

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ نُورٌ وَكِتَابٌ مُبِينٌ

A light has assuredly come to you  
from Allah, (in the form of)  
a clear, precise and evident Book

# WOMAN

IN THE LIGHT OF QURAN

**Idara Tolu-e-Islam (Regd)**

25 B, Gulberg II, Lahore 54660, Pakistan.

Ph. 042 5714546

Email address : [Idara@toluislam.com](mailto:Idara@toluislam.com)

Website : [www.toluislam.com](http://www.toluislam.com)

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## **IN THE LIGHT OF QURAN**

The moral right of the author has been assured.

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# **C O N T E N T S**

1.	THE STATUS OF WOMAN IN CHRISTIANITY	<b>7</b>
2.	WOMAN - THE INFERIOR BEING?	<b>8</b>
3.	THE RELATION SHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN	<b>14</b>
4.	BEATING OF WOMEN	<b>16</b>
5.	WOMEN'S EQUALITY	<b>18</b>
6.	EQUAL PARTICIPANTS IN GOVERNMENT	<b>21</b>
7.	RIGHTS AND OBLIGATION	<b>22</b>
8.	WOMEN'S RIGHT TO OWN PROPERTY	<b>27</b>
9.	THE VEIL	<b>29</b>
10.	CHASTITY	<b>32</b>
11.	CONFINEMENT	<b>33</b>
12.	ADORNMENT	<b>35</b>
13.	CLEANSING OF THE INTELLECT	<b>37</b>
14.	CONCLUSION	<b>39</b>

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

# WOMAN

## IN THE LIGHT OF THE HOLY QURAN

### PREAMBLE:

*Women represent more or less half of the human race, yet they have to fight for their rights like other minority groups. The Holy Quran had, more than fourteen centuries ago, detailed their rights and obligations so that human energies would not be wasted on such issues. It is unfortunate that English readers have no access to the message in its pristine form. I have therefore been requested by my own family members to write on the subject in English.*

*Over the years, Tolu-e-Islam has published many articles in Urdu on the rights and obligations of women from the Quranic perspective. Allama Ghulam Ahmeḍ Parwez's book, Letters to Tahira, in Urdu, has dealt with this subject extensively. I found the pamphlet, with the above caption, published by the Tolu-e-Islam Trust to contain most of the fundamental injunctions of the Holy Quran in this respect. Therefore, I took upon myself to re-present an adaptation of the same in the English Language. I would like to mention that the idea here is to clarify what Allah's final book, The Holy Qurān, says on the subject and not to contradict any one's, any sect's or for that matter, any religion's beliefs.*

***Most of present day Islamic Literature is based on stories originally derived from Judaism and Christianity. Therefore it becomes inevitable to describe what these religions say about women, as background information. It will enable one to understand the origin of many of our own (most of the present day Muslim's) beliefs and practices.***

Ubedur Rahman Arain, Kuwait 1996.

## 1. THE STATUS OF WOMAN IN CHRISTIANITY

The Bible tells us that Adam and Eve used to live in Heaven, when the Devil (in the form of a snake) misguided Eve, who in turn made Adam eat the fruit from the forbidden tree (Genesis 2-3). This resulted in the exodus of man (humanity) from Heaven.

Thus, the woman is viewed as the real cause of the first sin and not man. Therefore, the woman is the one who started all of the difficulties faced by mankind in this world and thus is an inferior being. Much of classical Christian Literature blames her and considers her the curse on mankind. Many Saints looked down upon women. That is why, they say, that the Prophet Essa (Jesus) never got married (and thus maintained his celibacy); and that any man that will follow suite, will become closer to God. Similarly, and following their practice, even the nuns live a life of celibacy so much so that for centuries, the Christian clergy have been discussing whether woman had soul or not.

Charles Seltman has written a book entitled "Woman in Antiquity" wherein he has discussed the origin of various of the Christian beliefs about woman. He has quoted a saying of St. Paul which says:

"All unmarried women and widows are advised not to get married, just as myself". Then he goes on to say "The man was not created from the woman, the woman is. The man is not created for the woman, the woman is. The women should sit quietly in the Church, they are not allowed to talk. Legally, their



status should be less than that of men. If they want to enquire anything, they should go home and enquire from their husbands. It is disgraceful for the women to talk in the Church".

Another of the Saints, Saint Hieronymus is quoted to have said, "The woman is the doorway to devil, a way to evil, and Scorpio's venom".

These Saints believed that women cannot go to Heaven. Their only problem was that of Mary! What would be her status? St. Thomas solved this problem by saying that Mary and all the other women who believe in salvation due to crucifixion of Jesus, will be changed to men so that they could go to Heaven. He even thought that in life hereafter, there will be no distinction of genders.

Such beliefs did develop in Christianity; but unfortunately, Muslims were influenced as well. Muslims borrowed these ideas from Christians and made them part of Islamic Literature.

It would be prudent to clarify here, however, that contrary to popular belief, the Holy Quran has clearly indicated that the devil (Satan) had misguided both Adam and his wife together and not wife alone (who in turn misguided Adam). The Holy Quran says in verse (2:36) **فَازَلَهُمَا الشَّيْطَانُ** "Satan deceived both (هُمَا) of them".

## 2. WOMAN - THE INFERIOR BEING?

Christianity believes that Adam was created first. When he felt lonely, his wife Eve was created from his rib (Genesis). It is an unimaginable reality that the same concept

has been accepted as a fact by Muslim theologians.

