The IDEAL MUSLIMAH
The True Islamic Personality of the Muslim Woman
as Defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah

Dr. Muhammad Ali Al-Hashimi

Translated by Nasiruddin Al-Khattab
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Translator's Foreword

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Preface to first edition

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Praise be to Allah (SWT), Lord of the Worlds, and may the blessings and peace of Allah (SWT) be upon our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his Family and Companions.

The Ideal Muslimah: the true Islamic personality of the Muslim woman and defined by the Qur'an and Sunnah offers the reader a comprehensive overview of the woman's place in the Islamic scheme of things. The many roles which a woman may play throughout her life - daughter, wife, mother, friend - are explored in detail. Extensive quotations from Hadith and historical accounts of the lives of the early Muslim women provide a vivid picture of how the Muslim woman at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) went about putting Islam into practice; this is an example which Muslim women of all places and eras may follow in their own lives.

An important point is the fact that the first chapter addressed the Muslim woman's relationship with Allah (SWT). Dr. Muhammad `Ali al-Hashimi rightly puts first things first, and reminds readers that they must pay attention to this most important aspect of our lives. If our `aqidah and worship is sound and sincere, then other things will begin to fall into place, in sha Allah.

From there, the author takes us by stages from a woman's care of her own self - body, mind and soul - to her relationships and dealings with her family, friends, neighbours and society as a whole. Far from being the passive, oppressed victim of popular stereotype, the Muslim woman is seen to be a whole person with a valid contribution to make at every level of community life.

This is, above all, an immensely practical book. Dr al-Hashimi addresses real issues that face Muslim women throughout the world, and supports every point made with extensive quotations from the Qur'an and hadith.
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At a time when Muslim women are being increasingly attracted by "feminist theories" and "women's studies," this book serves as a timely reminder that the unique and authentic sources of Islam have always spoken of the rights of women and recognized women as full partners in the human venture of history. The translation of this book into English will render this valuable information more readily accessible to Muslims whose mother-tongue is not Arabic.

Husbands, fathers, brothers and sons will also benefit from reading this book. Studied in conjunction with the author's Ideal Muslim: the Islamic personality as defined by the Qur'an and Sunnah, it will enable both men and women to have a deeper insight into the complementary roles of men and women and the harmony between the genders envisaged by Islam.

The interpretations of Qur'anic quotations have been taken from the well-known translation by Yusuf `Ali. The archaic style of this translation has been amended and modernized, so that "thou" becomes "you," "goeth" becomes "goes," etc.

Many Islamic concepts are difficult to express in English, where "religious" words carry much cultural baggage that gives connottions that do not exist in Arabic. For this reason, many Arabic religious terms have been retained, with explanations given either in the text or in the Glossary that may be found at the end of the book.

May Allah (SWT) reward the author for his efforts to educate the Muslims, men and women alike, about their religion; may He cause this book to be a source of beneficial instruction to English-speaking Muslims; and may He (SWT) guide us and keep us on the Straight Path.

Nasiruddin al-Khattab

September 1997
Publisher's Note

At a time when Muslim and Non-Muslim women are being harshly attached and attracted by the "feminist theories and studies" this book is a good approach and a reminder that Islam has held women as highly esteemed and respected. It is enough that the Holy Qur'an contains a full chapter on women. The sources of Islam i.e. the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic Traditions have always spoken of the women's rights and made them full partners in the human venture of history more than any other religion or thought.

Women in Islam are; mothers, sisters, partners, workers, scholars and business owners and managers, etc.

Though this book outlines the ideal Muslimah personality as it should be according to the Qur'an and Sunnah Husbands, sons and daughters will also draw very much benefit from it.

A true Muslimah is the one who is alert, knowledgeable, true to herself as well as to others. She is righteous, and faithful. She balances her obligations to Allah (SWT), her parents and children. She does not excel in one thing and neglect the other. She is a Qur’anic example to follow-, she is a woman whose examples to follow are the she-companions of the Messenger (PBUH). Her ideals are the wives of the Messenger (PBUH).

The reader will find all this and much more in this book, which Dr. Hashmi wrote in a Arabic and was also broadcast on Riyadh Radio.

This is his second book I.I.P.H translated into English. We hope the readers will find it really informative and comprehensive and pray Allah (SWT) for the best reward for them and ourselves. May the peace and blessing of Allah (SWT) be upon Muhammad (PBUH) his household and all his companions.

Mohammed Abdul-Mohsin Al Tuwaijri, International Islamic Publishing House (I.I.P.H), Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
At a time when Muslim women are being increasingly attracted by "feminist theories" and "women's studies," this book serves as a timely reminder that the unique and authentic sources of Islam have always spoken of the rights of women and recognized women as full partners in the human venture of history. The translation of this book into English will render this valuable information more readily accessible to all the Muslims whose mother-tongue is not Arabic.

Dr. Muhammad Ali Hashmi is a well-known writer in the Arab world. Born in Syria, he is the author of numerous books on Islamic and literary topics. This is his second book translated into English; the first was "The Ideal Muslim."
PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

Praise be to Allah (SWT), as befits His glory and the greatness of His power. I offer the praise of a humble, repentant servant who is need of His guidance and help. I thank Him for the blessings which He has bestowed upon me, and for honouring me with His aid to write this book, which has been so well-received by its readers and has been more popular than I ever expected. The first and second editions (of the Arabic original) sold out within a few short months of publication, and there was a great demand for the book, so I promptly prepared a third edition, with some important revisions and additions, most notably a new chapter, entitled "The Muslim woman and her sons- and daughters-in-law."

The circulation of this book was not confined only to Arab readers; it has also reached a Turkish audience. It has been translated by more than one publishing house in Turkey, and tens of thousands of copies have been printed. I have received copies of two of these Turkish editions. All this, if it indicates anything, shows that there is a great thirst among non-Arab Muslim peoples for knowledge from the pure sources of Islam. There is a deep longing for serious, useful Islamic books from the Arab world, especially on the topic of the Muslim woman. Publishers are racing to translate this book into their own languages, so that they could present it to those people who have woken up to the authentic, pure guidance of Islam, which offers nourishment to their minds and souls. This is the best provision for the Muslim peoples at this time of reawakening.

I have received offers from a number of publishers to translate this book into English and French, which should be done soon, in sha Allah. All praise and glory be to Allah (SWT); praise be to Allah (SWT), the Lord of the Worlds.

Dr. Muhammad `Ali al-Hashimi

Riyadh, 15th Shawwal 1416, 4th March 1996
PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

All praise and blessings be to Allah (SWT), as befits His glory and the greatness of His power. Peace and blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), the most noble of the Prophets and Messengers, whom Allah (SWT) sent to bring life to the Arabs and mercy to the worlds.

For a long time, I have been wanting to write a book on the Muslim woman, but for too long I was not able to find the means to fulfil this wish, as life kept me too busy with other things. But I was still very keen to write a book that would explain the character of the righteous Muslim woman who is guided by the teachings of her religion, understands its wisdom, follows its commandments and adheres to its limits.

Years passed by, when I was preoccupied with other matters, but my interest in this issue grew deeper. My desire to produce a book on this topic increased because I felt that it was of great importance: it would cast light on the life of the Muslim woman and explain how her character should be, in accordance with the will of Allah (SWT) and her understanding of the high status to which Allah (SWT) has raised her. For years I was determined to write such a book, until Allah (SWT) blessed me and enabled me to write it in 1410 AH/1994 CE.

The reason for my interest in presenting the character of the Muslim woman stems from the inconsistencies I had noticed in the lives of contemporary women, whereby they exaggerate some aspects of Islam and neglect others.

For example, you might see a Muslim woman who is pious and righteous, observing all the rites of her religion, but she neglects oral and bodily hygiene and does not care about the offensive smell emanating from her mouth and body; or she may pay attention to her health and hygiene, but is failing to observe all the rites and acts of worship prescribed by her religion; or she may be performing all the acts of worship required, but she does not have a proper understanding of the holistic Islamic view of life and humanity; or she may be religious, but she does not control her tongue in gatherings and refrain from gossip and slander; or she may be religious and knowledgeable, but she does not treat her neighbours and friends properly; or she may treat (female) strangers well, but she is failing to give her parents the love and respect that they deserve; or she may be treating her
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parents properly, but neglecting her husband's rights and failing to be a good wife to him, making herself look beautiful at women's gatherings but neglecting her appearance in front of him; or she may be taking good care of her husband, but not taking care of his parents or encouraging him to be righteous, to fear Allah (SWT) and to do good works; or she may respect the rights of her husband, but she is neglecting her children and failing to bring them up properly, teach them, direct their spiritual, physical and mental development, and monitor the pernicious influences of their environment; or she may be paying attention to all that, but failing to uphold the ties of kinship; or she may uphold the ties of kinship, but fail to uphold social ties, focusing only on her private affairs with no concern for Muslim men and women in general; or she may be concerned with both her own and society's affairs, but she is not taking care of her own intellectual growth by continually reading and seeking to increase her knowledge; or she may be totally absorbed in reading and studying, but she ignores her house, her children and her husband.

What is strange indeed is to see these contradictions, or some of them, among those who consider themselves to be educated Muslim women who have benefitted from an extensive Islamic education. It may be a matter of negligence or carelessness, or it may be a failure to fully understand the idea of balance on which Islam bases its holistic view of man, life and the universe, a view which gives everything the place it deserves in life, without neglecting any one aspect at the expense of another.

The true sources of Islam, the Qur'an and Sunnah, explain the ideal behaviour which the Muslim woman should adopt in her relationship with her Lord, in her personal development, in her relationships with others, whether they are related to her or not, and in her social dealings in general. Whoever takes the time to research these texts will be amazed at their abundance and comprehensiveness: they deal with all major and minor aspects of a woman's life, setting out the guidelines for a balanced, upright, virtuous life which guarantees happiness and success in this world, and an immense victory and reward in the Hereafter.

I was astounded when I realized how far the modern so-called Muslim woman falls short of the noble level which Allah (SWT) wants for her. Nothing stands between her and the attainment of that level but the need to devote

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herself to seeking knowledge of the true Islamic character described in the Qur'an and Sunnah, which will make her a refined, noble woman who is distinguished by her feelings, thoughts, behaviour, conduct and dealings and will make her adhere with determination to her religion.

It is of the utmost importance that a woman does reach that refined level, because of the great influence she has in bringing up the next generation, instilling in them virtues and values, filling their lives with love, compassion and beauty, and creating an atmosphere of security, tranquillity and stability in the home.

The Muslim woman is the only woman who has the potential to achieve this in a world where modern women are exhausted and tired of materialistic philosophies and the wave of ignorance (jahiliyyah) that has overwhelmed those societies that have gone astray from the guidance of Allah (SWT). She may achieve this through knowing who she is and being aware of the pure intellectual sources of the Qur'an and Sunnah and the genuine character which Allah (SWT) wants her to have, by which she will be distinguished from all other women in the world.

So I began to collect texts from the Qur'an and authentic ahadith which spoke about the character of the Muslim woman, and I sorted them according to their subject-matter.

This enabled me to draw up an integrated plan for researching personal and general woman's issues, as follows:

1. The Muslim woman and her Lord
2. The Muslim woman and her ownself
3. The Muslim woman and her parents
4. The Muslim woman and her husband
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5. The Muslim woman and her children

6. The Muslim woman and her sons- and daughters-in-law

7. The Muslim woman and her relatives

8. The Muslim woman and her neighbours

9. The Muslim woman and her Muslim sisters and friends

10. The Muslim woman and her community/society

Whilst I was examining these texts, an important fact became apparent to me, one which we frequently overlook. That is, that the mercy of Allah (SWT) to the Muslim woman is great indeed. Islam has rescued her from the abyss of humiliation, (being regarded as valueless) and total subordination to men, and has raised her to the highest level of honourable and respected femininity, free from the exhausting burden of having to fend for herself and earn a living; even if she is rich she does not have to provide for herself. Islam has made her independent, entitled to dispose her own wealth - if she is wealthy - as she wishes, and equal with man in human worth and with regard to general religious duties. She has rights and duties, just as a man has rights and duties. Women and men are equal in the sight of Allah (SWT) and may be rewarded or punished equally.

The blessings of Islam did not stop at raising women from humiliation and backwardness to a level of progress, honour, security and protection. Islam is also concerned with the formation and development of every aspect of her personality, whether it affects her alone or her relationship with her family and society, so that she may become refined and highly developed, worthy of her role as Allah's vicegerent (khalifah) on earth.

How does Islam form her personality? How may her development reach such a high level that had never before been attained in the history of womankind, except in the religion of Islam?
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This is the question to which the reader will find the answer in the following pages. I ask Allah (SWT) to accept my work and make it purely for His sake. May He benefit others through it, make it a source of reward for me in this life and the next, and make it a help for me on the Day of Reckoning. May He guide me through it to what is right, and protect me from errors of thinking, bad intentions, slips of the pen, weakness of arguments and excessive verbiage.

Dr. Muhammad Ali al-Hashimi

Riyadh

20th Sha'ban 1414 AH

2nd January 1994 CE
The Believing Woman is Alert

One of the most prominent distinguishing features of the Muslim woman is her deep faith in Allah (SWT), and her sincere conviction that whatever happens in this universe, and whatever fate befalls human beings, only happens through the will and decree of Allah (SWT); whatever befalls a person could not have been avoided, and whatever does not happen to a person could not have been made to happen. A person has no choice in this life but to strive towards the right path and to do good deeds - acts of worship and other acts - by whatever means one can, putting all his trust in Allah (SWT), submitting to His will, and believing that he is always in need of Allah's (SWT) help and support.

The story of Hajar offers the Muslim woman the most marvellous example of deep faith in Allah (SWT) and sincere trust in Him. Ibrahim `May peace be upon him' (PBUH) left her at the Ka`bah in Makkah, above the well of Zamzam, at a time when there were no people and no water in the place. Hajar had no-one with her except her infant son Isma`il. She asked Ibrahim, calmly and with no trace of panic: "Has Allah (SWT) commanded you to do this, O Ibrahim?" Ibrahim (PBUH) said, "Yes." Her response reflected her acceptance and optimism: "Then He is not going to abandon us." Reported by Bukhari in Kitab al-Anbiya¹

Here was an extremely difficult situation: a man left his wife and infant son in a barren land, where there were no plants, no water, and no people, and went back to the distant land of Palestine. He left nothing with her but a sack of dates and a skin filled with water. Were it not for the deep faith and trust in Allah (SWT) that filled Hajar's heart, she would not have been able to cope with such a difficult situation; she would have collapsed straight away, and would not have become the woman whose name is forever remembered night and day by those who

¹ Dr. Muhammad Ali Al-Hashimi
perform haj and `umrah at the house of Allah (SWT), every time they drink the pure water of Zamzam, and run between the mounts of Safa' and Marwah, as Hajar did on that most trying day.

This deep faith and awareness had an amazing effect on the lives of Muslim men and women: it awoke their consciences and reminded them that Allah (SWT) witnesses and knows every secret, and that He is with a person wherever he may be. Nothing gives a clearer idea of that consciousness and fear of Allah (SWT) at all times than the story of the young Muslim girl related in Sifat al-Safwah and Wafiyat al-A'yan and cited by Ibn al-Jawzi in Ahkam al-Nisa' (pp. 441, 442):

"Narrated `Abdullah ibn Zayd ibn Aslam, from his father, from his grandfather, who said: `When I was accompanying `Umar ibn al-Khattab on his patrol of Madinah at night, he felt tired, so he leant against a wall. It was the middle of the night, and (we heard) a woman say to her daughter, "O my daughter, get up and mix that milk with some water." The girl said, "O Mother, did you not hear the decree of Amir al-Mu'minin (chief of the believers) today?" The mother said, "What was that?" The girl said, "He ordered someone to announce in a loud voice that milk should not be mixed with water." The mother said, "Get up and mix the milk with water; you are in a place where `Umar cannot see you." The girl told her mother, "I cannot obey Him (Allah) in public and disobey him in private." `Umar heard this, and told me: "O Aslam, go to that place and see who that girl is, and to whom she was speaking, and whether she has a husband." So I went to that place, and I saw that she was unmarried, the other woman was her mother, and neither of them had a husband. I came to `Umar and told him what I had found out. He called his sons together, and said to them: "Do any of you need a wife, so I can arrange the marriage for you? If I had the desire to get married, I would have been the first one to marry this young woman." `Abdullah said: "I have a wife." `Abd al-Rahman said: "I have a wife." `Asim said: "I do not have a wife, so let me marry her." So `Umar arranged for her to be married to `Asim. She gave him a daughter, who grew up to be the mother of `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz."

This is the deep sense of awareness that Islam had implanted in the heart of this young woman. She was righteous and upright in all her deeds, both in public and in private, because she believed that Allah (SWT) was
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with her at all times and saw and heard everything. This is true faith, and these are the effects of that faith, which raised her to the level of *ihsan*. One of the immediate rewards with which Allah (SWT) honoured her was this blessed marriage, one of whose descendants was the fifth rightly-guided *khalifah*, `Umar ibn `Abd al-`Aziz `May Allah be pleased with him' (RAA).

