’la Maududi, <u>The Meaning of the Qur’an</u>, Vol. 2, pp.112-113).</p> <p>This discussion makes it absolutely clear that the relation between a man and a slave-girl given to him by the government is more or less similar to the relation between the husband and the wife, with all the legal rights given to her and her children. In such a relation of intimacy, the question of forced sex seems irrelevant as it is in the case of the wife. All sex relations are maintained almost in the same way as in a marriage.</p> <p>However, to protect the rights of slaves and slave-girls, the Prophet issued general instructions so that the true believers should be careful regarding their rights. It is reported that the Prophet said: “One who treats badly those under his authority will not enter paradise” (Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah). He also said: “If anyone possesses the following three characteristics, Allah will give him an easy death and bring him into His paradise: gentleness towards the weak, affection towards parents and kindness to slaves.” (Tirmidhi).</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[A, 317]	<p>The Prophet stressed the rights of slaves and slave-girls quite often and exhorted his Companions to treat them kindly and nicely. There are many examples of the Muslims freeing their slave-girls and marrying them, and even where they kept them as slave-girls and maintained their sexual relations, they kept them in honour and respect. There are quite a few examples of a king marrying his daughter to a slave, who became king after his death. In practice, slave-girls were treated as members of the household and enjoyed all the rights of members of the family.</p> <p>It may, however be pointed out that during the time of the Prophet most of the women captured in fighting were returned to their tribes after he had accepted ransom money or as a gesture of goodwill or for other political reasons. It was only women of the Banu Quraizah who were made prisoners of war, and this was the decision of Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, whom they themselves had requested to be appointed an arbitrator in their case.</p> <p>It was the general practice of those times and was also the law of the Torah that the men of a defeated people should be killed, and their women and children enslaved. The Muslims often freed men and women and rarely made them their slaves. They always tried to find ways to set them free against the prevalent practice and custom, following the Instructions of the Qur'an and the advice and practice of the Prophet.</p> <p>The Qur'an exhorts the freeing of slaves (90:12-13; and 2:177) and assigns a certain portion of state income to this purpose. It also encourages Muslims to free slaves as an atonement for may minor errors and faults (4:92, 589; and 58-3). The Prophet was [a] perfect example of this teaching and showed it by his practice. He conquered many lands and subdued innumerable tribes but freed them all, and rarely kept any prisoners of war. This policy reached its climax when he finally declared that no Arabs could be enslaved. (Sarakhsi, <u>Mabsut</u>, 10,118; <u>Sharh Siyar al-Kabir</u>, 2, p.265, quoted by Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah, <u>The Muslim Conduct of State</u>, Lahore, 1977, p.217).</p>



Citation	Excerpt
[A, 317-318]	<p>Another point to remember in this respect is that Islam did not directly permit enslavement. There is some indirect mention of it in the Qur'an (33:50), which allows it in special circumstances but does not command Muslims to enslave people, although it was the general practice of the time and had become almost a part and parcel of human civilization. It was neither feasible nor wise to disrupt the existing system, therefore the lawgiver did not take any legislative measures to stop it. However, it introduced various kinds of reforms which ultimately paved the way for its abolition. It encouraged release of prisoners through exchange with Muslim prisoners in enemy hands, through ransom money, and also gratuitously. (Ibn Hisham).</p> <p>Thus we find that Islam neither introduced slavery, nor did it encourage it, nor did it recommend it, but it found it in practice all over the world. On the other hand, it took definite measures to make the condition of the slaves better and exhorted kind treatment towards them. And when anyone had sexual relation[s] with his slave-girl, and had children by her, she and her children enjoyed all the legal rights of the members of the family. Furthermore, it encouraged people to free their slaves, in one way or another, to win the Pleasure of Allah. Islam did not allow or encourage the free buying of slave-girls for licentious purposes.</p> <p>To sum up, many malpractices do creep into human systems, firstly because ordinary men and women do not possess sufficient knowledge of their faith and tend to forget their rights and obligations to each other in wedlock, and secondly, because gradually society also goes away from the Highway of its Faith and assimilates many local and foreign practices and conventions which have no relation to the original Din. These factors together have played a main role in Muslim societies, and now they have realized that many of the rights given to them by Islam are denied to them, especially to women. Many of the young, educated Muslim men and women are now realizing that these problems which have arisen in their societies are not due to the Islamic Code of Life but to the lack of it.</p>