*Tafseer Ibn Kaseer* is considered to be one of the most authentic explanations of the Holy Quran. In it, the birth of Adam has been explained as:

*"It is narrated by Ibn-Abbass® (from Prophet Mohammed SA.) that after scolding the Devil, and after teaching Adam knowledge about everything, Adam was put to sleep. Then Eve was created from his left rib. When Adam saw her, after he woke up, he became fond of her as she had the same flesh and blood as his own. Then Allah married them and ordered them to live in the Heaven. However, some say that Eve was created after Adam had been admitted to Heaven. Ibn-Abbass®, Ibn Masood®, etc. the companions of the Prophet SA. narrated that Adam was admitted to Heaven after expulsion of Iblees (devil) from Heaven, but he was all alone and lonely at that time and that is why Eve was created in his sleep. When he (Adam) woke from his sleep, he asked her who she was and why was she created. Eve replied that she was a woman and had been created to live with him and to comfort him."*

(Urdu translation by  
Maulana Mohammed Juna Gari,  
Section 1, Page 85)

Elsewhere it is said,

*"The true tradition of (Prophet Mohammed SA.) tells us that the woman is created from the rib (of man), and since she is created from the highest rib, which is the*



*most crooked, if you try to straighten her, you will break her; and if you will leave her little bent, you can benefit from her."*

(Urdu translation by  
Maulana Mohammed Juna Gari,  
Section 4, Page 66).

In this, and other similar explanations of The Holy Quran which are supposedly in accordance with the so called traditions (which are attributed to Prophet Mohammed SA. even though there is no doubt in their falsehood), Woman's existence in itself is meaningless. She is just there to comfort the man. Secondly, since it is assumed that she was created out of a bent rib, it is implied, therefore, that she cannot be straightened. Whoever will try to straighten her will break her. In other words, she is and she will always be crooked.

This is not the only such phenomenon. One will see numerous other false traditions being attributed to Prophet Mohammed SA. and which, having become part of the Muslim faith, are considered the basis of explanation of many of the Quranic verses. Soora (Chapter) Al-Nisa (Soora 4) verse 34, starts with the " words *الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ* It is usually translated as "Men are guardians (or rulers) of women." This translation is based on a falsely attributed tradition, likes of which are common in today's Muslim theology.

Tafseer Ibn-Kaseer Soora Al-Nisa, tells us:

*"Ibn-Abbass® has narrated that the woman must be obedient to man. Hasan Basri® has narrated that a woman, one day, complained to Prophet Mohammed*

SA. that her husband had slapped her. He had just permitted her to take revenge when this verse was revealed and she was thus stopped from taking revenge. In another tradition it is said that one of the Ansars took his wife to Prophet Mohammed SA. She complained to the Prophet SA. that her husband had slapped her and the mark was visible on her face. The Prophet SA. said that he (the husband) had no right. Immediately this verse was revealed saying that men are rulers over women so that they can teach them manners. The Prophet SA. said, "I had hoped for something different and God's will was different".

(Urdu Translation of Tafseer Al-Minar  
by Mufti Mohammed Abdah,  
Volume 5, Page 74).

In the same Tafseer, further on, it is said:

"In one tradition it is said that Prophet Mohammed SA. said not to beat the concubines (here the writer got confused between wives and concubines). Then one day Omer Farooq® came and told the Prophet SA. that the women have become adamant and bold in front of their husbands after hearing his statement. Then Prophet SA. allowed men to beat them. Then men started beating (the hell out of) them. A lot of womenfolk brought their complaints to the Prophet SA.. Then the Prophet SA. asked the people that he had heard a lot of complaints from the women that men had mistreated them; whoever does that is not good (giving the impression that it is legally permissible but not advisable to beat the wives).

*Ash-a'th® tells us that "Once I was guest of Farooq Al-Azam (Omer)®. By chance the husband and wife quarreled about something and Hazrat Omer beat her and then said to me, "Ash-a'th, remember three things which I have memorized from Rasool Allah (Messenger of God) SA. Firstly, never ask a man why he beat his wife, secondly don't sleep without reciting 'Witter' (a prayer for Isha time), and the third thing the narrator forgot"(Page 20-21).*

The same explanation further says:

*"Rasool-Allah SA. said that if I could order anyone to kneel down in front of anyone other than Allah, I would have ordered women to do that in front of their husbands. Bukhari Shareef (a book of Ahadees) says that if a husband calls his wife to the bed, and she refuses, then the Angels curse her till the morning. In Sahih Muslim, another book of Ahadees, it is said that if a woman does not go to bed with her husband due to being cross with him, then Allah's Angels of Mercy curse her for the whole night." (Page 21)*

This is the position of women compared to men in Islam as practiced today. As regards their being source of sin and evil, the books of tradition are full of examples. For example, Bukhari Shareef (considered to be the most accurate of the books of Ahadees) says:

*"It is narrated by Abu Hurraira® that the Messenger of Allah had said that if Bani-Israel were not there, the meat would never rot and if Eve was not there no woman would have betrayed her husband".*

(Bukhari - Book of Birth of Prophets)

Another tradition says:

*"Rasool-Allah SA. said ominousness is found in three things - the woman, the house and the horse".*

(Bukhari - Book of Nikah)

In this regard, another Hadees tells us:

*"Rasool-Allah SA. said that when he peeped into Heaven, He saw the poor, and when He looked into Hell, He found the majority to be women".*

(Bukhari - Book of Prophets)

It must be noted here that Rasool-Allah SA. is believed to have said that *"Heaven is at the feet of Mother"*, and on the other hand women were in hell in abundance! One should ask weren't they mothers? At least some of them must have been! Then, how come they themselves were in Hell and Heaven was under their feet! One can easily infer that these traditions were coined by men who considered women to be beings of low integrity, suitable to be their wives (so that their lowly desires could be fulfilled) and nothing else.