The *Aqeedah* (faith) of the true Muslim woman is pure and clear, uncontaminated by any stain of ignorance, illusion or superstition. This *Aqeeda* is based on faith in Allah, (SWT) the One, the Most High, the Eternal, Who is able to do all things, Who is in control of the entire universe, and to Whom all things must return: Say: *'Who is it in Whose hands is the governance of all things - Who protects [all], but is not protected [by any]? [Say] if you know.'* They will say, *'[It belongs] to Allah,'* Say: *'Then how are you deluded?'* (Qur'an 23:88-89)

This is the pure, deep faith which increases the character of the Muslim woman in strength, understanding and maturity, so that she sees life as it really is, which is a place of testing whose results will be seen on the Day, which will undoubtedly come: Say: *'It is Allah Who gives you life, then gives you death; then He will gather you together for the Day of Judgement about which there is no doubt':* but most men do not understand. (Qur'an 45:26)

**Did you then think that We had created you in jest, and that you would not be brought back to Us [for account]?** (Qur'an 23:115)

Blessed is He in Whose hands is Dominion; and He over all things has Power - He Who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed; and He is the Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving. (Qur'an 67:1-2)

On that Day, man will be brought to account for his deeds. If they are good, it will be good for him, and if they are bad, it will be bad for him. There will not be the slightest injustice: That Day will every soul be requited for what it earned; no injustice will there be that Day, for Allah is Swift in taking account, (Qur'an 40:17)

The Balance (in which man's deeds will be weighed) will measure everything with the utmost precision, either in a person's favour or against him:

**Then shall anyone who has done an atom's weight of good, see it! And anyone who has done an atom's weight of evil, shall see it.** (Qur'an 99:7-8)
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Nothing could be hidden from the Lord of Glory on that Day, not even if it were as insignificant as a grain of mustard seed: *We shall set up scales of justice for the day of Judgement, so that not a soul will be dealt with unjustly in the least. And if there be [no more than] the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it [to account]: and enough are We to take account.* (Qur'an 21:47)

No doubt the true Muslim woman, when she ponders the meaning of these *ayat*, would think about that crucial Day and would turn to her Lord in obedience, repentance and gratitude, seeking to do as many righteous deeds as she is able, in preparation for the Hereafter.

She Worships Allah (SWT)

It is no surprise that the true Muslim woman enthusiastically worships her Lord, because she knows that she is obliged to observe all the commandments that Allah (SWT) has enjoined upon every Muslim, male or female. So she carries out her Islamic duties properly, without making excuses or compromises, or being negligent.

She Regularly Prays Five Times a Day

She offers each of the five daily prayers at its appointed time, and does not let domestic chores or her duties as a wife and mother prevent her from doing so. Prayer is the pillar of the - whoever establishes prayer establishes faith, and whoever neglects prayer destroys the faith.² Prayer is the best and most noble of deeds, as the Prophet `Peace and Blessing be upon him' (PBUH) explained in the hadith narrated by `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud (RAA): (I asked the Messenger of Allah (PBUH): `What deed is most beloved by Allah?' (SWT) He said, `To offer each prayer as soon as it is due.' I asked him, `Then what?' He said, `Treating one's parents with mercy and respect.' I asked him, `Then what?' He said, `Jihad (fighting) for the sake of Allah (SWT)).'³

Prayer is the link between the servant and his (Rabb). It is the rich source from which a person derives strength, steadfastness, mercy and contentment, and it is a means of cleansing the stain of his or her sins: Abu Hurayrah (RAA) narrated: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say: `What would you think if there were a river running by the door of any of you, and he bathed in it five times every day, would any trace of dirt be left on him?' The

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people said: `There would be no trace of dirt on him.' He said: `This is like the five daily prayers, through which Allah (SWT) erases sins.'\(^4\) (Sharh al-Sunnah 2/175).

Jabir (RAA) said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: `The five daily prayers are like a deep river flowing by the door of any of you, in which he bathes five times every day.'\(^5\)

Prayer is a mercy, which Allah (SWT) has bestowed upon His slaves; they seek its shade five times a day and praise their Rabb (Lord), glorifying Him, asking for His help and seeking His mercy, guidance and forgiveness. Thus prayer becomes a means of purification for those who pray, men and women alike, cleansing them from their sins. `Uthman ibn `Affan (RAA) said: "I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say: `There is no Muslim person who, when the time for prayer comes, performs \textit{wudu}' properly, concentrates on his prayer and bows correctly, but the prayer will be an expiation for the sins committed prior to it, so long as no major sin has been committed. This is the case until the end of time.'\(^6\) (Sahih Muslim 3/112).

There are very many Hadith which speak of the importance of \textit{salah} and the blessings it brings to the men and women who pray, and the rich harvest of benefits that they may reap thereby, every time they stand before Allah (SWT) in an attitude of humility and repentance.

**She May Attend the \textit{Jama`ah} (Congregational)**

**Prayer in the Mosque**

Islam has excused women from the obligation to attend the \textit{jama`ah} prayer in the mosque, but at the same time, they are permitted to go out of the house to attend \textit{jama`ah} on condition that they dress up well enough not to cause any temptation. Indeed, the first Muslim women did go out and pray in the mosque behind the Prophet (PBUH). `A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to pray \textit{fajr}, and the believing women would pray with him, wrapped up in their outer garments; then they would go back to their homes, and nobody would recognize them."\(^7\) And: "The believing women used to attend \textit{fajr} prayer with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), wrapped up in their outer garments. Then they would go back to their homes after they had finished praying, and no one would recognize them because of the darkness."\(^8\)
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The Prophet (PBUH) used to shorten his prayer if he heard a child crying, because he understood the concern the child's mother would be feeling. In a hadith whose authenticity is agreed upon he (PBUH) said: "I begin the prayer, intending to make it lengthy, but then I hear a child crying, so I shorten my prayer because I know the stress facing the mother because of his crying."\(^9\)

Allah (SWT) showed great mercy to women by sparing them the obligation to offer the five compulsory prayers in congregation in the mosque. If He had made this obligatory, it would have placed an intolerable burden on women, and they would not have been able to fulfil it, just as we see many men failing to pray regularly in the mosque and finding themselves with no other choice but to pray wherever they are, in the workplace or in the home. The woman's heavy burden of household chores and attending to the needs of her husband and children do not permit her to leave the house five times a day; it would be impossible for her to do so. Thus the wisdom behind the limiting of compulsory attendance at the mosque to men only becomes quite clear. Her prayer at home is described as being better for her than her prayer in the mosque, but Allah (SWT) gives her the freedom of choice: she may pray at home if she wishes, or she may go out to pray in the mosque. If she asks her husband for permission to go out to the mosque, he is not allowed to stop her, as the Prophet (PBUH) stated in a number of hadith, for example: "Do not stop your women from going to the mosque, although their houses are better for them."\(^{10}\)

"If the wife of any of you asks for permission to go to the mosque, do not stop her."\(^{11}\)

The men heeded the command of the Prophet (PBUH), and allowed their women to go to the mosque even if this was against their own wishes. There is no clearer indication of this than the hadith of `Abdullah ibn `Umar, in which he said: "One of `Umar's wives used to pray fajr and `isha' in congregation in the mosque. She was asked, `Why do you go out (to the mosque) when you know that `Umar dislikes this and is a jealous man?;' She said, `What is stopping him from forbidding me (to do so)?' He said, `The words of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH): "Do not prevent the female servants of Allah (SWT) from attending the mosques of Allah (SWT)."'\(^{12}\)

In accordance with the Prophet's teaching which allowed women to attend the mosque, and forbade men to stop them from doing so, the mosques were full of women coming and going, both at the time of the Prophet (PBUH), and whenever it was possible in the following periods. Women would come to pray, attend lectures and classes, and take part in the public life of Islam. This was the case from the time congregational prayer was prescribed for the Muslims. The Muslims used to pray in the direction of Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem), before the qiblah was
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changed to the Holy Ka`bah. When the command of Allah (SWT) to take the Ka`bah as their qiblah was revealed, the men and women who were praying were facing towards Palestine, so they turned to face the direction of the Ka`bah, which meant that the men and women had to change places.  

The mosque was, and still is, the centre of light and guidance for Muslim men and women; in its pure environment acts of worship are performed and from its minbar messages of truth and guidance are transmitted. From the dawn of Islam, the Muslim woman has had her role to play in the mosque.

There are many sahih reports, which confirm the woman's presence and role in the mosque. They describe how women attended salat al-jumu`ah, the eclipse prayer, and the Eid prayers, responding to the call of the muezzin to join the prayer.

A report in Sahih Muslim tells us that Umm Hisham bint Harithah ibn al-Nu`man said: "I never learned `Qaf. Wa'l-Qur'an al-majid . . .', except from the Prophet (PBUH) himself. He used to recite it from the minbar every Friday, when he addressed the people."  

Imam Muslim also narrates that the sister of `Amrah bint `Abd al-Rahman said: "I learned `Qaf. Wa'l-Qur'an al-majid . . .' from the Prophet (PBUH) himself on Fridays, when he used to recite it from the minbar every Friday." The Prophet (PBUH) taught the Muslims to prepare themselves and present a neat and clean appearance at jumu`ah prayers by encouraging both men and women to take a shower (ghusl): "Whoever comes to jumu`ah, man or woman should take a shower first."  

Hadith reports also tell us that Asma' bint Abi Bakr (May Allah be pleased with her) attended the eclipse prayer (salat al-kusuf) with the Prophet (PBUH). She could not hear the Prophet's words clearly, so she asked a man who was nearby what he was saying. This hadith is reported by Bukhari from As' herself: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) stood up to address us (after the eclipse prayer), and spoke about the testing that a person will undergo in the grave. When he mentioned that, the Muslims panicked somewhat, and this prevented me from hearing the latter part of the Prophet's speech. When the hubbub died down, I asked a man who was nearby, `May Allah
bless you, what did the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) say at the end of his speech?' He said, "’It has been revealed to me that you will be tested in the grave with something similar in severity to the test (fitnah) of the Dajjal . . ."'17

Bukhari and Muslim also narrate another report from Asma', in which she says: "There was a solar eclipse at the time of the Prophet (PBUH) . . . I finished what I was doing, then I came to the mosque. I saw the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) standing (in prayer), so I joined him. He stood for so long that I felt I needed to sit down, but I noticed a woman who looked weak and tired and said to myself: This woman is weaker than I, so I must continue to stand. Then he bowed, and remained in that position for a long time; then he raised his head and stood for such a long time that anyone who came in at this point would think that he had not yet bowed in ruku`. He completed the prayer when the eclipse was over, then he addressed the people, praising and glorifying Allah (SWT), and saying ‘Amma ba`d.’"18

During that golden era, the time of the Prophet (PBUH), the Muslim woman knew about her religion and was keen to understand the events and affairs that concerned the Muslims in this world and the next. When she heard the call to prayer, she would rush to the mosque to hear the words of the Prophet (PBUH) from the minbar, guiding and teaching the people. Fatimah bint Qays, one of the earliest migrant women (muhajirat), said: "The people were called to prayer, so I rushed with the others to the mosque, and prayed with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). I was in the first row of women, which was just behind the last row of men."19

It is clear, from the sahih reports quoted above, that Muslim women attended the mosque on various occasions and that this attendance was an approved custom at the time of the Prophet (PBUH). Once, a woman was attacked on her way to the mosque, but this incident did not make the Prophet (PBUH) have any reservations about allowing women to go out to the mosque. He still allowed them to do so, and forbade men to prevent them, because there was so much benefit - spiritual, mental and otherwise - for them in attending the mosque from time to time. Wa'il al-Kindi reported that a woman was assaulted by a man in the darkness of the early morning, whilst she was on her way to the mosque. She shouted to a passer-by for help, then a large group of people came by, and she called to them for help. They seized the man to whom she had first called for help, and her attacker ran away. They brought the (innocent) man to her, and he said, "I am the one who answered your call for help; the other man got away." They brought him to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), and told him that this man had assaulted the woman, and they had seized him whilst he was running away. The man said, "I was the
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one who answered her call for help against her attacker, but these people seized me and brought me here." The woman said, "He is lying; he is the one who attacked me." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "Take him away and stone him." Then a man stood up and said, "Do not stone him, stone me, for I am the one who did it." Now the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) had three people before him: the one who had assaulted the woman, the one who had answered her cries for help and the woman herself. He told the attacker, "As for you, Allah (SWT) has forgiven you," and he spoke kind words to the one who had helped the woman. 'Umar said, "Stone the one who has admitted to the crime of adultery." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "No, for he has repented to Allah (SWT)" - I think he said, "with an act of repentance so great that if the people of Madinah were to repent in this way, it would be accepted from them."20

The Prophet (PBUH) appreciated the circumstances of the women who attended the congregational prayers, so he used to be kind to them and would shorten the prayer if he heard a child crying, so that the mother would not become distressed - as we have seen in the hadith quoted above (see p. 9). Once he delayed the `isha' prayer, and `Umar (RAA) called him saying: "The woman and children have gone to sleep." The Prophet (PBUH) came out and said, "No-one on earth is waiting for this prayer except you."21

Many sahih reports describe how the Prophet (PBUH) used to organize women's attendance at congregational prayers, for example, the hadith reported by Muslim: "The best rows for men are those at the front, and the worst are those at the back; the best rows for women are those at the back, and the worst are those at the front."22 Another hadith, reported by Bukhari, deals with giving the women room to leave the mosque before the men, after the prayer is over. Hind bint al-Harith said that Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet (PBUH), told her that at the time of the Prophet (PBUH), when the obligatory prayer was over, the women would get up to leave, and the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and the men who were with him would wait as long as Allah (SWT) willed. When the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) got up to leave, then the men would get up.23

Bukhari and Muslim also report a hadith concerning how women should draw the imam's attention to something during the prayer by clapping. Sahl ibn Sa'd al-Sa'idi said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, 'Why do I see you clapping so much? Whoever notices any error in my prayer should say "Subhan Allah," for by doing so he will alert me to the error. Clapping is only for women.'"24

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The number of women who attended the mosque increased daily until - at the time of the Abbasids - they filled the courtyard of the mosque, and men would have no choice but to pray behind them. This was the verdict (fatwa) of Imam Malik, as recorded in al-Mudawwanah al-Kubra: Ibn al-Qasim said, "I asked Malik about people who come to the mosque and find the courtyard (of the mosque) filled with women, and the mosque itself filled with men: may those men pray with the imam behind the women?" Malik said: "Their prayer is valid; they do not have to repeat it."\(^{25}\)

But women's going out to the mosque should not be a cause of fitnah, and women should behave in accordance with Islamic teachings of purity of thought and behaviour. If for any reason there is the fear of fitnah associated with women's going out to the mosque, then it is better for women to pray at home, and they should do so. This is what is indicated by the hadith of Ibn `Umar, quoted above, in which the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do not stop your women from going to the mosque, although their houses are better for them." (See p. 10)

It appears that some men feared the possibility of fitnah, and took this as an excuse to forbid their women to go to the mosque. This is why the Prophet (PBUH) forbade men to prevent women from attending the mosque from time to time. This is what is indicated in the first part of the hadith quoted above. Other Hadith confirm the Prophet's keenness for women to attend gatherings in the mosque, for example, the report of Mujahid ibn `Umar: "The Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Do not prevent the women from going to the mosque at night' One of the sons of `Abdullah ibn `Umar said, 'We will not let them go out because it will give rise to deviation and suspicion.' Ibn `Umar rebuked him and said, 'I tell you that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said such-and-such and you say, 'No, we will not let them'!"\(^{26}\)

Bilal ibn `Abdullah ibn `Umar reported from his father that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do not deny the women their share of the mosque, if they ask your permission." Bilal said, "By Allah (SWT), we will most certainly prevent them (from going to the mosque)!" `Abdullah (his father) said to him: "I tell you that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said such-and-such, and you say 'We will most certainly prevent them'!"\(^{27}\)
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The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do not prevent your women from attending the mosque if they seek your permission to do so."28 "Do not prevent the female servants of Allah (SWT) from attending the mosques of Allah (SWT)."29 "If your womenfolk seek your permission to go to the mosque, then let them do so."30

It is permissible for Muslim women to attend the gatherings of the Muslims in the mosque, and there is much to be gained from them doing so, but certain conditions apply to this permission, the most important of which is that the woman who goes to the mosque should not wear perfume or make-up. Zaynab al-Thaqafiyyah reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "If any of you (women) wishes to attend ʿisha’ prayer, she should not wear perfume that night."31

Numerous other Hadith also forbid women to wear perfume when they go to the mosque, for example: "If any of you (women) goes to the mosque, she should not wear perfume."32 "Any women who has perfumed herself with incense should not attend ʿisha’ prayers with us."33

She Attends Eid Prayers

Islam has honoured woman and made her equal with man as regards obligatory acts of worship. Women are also encouraged to attend public gatherings on Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, so that they may take part in these blessed occasions. This is demonstrated in a number of Hadith reported by Bukhari and Muslim, in which we see that the Prophet (PBUH) commanded that all the women should come out on these occasions, including adolescent and prepubescent girls, those who usually remained in seclusion, and virgins; he even commanded that menstruating women should come out, to take part in the joyous occasion, but they were to keep away from the prayer-place itself. His concern that all women should attend the prayer on the two Eids was so great that he ordered the one who had more than one jilbab (outer garment) to give one to her sister who had none. In this way he encouraged both the attendance of all women at Eid prayers and mutual support and help to do good and righteous deeds. Umm ʿAtiyyah said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) commanded us to bring out to the Eid prayers the adolescent and prepubescent girls, those who usually remained in seclusion, and virgins, and he ordered those who were menstruating to keep away from the prayer-place."34 "We (women) used to be commanded to go out on the two Eids, including those who usually stayed in seclusion, and virgins. The menstruating women went out too, and stayed behind the people, joining in the takbirat. "35 "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) commanded us to take them out on Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha, the adolescent and prepubescent girls, the menstruating women,
and those who usually remained in seclusion, so that they could share in the festive occasions of the Muslims, but the menstruating women were not to pray. I said, `O Messenger of Allah (PBUH), one of us does not have a jilbab.' He said, `Let her sister dress her in one of her own jilbabs.'