[A, 33]	<p>...man is physically and intellectually different from the woman, who is more emotional... If emotions are allowed to permeate government and judgement, then the rights of many will be violated by the authorities in charge.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[A, 427-428]	<p>The enemies of Islam have also made a lot of fuss about the verse of the Qur'an which suggests a sharp reprimand as a last resort in the form of light punishment to a wife in cases of defiance and ill-conduct on her part (4:34). As explained before, this is seen as the ultimate weapon where necessary to maintain peace and solidarity in the family. It is in the interests of the whole family, including that of the wife, that they should all live in peace and tranquility without unnecessary discord and disloyalty, which is likely to wreck the family. And this is only recommended when all other conciliatory methods have failed and the wife still wants to remain in the family for the sake of her children, but refuses to be loyal and maintains her attitude of defiance. Under the circumstances, there is no other remedy for such ill-conduct, but light beating.</p> <p>All the sex experts agree that there are some abnormal women who would not mend their ways but would keep their attitude of hostility and defiance toward the husband unless they were given a light beating. They remain sexually unsatisfied for various reasons and become defiant and hostile to the husband. They are called masochistic by the sex psychologists and need light beating for their sex satisfaction. However, it may be mentioned here that these women are exceptions and very few cases would fall under this category. The majority of men and women are normal and this would not apply to them. The Qur'an therefore recommends conciliatory and honourable treatment of women in general. Even this harsh treatment to the defiant and hostile women was only reluctantly permitted by the Prophet, and he did not like it.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[B, 204]</p> <p>Catalogued as Sermon 80 in <a href="#">online version</a></p>	<p><b>SERMON 79</b></p> <p><b>After the Battle of Jamal,<sup>1</sup> Amir al-muminin said about physical defects of women</b></p> <p>O' ye peoples! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence. As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period. As regards deficiency in their intelligence it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man. As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share in inheritance being half of men. So beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good. Do not obey them even in good things so that they may not attract you to evils.</p> <p>1. Amir al-muminin delivered this sermon after the devastation created by the Battle of Jamal. Since the devastation resulting from this battle was the out-come of blindly following a woman's command, in this sermon he has described women's physical defects and their causes and effects. Thus, their first weakness is that for a few days in every month they have to abstain from prayer and fasting, and this abstention from worship is a proof of their deficiency in Faith. Although the real meaning of <i>iman</i> (belief) is heart-felt testification and inner conviction yet metaphorically it also applies to action and character. Since actions are the reflection of Belief they are also regarded as part of Belief. Thus, it is related from Imam Ali ibn Musa ar Rida (p.b.u.t.) that:</p> <p><i>iman</i> (belief) is testification at heart, admission by the tongue and action by the limbs.</p> <p>The second weakness is that their natural propensities do not admit of full performance of their intelligence. Therefore, nature has given them the power of intelligence only in accordance with the scope of their activities which can guide them in pregnancy, delivery, child nursing, child care and house-hold affairs. On the basis of this weakness of mind and intelligence their evidence has not been accorded the status of man's evidence, as Allah says:</p> <p>...then call to witness two witness from among your men and if there not be two men then (take) a man and two women, of those ye approve of the witnesses, so that should one of the two (women) forget the (second) one of the two may remind the other...(Qur'an, 2:282)</p>

Citation	Excerpt