### **These Traditions Are All Fictitious**

Such beliefs make women hateful. Non-Muslims (mostly Jews) coined such traditions under a plan and collectors of Ahadees entered them into our books of Ahadees erroneously. Unfortunately, people adore these fictitious traditions and never think about the ramifications of associating and attributing such stories to Prophet Mohammed SA.. Anyone in his right mind, who refuses to



attribute them to Rasool-Allah SA., is branded for denial of Ahadees and excommunicated from Islam.

### 3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

It was mentioned earlier that a verse of Soora Al-Nisa is quoted extensively in the support of superiority of men over women. This is Verse 34 of Soora 4 and its traditional translation says:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ  
أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ  
فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا  
إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا

*Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that what Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then, if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High Exalted, Great.*

(English Translation by  
Marmaduke Pickthal - Taj Co. Ltd.)

This translation is not correct.

#### The Correct Explanation

Since the Holy Quran is a book of the Arabic Language, which is a living language, the explanation based on the basic concepts in classical Arabic is quite easy and

straightforward.

At the onset, it must be understood that this verse does not deal with the relations between husband and wife or man and his woman. It is talking about *الرجال* *men* and *النساء* *the women* in the general sense. Here Allah is explaining the obligations of men and women in the society.

It is common knowledge that women are not always free to earn their livelihood due to certain obligations (pregnancy, childbirth, nursing, and taking care of the children), whereas men are free to work and earn all the time. Therefore, according to the Quranic distribution of the duties, men were assigned the obligation of *قَوَامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ*. In the dictionary, *قوام عليها* means to provide subsistence. In other words, the rule is that the men of the society must provide the means of subsistence for the women in society. This is so because as per the rules of distribution of labour *بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ* one kind of working capacity has been given to men and another kind to women. Therefore, *وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ* the earnings of men (who are free to earn all the time) provide for the needs of the women, (who cannot earn all the time). This will fulfill the needs of woman and *فَالضَّالِمَاتُ* their abilities will develop positively. They will be free (from the burden of earning) so that they can utilize their special abilities, which are unique to them. This is the meaning of the word *قُنُوتٌ* *سقاء قنيت* it is that canteen which is closed firmly after filling water so that it will preserve its water and not let it spill. It should only open when the water need be discharged. If women have to earn their living, they will not be able to fulfill the function assigned to them. This



point is further explained by saying *حَفِظْتُكَ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ* i . e . *since Allah (by virtue of His law) has relieved them from having to provide their means of sustenance, they would be satisfied and become free to preserve what has been given to them inconspicuously (i.e. the safeguarding and nurturing of the embryo).*

It is to be noted here that the Holy Quran mentions the particular obligations of women and related matters in a very serious way, while our traditional translations make the men rulers and guardians and women obedient to them. They are supposed to stay chaste (in the absence of their husbands). In other words *قَالِصَاتٌ* is translated as, *Good women, obedient and preservers of chastity* as if chastity is only applicable to women. Actually in Soora Al-Ahzab (Soora 33) Verse 35, this virtue is given to both men and women. This is because if women should follow the laws of Allah, then men should too. Hence, to apply these words to infer that they support the supremacy of men over women is wrong from this point of view as well. Men and women are both companions and partners of each other and in companionship, for one to rule above the other is not possible. They are both one of a pair "URDU TEXT"; that is the word used in Holy Quran for them. This word in itself carries the message of Allah regarding compatibility, companionship, and complete understanding between the two.

#### 4. BEATING OF WOMEN

The remaining part of the above verse is

وَالَّذِينَ تَخَافُونَ شُرُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاجْبُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ

Since our traditional explanations of the Holy Quran have assumed that men are supposed to be guardians and rulers over women and the women must be obedient to them, they have taken the verse to mean that if a wife does not obey her husband then he should first try to make her understand; if not, break relations with her and ultimately if it does not work, to beat her.

As has been explained earlier, this verse is not talking about husband and wife but about the duties and obligations of men and women in society generally. In accordance with the distribution of work, men are supposed to earn and once women do not have to worry about earning, they should fulfill their particular duties (of motherhood) properly. If women, in spite of this arrangement, revolt against this arrangement of distribution of work without reason, (just as is happening in some western countries), then it is necessary for society to stop the anarchy. Imagine what will happen to the continuity of human race, if all women start imitating men and without reason abandon those duties which only they can perform. Therefore it is said that women of this mentality should first be taught and made to understand that their approach is disastrous for society. If they do not refrain, then they should be put under house arrest. This will be like internment; if any of them still continues to revolt, then courts could sentence her to corporal punishment.

It should be clarified that no woman could be forced to bear children. This injunction from Allah is against organized revolt against child bearing and duties of motherhood.

