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Submitters Perspective

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Religious Equality

Quran vs. Tradition

Are men and women equal in God's eyes?

In this age of women's liberation it is political suicide to answer this question with a "no." But what does God say? What does traditional Islam teach?

Every westerner thinks that Islam is very chauvinistic and oppressive towards women. In the religion practiced by most traditional sectarian Muslims, this is absolutely true.

However, in Submission, true Islam as revealed in the Quran, nothing could be farther from the truth! God treats men and women as spiritual equals.

As an example, Quran 3:195 tells us:

Their Lord responded to them:
"I never fail to reward any worker among you for any work you do, **be you male or female — you are equal to one another.** Thus, those who immigrate, and get evicted from their homes, and are persecuted because of Me, and fight and get killed, I will surely remit their sins and admit them into gardens with flowing streams." Such is the reward from God. God possesses the ultimate reward. (Quran 3:195)

In this verse God tells us that women are absolutely equal to men. Both sexes can work in the cause of God, immigrate, be persecuted, fight and die for God.

This is what God says. What do tradi-

tional Muslims believe? What does hadith say?

Women are naturally, morally and religiously defective. (Bukhari)

Because women usually do not have the physical strength of men, hadithists see them as "naturally defective." They forget that women have other natural qualities in which they are superior to men, like their ability to endure pain, the ability to bear children, etc. Hadithists see women as "morally defective," conveniently ignoring the fact that the vast majority of individuals jailed for murder, rape, child abuse, etc., are men. And hadithists claim that women are "religiously defective," but it is they who forbid their daughters from praying and fasting during their menstrual periods and it is they who discourage or forbid the women from coming to the mosque, even for the Friday prayers.

Their problem is that they have taken the words of men instead of those of God.

After making it all but impossible for a woman to practice her religion for about 25% of her life (the amount of time most women have their periods), is it any wonder that hadithists claim that the majority of people in hell are women?

Ibn'Abaas reported that Allah's Messenger (may peace be upon him) said: I had a chance to look into the Paradise and I found that [the] majority of the people was poor and I looked into the Fire and there I found the majority consti-

tuted by women. (Sahih Muslim - 6597)

However, what God revealed in the Quran is very different.

The spiritual equality between men and women is reiterated in 4:124, as follows:

As for those who lead a righteous life, male or female, while believing, they enter Paradise; without the slightest injustice. (Quran 4:124)

And again in 16:97:

Anyone who works righteousness, male or female, while believing, we will surely grant them a happy life in this world, and we will surely pay them their full recompense (on the Day of Judgment) for their righteous works. (Quran 16:97)

And yet again in 40:40!

Whoever commits a sin is required for just that, and whoever works righteousness — male or female — while believing, these will enter Paradise wherein they receive provisions without any limits. (Quran 40:40)

Thus God does not tell us just once or twice that men and women are spiritually

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Again note that unless you are in the directory, you will not be able to benefit from the directory. Therefore, all submitters, especially parents, should encourage the young adults in their community to submit this information as soon as possible. The deadline is March 31, 1994.

We would like to make the directory as complete as possible. God willing, we will have it printed and ready for the 1994 conference.

Send to:

Universal Unity
P.O. Box 15067
Fremont, CA 94539

Naoko Chiba

We will keep that information in our files so that we can forward correspondence to you.

We will act as a clearing house only for those submitters who are in the directory. Therefore, if you are not in the directory, you will not be able to get information on someone in the directory.

Anyone in the directory wanting to write to another submitter in the directory should mail the letter to us in an already sealed envelope with the receiving submitter's name and a stamp. Please be sure to put enough postage on a letter which is to go overseas.

We will fill in the address and send it on. Be sure to include your own address or phone number in the letter if you want the submitter you are writing to contact you directly.

Young Submitters' Directory

God willing, we plan to publish a directory that will consist of all of the young submitters (14 years to single young adults) in the world. We need your help in this endeavor. Each young submitter should please send the following for publication:

- 1) Passport size photograph
- 2) Name
- 3) Birth date
- 4) Hobbies, interests, etc.
- 5) Profession or schooling
- 6) Country of residence
- 7) A short paragraph (5-6 lines) describing how and why you became a believer.

Note that the directory will not include your address and/or the phone number.

and religiously equal. He tells us four times!

Also, the religious duties of men and women are the same, and each of us must strive to "race towards righteousness" as much as possible:

The submitting men,
the submitting women,
the believing men,
the believing women,
the obedient men,
the obedient women,
the truthful men,
the truthful women,
the steadfast men,
the steadfast women,
the reverent men,
the reverent women,
the charitable men,
the charitable women,
the fasting men, the fasting women,
the chaste men, the chaste women,
and the men who commemorate
God frequently,
and the commemorating women;
God has prepared for them
forgiveness and
a great recompense.
(Quran 33:35)

Not only does God make it very clear that men and women are spiritual and religious equals, but He specifically gives the following as examples of believers:

And God cites as an example of those who believed the wife of Pharaoh. She said, "My Lord, build a home for me at You in Paradise, and save me from Pharaoh and his works; save me

from the transgressing people." Also Mary, the Amramite. She maintained her chastity, then we blew into her from our spirit. She believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures; she was obedient.
(Quran 66:11-12)

Pharaoh's wife wanted to please God, instead of Pharaoh. She prayed that God would save her from Pharaoh and his evil works.