<p>[B, 204-205]</p> <p>Catalogued as Sermon 80 in <a href="#">online version</a></p>	<p>The third weakness is that their share in inheritance is half of man's share in inheritance as the Qur'an says:</p> <p>Allah enjoineeth you about your children. The male shall have the equal of the shares of two females... (4:11)</p> <p>This shows woman's weakness because the reason for her share in inheritance being half is that the liability of her maintenance rests on man. When man's position is that of a maintainer and care taker the status of the weaker sex who is in need of maintenance and care-taking is evident.</p> <p>After describing their natural weakness as Amir al-muminin points out the mischiefs of blindly following them and wrongly obeying them. He says that not to say of bad things but even if they say in regard to some good things it should not be done in a way that these should feel as if it is being done in pursuance of their wish, but rather in a way that they should realize that the good act has been performed because of its being good and that their pleasure or wish has nothing to do with it. If they have even the doubt that their pleasures has been kept in view in it they would slowly increase in their demands and would wish that they should be obeyed in all matters however evil, the inevitable consequence whereof will be destruction and ruin. Ash-Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh writes about this view of Amir al-muminin as under:</p> <p>Amir al-muminin has said a thing which is corroborated by experience of centuries.</p>
<p>[C, 127]</p>	<p>Invitations were sent to ten monarchs of different states for embracing Islam. This was the first step to introduce Islam as an international religion for whole of the humanity...Maqooqas [ruler of Egypt at the time] as a gesture of good will sent in return some gifts of gold, clothes, honey and two bondmaids, namely Seereen and Mary to the Holy Prophet (SAW) for strengthening the bonds of friendship between him and the State of Madina.</p>

### 13.8 Quotations from Academic Literature

Citation	Excerpt
[a, 13]	<p>The interventionist measures deployed by post-independence states through direct family legislation or more general education, employment and population control policies, have been limited in their emancipatory potential for a variety of reasons. First, measures for the emancipation of women did not as a rule coincide with a drive for democratisation and the creation of a civil society where women's gender interests could be autonomously represented. On the contrary, these measures were mostly part of the general thrust of 'dirigiste' and frequently authoritarian [authoritarian] and repressive regimes. The same governments which granted women new rights proceeded to simultaneously abolish independent women's organizations where they existed, whilst setting up state-sponsored women's organizations which were generally docile auxiliaries of the ruling state-party. This tendency is well illustrated in Joseph's discussion of the General Federation of Iraqi Women and its links with the Ba'th Party. This was also evident during the single-party era in Turkey, under Reza Shah in Iran and under Nasser in Egypt, who immediately after granting women suffrage in 1956 moved to outlaw all feminist organizations.</p>
[a, 14]	<p>Significantly, she notes that whereas the traditional exercise of patriarchal authority tended to rest with particular men—fathers, husbands and other male kin—the communalisation of politics, particularly when backed by state-sponsored religious fundamentalism, shifts the right of control to all men. Indeed, clergy and police in Pakistan or Iran may assume expanded functions of direct control over women's dress and deportment, elements of control more commonly exercised within the confines of the household and the immediate neighbourhood. Some have argued that the very erosion of the traditional structures of patriarchy has created a favourable climate for the emergence of a conservative backlash against the emancipation of women articulated in the idiom of religious fundamentalism.</p>
[a, 18]	<p>If some women's response to their vulnerability is a retreat into the protective certainties of religious conservatism, others may be motivated to struggle for a social order in which they no longer need the veil to legitimise their public presence and to fend off male aggression. Women will continue to be divided over the definition of their gender interests, over the nature of social arrangements which best serve them and over their visions of a better society. It is important to remember that their various movements are responses to similar sets of contradictions, and that their discourses are circumscribed by the political cultures of their societies.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[a, 50]	<p>Writers critical of the Islamic regime in post-revolutionary Iran are similarly not short of documentary evidence to support their view that the new regime has made a wholesale attack on women's rights. Compulsory veiling, barring women from the judiciary, segregation in transport, sports and many public places, and the introduction or reimposition of discriminatory laws lead to such conclusions as, 'The Islamic Republic in Iran has created two classes of citizens; the male . . . , and the female', and that women have become second-class citizens 'who have no place in the public arena and no security in the domestic sphere'.</p>