Another point worth noting is that the Holy Quran has

ordained that for the establishment of the Islamic System (Social Order), an independent sovereign government is a must. However, it has not used the terms like, *Government, State, Judiciary and its Subordinates and Courts*, etc., as it makes all members of the society responsible for carrying out the affairs of the State. That is why, all usual obligations of the State have been addressed to " **كُم** " your or **هَم** "they. For Example, in connection with the punishment of thieves, it is said **وَالسَّارِقُ وَالسَّارِقَةُ فَاقْطَعُوا أَيْدِيَهُمَا** (5:38) *you should 'cut' hands of Male thief and female thief* . It is obvious that only a competent court after hearing the case will decide on the punishment and the Government will carry out the decision accordingly. Here neither the court nor the government, is mentioned only "you" have been mentioned. "You" does not mean that everyone in the society, including the victim, has the right to cut the hand of the thief by himself/herself. Therefore, it should be clear that men (even husbands) do not have the right to punish women (even wives) by themselves without the court order.

This is the correct explanation of this verse, which we are usually told, allows husbands to be the rulers and guardians over their wives and to suppress them to make them obedient. **The Holy Quran does not allow any human being to rule over any other human.**

## 5. **WOMEN'S EQUALITY**

The main rule of the Holy Quran which has made men and women equal to each other will be discussed later. Below are some of the verses of the Holy Quran which make it clear that men and women are partners and equally capable. It is



said in Soora Al-Ahzab (Soora 33) Verse 35

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَنَاتِ  
وَالْقَنَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ  
وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَالصَّالِحَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ  
فُرُوجَهُمُ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ  
مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

In this verse various qualities have been described, by using masculine and feminine form of the same word. This implies that a woman can do what a man can do and just as well. It says:

*Definitely,*

الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ *Men are capable of integrating themselves, by obeying to the laws of Allah and so are women.*

وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ *Men can belong to the party which believes that the sure result of following Allah's Laws will be universal peace, and so can women.*

وَالْقَنَاتِ وَالْقَنَاتِ *Men have the capability to preserve their abilities in such a way that they use them only in accordance with his laws, and so have women.*

وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ *Men are capable of proving the truthfulness of their claims about conviction (about the Holy Quran and whatever it stands for), and so are women.*

وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ *Men are steadfast and so are women.*

وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ *Men keep on bowing more and more in front of the Laws of Allah as they develop their abilities more and more, and so do the women.*

وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ *Men can be charitable and so can*

women be.

وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّامِتِينَ *Men can control and restrain themselves from whatever is asked of them, so can women.*

وَالْحَفِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَفِظَاتِ *Men can control their sex drives within allowable bonds, and so can women..*

وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذِّكْرَ *Men are capable of comprehending and considering the laws of Allah all the time, and so are women.*

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا *Since all the above qualities are available in both of them, therefore, results of their efforts should be the same. Hence in Allah's system, both of them have protection and great reward.*

After considering all of the above details given by the Holy Quran, there is no aspect of human life about which Allah might have given an ability to men and not to women. This is the reason the Holy Quran says that both of them will enter heaven together, may it be the Heaven of home, society or the hereafter. وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ اُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يُلَاقِيكَ (4:124) and that the efforts of both men and women will not go in vain. اِنِّى لَا اُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ (3:195).

There is no doubt that, as per the distribution of responsibilities, there are certain functions particular to the woman (for example, pregnancy, childbirth and the initial care and training of children). For the same reason, her body is built differently from man; and so is her psyche, which helps her with her duties, such as the love and affection for the child, and ability to sacrifice. What a sacrifice! That it begins

with the embryo, which develops with her blood and continues in the form of lactation after birth. The mother has such an abundance of patience and tolerance that she can fulfill all kinds of demands from her child with a smile, without expecting any thanks or reward. This and other similar qualities make women unique.

## 6. EQUAL PARTICIPANTS IN GOVERNMENT

At the same time, her uniqueness does not mean that she cannot participate in other aspects of life. The Holy Quran has described the most important responsibility of an Islamic Government is to order what is right and stop what is wrong. It has made both men and women equally responsible for it. Soora Al-Tauba (Soora 9) Verse 71, says:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ  
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ  
أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٧١﴾

*Men and women are each other's friends and benefactors. Both of them order what is right and stop (others from) what is wrong. They establish the system of Salat and arrange for giving Zakat. They obey Allah and His Messenger. These are the ones who will be blessed with kind protection and growth (like an embryo gets in mother's womb). This will be from Allah, Who is all powerful and His power is based on reason.*

It should be noted that "to order the people to do what is right and stopping them from what is wrong" is not a matter



of sermons in mosques only. This is the responsibility of the Government of any particular region. Soora Haj (Soora 22) Verse 41 tells us:

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا  
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَاللَّهُ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

*These Momins are those who, when they will have their own Government, will establish system of Salat, a system of Zakat (i.e. providing means of development for all), and order what is right and stop others from what is wrong and in the end, all matters will be decided in accordance with the Laws of Allah*

Hence it is clear that both men and women run the Government together. It implies that women can equally participate in the affairs of the State.

## 7. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATION

With respect to the rights and obligations of men (husbands) and women (wives) the Holy Quran has beautifully contained the basic concept in a few words (2:238)

لَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

*The women have rights as much as they have obligations.*

In other words, for every responsibility given to them, they acquire a right. What an equality! It is an irony that the very verse which equates rights and obligations is usually quoted to say that men are superior to women. The details are quite amusing. The above verse continues to say"

وَاللِّرِّجَالُ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ which according to traditional

translators means "*Men are superior to Women*".