The example of Pharaoh's wife is in sharp contrast to the following hadith:

Umm Salamah relates that the Holy Prophet said: if a woman dies and her husband is pleased with her she will enter Paradise. (Tirmidhi - 288)

Of course, just like men, women can be disbelievers:

God cites as examples of those who disbelieved the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were married to two of our righteous servants, but they betrayed them and, consequently, they could not help them at all against God. The two of them were told, "Enter the Hellfire with those who deserved it."
(Quran 66:10)

Throughout the Quran God addresses the believers "O you who believe," not "O you believing men." This makes it clear that all believers are covered by the commandments given in the Quran, and the promises of guidance and forgiveness too.

God also addresses us "O people," or "O children of Adam." We are all people, we are all children of Adam regardless of our sex.

God created us all from one person:

O people, observe your Lord; the One who created you from one being, and created from it its mate, then spread from the two many men and women. You shall regard God, by whom you swear, and regard the parents. God is watching over you.
(Quran 4:1)

All of us, male and female alike, pray each day to be guided, to be helped. All of us recite the following sura seventeen times each day during our Contact (Salat) prayers, regardless of our gender:

In the name of God,
Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
Praise be to God,
Lord of the universe.
Most Gracious, Most Merciful.
Master of the Day of Judgment.
You alone we worship.
You alone we ask for help.
Guide us in the right path;
the path of those
whom You blessed;
not of those who have deserved
wrath,
nor of the strayers.
(Quran 1:1-7)

God made us spiritual equals and He helps and guides each one of us as individuals, whether we are male or female.

Lisa Spray

News Update from Around the World

EGYPT The Case of the Professor vs. the Fundamentalists

An Egyptian court ruled in late January to dismiss the case brought by "Muslim" fundamentalists against professor Nasser Abu Zeid (see *Submitters Perspective*, December 1993 issue). He is the Cairo University professor of Arabic literature whose writing so inflamed the fanatics that he has been declared as an apostate. According to the human-made *Sharia* law, Abu Zeid's marriage to his wife, who is a professor of French at the same University, must be dissolved because it is unlawful for a Muslim woman to remain married to an apostate. A civil affairs court judge turned down the suit on grounds that the plaintiffs had no direct interest in the case.

"Muslim" fanatics in Egypt have waged a campaign of violence for more than two years to push for an "Islamic" state, resulting in nearly 300 deaths. Egyptian intellectuals, one of the targets of the campaign, have watched the professor's case closely. They are reminded of the 1992 murder of Farag Foda, a writer who was an outspoken critic of the fundamentalists. The *'ulama* had issued a decree declaring Foda an apostate, hence giving the fanatics a license to kill him.

Lawyers for the fundamentalists have pledged to appeal. One of them insisted that "any Muslim has the right to ask for the separation of an apostate from his wife." An *'ulama* who supported the suit said there were 200 instances in Abu Zeid's writings "which prove that he has insulted prophet Muhammad and Islamic law."

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MALAYSIA Kelantan Sharia Legislation: A Move Backward

A group of Muslim professional women in Malaysia have voiced their opposition to the enactment of the *Sharia* Criminal Code in the Malaysian state of Kelantan. The PAS-controlled Kelantan State Assembly passed the legislation in November (PAS is the Malay acronym for the Islamic Party of Malaysia).

Calling themselves the Sisters-in-Islam, the group includes journalists, academicians and lawyers. They submitted a four-page memorandum to Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad outlining their objections. In it, they argued that the enactment discriminated against women in criminal and divorce matters. They also questioned the basis of the law which prescribes amputation of limbs for thefts, stoning to death for adulterers and lashings for alcoholic consumptions. Other aspects of the law which they found questionable included the death penalty for apostasy. "They are the product of human interpretations, consensus and human inference, not divine injunctions," said the memorandum.

The Sisters-in-Islam has become the first Muslim group in the country to voice their objection publicly (a noted Malaysian writer, Dr. Kassim Ahmad—who is the head of the Malaysian Quranic Society—has also written a newspaper article critical of the legislation). The women's group also urged the National Front coalition, which holds power at the federal level, to postpone any action that might permit the implementation of the Kelantan law. Although the National Front, which rules in 10 remaining states in Malaysia, has no plans to replace the present secular criminal code, it has not made clear its opposition to the Kelantan's move. This reflects the appearance of paralysis among the politicians in the country because of this controversial issue. As one Muslim parliamentarian from the National Front of the Kelantan state puts it, "even if we disagree, we can't oppose it because these provisions are prescribed in the Quran." Which goes to show that so many people who call themselves Muslims are actually ignorant of what the Quran says.

Editor's note: An article by Dr. Kassim Ahmad on how Malaysia should resolve the Sharia Law dilemma will be published in a coming issue of SP, God willing.

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Important Update:

International Conference of United Submitters July 15-17, 1994

God willing, this year's International Conference of United Submitters will be held on July 15-17. Please note that these dates are different than those previously announced. There is also a small change in the location of the conference. Originally we were hoping to hold the conference in Vancouver. But because of the timing and possible border crossing problems for some Submitters, the location of the conference has been moved to south of Vancouver, across the border on the American side. The new site is also a beautiful place to get together and enjoy each other's company. Therefore, let us all make plans to attend the conference by God's leave.

For those of you who will be coming by air, you can either fly to Vancouver, B.C., or you can fly to Seattle, Washington. In both cases some driving will be needed, about half an hour from Vancouver, or one hour and 15 minutes from Seattle. Our brothers and sisters in Vancouver are looking into some kind of shuttle arrangements from both airports to the conference site. The earlier we know about your plans, the better arrangement they will be able to make. Therefore please start making your plans to attend the conference. We pray to God that He gives us the opportunity to be with the Submitters from all around the world.

Look for more details in the following issues of the Submitters Perspective. God willing we will see you all at the conference.