Bukhari reports: "Muhammad ibn Sallam told us that `Abd al-Wahhab reported from Ayyub from Hafsah bint Sirin, who said: `We used to prevent our prepubescent girls from going out on the two Eids'"

A woman came and stayed at the castle of Banu Khalaf, and reported something from her sister. Her sister's husband had taken part in twelve military campaigns with the Prophet (PBUH), and her sister herself had accompanied him on six of them. She said: "We used to take care of the sick and wounded." Her sister asked the Prophet (PBUH): "Is there anything wrong if one of us does not have a jilbab and never goes out for that reason?"

He said: "Let her friend give her one of her jilbabs, so that she can come out and join the righteous gatherings of the Muslims.'"

Hafsah said: `When Umm `Atiyyah arrived, I went to her and asked her, "Did you hear the Prophet (PBUH) say that?" She said, "May my father be sacrificed for him, yes I did. [She never mentioned him without saying "may my father be sacrificed for him"]'). I heard him say, `Let the young girls who usually stay in seclusion, or the young girls and those who usually stay in seclusion, and the menstruating women, go out and attend the righteous gathering of the believers, but let the menstruating women keep away from the prayer-place itself.'"

Hafsah said: `I asked her, "Even the menstruating women?" She said, "Yes, are menstruating women not present at `Arafah and on other occasions?""

Bukhari also narrates another report from Umm `Atiyyah, in which she says: "We used to be commanded to go out on the day of Eid, and we even brought the virgins out of their seclusion, and the menstruating women, who would stay behind the people, joining in their takbirat and du`a's, hoping for the blessing and purity of that day."

These sahih Hadith give a clear indication of the Prophet's concern for the intellectual and spiritual benefit of women. He ordered all the women to go out to the Eid prayer, including those who were menstruating, even though menstruating women are excused from praying and are not allowed to enter the prayer-place itself. But his call was addressed to all women, because of his concern that they should take part in these two blessed events and attend the righteous gathering of the Muslims, joining in the takbirat and du`a's, and being a part of the public life of Islam which is discussed in the khutbah following the Eid prayer.
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The Prophet (PBUH) was concerned with the teaching and guidance of women, and wanted them to play a part in building the Muslim society, so he devoted part of his *khutbah* to women. He would come to the place where the women were gathered, and exhort and remind them, and he made doing this a duty of the *imam*. We find this in a *hadith* narrated by Bukhari and Muslim from Ibn Jurayj, who said: "'Ata' told me: "I heard Jabir ibn `Abdullah say: `The Prophet (PBUH) stood up on the occasion of Eid al-Fitr and led the people in prayer. He began the prayer before the *khutbah*. Then he addressed the people. When the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) had finished his *khutbah*, he came to the women and spoke to them, whilst leaning on Bilal's arm, and Bilal spread out his cloak for the women to put their *sadaqah* in it.'" I [Ibn Jurayj] said to `Ata', `Was it zakat al-fitr?' He said, `No, it was the *sadaqah* that they gave at that time; one woman threw her ring into it, then others followed her lead.' I said to `Ata', `Is it a duty nowadays for the *imam* to come to the women and address them when he has finished his *khutbah*?' He said, `It most certainly is. This is a duty on them (*imams*); what is wrong with them that they do not do that nowadays?'"**39**

According to this hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) exhorted and reminded the women, and accepted the *sadaqah* that they themselves willingly gave. Another *hadith*, also narrated by Bukhari and Muslim from Ibn `Abbas (RAA) via Ibn Tawus adds that the Prophet (PBUH) also reminded the women of their *bay`ah* (oath of allegiance) and reconfirmed their adherence to it. Ibn `Abbas said: "I attended Eid prayers with the Prophet (PBUH), and (after his death) with Abu Bakr, `Umar and `Uthman. All of them used to perform the prayer before the *khutbah*. The Prophet (PBUH) came down (from the *minbar*) - and it is as if I can see him now, gesturing to them to sit down - then he would come through the crowd, until he reached the women. Bilal was with him, and he recited; **O Prophet! When believing women come to you to take the oath of fealty to you, that they will not associate anything whatever with Allah . . .** (Qur'an 60:12), until the end of the *ayah*. Then he said, `Are you adhering to that?' Only one woman answered, `Yes, O Prophet of Allah (PBUH),' and he did not know at that time who she was**40**. He said, `Then give *sadaqah*, and Bilal spread out his cloak. The Prophet (PBUH) said, `Come on, may my father and my mother be sacrificed for you!' So they began to throw their rings and jewellery onto Bilal's cloak."**41**

There is no doubt that the Prophet (PBUH) addressed the women in the Eid prayer-place, reminding them about their religion, and that he took charity from them, reconfirmed their adherence to their oath of allegiance,
enjoined them to remember the teachings of Islam, and motivated them to do good works. All of this was achieved by calling them to attend the congregational prayer on both Eids. This is indicative of the importance of congregational prayer in the life of the Muslim individual and the Islamic society.

Although Islam does not oblige women to attend congregational prayer in the mosque, whenever women gather together, they are encouraged to offer the fard prayers in congregation. In this case, the one who is leading them in prayer should stand in the middle of the (first) row, not in front, and they do not have to recite the adhan or iqamah. This is what Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet (PBUH), used to do when she led other women in prayer.42

She Prays Sunnah and Nafil Prayers

The Muslim women does not limit herself to the five daily obligatory prayers; she also prays those sunnah prayers which the Prophet (PBUH) used to perform regularly (al-rawatib), and prays as many of the nafil (supererogatory) prayers as her time and energy allow. These prayers include salat al-duha, sunnah prayers following maghrib, and prayers offered at night. Nafil prayers bring a person closer to Allah (SWT), earn him or her the love and pleasure of Allah (SWT), and make him or her one of the victorious, obedient and righteous ones. There is no clearer indication of the great status attained by the believer who draws closer to Allah (SWT) by performing nafil deeds than the hadith qudsi: "My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I will love him. When I love him, I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him; and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it."43

Because of Allah's (SWT) love for His servant, that person will be loved by the inhabitants of heaven and earth, as is described in a report narrated by Abu Hurayrah in which the Prophet (PBUH) said: "When Allah (SWT) loves one of His servants, He calls Jibril and tells him: 'I love so-and-so, so love him.' Then Jibril will love him, and will proclaim to the inhabitants of heaven: 'Allah (SWT) loves so-and-so, so love him.' So the inhabitants of heaven

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will love him too, and he will be well accepted by the inhabitants of the earth. If Allah (SWT) hates one of His servants, He calls Jibril and tells him: 'I hate so-and-so, so hate him.' Then Jibril will hate him and will proclaim to the inhabitants of heaven: `Allah (SWT) hates so-and-so, so hate him.' Then the inhabitants of heaven will hate him and he will also be detested by the inhabitants of earth." 44

The Prophet (PBUH) used to pray so much at night that his feet would become swollen. 'A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) asked him: "Why do you do this, O Messenger of Allah (PBUH), when has forgiven all your past and future sins?" He answered, "Should I not be a grateful servant?" 45

The Prophet's wife Zaynab (May Allah be pleased with her) used to perform nafil prayers, and make them lengthy. She put up a rope between two columns (in the mosque), so that when she felt tired and exhausted she could lean against it and restore her energy. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) entered the mosque, saw the rope, and asked, "What is this?" The people told him, "It belongs to Zaynab: she prays, and when she feels tired, she leans against it." He said, "Untie it; let any of you pray as long as he has the energy to do so, and if he feels tired, he can sit down (or: let him sit down)." 46

A woman of Banu Asad, whose name was al-Hawla' bint Tuwayt, used to pray all night, and never sleep. One day she called on 'A'ishah when the Prophet (PBUH) was present. 'A'ishah told him, "This is al-Hawla' bint Tuwayt. They say that she never sleeps at night." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "She never sleeps at night! Do only as much as you can, for by Allah (SWT), Allah (SWT) never gets tired, although you do." 47

The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged Muslim men and women to do more nafil deeds, but at the same time he told them to be balanced in their approach to worship, and disliked exaggeration therein. He wanted the Muslims to have a balanced personality, so that their worship would be enthusiastic, but consistent, and would not be so burdensome that people would not be able to persist in it. He also taught that the most beloved deed in the sight of Allah (SWT) is that which is done continuously, even if it is a little, as is stated in the hadith in which 'A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: `The most beloved deed to Allah (SWT) is that which is continuous, even if it is little.'" 48

This attitude of keeping up the habit of doing righteous deeds was not confined to 'A'ishah alone; it was the attitude of all members of the Prophet's household, and of those who were nearest and dearest to him. We see this in the hadith reported by Muslim from 'A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her): "The Messenger of Allah

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(PBUH) had a mat which he used for making a compartment at night in which he would pray, and the people began to pray with him; he used to spread the mat during the day time. The people crowded around him one night. He then said, ‘O people, perform only such acts as you are capable of doing, for Allah (SWT) does not grow weary but you will get tired. The acts most pleasing to Allah (SWT) are those which are done continuously, even if they are small.’ And it was the habit of the family of Muhammad (PBUH) that whenever they did any deed they did it continuously.”

She Performs Her Prayers Properly
The true Muslim tries hard to perform her prayers properly, with deep concentration and precision of physical movements. She thinks about the meaning of the ayat she is reciting, and the words of praise and glorification that she is uttering. Her soul is flooded with fear of Allah (SWT), and with gratitude to Him and sincere worship of Him. If the Titan happens to whisper some idea to her during the prayer, to distract her from concentrating properly, to keep him away she focuses on the words that she is reciting from the Qur'an, and the words of praise that she is uttering.

The Muslim woman does not rush back to her housework and chores when she has finished her prayer. Rather, as the Prophet (PBUH) used to do, she asks Allah (SWT)’s forgiveness by saying "Astaghfir-Allah" three times, and repeats the du`a‘: "Allahumma anta al-salam wa minka al-salam, tabaraka ya dha'l-jalali wa'l-ikram (O Allah (SWT), You are Peace and from You comes peace, Blessed are You, O Lord of majesty and honour.) Then she repeats the adhkar and du`a’s that the Prophet (PBUH) is known to have recited after completing his prayer. There are many such adhkar, one of the most important of which is to repeat "Subhan Allah" thirty-three times, "La ilaha ill-Allah" thirty-three times, "Allahu akbar" thirty-three times, then to complete one hundred with "La illaha ill-Allah wahdahu la shaika lah, lahu'l-mulk wa lahu'l-hamd, wa huwa `ala kulli shayin qadir." According to a sahih hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever glorifies Allah (SWT) (says subhan Allah) after every prayer thirty three times, praises Allah (SWT) (says al-hamd lillah) thirty three times, and magnifies Allah (SWT) (says Allahu akbar) thirty-three times, which adds up to ninety-nine, then completes one hundred by saying La illaha ill-Allah wahdahu la shaika lah, lahu'l-mulk wa lahu'l-hamd, wa huwa `ala kulli shayin qadir, his sins will be forgiven, even if they were like the foam of the sea.”
Then she turns to Allah (SWT) humbly asking Him to correct all her affairs, in this world and next, and to bless her abundantly and guide her in everything. Thus the Muslim woman finishes her prayers, purified in heart and mind and reinvigorated with a dose of spiritual energy, which will help her to cope with the burdens of everyday life, knowing that she is under the protection of Allah (SWT). She will not panic if anything bad befalls her, nor will she become miserly if she enjoys good fortune. This is the attitude of those righteous women who pray and fear Allah (SWT): Truly man was created very impatient; Fretful when evil touches him; and niggardly when good reaches him. Not so those devoted to Prayer. Those who remain steadfast to their prayer; And those in whose wealth is a recognized right For the [needy] who asks and him who is prevented [for some reason from asking] (Qur'an 70:19-25)

She Pays Zakat on Her Wealth

The Muslim women pay zakat on her wealth, if she is wealthy enough to be liable for zakat. Every year at a specified time, she calculates how much she owns and pays what she has to, because zakat is a pillar of Islam, and there can be no compromise or excuse when it comes to paying it every year, even if the amount comes to thousands or millions. It would never occur to the true Muslim woman to try to avoid paying some of the zakat that she is obliged to pay. Zakat is a clearly-defined financial obligation and act of worship which Allah (SWT) has enjoined upon every Muslim, man or women, who owns the minimum amount (nisab) or more. Withholding zakat, or denying that it is obligatory, is tantamount to apostasy (riddah) and kufr, for which a person may be fought and even killed, until or unless he pays in full as required by Islam. The words of Abu Bakr (RAA) concerning the apostates who withheld their zakat echo down the centuries to us: "By Allah (SWT) I will fight whoever separates salat from zakat."

These immortal words demonstrate the greatness of this religion, which made the connection between "religious" and "secular" affairs, and reveal Abu Bakr's deep understanding of the nature of this integrated, holistic way of life, which combines abstract beliefs with the practical application of their principles. Many ayat of the Qur'an confirm the interdependence of salat and zakat in the structure of faith: . . .Those who establish
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regular prayer and regular charity . . ; (Qur’an 5:55) And be steadfast in prayer: practise regular charity, (Qur’an 2:43) . . . [those who] . . . establish prayers and regular charity (Qur’an 2:277)

It is clear to the true Muslim woman that Islam - although it has given her the right to financial independence, and has not obliged her to support herself or others, which is, rather, the duty of men - has indeed enjoined zakat on her, and has made zakat a right to which the poor are entitled. So the Muslim woman would not hesitate to pay it in the ways prescribed by shari`ah. She cannot claim to be excused because she is a woman and no woman is obliged to spend on others. Any woman who makes such a claim has a poor understanding of Islam, her faith is weak and there is some fault in her personality. Or else she is a woman who appears to be religious, but she is ignorant and negligent, or is stingy and loves money, and it would never occur to her to pay zakat even though she fasts, prays and performs Hajj, and occasionally gives a small charitable donation from her great wealth. These types of women - ignorant or stingy - are nothing like the true Muslim woman as envisaged by Islam.

She Fasts During the Day and Prays at Night in Ramadan

The true Muslim woman fasts the month of Ramadan, and her soul is filled with faith that: "Whoever fasts Ramadan out of faith and hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven." She has the attitude of one who truly fasts, whose faculties keep away from all kinds of sins that may invalidate the fast or diminish its reward. If she finds herself exposed to the trials of hostility or argument, she follows the Prophet's advice to men and women who fast: "When any of you is fasting, he should not utter foul words or raise his voice in anger. If then anyone provokes or fights him, he should say, `I am observing a fast.'"

"Whoever does not give up false speech and evil actions, Allah (SWT) has no need of his giving up his food and drink." During Ramadan, the true Muslim woman feels that she is immersed in the atmosphere of a month unlike any other, when good deeds should be multiplied and the gates of goodness should be opened wide. She knows that her fasting during this month should be only for Allah (SWT), and that He will give the reward for it, for the

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reward of Allah (SWT), the Bountiful and Munificent, is greater and vaster than anyone could even imagine: "The reward for every good deed of the sons of Adam will be multiplied anywhere between ten and seven hundred times. Allah (SWT) said: `Except for fasting, because it is for Me and I Myself will give recompense for it. He gives up his food and his passion for Me.' For the one who fasts, there are two times of rejoicing, one when he breaks the fast, and one when he meets his Lord. Verily the smell that comes from the mouth of one who is fasting is more pleasing to Allah (SWT) than the scent of musk."\(^{57}\)

Therefore the wise Muslim woman must strike a balance, during this all-too-short blessed month, between her domestic duties and the opportunity this month brings to draw closer to Allah (SWT) through worship and good deeds. She should not let her household chores distract her from performing the obligatory prayers at the appointed times, or from reading Qur'an or praying \textit{nafil} prayers. Nor should she let traditional late-night family gatherings keep her from praying \textit{qiya\mbox{m} al-layl} and \textit{tahujjud}, and making \textit{du`a'}. She knows the great reward and abundant forgiveness that Allah (SWT) has prepared for those who stay up to pray during the night in Ramadan: "Whoever spends the night in prayer during Ramadan out of faith and hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven."\(^{58}\)

The Prophet (PBUH) used to strive to do more good deeds during Ramadan than at other times, especially during the last ten days of it: `A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to strive during Ramadan, and especially the last ten days of it, more than he used to at other times."\(^{59}\)

`A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) also said: "When the last ten days of Ramadan began, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) would sty up for the whole night, wake his family up, strive extra hard, and abstain from marital relations."\(^{60}\)

The Prophet (PBUH) used to command the Muslims to seek \textit{laylat al-qadr}, and encouraged them to spend that night in prayer: "Seek \textit{laylat al-qadr} during the last ten days of Ramadan."\(^{61}\)
"Whoever spends the night of laylat al-qadr in prayer and worship out of faith and hope of reward, all his previous sins will be forgiven."\textsuperscript{62}

This blessed month is a time that is purely for worship. The serious-minded Muslim woman has no time to spend on chatting and idle pursuits throughout the night. She should not be among those who while away the night until dawn approaches, whereupon she offers her family something to eat and they fall into a deep sleep, and may even miss the \textit{fajr} prayer!