If, on one hand, the verse says that the men and women have equal rights and obligations and on the other that the men are superior to women, it would be a clear contradiction. One gender cannot be superior to another if their rights and obligations are equal. The word used by the Holy Quran is **درجة** meaning "*one degree*". This "*degree*" can be understood easily by reviewing the whole verse. This verse from Soora Al-Baqra (Soora 2) deals with the conditions attached to remarriage after divorce. The verse is:

وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنْفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ ۖ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكُنَّ  
مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۚ وَبُعُولَتُهُنَّ  
أَحَقُّ بِرَدِّهِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ  
بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

"Divorcees should refrain (from remarriage) for three menstrual cycles. (This period is usually called Iddat.). This is so because whatever has been created by Allah (i.e. in accordance with His Laws) becomes pronounced etc....then it says.... men have one advantage " (i.e. men can remarry right away and women have to wait almost three months, or more if found to be pregnant, before they can re-marry). Obviously, an advantage in a peculiar situation does not mean one is superior than the other.

There are two more arguments raised by our so-called religious authorities against equality of men and women:

1. The inheritance laws, where it is said that the daughters get half of what the sons get.
2. Two women are considered equal to one man as

witnesses.

### **Girl's Share in Inheritance**

According to the Holy Quran, daughters inherit half of what sons get (4:11). As has been discussed earlier, the type of society envisaged by the Holy Quran has men in the primary role of providing for women (and children) and women are busy taking care of their responsibilities without worrying about earning for living. It is but natural, therefore, that they should inherit more. This is particularly so as children represent a new generation whose needs must be fulfilled as well as the needs of aging parents.

Where the distribution of inheritance is amongst the people of the same generation, as is the case of a brother and sister (in case the deceased was issue-less and parents were still living) each of them gets one sixth (equal). For parents, it is again one sixth each for mother and father. Therefore, it is wrong to say that the Holy Quran has made a general rule that the woman's share is half of the man's; it is only so for sons and daughters, members of the future generation or others where the situation is similar.

In the secular world, men are not likely to fulfill their Quranic obligations, and women may not be provided for. Therefore, until the Quranic Society is established, the Holy Quran has empowered the deceased the full right to distribute his/her belongings as he/she chooses through a Will. The proportions of inheritance fixed by the Holy Quran are only applicable when one dies without making a Will or if the Will does not cover the whole of the estate of the deceased. This has been explicitly mentioned in the Holy Quran. (It is



solving a peculiar situation. It is not an edict that men are not reliable and therefore one cannot trust the evidence of one. Two witnesses consolidate the evidence.

Similarly, when two women were required as witnesses instead of one man, the implication should not be unreliability. It is only a way of consolidation of the evidence and not that women are less reliable. As far as comparative trust of testimony from man and woman is concerned, the Holy Quran has made both equally trustworthy. For example, evidence from a woman or man is equally acceptable in case of abuse (See 24:6-9).

The other part of the problem relates to the matter of one of the women getting perplexed etc. This verse was revealed about fourteen hundred years ago. Even today, in most societies, women are not used to the courts and to dealing with strange men. Such state of women has been described by Allah in (43:18), which was prevalent at the time of revelation

أَوْ مَنْ يُنشَأُ فِي الْحُلِيِّ وَهُوَ فِي الْخِصَامِ غَيْرُ مُبِينٍ

*the ones raised loaded with jewelry, who cannot even describe clearly what is in her mind.*

It must be clarified here that making agreements in the presence of two witnesses is one thing and taking evidence in a dispute is another. The evidence will only be taken from one. The other will remind the first one if she gets perplexed, if not, then the second one will keep quiet.

Further, one should not raise girls entrenched in gold and jewellery which does not prepare them to face the world

interesting to note that as per the traditional religion, the Quranic Law regarding Will is considered canceled. Is it believable???)

### **Women As Witness**

The other quoted objection is regarding a woman as a witness. Soora Al-Baqra (Soora 2) Verse 282 says that *"When you make a loan agreement, then the deal must be written down and let there be two male witnesses"*. Then it continues to say: *"If two men are not available, then one man and two women"*. Why should two women be called? This is explained by the Holy Quran by saying *أَنْ تَضِلَّ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَىٰ* which is translated to mean *"if one forgets, the other could remind her"*. The main word here is ضلال which means to get confused or become perplexed and not forgets. Here the main issue is:

1. Why must there be two women instead of one man?
2. Why is it said for the women that they could be perplexed or confused? Some people imply that the reason according to the Holy Quran is that the women are less reliable and of lower mental capability as compared to men.

As far as the reliability is concerned, the Holy Quran has required even of men to be two as witnesses and not one. Does that imply that Allah does not consider men to be reliable that one was not considered enough? Should both of the men give evidence? This is required only so that if one of them misses any detail or gets confused then the other could fill the missing information. In other words, it is a legal way of

*obligations are concerned, men are better in some and women in other. But, it does not mean that women become invalid and look up to men to earn and not work themselves. They should strive to and expect from Allah to increase their earning abilities. Allah is all knowing and therefore knows what they could do.*

This means that whatever the women inherit or earn themselves is their own property. If the husband and wife have a successful relationship, and they do not stay businesslike with each other, the legal status of property ownership will still stay the same as the Holy Quran has indicated.

In the light of the above explanations, it becomes clear that under no circumstance, women are inferior to men or for that matter husbands are superior to their wives. These ideas of male supremacy in our society (unfortunately which are attributed to religious laws) have been borrowed from Christianity, Judaism or Hinduism. The Holy Quran should not to be blamed.

Alas! the present day Muslim theocratic leadership hates women so much that they even consider them half human, even after their death. Their consented opinion is that the compensation for manslaughter in case of women will be half of that of the men. Leadership that is so discriminatory cannot be expected to equate men and women. This is only possible if the Holy Quran (alone) is singled out as the source of Islamic Law.