[a, 32]	<p>Mustafa Sabri emphatically rejected the views of apologists who maintained that women did not hold an inferior status in Islam: 'Muslim religion does not need such lying and ignorant defenders . . . To distort the truth and attempt to reconcile the views of the adversary, and thereby approve such views, is not a service to Islam but treason'.</p>
[a, 91]	<p>So no one flinched when Begum Shaista Ikramullah tried to draw parliament's attention to the government's 'retrograde and . . . reactionary policy' towards women on the educational as well as the employment fronts. Not only was government slashing allocations for their higher education, but was 'definitely taking steps to discourage and prevent women from taking their fair share in the Government of the country'. Women were beginning to secure better grades than men in most qualifying examinations. Yet they could not look forward to careers in a range of government departments, including the prestigious foreign service. To add insult to injury, those persuaded or coerced into liking marriage had to do so by lumping their jobs in government. The Begum was heard with the respect due to women of her class. But at the end of it all, the government rebuttal was patronising enough to sound almost insolent. A passing remark about men being allowed to take second and fourth wives was picked up by the government spokesman to query Begum Ikramullah whether she favoured similar rights for women. Her response splendidly sums up the dialogue between women and the state: 'I mean the rights to an equal share in the country's government, in the country's legislature and in every other sphere of work . . . The fault lies in your <i>own nasty minds</i>. I cannot help that'.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[a, 95]	<p>The real cut for those who saw unfettered male supremacy as an immutable part of the Islamic way of life were the measured steps to curb polygyny. In concert with Quranic Law, the Ordinance did not abolish a man's right to marry more than one woman at a time; it merely stipulated that he first obtain the permission of his existing wife. Since even this could be construed as too stringent a restriction on the prerogatives of the Muslim male, the Ordinance inserted a convenient loop hole. In the event that a wife was unable or unwilling to give her husband permission, he could file an application at the local council whose chairman would set up an arbitration board to decide whether the man's reasons for taking another wife were 'necessary and just'.<sup>36</sup></p> <p>It is difficult to imagine how a handful of mortals could determine what was just or necessary for a Muslim man who until now had divine sanction to contract as many as four marriages. But if this were the poisoned arrow in the Ordinance's onslaught against diehard male chauvinism, its other provisions were no less biting. Men lured by the joys of polygyny had to maintain each of their wives 'adequately',<sup>37</sup> while those preferring the simplicity of divorce had to pay the dower agreed upon at the time of marriage. From the point of view of women, the Ordinance was an improvement on the Muslim Marriage Dissolution Act of 1939, which had already given them the right to initiate divorce proceedings, and a better insurance for claiming the custody of their children.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[b, 166]	My argument here is not that Islamic societies did not oppress women. They did and they do; that is not in dispute.
[b, 239]	It is this technical, legalistic establishment version of Islam, a version that largely bypassed the ethical elements in the Islamic message, that continues to be politically powerful today. But for the lay Muslim it is not this legalistic voice but rather the ethical, egalitarian voice of Islam that speaks most clearly and insistently. It is because Muslim women hear this egalitarian voice that they often declare (generally to the astonishment of non-Muslims) that Islam is nonsexist.
[b, 49]	Having two wives concurrently was not a new practice in that society, but it was new for Muhammad, leading some investigators to speculate that he may have had a marriage contract with Khadija specifying that during her lifetime she would be his only wife.
[b, 49]	Aisha's case was different. She was the six-year-old daughter of Muhammad's closest and most important supporter, Abu Bakr. Khawla took the proposal to Umm Rumman, Aisha's mother, who deferred the matter to her husband. He said that because Aisha was already betrothed, he would first have to release her from that commitment. There is no suggestion that anyone thought the marriage inappropriate because of the discrepancy in their ages, though Aisha's prior betrothal was evidently to a boy.
[b, 50]	Aisha later recalled that she had realized she was married (that is, that the marriage agreement had been concluded) when her mother called her in from her games with her friends and told her she must stay indoors, and so "it fell into my heart," she said, "that I was married." She did not, she recalled, ask to whom (Ibn Sa'd, 8:40). Muhammad thereafter continued his regular daily visits to Abu Bakr's house, but the marriage was not consummated until after the Muslims had migrated to Medina.