The true Muslim woman and her family should live an Islamic life during Ramadan, striving to organize themselves in such a way that when they all come back from \textit{tarawih} prayers, they do not stay up for too long, because in a few short hours' time, they will get up to pray \textit{qiyam al-layl} and then eat \textit{suhur}, for the Prophet (PBUH) commanded us to eat \textit{suhur}, as there is much benefit in it: "Eat \textit{suhur}, for in \textit{suhur} there is blessing."\textsuperscript{63}

The true Muslim woman helps all the members of her family to get up for \textit{suhur}, in obedience to the command of the Prophet (PBUH) and in the hope of obtaining the blessings of \textit{suhur}, such as the reminder to pray \textit{qiyam al-layl}, and encouragement to go out to the mosque to pray \textit{fajr} in congregation, as well as the physical benefits of strengthening the body for the day's fast. This is what the Prophet (PBUH) used to do and trained his Companions to do likewise:

Zayd ibn Thabit (RAA) said: "We ate \textit{suhur} with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), then we got up to pray." Someone asked, "How much time was there between the two?" He said: "Fifty \textit{ayat} [i.e. the time it would take to recite fifty \textit{ayat}]."\textsuperscript{64}

There is no doubt that Allah (SWT) will increase the reward of the Muslim woman who is the means of bringing these blessings to her family during Ramadan; \textbf{As to those who believe and work righteousness, verily We shall not suffer to perish the reward of any who do a [single] righteous deed,} (Qur'an 18:30)

\textbf{She Observes Nafil Fasts}
The true Muslim woman also observes *nafil* fasts at times other than Ramadan, if it is not too difficult for her to do so. So she fasts the day of `Arafat, and `Ashura', and the ninth day of Muharram, because fasting on these days and others is one of the righteous deeds that may expiate sins, as the Prophet (PBUH) told us: Abu Qutadah (RAA) said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was asked about fasting on the day of `Arafat, and he said: `It is an expiation for the sins of the previous year and the current year.'" Ibn `Abbas (RAA) said that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) fasted the day of `Ashura', and commanded others to fast on this day too. 

Abu Qutadah (RAA) said that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) was asked about fasting on the day of `Ashura', and he said: "It is an expiation for the sins of the previous year." Ibn `Abbas said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: `If I am still alive next year, I will fast on the ninth day (of Muharram).'"

Fasting six days of Shawwal is also encouraged, as the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever fasted Ramadan then followed it with six days of Shawwal, it will be as if he fasted for a lifetime."

It is also recommended to fast for three days of each month, concerning which Abu Hurayrah (RAA) said: "My dearest friend (i.e., the Prophet (PBUH)) advised me to do three things: to fast for three days of each month, to pray two *rak`ahs* of *duha* prayer, and never to sleep until I pray *witr*."

Abu'l-Darda' (RAA) said: "My beloved friend (PBUH) advised me to do three things that I shall never give up as long as I live: to fast three days of each month, to pray *duha*, and not to sleep until I have prayed *witr*.

`Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn al-`As (RAA) said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: `Fasting for three days of each month is like fasting for an entire lifetime.'"

Some reports describe these three days as being the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of each month, which are called *al-ayyam al-bid* (the white days); other reports state that the Prophet (PBUH) used to fast on three unspecified days of each month.

Mu`adhah al-`Adawiyyah said: "I asked `A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her), `Did the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to fast three days in each month?' She said, `Yes.' I asked her, `In which part of the month did he used to fast?' She said, `He did not mind in which part of the month he would fast.'"

*She goes on Hajj to the sacred House of Allah (SWT).*
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The true Muslim woman intends to go on Hajj to the House of Allah (SWT) when she is able to do so and it is easy for her to travel. Before she sets out on her journey, she takes the time to study the rules (ahkam) of Hajj in depth, so that when she begins to perform the rituals of Hajj, her actions will be based on true understanding and her Hajj will be complete according to the conditions laid down by the shari`ah. It will also be the equivalent of jihad for men, as the Prophet (PBUH) described it in a hadith narrated by `A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her): "I ['A'ishah] said: 'O Messenger of Allah (PBUH), can we (women) not go out on military expeditions and fight in jihad with you (men)?' He said, 'You (women) have the best of jihad, and the best of it is Hajj, a blessed Hajj.'" `A'ishah said, "I should never stop going for Hajj after I heard this from the Messenger of Allah (PBUH)."\textsuperscript{74}

She goes for `Umbra

Just as Hajj is obligatory for the Muslim woman, so also is `Umbra, if she is able to go - especially `Umbra during Ramadan, the reward for which is equivalent to that for performing Hajj with the Prophet (PBUH). This is seen in the hadith narrated by Imam Bukhari from Ibn `Abbas (RAA) who said: "When the Prophet (PBUH) came back from Hajj, he said to Umm Sinan al-Ansariyyah, 'What stopped you from going to Hajj?' She said, 'Abu so-and-so - meaning her husband - has two camels; he took one to go to Hajj, and we need the other to irrigate our land.' He said, 'When Ramadan comes, go for `Umbra, for `Umbra in Ramadan is a Hajj.'" According to another report also narrated by Ibn `Abbas, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "For `Umbra in Ramadan is equivalent to (performing) Hajj with me."\textsuperscript{75}

She is obedient to the commands of Allah (SWT)

The true Muslim woman does not forget that she is duty bound to perform all the religious duties that Allah (SWT) has commanded her to do. In this regard her situation is the same as that of a man, and there is no difference between them except in a few regulations which apply exclusively to either men or women. Other than that, women and men are equally responsible before Allah (SWT). Allah (SWT) says; \textbf{For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast [and deny themselves], for}

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men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise - for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward, (Qur'an 33:35)

Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, and life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions, (Qur'an 16:97)

And their Lord has accepted of them, and answered them: `Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: you are members, one of another; those who have left their homes and were driven out therefrom, and suffered harm in My Cause, and fought and were slain - verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath - a reward from the Presence of Allah, and from His Presence is the best of rewards, (Qur'an 3:195)

Whenever the phrase "ya ayyuha'l-nas (O people or O mankind)" appears in the Qur'an or Hadith, it includes both men and women. Evidence of this may be found in the hadith narrated by Imam Muslim from the Prophet's wife Umm Salamah (May Allah be pleased with her), who said: "I used to hear the people talking about al-hawd (the cistern), and I had never heard about it from the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). One day, whilst a young girl was combing my hair, I heard the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) saying "O people!" I said to the young girl, "Leave me alone now." She said, "That call is for men only; he is not calling the women." I said, "I am one of the people." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said: "I am the one who will be at the cistern (in the Hereafter) before you. So be careful, lest one of you should come to me and be driven away like a stray camel. I will ask the reason why, and I will be told, 'You do not know what innovations they wrought after your death,' and I will say, 'Away with them!'"

According to another report also narrated by Muslim, he (PBUH) said: ". . . and I will say, 'Away, away with the one who changed (the religion) after my death!'"

Men and women are equal before Allah (SWT), and both must pay heed to His commands and prohibitions. So the Muslim woman does what Allah (SWT) has commanded and keeps away from what He has forbidden, believing that she will be questioned about what she did in this life: if they are good, it will be good for her, and if they are bad, then will be bad for her. She does not transgress the limits laid down by Allah (SWT), and does not do anything that is haram. She always seeks the ruling of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger, and accepts it no matter what happens to her in her life.

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Islamic history is filled with the stories of great women who kept the rule of Allah (SWT) in mind at all times and did not deviate from it or look for alternatives. Among these stories is that of Khawlah bint Tha`labah and her husband Aws ibn al-Samit, narrated by Imam Ahmad and Abu Dawud, and quoted by Ibn Kathir in his tafsir of the beginning of Surat al-Mujadilah. Khawlah said: "By Allah (SWT), concerning me and Aws ibn al-Samit, Allah (SWT) revealed the beginning of Surat al-Mujadilah. I was married to him, and he was an old man who was bad-tempered. One day, he came in and I raised a particular issue with him again; he became angry and said, 'You are to me as the back of my mother.' Then he went out and sat for a while in the meeting-place of his people. Then he came back, and wanted to resume marital relations with me. I said, 'No way! By the hand of the One in Whose hand is the soul of Khuwaylah (i.e., Khawlah), you will never get what you want from me after saying what you said, until Allah (SWT) and His Messenger decide between us.' He tried to force himself on me, but I was able to resist because I was a young woman and he was a weak old man. I pushed him away, then I went to one of my (female) neighbours and borrowed a cloak from her and went to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). I sat before him, told him what (my husband) had done to me, and began to complain to him about my sufferings because of my husband's bad temper. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, 'O Khuwaylah, your cousin is an old man, so fear Allah (SWT) with regard to him.' I did not leave him until Qur'an was revealed concerning me: he was overcome as he usually was when Qur'an was revealed to him, and when it was over, he said: 'O Khuwaylah, Allah (SWT) has revealed Qur'an concerning you and your husband.' Then he recited to me: Allah has indeed heard [and accepted] the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and carries her complaint [in prayer] to Allah: and Allah [always] hears the arguments between both sides among you: for Allah hears and sees [all things]. If any men among you divorce their wives by zihar [calling them mothers], they cannot be their mothers: none can be their mothers except those who gave them birth. And in fact they use words [both] iniquitous and false: but truly Allah is One that blots out [sins], and forgives [again and again]. But those who divorce their wives by zihar, then wish to go back on the words they uttered - [it is ordained that such a one] should free a slave before they touch each other: this are you admonished to perform: and Allah is well-acquainted with [all] that you do. And if any has not [the wherewithal], he should fast for two months consecutively before they touch each other. But if any is unable to do so, he should feed sixty indigent ones.
This, that you may show your faith in Allah and His Messenger, those are limits [set by] Allah. For those who reject [Him], there is a grievous Penalty; (Qur'an 58:1-4)

He told me, `Let him release a slave.' I said, `O Messenger of Allah (PBUH), he does not have the means to do that.' He said, `Then let him fast for two consecutive months.' I said, `By Allah (SWT), he is an old man, he is not able to do that.' He said, `Then let him feed sixty poor people with a wasq of dates.' I said, `O Messenger of Allah (SWT), he does not have that much.' He said, `Then we will help him with a faraq of dates.' I said, `And I will help him with another faraq, O Messenger of Allah (SWT).' He said, `You have done right and done well. Go and give it in charity on his behalf, then take care of your cousin properly.' And I did so.

Khawlah bint Tha`labah could not bear to stay for one moment with her husband after he had spoken the words of zihar to her, which was a form of divorce at the time of jahiliyyah, until she had referred the matter to the Prophet (PBUH), so that she might know how Allah (SWT) would judge between her and her husband. She did not even have a suitable garment with which to go out and appear before the Prophet (PBUH), so she borrowed a robe from one of her neighbours, and rushed to where the Prophet (PBUH) was sitting, so that she could hear Allah's (SWT) ruling concerning her, and follow it.

It comes as no surprise that this great woman enjoyed such high standing among the Sahabah who were her contemporaries and knew her virtues, above all `Umar ibn al-Khattab (RAA). She met him one day outside the mosque, when al-Jarud al-`Abdi was with him. `Umar, who was the khalifah at that time, greeted her, and she said to him, "O `Umar, I remember you when you were called `Umayr in the marketplace of `Ukaz, taking care of the sheep with your stick. So fear Allah (SWT) in your role as khalifah taking care of the people, and know that the one who fears the threat of punishment in the Hereafter realises that it is not far away, and the one who fears death fears missing some opportunity in this life." Al-Jarud said, "You have spoken too harshly to Amir al-Mu'minin, woman!" `Umar said, "Let her be. Do you not know that this is Khawlah, to whose words Allah (SWT) listened from above the seven heavens? By Allah (SWT), `Umar should by rights listen to her."
Ibn Kathir mentions in his *Tafsir* that a man said to `Umar, when he saw him welcoming her warmly and listening to her, "You left a man of Quraysh to come to this old woman?" `Umar said, "Woe to you! Do you not know who this is?" The man said, "No." `Umar said, "This is a woman whose complaint Allah (SWT) listened to from above the seven heavens: this is Khawlah bint Tha`labah. By Allah (SWT), if she did not leave me until night fell, I would not tell her to leave until she had got what she came for, unless the time for prayer came, in which case I would pray, and then come back to her until she had got what she came for."

The true Muslim woman always bears in mind the words of Allah (SWT): *It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger, to have any option about their decision: if anyone disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path,* (Qur'an 33:36)

Obedience to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger is much more important than one's own whims and desires; it comes before pleasure and individual choice. Zaynab bint Jahsh (May Allah be pleased with her) set the best example of obedience to the command of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger when he asked her to agree to marry his freed slave and adopted son Zayd ibn Harithah. This marriage achieved two legislative (*tashri`i*) aims:

(1) To achieve total equality among people: the beautiful woman of Quraysh, the noblewoman of the sons of `Abdu Shams, and the cousin of the Prophet, married a freed slave. Freed slaves were of a lower class than the nobility; indeed, the differences between the classes was so great and so deep that nothing could abolish it except a decisive, public act on the part of the Prophet (PBUH), that the Muslim community would have to take as an example, so that these barriers might be torn down and people would not be viewed as superior except in terms of their level of *taqwa*.

(2) to abolish the custom of adoption which was widely spread at the time of *jahiliyyah*. Hence the Prophet (PBUH) married Zaynab, after she had been divorced by his adopted son Zayd, to demonstrate in practical terms that if Zayd had been his real son, Allah (SWT) would not have commanded him in the Qur'an to marry Zaynab.
The choice fell to Zaynab, the cousin of the Prophet (PBUH), to achieve these two legislative aims within the environment of the Prophet's household, so that the people could accept them in obedience to the command of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (PBUH). When he chose her to be the wife of Zayd ibn Harithah, she disliked the idea, and said, "O Messenger of Allah (PBUH), I will never marry him, for I am the noblewoman of the tribe of 'Abdu Shams." The Prophet (PBUH) replied, calmly but firmly, "You have to marry him." Whilst they were discussing the matter, Allah (SWT) revealed to His Messenger (PBUH): It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger, to have any option about their decision: if anyone disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path. (Qur'an 33:36). Then Zaynab accepted the command of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger, and said: "I will not disobey Allah (SWT) and His Messenger, and I will give myself in marriage to him." Subsequently, the differences between Zaynab and Zayd led to their divorce. When Zaynab had completed her 'iddah, Allah (SWT) revealed the following ayah: Behold! You did say to one who had received the grace of Allah and your favour: 'Retain [in wedlock] your wife, and fear Allah.' But you did hide in your heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: you did fear the people, but it is more fitting that you should fear Allah. Then when Zayd had dissolved [his marriage] with her, with the necessary [formality], We joined her in marriage to you: in order that [in future] there may be no difficulty to the Believers in [the matter of] marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary [formality] [their marriage] with them. And Allah's command must be fulfilled. (Qur'an 33:37)

The Prophet (PBUH) recited this ayah, smiling, then he said, "Who will go to Zaynab and tell her the good news that Allah (SWT) has arranged my marriage to her from heaven?" It was as if Allah (SWT) was rewarding Zaynab for her absolute obedience to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger. She had accepted their decision that she should marry Zayd, then she became the wife of the Prophet (PBUH) by the command of Allah (SWT), in ayat which the Muslims will recite when they worship Allah (SWT) by reciting the Qur'an, until the end of time. This honour was bestowed only on Zaynab, who was unique among the wives of the Prophet (PBUH). She was proud of the favour of Allah (SWT) to her, and used to boast to the other wives of the Prophet: "Your families arranged your marriages, but Allah (SWT) arranged my marriage from above the seven heavens."
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She does not sit alone with a "stranger"

Obedience to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger can only be achieved by following their commands and keeping away from that which they have prohibited. One way in which the Muslim woman obeys Allah (SWT) and His Messenger is by not sitting alone with a "stranger" (ajnabi) i.e., a man to whom she is not related, because doing so is haram according to the consensus of the scholars, on the basis of the hadith: "A man should not sit alone with a woman unless a mahram is with her, and a woman should not travel without a mahram." A man stood up and said: "O Messenger of Allah (PBUH), my wife has set out for Hajj, and I have enlisted for such-and-such a military expedition." He said, "Go and perform Hajj with your wife."\(^\text{82}\)

The mahram is a man to whom marriage is forever forbidden for a woman, such as the father, brother, paternal uncle, maternal uncle, etc.