## 9. THE VEIL

Another matter that concerns women is that of physical exposure of their bodies. It is a very sensitive issue as most of people are quite emotional about this subject. The Muslim clergy feels that women should stay inside (the walls of the house); and if they go out, then they should look like walking tents! This has been taken for granted so much so that the clergy does not even feel that it has to quote any authority in this regard!

Allah, when talking about Jews and Christians, had described that they have made their priests and mystics, gods short of the real God. Exactly the same situation has prevailed in our society for generations. Whatever the clergy says, becomes the word of God. Allah had asked Prophet Mohammed SA. in the verse (66:1):

لَمْ تُخِزْهُمُ مَّا أَحَلَّ اللَّهُ لَهُ

*you forbidden for yourself what is made permissible by Allah'!*

But, most of the Muslim priests and mystics consider themselves as if they have the license to declare whatever they think is permissible, even though it may not be allowed by Allah, and forbid what He may have allowed.

In this regard their first target is the woman. They want to tie her down and confiscate her God given freedom. The VEIL is one of the most drastic of these restrictions. The veil and the associated restrictions put on the women on this pretext, restrains them from participating fully in all walks of life; whereas Allah has not made any such restrictions.

59, Allah asked Rasool-Allah SA. To

قُلْ لِّأَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَبَنَاتِكُمْ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ  
مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَى أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ

*Tell your WIVES, DAUGHTERS and other Momin women to wear their Jalbab (over-all, apron upon a loose cloth over your clothes), so that they could be recognized and not be disturbed*

The next verse says that if they still continue to tease the women, treat them like criminals (33:60). It is clear, therefore, that the reason of wearing Jalbab is so that they could be recognized and nothing more.

The explicit nature of the verse (33:59) indicates that the injunctions of the Holy Quran regarding the precautions required of Muslim women while they go out were only applicable in those peculiar circumstances of that society. They were not forever nor unchangeable. The prime importance should be given to the spirit of the Quranic Injunctions. They are not changeable, but how to apply them will vary from time to time, place to place. For example, the reasons for going to war, in principle, are permanent and unchangeable, but how will it be fought including methods, tools, etc. will change from time to time. Once this concept is understood, the need for these apparent restrictions can be understood.

In other words, the Jalbab is more of a uniform for identification rather than anything else. In a predominantly Muslim Society, this will not be necessary as most of the women will be Muslim and everyone would know that.

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The Holy Quran has not required anyone to cover the face nor the head/hair. However, it has required decent clothing and the covering of the bosoms (Soora Al-Noor, 24:31) and has asked the women not to show themselves off (33:33). Similarly, confining women to their homes is only allowed as a punishment for obscenity and abomination (4:15). Thus, to expect half of the humanity to be punished by confining them to their homes for no crime is an injustice which has no parallel.

## 10. CHASTITY

The Holy Quran has placed great importance on sexual conduct and the matter of chastity. This is one of the permanent values. It requires both men and women to be chaste. As a matter of fact, it requires first men to be **وَيَحْفَظُونَ فُرُوجَهُمْ** chaste (24:30) and then women **وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ** (24:31).

It described the Momin men and women to be **وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ** (33:35) "the men who are protectors of chastity and the women who are protectors (of chastity)".

Unfortunately, in most of Muslim societies, women are expected to be chaste and not men. The word **عصمت** (chaste) has been singled out for women. Women are always blamed for any kind of permissiveness in society and not men.

There is no movement ever to say that men should be chaste. The clergy always blames women for all ills, particularly with respect to lewdness in the society. The fact is, if men do not approach the women for their lowly desires,



women alone can never be lewd. Even if a woman suggests or tries to lure a man, the obscenity will not spread if the man adheres to moral values. The physical act of immorality is always perpetrated by the man, but he always, with the help of the clergy, tries to put the blame on the woman.

One of the main arguments in favor of confinement of women to homes is that the faith of men (that they should stay moral and chaste) gets disturbed if the women go out of their homes. It is shocking, insulting and humiliating that the faith of men is considered so weak that it gets disturbed only by seeing women! Any faith that is so weak, by virtue of definition, constitutes demotion of the word Eiman, which implies conviction. It seems that, by default, women are responsible for the Eiman of men as well. In addition to their responsibilities! They should be locked up in homes, so that they could keep their Eiman!!!

The dilemma is that the Holy Quran (since it is from the Creator who knows His creations well) has taken precautionary measures. It says that when one goes out, one should keep the eyes low (i.e. not to let them go wild). It is interesting to note that this instruction is first given to men “قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ” (24:30) and then to women “وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ” (24:31).

The idea is, not that by lowering the eyes they should bump into each other, it implies that they should not be on the lookout for the opposite sex just for the sake of it.