Citation	Excerpt
[b, 51]	<p>When 'Aisha was no more than nine or ten, Abu Bakr, anxious no doubt to create the further bond of kinship between Muhammad and himself, asked Muhammad why he was delaying consummation of the marriage. When Muhammad replied that he was as yet unable to provide the marriage portion, Abu Bakr forthwith provided it himself (Ibn Sa'd 8:43). Thereafter, the marriage was consummated in 'Aisha's father's house in Sunh. As 'Aisha recalled the occasion:</p> <p>My mother came to me and I was swinging on a swing.... She brought me down from the swing, and I had some friends there and she sent them away, and she wiped my face with a little water, and led me till we stopped by the door, and I was breathless [from being on the swing] and we waited till I regained my breath. Then she took me in, and the Prophet was sitting on a bed in our house with men and women of the Ansar [Medinians] and she set me on his lap, and said, "These are your people. God bless you in them and they in you." And the men and women rose immediately and went out, And the Prophet consummated the marriage in our house.</p> <p>'Aisha became, and remained Muhammad's undisputed favorite, even when he had added beautiful, sought-after women to his harem. Her most recent scholarly biographer, Nabia Abbott, stresses Muhammad's tender care and patience with her; he joined even in her games with dolls.</p>
[b, 51-52]	<p>To modern sensibilities, however, such details, like 'Aisha's recollections of her marriage and its consummation, do not make the relationship more comprehensible. If anything, they underscore its pathos and tragedy. Nevertheless, Abbott is right to assume that the relevant matter is not the sensibilities of other ages but rather the accurate representation of the relationship. Consequently, other aspects, such as their apparent emotional equality and their mutual dependence, should also be noted. These are suggested by, for instance, Muhammad's sullen, wounded withdrawal following the famous necklace incident: 'Aisha was left behind at a campsite because she had wandered off looking for the beads of her necklace. Returning the following morning, her camel escorted by a young man, she was suspected by the community, and finally by Muhammad, of infidelity. Muhammad's distress over the matter became so intense that his revelations ceased for the duration of their estrangement; his first revelations at the end of that period were the verses declaring her innocence.<sup>24</sup> Complementarily, 'Aisha must have felt reasonably equal to and unawed by this prophet of God, for his announcement of a revelation permitting him to enter into marriages disallowed other men drew from her the retort, "It seems to me your Lord hastens to satisfy your desire!" (Ibn Sa'd, 8:112). In other words, in all its aspects their relationship was defined by the particular social context--not only in the sense of the mores of the society but also in the sense of the ways in which the mores of a society shape the inner psychic and emotional structures of its members.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[b, 52]	The details of 'Aisha's betrothal and marriage indicate that parents before and around the time of the rise of Islam might arrange marriages between children, male or female, and their peers or elders. They indicate too, that for girls betrothal entailed control and supervision of their sexuality, some form of seclusion ('Aisha understood she was married when told she had to stay indoors). A patriarchal notion of marriage and sexuality then, already pertained in 'Aisha's childhood environment. Similarly, the arrangements for Muhammad's simultaneous betrothal to women were represented in the literature not as innovatory but, again, as ordinary. It is, however, possible that the reports, coming from the pens of Muslim authors, do not accurately reflect late Jahilia and early Islamic practices but rather conform to a later Islamic understanding of marriage.
[b, 53]	Medina's being an agricultural community presumably made the new inheritance law, involving the division of land, more complex in its consequences than for commercial Mecca, where property was in herds and material goods and where even before Islam it was apparently the custom for women to inherit.
[b, 55-56]	Throughout Muhammad's lifetime veiling, like seclusion, was observed only by his wives. Moreover, that the phrase "[she] took the veil" is used in the hadith to mean that a woman became a wife of Muhammad's suggests that for some time after Muhammad's death, when the material incorporated into the hadith was circulated, veiling and seclusion were still considered peculiar to Muhammad's wives. It is not known how the custom spread to the rest of the community. The Muslim conquests of areas in which veiling was commonplace among the upper classes, the influx of wealth, the resultant raised status of Arabs, and Muhammad's wives being taken as models probably combined to bring about their general adoption.
[b, 56]	Yet another claims that Hafsa had caught Muhammad with Miriam, his Egyptian concubine, in her own (Hafsa's) apartment, but on Aisha's day. In spite of promising Muhammad that she would not tell Aisha, Hafsa broke her vow. Soon after Aisha confronted him, the entire harem was up in arms over the matter (Ibn Sa'd, 8:131-39).
[b, 60]	Furthermore, some Arabian women at the time of the institution of Islam, and not only priestesses, doubtless understood and disliked the new religion's restrictions on women and its curtailment of their independence.