The ajnabi or "stranger" is a man to whom marriage is allowed in principle, even if he is a relative, especially the husband's brother and other similarly close relatives. It is forbidden for a woman to sit alone with all of these, because the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Beware of entering upon women." A man of the Ansar asked, "O Messenger of Allah (PBUH), what about the brother-in-law?" He said, "The brother-in-law is death."\(^\text{83}\)

The brother-in-law is the husband's brother or other similarly close relatives by marriage. The Prophet's words, "The brother-in-law is death" mean that evil is more likely to occur from these quarters than from elsewhere, because of the ease with which he enters his brother's house. The word "death" is used for emphasis and as a sharp warning, as if sitting alone with the brother-in-law may lead to immorality and calamitous consequences that would be akin to the calamity of death.

The true Muslim woman does not fall into such errors as are committed by so many careless people nowadays.
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She wears correct hijab

The Muslim woman wears correct hijab when she goes out of her house. Hijab is the distinctive Islamic dress whose features have been clearly defined by the Qur'an and Sunnah. She does not go out of the house, or appear before non-mahram men, wearing perfume, make-up or other fineries, because she knows that this is haram according to the Qur'an: And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what [must ordinarily] appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or the slaves whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O you Believers! Turn all together towards Allah, that you may attain Bliss, (Qur'an 24:31)

The Muslim woman, therefore, is not one of those dressed-but-naked women who abound in societies which have deviated from the guidance of Allah (SWT). She would tremble with fear at the terrifying picture which the Prophet (PBUH) draw of those painted and adorned temptresses who have gone astray: "There are two types of the people of Hell that I have not seen: people with whips like the tails of oxen, with which they beat the people, and women who are dressed yet still appear naked, who are inclined to evil and make their husbands incline towards it also. Their heads are like the humps of camels, leaning to one side. They will not enter Paradise, or even smell its scent, although its scent can be discerned from such-and-such a distance." The Muslim woman who has been truly guided by her faith and has received a sound Islamic education does not wear hijab just because it is a custom or tradition inherited from her mother or grandmother, as some foolish men and women try to describe it with no evidence or logic whatsoever. The Muslim woman wears hijab on the basis of her belief that it is a command from Allah (SWT), revealed to protect the Muslim woman, to make her character distinct, and to keep her away from the slippery slope of immorality and error. So she accepts it willingly and with strong conviction, as the women of the Muhajirin and Ansar accepted it on the day when Allah
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(SWT) revealed His clear and wise command. According to a report narrated by Bukhari, `A’ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said: "May Allah have mercy on the Muhajir women. When Allah (SWT) revealed . . . that they should draw their veils over their bosoms . . . (Qur’an 24:31), they tore their wrappers and covered their heads and faces with them."

According to another report given by Bukhari, `A'ishah said: "They took their wrappers and tore them at the edges, then covered their heads and faces with them."86

Safiyyah bint Shaybah said: "When we were with `A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her), we mentioned the women of Quraysh and their virtues. `A'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said, 'The women of Quraysh are good, but by Allah (SWT) I have never seen any better or more strict in their adherence to the Book of Allah (SWT) than the women of the Ansar. When Surat al-Nur was revealed - . . . that they should draw their veils over their bosoms . . . - their menfolk went to them and recited to them the words that Allah (SWT) had revealed. Each man recited it to his wife, his daughter, his sister and other female relatives. Every woman among them got up, took her wrapper, and wrapped herself up in it out of faith and belief in what Allah (SWT) had revealed. They appeared behind the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), wrapped up, as if there were crows on their heads."87

May Allah (SWT) have mercy on the women of the Muhajirin and the Ansar: how strong their faith was, and how sincere their Islam! How beautiful was their obedience to the truth when it was revealed! Every woman who truly believes in Allah (SWT) and His Messenger cannot but follow the example of these virtuous women, so she herself must wear the distinctive Islamic dress with no regard to the nakedness and wanton display that surrounds her. I remember a young university student who wore hijab, whose attitude was no less admirable than that of the women of the Muhajirin and Ansar, may Allah (SWT) be pleased with them: when a journalist who was visiting the University of Damascus asked her about her hijab and whether it was not too hot for her in the extreme heat of summer, she responded by quoting: Say: `The fire of Hell is fiercer in heat,' (Qur’an 9:81).

It is Muslim girls such as this who will build Muslim homes and families, and raise a virtuous generation which will fill society with constructive and noble elements. Today there are many such young women, al-hamdu lillah.

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Proper dress for women was not something novel introduced by Islam; it existed in all the laws of Allah (SWT) revealed before Islam. This can be seen in what remains of those laws in the altered books (i.e. the Bible). We also see it in the modest dress of the Christian nuns who live in the Islamic world and also in the West, and in the fact that the women of the people of the Book cover their heads when they enter their churches. The modern rejection of the idea that women should be covered and modest goes against all divine laws, from the time of Ibrahim, Musa and `Isa (PBUH), until the hanifi way brought by Islam. This attitude is an attempt to escape the decree of Allah (SWT), which Allah (SWT) has sent to mankind throughout the ages, brought time after time by His Messengers to guide mankind to truth and righteousness, so that they would become one nation, worshipping and obeying one Lord: Mankind was but one nation, but differed [later]. Had it not been for a Word that went forth before from your Lord, their differences would have been settled between them. (Qur'an 10:19)

O messengers! Enjoy [all] things good and pure, and work righteousness; for I am well-acquainted with [all] that you do. And verily this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood. And I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore fear Me [and no other]. (Qur'an 23:51-52)

And [remember her who guarded her chastity: We breathed into her of Our Spirit, and We made her and her son a Sign for all peoples. Verily, this Brotherhood of yours is a single Brotherhood, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me [and no other]. (Qur'an 21:91-92)

The determination of many modern societies that women should be uncovered, living naked and immoral lives, is an indication of how far they have deviated from the guidance of Allah (SWT), not only in the Muslim lands, but in all countries of the world. The Westerners may not care about this, and may go ahead and invent more means of immorality without finding any deterrent in their corrupted books, but the Muslims who worship Allah (SWT) by reciting His perfectly preserved Book night and day will never accept such deviance, no matter how negligent and weak they are in their practice of Islam, because they constantly hear the definitive words of the Qur'an and Sunnah warning those who disobey Allah (SWT) and His Messenger of the test in this life and the severe
punishment to come in the Hereafter: . . . Let those beware who withstand the Messenger's order, lest some trial befall them, or a grievous Penalty be inflicted on them, (Qur'an 24:63)

So those men and women who have sold out to the West and called for women to uncover themselves and take off *hijab*, have failed miserably in the face of the determination of the men and women of the Islamic revival which is taking place throughout the world. Rightly-guided, educated Muslim women have gone back to their distinctive Islamic dress and correct, decent *hijab*, in many Muslim countries which had previously witnessed the call for Westernization and the abolishing of *hijab* and decency. For example, the followers of Ataturk in Turkey, Reza Pahlevi in Iran, Mohammad Aman in Afghanistan, Ahmed Zogo and Enver Hoxha in Albania, Marcus Fahmi, Qasim Amin and Hoda Shaarawi in Egypt. Some of those who supported women's "liberation" from *hijab* and modesty have now renounced their former opinions about women's showing off and mixing freely with men.

Dr Nawal al-Saadawi, who for a long time attacked *hijab* and those who wear it, vehemently calling for women to take off *hijab*, now condemns the vulgarity and scandalous nakedness of women in the West. She says: "In the streets of London . . . I see women who are nearly naked, showing off their bodies like merchandise. Clothing has a function, which is to protect the body from the natural environment, not to transmit messages of temptation. If a woman saw herself as a human being, and not as merchandise, she would not need to show her nakedness." 88

It became clear to Nawal al-Saadawi after a while, that the veil should be removed from the mind, not the body, especially in the case of those men and women who are educated. Those women of lesser education, but with intelligence and openness of mind, who wear *hijab*, are worth tens of those foolish educated women who make a wanton display of themselves, uncovering their faces, heads and bodies whilst veiling their minds and instincts! This is why she describes her future plans as "lifting the veil from the minds of educated men and women." 89 She adds: "I know many female professors, doctors and engineers who are politically, socially and culturally illiterate." 90
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The famous novelist Ihsan `Abd al-Quddus, who flooded the literary marketplace with his stories that called for women to go out of the house and mingle with men, dancing with them at parties and night-clubs, said in an interview with the Kuwaiti newspaper al-Anba’ (18 January 1989):

"I think that the basic responsibility of any woman is her house and children. This applies to me above all. If it were not for my wife, I would not have been able to enjoy success, stability and family life, because she is devoted to the house and children . . ."

In the same interview, he said: "I never in all my life envisaged marrying a woman who works, and I am well-known for this, because I knew from the beginning that the house is a heavy burden or responsibility for women."

She avoids mixing freely with men

The true Muslim woman avoids mixing with men as much as possible; she does not pursue it or encourage it. Thus she follows the example of Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet (PBUH), the Prophet's wives, the women of the salaf (the Sahabah and Tabi‘in), and those who followed their way sincerely.

The harm that may be done to both sexes as a result of free mixing, that is obvious to the Muslim woman, is now becoming clear to Westerners who have practised free mixing on the widest scale. They have seen that it leads to a fall in standards of education, so they have now begun to segregate male and female students in some universities and institutes of education. A number of the greatest Muslim educators, who have visited Europe, America and Russia have witnessed this segregation, for example, Professor Ahmad Mazhar al-`Azmah, who was sent by the Syrian Ministry of Education to Belgium, where he visited a number of schools. On a visit to a girls' elementary school, he asked the principal, "Why do you not let boys and girls mix at this level of education?" She replied, "We noticed the harm that mixing can do children even at the elementary level."

There was news that Russia had reached a similar conclusion, and had established separate, segregated branches of universities, where male and female students did not mix.
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In A, there are more than 170 university branches in which male and female students do not mix. They were set up because the educators and supervisors noticed the harm that was caused by mixing, even in a society that is used to mixing in every area of social life.

The evidence of the harm caused by mixing is too vast to be enumerated. All of it points to the wisdom of Islam in putting an end to mixing, and protecting the Muslim societies which adhere to Islamic guidance from its destructive, harmful effects.

She does not shake hands with a non-mahram man

It is natural that a Muslim woman who does not mix with men would not wish to shake hands with anyone who is not her mahram, in accordance with the teaching and example of the Prophet (PBUH). Bukhari reports that `A’ishah (May Allah be pleased with her) said: "When the believing women made hijrah to the Prophet (PBUH), he would examine and test them, in accordance with the ayah: ‘O you who believe! When there come to you believing women refugees, examine [and test] them’. . .; (Qur’an 60:10)

Whoever accepted these conditions required of the believing women has thereby accepted their bay’ah. When the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) accepted their words, he told them (the women), ‘You may go now, for I have accepted your bay’ah.’ By Allah (SWT), the Prophet's hand never touched the hand of a woman; he accepted their bay’ah by words only. By Allah (SWT), he never put any conditions on women other than those that Allah (SWT) commanded him, and when he had confirmed the bay’ah he would say ‘I have accepted you bay’ah by your words.'"

She does not travel except with a mahram

One of the rulings of Islam concerning women is that a woman should not travel without a mahram, because travel is full of dangers and hardships and it is not right for a woman to face all this alone, without a mahram to protect her and take care of her. So the Prophet (PBUH) forbade women to travel alone without a mahram; this is
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recorded in numerous Hadith, but it will suffice to quote just two of them here: "A woman should not travel for three days except with a mahram."\textsuperscript{92}, "It is not permitted for a woman who believes in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day to travel the walking-distance of three days without a mahram."\textsuperscript{93}

All the Hadith on this topic state that the presence of a mahram is the condition for women's travel, except in cases of utter necessity as defined by the scholars, whose points of view differ somewhat.\textsuperscript{94}

In this way the Muslim woman is truly obedient to Allah (SWT), following His commands, heeding His prohibitions, and accepting His rulings. She adheres to the teachings of Islam and bears with patience any difficulties that may be involved in obeying Allah (SWT), even if this goes against many of the prevalent social ideas. She is filled with hope that she will ultimately be successful and victorious, as the Qur'an states: By [the Token of] Time [through the Ages], Verily Man is in loss, Except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds, and [join together] in the mutual teaching of Truth, and of Patience and Constancy; (Qur'an 103:1-3)

She accepts the will and decree of Allah (SWT)

The Muslim woman who is obedient to the command of her Lord naturally accepts His will and decree, because this is one of the greatest signs of faith, obedience, taqwa and righteousness in a person. So the Muslim woman who is guided by the teachings of Islam always accepts whatever befalls her in life, whether it is good or bad, because this attitude of acceptance is good for her in all cases, as the Prophet (PBUH) explained: "How amazing is the affair of the Muslim! His affairs are all good. If he experiences ease, he is grateful, and that is good for him. If he experiences hardship, he faces it with patience and perseverance, and that is also good for him."\textsuperscript{95}

The Muslim woman is convinced that whatever befalls her in life could not have been avoided, and whatever does not befall her could not have been made to happen. Everything happens according to the will and decree of Allah (SWT), so her affairs are all good. If something good happens to her, she voices her praise to Allah (SWT), the Munificent Bestower, and she becomes one of those who are grateful, obedient and successful; if something
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bad happens to her, she faces it with patience and fortitude, so she becomes of those who are patient, redeemed and victorious.

With this deep faith, the Muslim woman faces the upheavals and calamities of life with a calm soul that accepts the will and decree of Allah (SWT). She seeks his help with patience and prayer, and hoping for reward from Him. She voices her praise to Allah (SWT) for what He has willed and decreed, as al-Khansa' did on the day when she heard the news about her four sons and said: "Praise be to Allah (SWT) Who has honoured me by their martyrdom; I hope that Allah (SWT) will gather me with them under His Mercy."96 She goes to the places where she usually prays, and seeks Allah's (SWT) help with prayer and patience, as Asma' bint `Umays used to do when disasters and tragedies stuck one after the other. She lost her first husband, Ja`far ibn Abi Talib (RAA), then she was stricken by the death of her second husband, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (RAA), and of her son, Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr (RAA).

There are many other examples in history of Muslim woman who had faith, hoping for reward from Allah (SWT) and facing difficulties with patience and fortitude. Allah (SWT) will reward them greatly: **Those who patiently persevere will truly receive a reward without measure!** (Qur'an 39:10)

**She turns to Allah (SWT) in repentance**

The Muslim woman may find herself becoming neglectful and slipping from the Straight Path, so she may fall short in her practice of Islam in a way that does not befit the believing woman. But she will soon notice her error, seek forgiveness for her mistakes or shortcomings, and return to the protection of Allah (SWT): **Those who fear Allah, when a thought of evil from Satan assaults them, Bring Allah to remembrance When lo! They see [aright]!** (Qur'an 7:201)

The heart that is filled with love and fear of Allah (SWT) will not be overcome by negligence. It is those who ignore Allah's (SWT) commands and guidance who will be led astray. The heart of the sincere Muslim woman is ever eager to repent and seek forgiveness, and rejoices in obedience, guidance and the pleasure of Allah (SWT).
She feels a sense of responsibility for the members of her family

The responsibility of the Muslim woman for the members of her family is no less, in the sight of Allah (SWT), than that of the man. Her responsibility is in fact even greater than a man's, because of what she knows of the secret life of her children who live with her most of the time: they may tell her things that they do not tell their father. The Muslim woman feels this responsibility every time she hears the words of the Prophet (PBUH): "Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. The leader is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock; a man is the shepherd of his family and is responsible for his flock; a woman is the shepherd in the house of her husband and is responsible for her flock; the servant is the shepherd of his master's wealth and is responsible for it. Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock."  

This sense of responsibility constantly motivates her to put right any faults or shortcomings she finds in her family's behaviour. A woman does not keep quiet about any deviance, weakness or negligence in her family or home, unless she is lacking in religion, her character is weak, and her understanding is incomplete.

Her main concern is the pleasure of Allah (SWT)

The true Muslim woman always seeks to earn the pleasure of Allah (SWT) in everything she does. So she measures everything against this precise standard, and will retain or discard any practice accordingly.

Whenever there is a conflict between what pleases Allah (SWT), and what pleases other people, she chooses what pleases Allah (SWT), with no hesitation or argument, even if it will anger other people. She does this because she knows, with her deep understanding of Islam and her own common sense, that pleasing the people is a goal that can never be achieved, and it will only bring about the wrath of Allah (SWT). The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever seeks the pleasure of Allah (SWT) at the risk of displeasing the people, Allah (SWT) will take care of him and protect him from them. But whoever seeks the pleasure of the people at the risk of displeasing Allah (SWT), Allah (SWT) will abandon him to the care of the people."
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By weighing up her deeds in this precise fashion, the Straight Path will be clearly signposted for the Muslim woman. She will know what she is allowed to do and what she should avoid; her unfailing standard is the pleasure of Allah (SWT). Thus the life of the Muslim women will be free from ridiculous contradiction which have ensnared so many of those who have deviated from the guidance of Allah (SWT).