## 11. CONFINEMENT

The confinement of women within the four walls of

the house is a punishment proposed by the Holy Quran for lewdness and obscenity. In other words, they might not have fornicated, but outwardly acted in a way or enticed men which might lead to illegal sexual acts. The Holy Quran says in Soora Al-Nisa (Soora 4), Verse 15

وَالَّتِي يَأْتِيَنَّ الْفَاحِشَةَ مِنْ نِسَائِكُمْ فَاسْتَشْهَدُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ أَرْبَعَةً مِّنكُمْ  
فَإِنْ شَهِدُوا فَامْسِكُوهُنَّ فِي الْبُيُوتِ حَتَّى يَتَوَقَّعَهُنَّ الْبُيُوتُ أَوْ يُجْعَلَ  
لِلَّهِ لِهِنَّ سَبِيلًا

*If any of your women act lewdly (which could lead to fornication), then you should have (at least) four witnesses from amongst you. If they are proven guilty, then confine them into the house for life or (Allah's other laws) create different circumstances (such as their marriage, reform by society, a change in other conditions, etc.).*

As has been mentioned earlier, the Arab Society of Rasool-Allah's SA. era was not civilized. Even the Muslims had to be reformed continuously to remove the deep rooted practices of the earlier time. This process of change looked harsh at times, but since Allah has explained the reasons for such such injunctions, the injunctions got limited to those set of circumstances.

One such injunction was restricting the movement of wives of the Prophet SA. (only them and not all women). They were told (33:32) *يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ لَأَنْتَ كَأَخٍ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ* 'You are not just one of the women folk' and then they were told to (33:33) *وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ* 'you should mostly stay at home' (as the society is going through a transformation) and further it is



Said وَلَا تَبْرُجْنَ تَبْرُجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى 'Do not show off like the earlier era of ignorance'. The word for show off used is تَبْرُج Which will be explained later, but it is important to note that they were asked not to act like they used to, prior to the advent of Islam.

Thus they were taught to live gracefully and were told  
 إِنَّ اتَّقِينَ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَعْرُوفًا (33:32)

*"If you have to talk to strange men, do not make your voice soft and attractive that the men with bad intentions may find encouragement. You should speak to them properly as normal conversation".*

This again shows the type of low society that existed at the advent of Islam and the steps that were necessary to transform the society.

## 12. ADORNMENT

This article is not meant to explain how much importance the Holy Quran gives to the enhancement of beauty and elegance of whatever is found in nature. (The details regarding it could be seen in the Article "Art and Islam" by Allama Parwez, published in Tolu-e-Islam Magazine of July 1979). Here, however, it is pertinent to mention what the Holy Quran has described for the adornment or ornamentation of women Soora Al-Aaraf (Soora 7) Verse 32, says:

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ

*"Say (O Rasool-Allah SA., ask them) who has forbidden you the adornments which have been made*

*pleasant by Allah for the use of His people as well as the niceties of nourishment (food)".*

In other words, Allah has challenged those who forbid the use of adornments. Hence it is permissible for both men and women.

However, there is a big difference between satisfying one's aesthetic sense and showing off. In the pre-Islamic era, the prime purpose of adornment was showing off (and still is in most societies). The Holy Quran corrected it when it said "*do not show off as you used to at the time of Ignorance* in verse (33:32) as quoted earlier.

The word used for show off is *تَبَرَّجَ* (Root ج ر ج) which means *to raise up; to induce with the purpose of excitement*. It also means to *stir up*, just as the milk is stirred in a churn. from it is the Arabic word for churn *أَبْرَج*.

Therefore, *Tabaruj* will be that kind of showing off, which could excite the feelings of wicked men. This was the purpose of adornment at that time and that is why they were told to refrain from intentional showing off. That is why it is said that *وَلَا يَبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا* (24:31) "*Don't show off intentionally, except what shows off by itself*".

As has been noted above, the circumstances associated with wearing of *Jalbab* were unique, but it is required of women to wear their clothes in a way to cover their bosoms *يُخْفِيْنَ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ* (24:31). Even when they walk they should not stamp their feet that they expose their adornments, *وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ زِينَتِهِنَّ ط* (24:31).

All the above injunctions do not oppose adornment, except when it is for showing off. At the same time, it has been said in Soora Al-Noor (Soora 24) Verse 36:

*"The women should not show off their adornments, except in front of their husbands, father, father-in-law, sons or step sons, brothers, nephews, other women who are known to them, slaves and bond maids (the ones who were prevalent prior to Islam, which Islam forbade later) or other workers who are older and beyond sexual activity level or such children who are not yet versed with matters of sex".*

In addition, the Holy Quran has cared for the privacy of couples, when it said that children and the servants should not come into the sleeping quarters prior to morning (Salat al-Fajr), afternoon when people rest and at night (after Salat al-Isha) without taking permission.

### 13. CLEANSING OF THE INTELLECT

All the rules and the instructions of the Holy Quran mentioned earlier have been for the sole purpose of cleansing the mentality and correction of the habits of the society that were prevalent in the era before the advent of Islam. These ways could not fit in the Islamic Social Order. Therefore the purpose behind these regulations was explained in verse (33:33):

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا

*"Allah wants to cleanse your mentality and purify your character"*



The fundamental purpose of Deen (Islam) in relation to sex is the maintenance of chastity. All the rules mentioned in the previous pages are just a means to achieve the end. The Islamic Government (not to be confused with the Governments where Muslim live) will have to review the conditions in a particular environment and then decide the best way to achieve the goal. The cleansing of sexual relations can never be achieved by applying laws mechanically nor with force alone. This is a psychological desire and can only be controlled by purifying the thoughts.

That is why it is said in verse (40:19)

يَعْلَمُ خَائِنَةَ الْأَعْيُنِ وَمَا تُخْفِي الصُّدُورُ

*Allah knows the secrets of the heart and perfidy of the eye*

An example of the relationship between the sexual behavior and the mental attitude of the individual could be seen in everyday life. An otherwise corrupt man could be living in a small room with his sister with no sexual feeling (sex perversion is a different matter), but as soon as he goes out of his house, he would not mind anything to achieve his objective. How come his behavior is different towards each of the two grown-up women? The only difference is that he has been told since childbirth that he cannot even look at her sister in that way. Hence, it is a matter of training and guidance.