Citation	Excerpt
[b, 60]	<p>...Umar promulgated a series of religious, civil, and penal ordinances, including stoning as punishment for adultery. He was harsh toward women in both private and public life: he was ill-tempered with his wives and physically assaulted them, and he sought to confine women to their homes and to prevent their attending prayers at the mosques. Unsuccessful in this last attempt, he instituted segregated prayers, appointing a separate imam for each sex. He chose a male imam for the women, another departure from precedent, for it is known that Muhammad appointed a woman, Umm Waraka, to act as imam for her entire household...</p>
[b, 61]	<p>The consistent silence on such issues now speaks eloquently. Given the harsh suppression at Hadramaut, there can be little doubt that the guardians of Islam erased female rebellion from the pages of history as ruthlessly as they eradicated it from the world in which they lived. They doubtless considered it their duty.</p>
[b, 61-62]	<p>We have surveyed key moments in the shaping of Islamic marriage, as well as the introduction of the mechanisms of control that the new relationship between the sexes necessitated, and we have seen the participation and independence of women in the society in which Islam arose and the diminution of their liberties as Islam became established. Jahilia women were priests, soothsayers, prophets, participants in warfare, and nurses on the battlefield. They were fearlessly outspoken, defiant critics of men; authors of satirical verse aimed at formidable male opponents; keepers, in some unclear capacity, of the keys of the holiest shrine in Mecca; rebels and leaders of rebellions that included men; and individuals who initiated and terminated marriages at will, protested the limits Islam imposed on that freedom, and mingled freely with the men of their society until Islam banned such interaction.</p>
[b, 62]	<p>In transferring rights to women's sexuality and their offspring from the women and her tribe to men and then basing the new definition of marriage on that proprietary male right, Islam placed relations between the sexes on a new footing. Implicit in this new order was the male right to control women and to interdict their interactions with other men. Thus the ground was prepared for the closures that would follow: women's exclusion from social activities in which they might have contact with men other than those with rights to their sexuality; their physical seclusion, soon to become the norm; and the institution of internal mechanisms of control, such as instilling the notion of submission as a women's duty.</p>
[b, 62]	<p>Marriage as sanctioned or practiced by Muhammad included polygamy and the marriage of girls nine or ten years old. Quranic utterances sanctioned the rights of males to have sexual relations with slave women (women bought or captured in war) and to divorce at will.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[b, 63]	Thus, while there can be no doubt that in terms of its pragmatic rulings Islam instituted a hierarchical type of marriage that granted men control over women and rights to permissive sexuality, there can be no doubt, either, that Islamic views on women, as on all matters, are embedded in and framed by the new ethical and spiritual field of meaning that the religion had come into existence to articulate.
[b, 65-66]	There appear, therefore, to be two distinct voices within Islam, and two competing understandings of gender, one expressed in the pragmatic regulations for society...the other in the articulation of an ethical vision. Even as Islam instituted marriage as a sexual hierarchy in its ethical voice -- a voice virtually unheard by rulers and lawmakers -- it insistently stressed the importance of the spiritual and ethical dimensions of being and the equality of all individuals. While the first voice has been extensively elaborated into a body of political and legal thought, which constitutes the technical understanding of Islam, the second -- the voice to which ordinary believing Muslims, who are essentially ignorant of the details of Islam's technical legacy, give their assent -- has left little trace on the political and legal heritage of Islam.
[b, 66]	The unmistakable presence of an ethical egalitarianism explains why Muslim women frequently insist, often inexplicably to non-Muslims, that Islam is not sexist.
[b, 66]	From the beginning there were those who emphasized the ethical and spiritual message as the fundamental message of Islam and argued that the regulations Muhammad put into effect, even his own practices, were merely the ephemeral aspects of the religion, relating only to that particular society at that historical moment. Thus, they never intended to be normative or permanently binding for the Muslim community. Among the groups that to some degree or other took this position were the Sufis, the Kharijis, and the Qarmatians (Qaramita). As will be discussed below, their views on women and their rules and practices pertaining to them differed in important ways from those affirmed by Islamic establishment; implicit to all of them was the idea that the laws applicable to the first Muslim society were not necessarily applicable to or binding upon later ones. The Kharijis and the Qarmatians, for instance, rejected concubinage and the marriage of nine-year-old girls (permitted by the orthodox), and the Qarmatians banned polygamy and the veil. Sufi ideas, moreover, implicitly challenged the way establishment Islam conceptualized gender, as is suggested by the fact that they permitted women to give a central place in their lives to their spiritual vocation, thus by implication affirming the paramountcy of the spiritual over the biological. In contrast, the legal and social vision of establishment Islam gave precedence to women's obligations to be wives and mothers.