There are women whom one sees praying perfectly, but in many instances they follow their own desires and deviate from the right path. In social gatherings they involve themselves in gossip and backbiting, criticising people, plotting against anybody they dislike, and putting words in their mouths so as to discredit them. These people are suffering from weakness of faith and a failure to understand the true reality of this holistic religion which Allah (SWT) revealed to guide mankind in all aspects of life, both public and private, so that people might seek the pleasure of Allah (SWT) by obeying His commands and emulating the behaviour of the Prophet (PBUH).

There are also women who obey Allah (SWT) in some matters, but disobey Him in others, acting according to their own whims and desires. Such people are, as it were, half-Muslims, and the split personality of those who have deviated from the guidance of Islam is one of the most dangerous psychological and spiritual disorders facing modern man.

She understands the true meaning of being a servant of Allah (SWT)

The true Muslim woman has the firm belief that she has been created to serve an important purpose in life, which Allah (SWT) has defined in the Qur'an: I have only created jinns and men, that they may serve Me, (Qur'an 51:56)

Life, for the true Muslim woman, is not to be spent solely on daily chores or enjoyment of the good things of this world; life is an important mission, in which every believer must take on the responsibility of living in such a way that he or she will be a true and sincere worshipper of Allah (SWT). This can only be achieved by checking one's intention, in all one's deeds, to ensure that they are done for the sake of Allah (SWT) and to please Him. According to Islam, all deeds are tied to the intentions behind them, as the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Actions are but
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by intention, and every man shall have but that which he intended. Thus he whose migration was for Allah (SWT) and His Messenger, his migration was for Allah (SWT) and His Messenger; and he whose migration was to achieve some worldly benefit or to take some woman in marriage, his migration was for that which he intended.\textsuperscript{99}

Hence the Muslim woman may be in a continuous state of worship, which may encompass all of her deeds, so long as she checks her intentions and ensures that she is carrying out her mission in life, as Allah (SWT) wants her to do. So she may be in a state of worship when she treats her parents with kindness and respect, when she is a good wife to her husband, when she takes care of her children's upbringing and education, when she goes about her domestic chores, when she upholds the ties of kinship, etc., so long as she does all this in obedience to the commands of Allah (SWT), and with the intention of serving and worshipping Him.

**She works to support the religion of Allah (SWT)**

The most important act of worship that the Muslim woman can do is to strive to establish the rule of Allah (SWT) on earth, and to follow the way of life that He has prescribed, so that Islam will govern the life of the individual, the family, the community and the nation.

The sincere Muslim woman will feel that her worship is lacking if she does not strive to achieve the purpose for which Allah (SWT) created \textit{jinn} and men, namely promoting the supremacy of the authority of Allah (SWT) on earth, which is the only way in which mankind can truly worship Allah (SWT): \textit{I have only created jinns and men, that they may worship Me}, (Qur'an 51:56)

This is the only way in which the true meaning of the words "la ilaha ill-Allah" will be realized in our own lives.

The first Muslim women had a sound grasp of this meaning, which penetrated deep into their souls. They were no less enthusiastic than the men when it came to sacrifice and courage for the sake of Allah (SWT). Some of the women of the early generations of this \textit{ummah} excelled many of the men in this regard.
Asma' bint `Umays, the wife of Ja`far ibn Abi Talib, hastened to embrace Islam along with her husband in the earliest days of Islam, the days of hardship and suffering. She migrated with him to Abyssinia, in spite of the risks and hardships involved, for the sake of Allah (SWT) and to support His religion. When `Umar ibn al-Khattab joked with her and said, "O Habashiyyah (Abyssinian woman)!

We beat you to Madinah," she said, "You have most certainly spoken the truth. You were with the Messenger of Allah, feeding the hungry and teaching the ignorant, whilst we were far away in exile. By Allah (SWT), I shall go to the Messenger of Allah and tell him that." She came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, some men are criticizing us and claiming that we were not among the early muhajirin." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "But you have two hijrah; you migrated to the land of Abyssinia, whilst we were detained in Makkah, then you migrated to me afterwards."

Asma' bint `Umays was successful in establishing the virtue of those who had migrated to Abyssinia in the early days of Islam, and she understood from the Prophet (PBUH) that this distinguished group would have the reward of two hijrahs. This was a great honour which was theirs because they had not hesitated to support the Prophet (PBUH), even though it meant leaving behind their families and homeland for the sake of Allah (SWT).

Muslim women were also present at the Treaty of `Aqabah, which took place in secret, under cover of darkness, and which played such an important role in supporting the Prophet (PBUH). Among the delegation of Ansar were two women of status and virtue: Nasibah bint Ka`b al-Maziniyyah, and Umm Mani` Asma' bint `Amr al-Sulamiyyah, the mother of Mu`adh ibn Jabal (RAA); the latter was present with the Prophet (PBUH) at Khaybar, where she performed extremely well.

When the Prophet (PBUH) began his Mission, calling for pure Tawhid and the abandonment of idol-worship, the mushrikin were very angry with him, and plotted to break into his house at night and kill him. The conspirators kept quiet and vowed to let their plot to kill the Prophet remain a secret amongst themselves. Nobody even sensed that there was a plot, apart from one Muslim woman, who was over one hundred years old. Her name
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was Ruqayqah bint Sayfi, and she did not let the weakness of old age stop her from hastening to save the Prophet's life. She made her way to him, and told him what the people were planning to do. He embarked upon his *hijrah* straight away, leaving the land that was the most beloved to him on earth, and leaving his cousin `Ali (RAA) sleeping in his bed, so that the conspirators surrounding his house would think that he was there, and this would keep them from following him and killing him on the road.\(^{101}\)

What a tremendous service this great woman did for Islam and the Muslims! How great was her *jihad* to save the life of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) at the most dangerous time he ever faced.

When the Prophet (PBUH) and his companion left Makkah, and stayed out of sight in the cave of Hira' at the top of Mount Thawr, it was a young girl who brought them food and water, and news of the people who were lying in wait for . Her name was Asma' bint Abi Bakr al-Siddiq (May Allah be pleased with her).

This brave young girl used to cover the great distance between Makkah and Mount Thawr at night; the difficulty and isolation of this journey, and the presence of watchful enemies, did not deter her. She knew that by saving the life of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companion, helping them to reach their goal of going to Madinah, she was supporting the religion of Allah (SWT), and working towards making His word supreme on earth. So she undertook her difficult mission every day, ever alert and striving to conceal herself as she walked and climbed up the mountain, until she had brought whatever supplies and news she was carrying to the Prophet (PBUH) and his companion. Then she would go back down to Makkah under cover of darkness.\(^{102}\)

This mission, which even the strongest of men could have failed to achieve, is not all that Asma' did to support the Prophet (PBUH) and Islam. She was tested severely, and proved to be as solid as a rock, on the day when the *mushrikin* surrounded her and asked about her father. She denied knowing anything, and they placed severe pressure on her, so much so that Abu Jahl struck her a blow that sent her earring flying from her ear. But this did not weaken her resolve or her determination to keep her secret hidden. She kept up her mission of taking food and news to the Prophet (PBUH) and his companion, until the time came for them to leave the cave and head for

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Madinah. She had already brought them provisions for the journey, but when she checked the cloth in which they were wrapped, she found that she had nothing with which to tie it apart from her own girdle. She told her father, who told her to tear it in two and use one piece to tie the water skins and the other to tie the cloth holding the food. Hence Asma' became known as *Dhat al-Nitaqayn* (she of the two girdles).\(^{103}\)

It was the attitude of the early Muslim women to support the religion of Allah (SWT) and join the forces of *da`wah*, because their hearts were filled with strong, vibrant faith. They could not bear to stay in the land of *kufr*, far from the centre of Islam, so they migrated - with their husbands, if they were married - and their *hijrah*, like that of the men, was in obedience to Allah (SWT) and in support of His religion. Their faith was like that of the men, and they made sacrifices just as the men did.

This deep faith is what motivated Umm Kalthum bint `Uqbah ibn Abi Mu`ayt to migrate to Madinah alone, at the time of the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah, where the Prophet (PBUH) had promised to return to the *mushrikin* anyone who came to him to embrace Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) had already kept his promise and sent two men back. When Umm Kalthum reached Madinah, she said to the Prophet (PBUH): "I have fled to you with my religion, so protect me and do not send me back to them, for they will punish me and torture me, and I do not have the patience and fortitude to endure that. I am a mere woman, and you know the weakness of women. I see that you have already sent two men back." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Allah (SWT) has cancelled this treaty with regard to women."\(^{104}\)

Allah (SWT) knew the faith of Umm Kalthum bint `Uqbah ibn Abi Mu`ayt, and other *muhajir* women who had migrated solely out of love for Allah (SWT) and His Messenger and Islam.

He revealed Qur'an concerning them, abolishing the treaty between the Prophet and the *mushrikin* in the case of women only, and forbidding their being sent back to the *mushrikin* once the Prophet (PBUH) had tested them and ensured that they had not migrated for the sake of a husband or wealth or some other worldly purpose, and that they had indeed migrated for the sake of Allah (SWT) and His Messenger: **O you who believe! When there come**
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to you believing women refugees, examine [and test] them: Allah knows best as to their Faith: if you ascertain that they are Believers, then send them not back to the Unbelievers. They are not lawful [wives] for the Unbelievers, nor are the [Unbelievers] lawful [husbands] for them. (Qur'an 60:10)

One of those virtuous women who were among the first people to support Islam and the Prophet was Umm al-Fadl bint al-Harith, Lubabah, the full-sister of the Prophet's wife Maymunah. She was the second woman to embrace Islam: she became Muslim after Khadijah (May Allah be pleased with her). She was a source of great support and consolation for the Prophet (PBUH).

Lubabah was the wife of the Prophet's paternal uncle al-`Abbas ibn `Abd al-Muttalib, and was diametrically opposed to Umm Jamil bint Harb, the wife of his other paternal uncle Abu Lahab, whom the Qur'an described as the carrier of firewood who would have a twisted rope of palm-leaf fibre around her neck (see Qur'an 111:4-5), because of her determination to harm the Prophet (PBUH), whilst Lubabah was the first to come to his support and to make sacrifices to support his religion during the most testing days that the early Muslims faced.

Lubabah, her husband al-`Abbas and their sons used to conceal their Islam, in obedience to the Prophet's command and in accordance with a well-thought-out plan.

Thus they were able to learn the secrets of the mushrikin and pass them on to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). When the battle of Badr was waged between the Muslims and the mushrikin, and news came of the defeat of Quraysh, Umm Fadl urged her sons and her freed slave Abu Rafi` to conceal their joy at this defeat, because she feared that the mushrikin, especially Abu Lahab who was filled with hatred towards Muhammad (PBUH), his companions and his message, might do them some harm.

But her freed slave Abu Rafi` was not safe from the wrath of Abu Lahab; when he expressed his joy at the Muslims' victory, Abu Lahab was enraged and vented his fury on the poor man, beating him in the presence of Umm Fadl. At this point, Umm Fadl became like a fierce lioness, and attacked him shouting, "You pick on him...
when his master is absent!" She struck him with one of the (wooden) pillars of the house and dealt him a fatal blow to the head. Abu Lahab did not live more than seven days after that.

Umm Fadl bore her separation from her husband al-`Abbas with patience, for the sake of Allah (SWT) and in support of His religion, when the Prophet (PBUH) issued a command that al-`Abbas should stay in Makkah, and she should migrate to Madinah. Their separation was a lengthy and difficult one, but Umm Fadl bore it patiently, hoping for reward and seeking help from Allah (SWT) through prayer and fasting, waiting for her beloved husband to finish what he had to do in Makkah and come to Madinah. As it turned out, he was one of the last to migrate to Madinah. The only thing that helped to ease the pain of this separation was seeing her eldest son `Abdullah, accompanying the Prophet (PBUH) daily and drinking deeply from the pure wellspring of Islam. It never occurred to her that history was preparing her to enter its widest gate, for she was to be the great mother of the great authority on Islamic teaching and the interpretation of the Qur'an: `Abdullah ibn al-`Abbas (RAA).

Another one of the early Muslim women who thought little of the sufferings and torture they endured for the sake of Islam was Sumayyah, the mother of `Ammar ibn Yasir. When the mid-day heat was at its most intense, and the desert sands were boiling, Banu Makhzum would drag her and her son and husband out to an exposed area, where they would pour burning sand over them, place heated shields on them, and throw heavy rocks at them, until her son and husband sought to protect themselves from this appalling torture by saying some words to agree with the mushrikin, although they hated to do so. Concerning them and others in similar situations, Allah (SWT) revealed the ayah:  

**Anyone who, after accepting faith in Allah, utters Unbelief, except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in faith...** (Qur'an 16:106)

But Sumayyah remained steadfast and patient, and refused to say what the mushrikin wanted to hear. The despicable Abu Jahl stabbed her with a spear, killing her, and thus she had the honour of being recorded as the first martyr in Islam.
The history of Islam is filled with other women who endured even worse torture for the sake of Islam. This suffering did not weaken their resolve or exhaust their patience; rather they willingly accepted whatever befell them, hoping for reward from Allah (SWT). They never said anything that would undermine their religion, and they never humiliated themselves by begging for mercy. Historians record that many of the men who were oppressed - apart from Bilal, may Allah (SWT) have mercy on him - were forced to say something that would please their oppressors, in order to save their lives, but not one of the women who were similarly oppressed was reported to have given in.

These brilliant Muslim women welcomed the oppression they suffered for the sake of Allah (SWT) and making His word supreme on earth. They never stopped preaching the word of Islam, no matter what trials and suffering came their way.

In the story of Umm Sharik al-Qurashiyyah al-`Amiriyyah, Ibn `Abbas gives an eye-witness account of the depth of the women's faith and how they rushed to devote themselves to Allah’s (SWT) cause, patiently enduring whatever trials this entailed.

Ibn `Abbas said: "Umm Sharik began to think about Islam whilst she was in Makkah. She embraced Islam, then began to mix with the women of Quraysh in secret, calling them to Islam, until this became known to the people of Makkah. They seized her and said, `If it were not for your people, we would have done what we wanted to you, but we will send you back to them.' She said, `So they seated me on a camel with no saddle or cushion beneath me, and left me for three days without giving me anything to eat or drink. After three days I began to lose consciousness. Whenever they stopped, they would leave me out in the sun whilst they sought shade, and keep food and drink away from me until they resumed their journey . . .''

This was not all that Muslim women did in support of Islam; they also went out on military expeditions with the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions where, when the forces of *iman* and the forces of *kufr* met in armed combat,
they performed the important duty of preparing the waterskins and bringing water to the fighters, and tending the wounded, and carrying the dead away from the battlefield.

At the most critical moments, they never shrank from taking up weapons and entering the fray alongside the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions.

Bukhari and Muslim narrate many Hadith which illustrate the brilliance of the Muslim women during that golden age, when hearts were filled with vibrant faith, deep love for Allah (SWT) and His Messenger, and the desire to make Islam victorious.

One of these reports is the account given by Imam Muslim of Umm `Atiyyah al-Ansariyyah, who said: "I went out on seven military campaigns with the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). I stayed behind in the camp, making food for them and tending to the sick and wounded."

Anas ibn Malik said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to go out on military campaigns accompanied by Umm Sulaym and some of the Ansar women; they would bring water and tend the wounded."

Imam Bukhari reported that al-Rubayyi` bint Mu`awwidh said: "We were with the Prophet (PBUH), bringing water, tending the wounded, and bringing the dead back to Madinah."

Bukhari and Muslim report that Anas said: "On the day of Uhud, when some of the people ran away from the Prophet (PBUH), Abu Talhah stood before the Prophet (PBUH), defending him with a shield. Abu Talhah was a highly-skilled archer, and on that day he broke two or three bows. Whenever a man passed by who had a quiver full of arrows, he would say, `Give it to Abu Talhah.' Whenever the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) raised his head to see what was happening, Abu Talhah told him, `O Prophet of Allah, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you! Do not raise your head, lest an arrow strike you. May it hit my chest rather than yours.' He [Anas] said: I saw `A‘ishah bint Abi Bakr and Umm Sulaym, both of whom had tucked up their garments so that their anklets were visible. They were carrying waterskins on their backs and were pouring water into the mouths of the people. They..."
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would go back and fill the waterskins again, then come and pour water into the mouths of the people again. Abu Talhah's sword fell from his hands two or three times because of exhaustion.”

What a noble deed these two great women did in quenching the thirst of the mujahidin in the midst of a raging battle and in the intense heat of the Hijaz climate. They were moving about the battlefield, not caring about the falling arrows and clashing swords that surrounded them.