By virtue of its unique teaching, the Holy Quran trains young men and women and creates such a change in their mentality that every young man considers every girl or woman (other than his wife) to be his sister. When the Holy Quran says in verse (49:10) *إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ* it does not mean that



only Momin men are brothers of each other, it also implies that Momin women are their sisters as well. (The Holy Quran has used the same word for brothers as well as sisters - See 4:176).

Hence, if the mentality of people could be cleansed by proper training, it could solve such problems. If not so, there can be no law or method on earth which would solve the problem.

#### 14. CONCLUSION

As was mentioned earlier, the governing rule regarding equality will be discussed later. That rule of the Holy Quran is that there is no difference between one human being and another.

The Jews believe that Heaven is for anyone who is born in a Jewish home. Non-Jews would not be able to enter Heaven. This is the biggest discrimination between one man and another. No one decides the family he or she is born into. To discriminate against non-Jews on this basis, is not worthy of a true God.

The Christians believe that every child coming into this world carries forward the first sin of Adam and Eve and until and unless he believes in the atonement (of Jesus) he/she cannot have salvation (i.e. cannot enter heaven). It is obvious, no person is born in this world out of his/her own decision.

Hence it is unjust to attribute any sin that he/she has no control over.

The Hindus believe that all human beings are divided

into four groups by virtue of their birth. The Brahmins are born from the head of their God, therefore they have all the respect and power. Khastri, born from the arms are the warriors, commanders and rulers. Waish, born from God's stomach, are the businessmen. Shooder, born from God's feet, are supposed to serve others, especially the Brahmin. They are practically considered non-human. No one can change this distribution. Should this discrimination be from God, then what kind of impression one gets of God!

With the revelation of the Holy Quran, all of the aforementioned misconceptions were wiped out with one stroke, when it was said in Soora Al-Asra (Soora 17), Verse 70:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ

*We have created all human beings to be equally worthy of respect*

Hence one cannot discriminate between one human and another by virtue of its birth. All human beings are equally respectable in the eyes of Allah. It is obvious that word 'human' includes both men and women. Hence all the injunctions of the Holy Quran are equally applicable, whenever *human or people* etc. are mentioned, to both men and women.

The fact of the matter is that no boy is born by his own decision to be a boy nor a girl is born by hers. Hence to consider girls (or women) to be inferior to boys (or men) is just like accepting the misconceptions mentioned earlier which have been negated by the Holy Quran. Nevertheless, to

consider men superior to women, is against the basic principles of the Holy Quran and negates God's designs. According to the Holy Quran, superiority depends on the individual qualities (developed personality, character, and one's deeds) and not by virtue of birth. In Islam's basic principles, men and women are equal partners. All these ideas of man's superiority are the creation of the "Islam" manufactured during the era of Muslim monarchy, when the women were auctioned off in markets. The classical books of Muslim jurisprudence are full of rules and regulations about their trade.

### **The High Status of Women**

The notion that women have been created to just fulfill the needs of men has been hammered into the subconscious of womenfolk to such an extent that women want to present themselves in that way. To men, they should appear attractive. That is the reason the Holy Quran does not mind them showing off in front of father, brothers, sons, etc. since one does not "dress up" to "show off" in front of them with the intent of attracting their attention. It is worth noting that the Quranic verse next to the one regarding "show off" (33:33), is the declaration of their equality with men. The verse has been quoted earlier, when it is said in Soora Al-Ahzab Verse (33:35),

Definitely, men and women have been equally given ability that they:

1. Submit to the Laws of Allah.
2. Should not obey the laws mechanically, but should be

convinced of their truthfulness and their healthy results.

3. Should develop their abilities and use them only when they have been told to by the laws of Allah.
4. Should justify the agreement they have made with Allah (9:111).
5. Should stay steadfast while facing difficulties.
6. Should be always available and willing to serve mankind.
7. Should be able to spend all they have got on the system made to implement God's Laws.
8. Should restrain themselves wherever Allah's Laws require them to and observe the limitations imposed on them.
9. Should protect their chastity and honor.
10. Should always remind themselves of the Laws of Allah in all matters.

*These are the people who will be protected by Allah's Law of Requitel from destruction in all walks of life and Allah will reward them for their efforts and work (3:194, 4:124).*

The Holy Quran tells women that men and women are both equally capable of performing the chores of life; then why should they (women) have the desire to show their adornment off to men. Unlike the Biblical notion that the woman was created to please the man, the Holy Quran has



wiped off this concept and said that both men and women have not been created just to fulfill the needs of any one of them. Both have been created to fulfill equally, Allah's programme for this universe. It wants women to be dignified and that is why it is opposed to women showing off their embellishment to men. They are not a commodity which should be made attractive for buyers so that they could fetch a good price. The women who cannot get rid of this desire are told in verse (7:176):

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَرَفَعْنَاهُ بِهَا وَلَكِنَّهُ أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ

*We wanted to elevate you (with The Holy Quran), but you have embraced the earth by virtue of trailing your lowly desires.*

It is hoped that readers realize the great importance Allah has given to women as the securer of the world's posterity. Therefore, they should be proud of their unique position and not necessarily copy or envy the opposite sex. Rather than regretting the fact that they are women, they should try to set themselves as equal to men, as Allah has ordained, and take their rightful position in the human society.

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