Citation	Excerpt
[b, 67]	<p>In the following pages I contend first, that the practices sanctioned by Muhammad within the first Muslim society were enunciated in the context of far more positive attitudes toward women than the later Abbasid society was to have, a context that consequently tempered the androcentric tendencies of Islamic practices; those tendencies were further tempered by the emphasis the religion placed on spiritual egalitarianism. Second, I argue that the decision to regard androcentric positions on marriage as intended to be binding for all time was itself an interpretive decision, reflecting the interests and perspective of those in power during the age that transposed and interpreted the Islamic message into the textual edifice of Islam. Finally, I argue that the social context in which this textual edifice was created was far more negative for women than that in Arabia, so the spiritually egalitarian voice of the religion would have been exceedingly difficult to hear. The practices and living arrangements of the dominant classes of the Abbasid era were such that at an implicit and often an explicit level, the words <i>women</i>, and <i>slave</i>, and <i>object for sexual use</i> came close to being indistinguishably fused. Such practices, and the conceptions they gave rise to, informed the dominant ideology and affected how Islam was heard and interpreted in this period and how its ideas were rendered into law.</p>
[b, 67-68]	<p>Within ten years of Muhammad's death...societies were more restrictive toward women and more misogynist; at least their misogyny and their modes of controlling women by law and by custom were more fully articulated administratively and as inscribed in code. These differences ... are suggested by the contrast between the Quranic verses <i>addressing</i> women and unambiguously declaring the spiritual equality of men and women and certain remarks of the supreme theologian of the Abbasid age, al-Ghazali (d. 1111). Al-Ghazali prefaces his account of eminent religious women with the following advice to readers, whom he presumes to be male: "Consider the women who have struggled in the path of God and say, 'O my soul, be not content to be less than a woman, for it is despicable for a man to be less than a woman in matters of religion or of this world.'" That is, in the spiritual (as well as in the material) realm, the most ordinary of men should expect to surpass the most gifted and percipient of women.</p>
[b, 68]	<p>...Jahilia women participated actively in society, a habit that necessarily carried over into early Muslim society; after all, these were the people who, by conversion and by conquest, became the first Muslims. Until the latter years of Muhammad's ascendancy, and perhaps later for women other than his wives, women mingled freely with men; even in the last years of Muhammad's life they were not veiled, except for his own wives.</p>

Citation	Excerpt
[b, 71]	<p>To give one instance of a "religious" divergence with clear social implications for women, the Kharijis rejected concubinage and the marriage of nine-year-old girls, even though Muhammad had owned a concubine and had married Aisha when she was about nine. They argued that God had allowed his prophet privileges not permitted to other men. Orthodox Muslims, in contrast, accepted both concubinage and the marriage of girls who were about nine, arguing that Muhammad's practice established a precedent for all Muslim men. These examples of radically different readings of the import of Muhammad's actions and words, and of the Quran, by passionately committed Muslims illustrate how matters merely of emphasis and interpretation in relation to the same acts and texts are capable of yielding what are in effect, for women, fundamentally different Islams.</p>
[b, 87]	<p>The fact that some people, such as the Kharijis, could "read" the same events or words as not intended to permit concubinage or marriage to nine-year-old-girls while the orthodox understood them as intending to permit either, makes clear the crucial role of interpretation. Nonetheless, a misogynist reading was undeniably one reading to which Islam plausibly lent itself.</p>
[b, 90]	<p>The consequence, of course, is that the vision of society, the understanding of the nature of justice, and the view of the proper relationship that should pertain between men and women that were developed by the men of that age have been consecrated as representing the ultimate and infallible articulation of the Islamic notion of justice and have, ever since, been set in stone.</p>
[b, 95]	<p>Both the more radical forms of Sufism and the Qarmatian movement diverged in their interpretation of Islam from orthodoxy in particular in that they emphasized the ethical, spiritual, and social teachings of Islam as its essential message and viewed the practices of Muhammad and the regulations that he put into effect as ephemeral aspects of Islam relevant primarily to a particular society at a certain stage in its history.</p>