For this reason, the Rightly-Guided khalifah `Umar ibn al-Khattab (RAA) preferred Umm Salit over his own wife Umm Kalthum bint `Ali when he was sharing out some garments among the women of Madinah. Because she had sewn waterskins on the day of Uhud, and this had played an important role in helping the mujahidin and renewing their energy. Bukhari reports from Tha`labah ibn Abi Malik: "`Umar ibn al-Khattab shared out some garments among the women of Madinah. There was one good garment left, and some of the people with him said, `O Amir al-Mu'minin, give this to your wife, the grand-daughter of the Messenger of Allah,' meaning Umm Kalthum bint `Ali. `Umar said, `Umm Salit has more right to it.' Umm Salit was one of the Ansari women who had pledged their allegiance to the Prophet (PBUH). `Umar said, `She carried the water-skins to us on the day of Uhud.'"

At Uhud, the Prophet's cheek and upper lip were wounded and his tooth was broken. His daughter Fatimah (May Allah be pleased with her) washed his wounds, whilst `Ali poured the water. When Fatimah saw that the water only made the bleeding worse, she took a piece of matting, burned it, and applied it to the wound to stop the bleeding.

Among the women who stood firm at the most intense moments of the battle of Uhud was Safiyyah bint `Abd al-Muttalib, the (paternal) aunt of the Prophet (PBUH). She stood with a spear in her hand, striking the faces of the people and saying, "Are you running away from the Messenger of Allah?!" When the Prophet (PBUH) saw her, he gestured to her son al-Zubayr ibn al-`Awwam that he should bring her back so that she would not see what had happened to her brother Hamzah (RAA). She said, "Why? I have heard that my brother has been mutilated, but that is nothing for the sake of Allah (SWT). We accept what has happened, and I shall hope for reward and be patient, in sha Allah."
Safiyyah was also present at the battle of al-Khandaq (the trench). When the Prophet (PBUH) set out from Madinah to fight his enemies, he put his wives and womenfolk in the fortress of the poet Hassan ibn Thabit, which was the most secure fortress in Madinah. A Jewish man came by, and began to walk around the fortress. Safiyyah said, "O Hassan, this Jew is walking around the fortress, and by Allah (SWT) I fear that he will go and tell the other Jews out there where we are. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and his Companions are too busy to come and help us, so go down and kill him." Hassan said, "May Allah forgive you, O daughter of `Abd al-Muttalib. By Allah (SWT), you know that I am not like that." When Safiyyah heard this, she stood up, took hold of a wooden post, and went down from the fortress herself. She struck the Jew with the wooden post and killed him, then went back to the fortress and said, "O Hassan, go down and strip him of his arms and armour; the only thing that is preventing me from doing so is that he is a man." Hassan said, "I have no need of this booty, O daughter of Abd al-Muttalib." Safiyyah was also present at the battle of Khaybar.

One of the most distinguished women who took part in the battle of Uhud, if not the most distinguished of them, was Nasibah bint Ka`ab al-Maziniyyah, Umm `Umarah (May Allah be pleased with her). At the beginning of the battle, she was bringing water and tending the wounded, as the other women were doing. When the battle was going in the favour of the Muslims, the archers disobeyed command of the Prophet (PBUH), and this turned the victory into defeat, as the Qur'an described it:

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Behold! You were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at anyone, and the Messenger in your rear was calling you back . . . (Qur'an 3:153)
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At this point, Nasibah went forward, with her sword unsheathed and her bow in her hand, to join the small group who were standing firm with the Prophet (PBUH), acting as a human shield to protect him from the arrows of the mushrikin. Every time danger approached the Prophet (PBUH), she hastened to protect him. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) noticed this, and later said, "Wherever I turned, to the left or the right, I saw her fighting for me."

Her son `Umarah also described what happened on that tremendous day: "On that day, I was wounded in my left hand. A man who seemed to be as tall as a palm-tree struck me, then went away without pursuing me to finish me off. The blood began to flow copiously, so the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) told me, `Bind up your wound.' My

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mother came to me, and she was wearing a waist-wrapper, which she had brought, for the purpose of wrapping wounds. She dressed my wound, whilst the Prophet (PBUH) was looking on. Then she told me, 'Get up, my son, and fight the people.' The Prophet (PBUH) said, 'Who could bear what you are putting up with, O Umm `Umarah?' She said: The man who had struck my son came by, and the Messenger of Allah said, 'This is the one who struck your son.' I intercepted him and hit him in the thigh, and he collapsed. I saw the Messenger of Allah smiling so broadly that I could see his back teeth. He said, 'You have taken your revenge, O Umm `Umarah!' Then we struck him with our weapons until we killed him, and the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Praise be to Allah (SWT), who granted you victory over him, gave you the satisfaction of taking revenge on your enemy, and let you see the vengeance for yourself.'

On this day, Nasibah herself received many wounds whilst she was fighting the people and striking their chests. The Prophet (PBUH) saw her, and called to her son, "Your mother! Your mother! See to her wounds, may Allah (SWT) bless you and your household! Your mother has fought better than so-and-so." When his mother heard what the Prophet (PBUH) said, she said, "Pray to Allah (SWT) that we may accompany you in Paradise." He said, "O Allah (SWT), make them my companions in Paradise." She said, "I do not care what befalls me in this world."111

Umm `Umarah's jihad was not confined to the battle of Uhud. She was also present on a number of other occasions, namely the treaty of `Aqabah, al-Hudaybiyah, Khaybar and Hunayn. Her heroic conduct at Hunayn was no less marvellous than her heroic conduct at Uhud. At the time of Abu Bakr's khilafah, she was present at al-Yamamah where she fought brilliantly and received eleven wounds as well as losing her hand.

It is no surprise that the Prophet (PBUH) gave her the good news that she would enter Paradise, and that she was later held in high esteem by the khilafah Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (RAA) and his commander Khalid ibn al-Walid (RAA), and subsequently by `Umar ibn al-Khattab (RAA).112

During this golden age of the Muslim woman's history there was another woman who was no less great than Nasibah bint Ka`b: Umm Sulaym bint Milhan. Like Umm `Umarah, 'A'ishah, Fatimah and the other women, she
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also brought water and tended the wounded, but here we will tell another story. When the Muslims were preparing to go out with the Prophet (PBUH) to conquer Makkah, her husband Abu Talhah was among them. Umm Sulaym was in the later stages of pregnancy, but this did not stop her from wanting to accompany her husband Abu Talhah and to earn alongside him the reward for jihad for the sake of Allah (SWT). She did not care about the hardships and difficulties that lay ahead on the journey. Her husband felt sorry for her and did not want to expose her to all that, but he had no choice but to ask the Prophet's permission. The Prophet (PBUH) gave his permission, and Umm Sulaym was delighted to accompany her beloved husband and witness the conquest of Makkah with him, on that great day when the hills of Makkah echoed with the cries of the believers and mujahidin: "There is no god but Allah (SWT) alone. He has kept His promise, granted victory to His servant, and alone has defeated the confederates. There is nothing before Him or after Him. There is no god but Allah (SWT), and we worship Him alone, adhering faithfully to His religion although the disbelievers may hate this." This was the day when the bastions of idolatry and shirk in the Arabian Peninsula were forever destroyed, and the idols were thrown down by the Prophet (PBUH), as he declared, Truth has [now] arrived, and Falsehood perished: for Falsehood is [by its nature] bound to perish. (Qur'an 17:81)

These events filled Umm Sulaym's soul with faith, and increased her courage and her desire to strive for the sake of Allah (SWT). Only a few days later came the battle of Hunayn, which was such a severe test for the Muslims. Some of the people ran away from the battle, not caring about anything. The Prophet (PBUH) stood to the right and said, "Where are you going, O people? Come to me! I am the Messenger of Allah, I am Muhammad ibn Abdullah." Nobody stayed with him except for a group of Muhajirin and Ansar, and members of his household, and Umm Sulaym and her husband Abu Talhah were among this group. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) saw Umm Sulaym wrapping a garment around her waist; she was pregnant with `Abdullah ibn Abi Talhah, and she was trying to control Abu Talhah's camel, which she was afraid would get away from her, so she pulled its head down towards her and took hold of its nose-ring. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) called her, "O Umm Sulaym!" and she replied, "Yes, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O Messenger of Allah."
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A report in Sahih Muslim states: "On the day of Hunayn, Umm Sulaym took hold of a dagger and kept it with her. Abu Talhah saw her, and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, Umm Sulaym has a dagger.' The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) asked her, 'What is this dagger?' She said, 'I took it so that if any one of the mushrikin comes near me, I will rip his belly open with it.' The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) began to laugh. She said, 'O Messenger of Allah, kill all of the tulaqa who have run away and left you.' The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, 'Allah (SWT) is sufficient for us and He has taken care of us.'"

Umm Sulaym stood firm with the Prophet (PBUH) when the battle intensified and even the bravest of men were put to the test. She could not bear even to see those who had run away and left the Prophet (PBUH), so she told him, "Kill those who ran away and left you . . ." It comes as no surprise that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) gave her the glad tidings that she would enter Paradise. In a hadith reported by Bukhari, Muslim and others from Jabir ibn `Abdullah (RAA), he (PBUH) told her: "I saw myself in Paradise, and suddenly I saw al-Rumaysa, the wife of Abu Talhah . . ."

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) used to visit Umm Sulaym, and her sister Umm Haram bint Milhan. Just as he gave glad tidings to Umm Sulaym that she would enter Paradise, so he also gave good news to Umm Haram that she would ride the waves of the sea with those who went out to fight for the sake of Allah (SWT).

Bukhari reports that Anas ibn Malik (RAA) said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) visited the daughter of Milhan, and rested there for a while. Then he smiled, and she asked him, 'Why are you smiling, O Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'Some people of my ummah will cross the green sea for the sake of Allah (SWT), and they will look like kings on thrones.' She said, 'O Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah (SWT) that I will be one of them.' He said, 'O Allah (SWT), make her one of them.' Then he smiled again, and she asked him again why he was smiling. He gave a similar answer, and she said, 'Pray to Allah (SWT) that I will be one of them.' He said, 'You will be one of the first ones, not one of the last ones.'"
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The Prophet's words came true, as Anas (RAA) reported: "She married `Ubada ibn al-Samit, and went out for jihad with him, and she travelled across the sea with the daughter of Qarazah. When she came back, her riding-beast threw her, and she fell and died."118

Her grave in Cyprus remains to this day as a memorial to a Muslim woman who fought in jihad for the sake of Allah (SWT). When people visit the grave they say, "This is the grave of a righteous woman, may Allah (SWT) have mercy on her."119

Another of the women who took part in military campaigns and jihad with the Prophet (PBUH), helping to defend Islam, was Umm Ayman, the nurse of the Prophet (PBUH). She was present at Uhud, Khaybar, Mu'tah and Hunayn, where she worked hard, tending the wounded and bringing water to the thirsty.120

There was also Kabshah bint Rafi` al-Ansariyyah, the mother of Sa`d ibn Mu`adh (RAA). During the campaign of Uhud, she came running towards the Prophet (PBUH), who was on his horse, and Sa`d ibn Mu`adh (RAA) was holding onto its reins. Sa`d said, "O Messenger of Allah, this is my mother." The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "She is most welcome." He stopped for her, and she came closer; he offered his condolences for the death of her son `Amr ibn Mu`adh, told her and her family the glad tidings of the martyrs in Paradise, and prayed for them.121

Among these great women are al-Furay`ah bint Malik, and Umm Hisham bint Harithah ibn al-Nu`man (RAA). They were among those who gave their oath of allegiance to the Prophet (PBUH) under the tree at Hudaybiyah. This was Bay`at al-Ridwan, which the Prophet (PBUH) called for when the mushrikin prevented the believers from entering Makkah; the Prophet (PBUH) had sent `Uthman ibn `Affan to Quraysh, and they detained him for so long that the Muslims though Quraysh had betrayed their trust and killed him. Allah (SWT) honoured His Messenger and those who were present on this blessed occasion, and He bestowed upon them His pleasure which many die before they can attain it, and beside which all other hopes and aspirations pale into insignificance. Allah (SWT) revealed ayat of the Qur'an on this occasion, which will be recited until heaven and earth pass away: Allah's Good Pleasure was on the Believers when they swore Fealty to you under the Tree: He knew what was in their
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hearts, and He sent down Tranquillity to them; and He rewarded them with speedy Victory, (Qur'an 48:18)

Umm al-Mundhir Salma bint Qays was present at Bay`at al-Ridwan, and had previously been present at Bay`ah al-Mu'minat, hence she was known as Mubaya`at al-Bay`atayn (the one who gave two oaths of allegiance). When the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions went out to besiege Banu Qurayzah, this great Sahabiyyah went with them, and earned the reward for jihad for the sake of Allah (SWT).

Asma' bint Yazid ibn al-Sakan al-Ansariyyah took part in the battle of al-Khandaq with the Prophet (PBUH). She was also present at al-Hudaybiyah and Bay`at al-Ridwan and at the battle of Khaybar. She continued her worthy efforts for the sake of Islam until the Prophet's death, and he died pleased with her. After his death, she never stopped working in support of Islam. In 13 AH, she travelled to Syria and was present at the battle of Yarmuk, when she brought water to the thirsty, tended the wounded and encouraged the fighters to stand firm. Yarmuk is one of the most famous battles in which the Muslim women took part alongside the fighting men. The Muslim army was sorely tested, and some of them retreated. The mujahid women were fighting a rear-guard action, rushing towards those who were running away with pieces of wood and stones, urging them to go back and stand firm. Ibn Kathir noted the courage of the Muslim women and the important role they played in this battle: "The Muslim women fought on this day, and killed a large number of Romans. They struck whoever among the Muslims ran away, and said, 'Where are you going, to leave us at the mercy of these infidels?!' When they told them off in this manner, they had not choice but to return to the fight."122

The Muslim woman's stance and encouragement played a major role in making the mujahidin stand firm until Allah (SWT) decreed that they would be victorious over the Romans.

On this tremendous day, Asma' bint Yazid did extremely well, and demonstrated a type of courage that was unknown among many of the men. She went forth into the battle lines, and struck down a number of the mushrikin. Ibn Hiji also noted her bravery: "Umm Salamah al-Ansariyyah, i.e., Asma' bint Yazid ibn Sakan, was present at al-Yarmuk. On that day she killed nine Romans with her tent-pole. She lived for a while after that."123
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It seems that this great heroine spent the rest of her life in Syria, where the battle of Yarmuk took place, as she went with those of the Sahabah who went there. She lived until the time of Yazid ibn Mu`awiyah, and when she passed away, she was buried in the cemetery of al-Bab al-Saghir. Her grave is still there, bearing proud testimony to the jihad of Muslim women for the sake of Allah (SWT).\textsuperscript{124}

These golden pages of Muslim women's history were written by those virtuous women themselves, through the depth of their faith and the completeness of their understanding of the Muslim's woman's mission in life and her duty towards her Lord and her religion. What I have cited represents only a small part of a vast and noble record of rare sacrifice, proud determination, unique talents and deep faith. Undoubtedly Muslim women today may find in these accounts an example worthy of following as they seek to form their own modern Islamic character and identity.

She is distinguished by her Islamic character and true religion

No doubt the true Muslim woman is distinguished by her Islamic character, and she is proud of the high status which Islam gave her at a very early stage, before women in other nations attained anything like it. Fifteen centuries ago, Islam proclaimed the full rights of women for the first time in history, and Muslim women enjoyed human rights centuries before the world had ever heard of human rights organizations or witnessed any "Declaration of Human Rights."

At that early stage, Islam declared that women were the twin halves of men, as stated in the hadith narrated by Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi, al-Darimi and Ahmad. At a time when the Christian world doubted the humanity of woman and the nature of her soul, the Qur'an declared: \textit{And their Lord has accepted of them, and answered them: \textquoteleft Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: you are members, one of another\textquoteleft} (Qur'an 3:195)

The Prophet (PBUH) accepted women's oath of Islam and obedience, just as he accepted that of men. The women's bay`ah was independent of and separate from that of their menfolk, and was not done as an act of blind
obedience. This is a confirmation of the independence of the Muslim woman's identity, and of their competence to bear the responsibility of giving the oath of allegiance and making the commitment to obey Allah (SWT) and be loyal to Him and His Messenger. All of this happened centuries before the modern world recognized woman's right to freedom of expression and the right to vote independently. This is in addition to other important rights, such as her independent right to own wealth and her freedom from the responsibility to spend on others, even if she is rich, and her equality with men in human worth, education, and general religious and legal duties. A full discussion of the rights which Islam has given to women, and the respect which it has bestowed upon them, is not possible here.

The level of respect, rights and competence attained by the Muslim woman is astonishing for Western women. I remember the comment of an American woman at a lecture given in the U.S. by the Syrian scholar Shaykh Bahjat al-Bitar on the rights of women in Islam. This lady was amazed at the rights which the Muslim woman had gained fifteen hundred years ago; she stood up and asked, "Is what you say about the Muslim woman and her rights true or is it just propaganda? If it is true then take me to live with you for a while, then let me die!" Many other Western women have also expressed their astonishment at the status and respect given to women in Islam.

The modern Muslim woman, if she understands all this, is also filled with admiration for her true religion; her faith deepens and her conviction of the greatness and perfection of this divine program for human happiness, the well-being of men and women alike - grows ever stronger. It is sufficient for her to know that fifteen hundred years ago Islam achieved more for women in one blow than any other nation has achieved in the twentieth century.

It is sufficient to know that the French Revolution of the late eighteenth century produced a human-rights document entitled "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens" The first clause of this document states: "Men are born free and equal under the laws." There was an attempt to add the words "and woman," but this was rejected, and the statement remained confined to men only: "Man is born free, and he should not be enslaved." A century later, the great French scholar Gustave le Bon, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth
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century, stated in his book "The Psychology of Peoples" that woman had never been equal to man except in periods of decline; this comment came in his refutation of demands that women should be made equal with men by giving them the same right to vote.

This is how the situation remained until the advent of the League of Nations, following the First World War, and the United Nations Organization following the Second World War. Women's-rights advocates succeeded in stating the equality of women with men only after a great deal of hard work, because they were faced with the obstacle of quasi-religious traditions and customs; they did not have access to any text of national or international law that treated women with any measure of justice, which they could have used to overturn these obstacles and free women from the oppressive legacy of the past. Meanwhile, fifteen hundred years ago, Islam had definitively shown, in the Qur'an and Sunnah, that men and women were equal in terms of reward, punishment, responsibility, worship, human worth and human rights.

When Islam made men and women equal in terms of human rights, it also made them equal in terms of human duties, as they were both charged with the role of khalifah (vicegerent) on earth and were commanded to populate and cultivate it, and to worship Allah (SWT) therein. Islam gave each of them his or her unique role to play in establishing a righteous human society; these roles are complementary, not opposite, and they apply to every man and woman. Each sex must play the role for which it is better suited and qualified, in order to build solid individuals, families and societies and achieve solidarity, mutual assistance and co-operation between the two sexes, without preventing anyone from doing any permitted deed which he or she wishes to do. Men and women are equally governed by whatever is in the interests of humanity, and both will be rewarded in accordance with their deeds in this life, as Allah (SWT) says: Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, and life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions, (Qur’an 16:97)

Both men and women are regarded as "shepherds" who are responsible for their "flocks," as is stated in the well-known hadith of the Prophet (PBUH).
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The Muslim woman who understands the high status which Islam gave her fifteen centuries ago knows full well that the position of women in every nation governed by ancient laws was appalling, especially in India and Rome, in the Middle Ages in Europe, and in Arabia prior to the advent of Islam. So her pride in her Islamic identity, true religion and high human status increases.

The position of women under ancient laws may be summed up in the comment of the Indian leader Jawarharlal Nehru in his book "The Discovery of India": "The legal position of women, according to Manu, was undoubtedly very bad. They were always dependent on either a father or a husband or a son." It is known that inheritance in India always passed from male to male, and excluded females completely.

Nehru commented on this: "In any case, the position of women in ancient India was better than that in ancient Greece or Rome, or during the early Christian period."

The position of woman in ancient Roman law was based on a complete denial of her civic rights, and on requiring her to be constantly under the tutelage of a guardian, whether she was a minor or had reached the age of majority, simply because she was female. So she was always under her father's or husband's tutelage, and had no freedom whatsoever to do as she wished. In general, she could be inherited, but she had no rights of inheritance.

Under Roman law, a woman was simply one of the possessions of her husband, deprived of her own identity and freedom of conduct. The effects of this law are still visible in the twentieth century, in most of the modern states whose laws are still influenced by Roman law.

As a result of the influences of Roman law, women's position during the early Christian period was as appalling as Nehru suggests. Some religious councils shed doubts on the humanity of woman and the nature of her soul; conferences were held in Rome to debate these matters, and to discuss whether woman possessed souls like men, or were their souls like those of animals such as snakes and dogs? One of these gatherings in Rome even decided that women did not possess a soul at all, and that they would never be resurrected in the afterlife.
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In the Arabian Peninsula, most tribes prior to the advent of Islam regarded women as something to be despised and abhorred. They were seen as a source of shame, which many would try to avoid by burying infant girls alive as soon as they were born.

Islam condemned this appalling situation of women in more than one place in the Qur'an. Referring to the low esteem in which women were held at the time of jahiliyyah, Allah (SWT) said: **When news is brought to one of them, of [the birth of] a female [child], his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain it on [sufferance and] contempt, or bury it in the dust? Ah! What an evil [choice] they decide on!** (Qur'an 16:58-59)

Explaining the enormity of the crime of burying alive an innocent infant who has never committed any sin, Allah (SWT) says: **When the female [infant], buried alive, is questioned - For what crime she was killed . . ;** (Qur'an 81:8-9)

Women were in the most appalling and humiliating situations, in which their very humanity was in doubt - especially in the Arab world before the advent of Islam, and in most of the civilized world at that time, in Rome, and during the early Christian period. Most of the modern nation-states are still influenced by Roman law, as is well-known to scholars of law.125

The Muslim woman understands the great blessing, which Allah (SWT) bestowed upon her the day when the brilliant light of Islam shone upon the Arab world: **"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion"** (Qur'an 5:3)

The Muslim woman's soul is filled with happiness, contentment and pride, and her status and position are raised by the fact that Islam gives the mother a higher status than the father. A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and asked him: "O Messenger of Allah, who among people is most deserving of my good company?" He said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who?" The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Then your
Because of the way she is created, the woman is unique in her ability to bear a child then breast feed and nurture him, a role that is difficult and involves much hardwork, as the Qur'an noted: And We have enjoined on man [to be good] to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years Twain was his weaning: [hear the command], `Show gratitude to Me and to your parents: to Me is [your final] Goal. (Qur'an 31:14)

Just as this heavy burden is placed on women's shoulders, men are given the role of maintaining and protecting the family (qawwamun); they have the duty of earning money and spending on the family. However, many men still do not understand the status of the mother in Islam, as is reflected in the hadith quoted above, in which a man asked the Prophet (PBUH) who was most deserving of his good company.

Islam raised the status of women by placing the status of the mother above that of the father, and it has also given women the right to keep their own family names after marriage. The Muslim woman keeps her own surname and identity after marriage, and does not take her husband's name, as happens in the West where the married women is known by her husband's name as "Mrs. So-and-so," and her maiden name is cancelled from civic records. Thus Islam preserves the woman's identity after marriage: although the Muslim woman is strongly urged to be a good wife, obeying and respecting her husband, her identity is not to be swallowed up in his.

If we add to this the fact that Islam has given women the right to complete freedom in how they dispose of their own wealth, and that they are not expected to spend on anyone else's upkeep, the high status to which Islam has raised women becomes crystal-clear. Hence we can understand how much Islam wants women to be free, proud, respected, and able to fulfil their tremendous mission in life.

**Her loyalty is to Allah (SWT) alone**

One of the results of the Muslim woman's pride in her Islamic identity is that she will never be loyal to anything or anyone other than Allah (SWT), not even her husband or her father, who are among the closest people to her. We see the epitome of this loyalty (wala') in the life of the Prophet's wife Umm Habibah (May Allah be pleased...
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with her), Ramlah bint Abi Sufyan, the chief of Makkah and leader of the *mushrikin*. She was married to the Prophet's cousin (son of his paternal aunt) `Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh al-Asadi, the brother of the Prophet's wife Zaynab. Her husband `Ubaydullah embraced Islam, and she entered Islam with him, whilst her father Abu Sufyan was still a *kafir*. She and her husband migrated to Abyssinia with the first Muslims who went there, and left her father in Makkah, boiling with rage because his daughter had embraced Islam and there was no way he could get at her.

But the life of this patient Muslim woman was not free from problems. Sadly, her husband `Ubaydullah left Islam and became a Christian, joining the religion of the Abyssinians. He tried to make her join him in his apostasy, but she refused and remained steadfast in her faith. She had given birth to her daughter Habibah, and was now known as Umm Habibah. She withdrew from people, and felt as if she would die of grief and sorrow because of all the disasters that had befallen her. She and her daughter were alone in a strange land, and all the ties between her and her father and husband had been cut. The father of her small daughter was now a Christian, and the child's grandfather at that time was a *mushrik* and an enemy of Islam who had declared all-out war on the Prophet in whom she believed and the religion that she followed.

Nothing could save her from this distress and grief except the care of the Prophet (PBUH), who was losing sleep over the believers who had migrated, concerned for their welfare and checking on them. He sent word to the Negus to request him to arrange his marriage to Umm Habibah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan, one of the immigrants to his country, as is explained in the books of *sirah* and history. Thus Umm Habibah, the daughter of Abu Sufyan, became one of the "Mothers of the Believers."

Time passed, and as the conquest of Makkah drew closer, the threat to Quraysh, who had broken the treaty of al-Hudaybiyah, became ever more apparent. Their leaders met and realized that Muhammad (PBUH) would never keep quiet about their betrayal or accept the humiliation they had inflicted on him. So they agreed to send an envoy to Madinah, to negotiate a renewal and extension of the treaty with Muhammad (PBUH). The man chosen for this task was Abu Sufyan ibn Harb.
Abu Sufyan came to Madinah, and was nervous about meeting Muhammad (PBUH). Then he remembered that he had a daughter in the Prophet's household, so he sneaked into her house and asked her to help him achieve what he had come for.

Umm Habibah (May Allah be pleased with her) was surprised to see him in her house, as she had not seen him since she had left for Abyssinia. She stood up, filled with confusion, not knowing what to do or say.

Abu Sufyan realised that his daughter was overwhelmed with the shock of his sudden arrival, so he asked for her permission to sit down, and went over to sit on the bed. He was stunned when his daughter Ramlah rushed to grab the mattress and roll it up. He said, "O my daughter, I do not understand. Is this mattress not good enough for me or am I not good enough for it?" She said, "It belongs to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH), and you are a mushrik, so I do not want you to sit on it."

Ramlah bint Abi Sufyan affirmed her loyalty (wala') to Allah (SWT). She had no regrets about her worthless husband, who had sold his religion for this world. She remained steadfast in her faith, bearing the pain of grief and loneliness in a strange land, where she was most in need of a husband to protect her and take care of her daughter. Allah (SWT), the Munificent Bestower, compensated her with the best that any woman could have hoped for at that time, and made her the wife of the Prophet (PBUH), and so her status was raised to that of one of the "Mothers of the Believers."

The shock of seeing her father so suddenly after many years did not make her forget her loyalty to Allah (SWT) and His Messenger (PBUH). She pulled the Prophet's mattress away from her father because he was a kafir, and she did not want to let him contaminate it by sitting on it. This is the attitude of a Muslim woman who is proud of her religion: her soul is filled with faith and there is no room for tribalism or loyalty to any other than Allah (SWT) and His religion.

Throughout history, Muslim women's pride in their Islamic identity gave them the strength and determination to resist temptations and threats, and protected them from being overwhelmed by the forces of kufr and falsehood.
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no matter how powerful these were. The Muslim women's souls were filled with the unquenchable fire of faith, as we see in the steadfastness of Pharaoh's wife, who challenged the entire Pharaonic world with all its temptations and pleasures, caring little about the punishments heaped upon her by her husband because of her faith, and repeating her prayer: **O my Lord! Build for me, in nearness to You, a mansion in the Garden, and save me from Pharaoh and his doings, and save me from those that do wrong**. (Qur'an 66:11)

Seeking the pleasure of Allah and striving to make His word supreme on earth come above any other goals or ambitions. The true Muslim woman never forgets this truth, and as time passes her pride in her Islamic identity, her devotion to this unique, divinely-ordained way of life, and her loyalty to Allah (SWT) go from strength to strength.

**She enjoins what is good and forbids what is evil**

The Muslim woman who understands her religion reads the **ayah**: **The Believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practise regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His Mercy: for Allah is Exalted in Power, Wise**. (Qur'an 9:71)- which Allah (SWT) revealed fifteen hundred years ago, and she finds herself on the highest level of intellectual and social status that any woman of any nation or race has ever known. Islam has stated that women are fully human, and are legally competent and independent. There is no difference between women and men when it comes to owning property, buying or selling, or arranging a marriage. This is something which had never previously been the case in any nation, where women were seen as possessions of men, under their tutelage and command. This **ayah**, **The Believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another . . .**, raises women to the level of loyalty and friendship with men, and makes them partners in the work of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil. Women are responsible for fulfilling this duty on equal terms with men, as both are charged with the duty of populating and cultivating the earth, and worshipping Allah (SWT) therein.
Thus Islam rescued women from their position of being mere chattels of men, which in most cases had given men control over life and death, and raised them to the level of equality and humanity.

When Islam gave women the duty of enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil, it gave her the status of a human being who, for the first time in history, was giving orders whereas under other systems she was the one to whom orders were always given.

Islam declared that in the sight of Allah (SWT), both sexes were equally qualified to worship Him, and were equally deserving of His mercy. There is a great deal of proof of this in the Qur'an and Sunnah.

Our history is filled with women whose words and deeds reflect their noble Islamic character. They spoke the truth, and felt that they had a responsibility before Allah (SWT) to do so, and were never afraid to do so.

One example of the strength and maturity of Muslim women's character, and the freedom that they had to express their opinions, is the criticism voiced by a woman who was listening to the khalifah `Umar ibn al-Khattab forbidding excessive dowries and advocating that they should be limited to a certain amount. This woman stood up and said, "You have no right to do that, O `Umar!" He asked, "Why not?" She said, "because Allah (SWT) says: But if you decide to take one wife in place of another, even if you had given the latter a whole treasure for dower, take not the least bit of it back; would you take it by slander and a manifest wrong?, (Qur'an 4:20), `Umar said, "The woman is right, and the man is mistaken." 127

The khalifah `Umar listened to this woman, and when it became apparent that she was right, he admitted that she was right, and he was mistaken. Thus a Muslim woman set the earliest historic precedent of criticizing the head of state, and what a head of state! This was the rightly-guided khalifah, the greatest ruler of his age, a man who was feared, the conqueror of Persia and Byzantium. This woman could not have criticized and opposed him if it were not for her deep understanding of the religion that had given her the right to freedom of expression, and commanded her to enjoin that which was good and forbid that which was evil. She reads Qur'an often.

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In order to reach this high level of obedience, righteousness and taqwa, the Muslim woman has no choice but to seek guidance in the blessed Book of Allah (SWT), sheltering herself in its shade every day. She should read Qur'an regularly, reciting it carefully and thinking about the meaning of the ayat. Then its meaning may penetrate her mind and emotions, and her heart and soul will be filled with the light of its pure guidance. It is enough for the Muslim woman to know the status of the one who reads Qur'an in the sight of Allah (SWT), as the Prophet (PBUH) described it in a number of Hadith. So she should read Qur'an whenever she has the opportunity, and her days and nights should be filled with recitation of its ayat and reflection upon its meaning.

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "The likeness of a believer who reads the Qur'an is like a citron, whose smell is pleasant and whose taste is pleasant; the likeness of a believer who does not read the Qur'an is like a date, which has no smell, but its taste is sweet; the likeness of the hypocrite who reads the Qur'an is like a fragrant flower which has a pleasant smell but whose taste is bitter; and the likeness of a hypocrite who does not read the Qur'an is like a colocynth (bitter-apple), which has no smell and its taste is bitter."128 "Read the Qur'an, for it will come forward on the Day of Resurrection to intercede for its readers."129

"The one who reads the Qur'an fluently is with the honourable pious scribes130, and the one who reads the Qur'an and struggles to read it even though it is difficult for him, will receive a double reward."131

Knowing this, how can any Muslim woman fail to read the Qur'an, no matter how busy she is with household duties and the role of wife and mother? Can she neglect the Qur'an and deprive herself of its great blessing and the reward which Allah (SWT) has prepared for those who read it?

In conclusion, this is the attitude of the true Muslim woman towards her Lord: she has deep faith in Allah (SWT) and willingly submits to His will and decree; she worships Him sincerely, obeying all His commands and heeding all His prohibitions; she understands what it means to be a true servant of Allah (SWT); she constantly strives to support His religion and to make His word supreme on earth; she is proud of her Muslim identity, which draws its...
strength from her understanding of the purpose of human existence in this life, as defined by Allah (SWT) in the Qur'an: I have only created *jinns* and men, that they may serve Me, (Qur'an 51:56)
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Footnotes:

2. See Ihya’ 'Ulam al-Din, 1/147.
7. Fath al-Bari, 1/482, bab fi kam tualli al-mar’ah fi’l-t hiyab.
10. Abu Dawud, 1/221, Kitab al-salah, bab ma ja’a fi khuruj al-nisa’ ila al-masjid; Ahmad, 2/76; it is hasan li ghayrihi.
13. See Fath al-Bari, commentary on Sahih Bukhari, 1/506, Kitab al-salah, bab ma ja’a fi’l-qiblah; Sahih Muslim, 5/10, Kitab al-salah, bab tahwil al-qiblah min al-quds ila’l-ka’bah.
15. Sahih Muslim, 6/160, Kitab al-jumu’ah, Bab khutbah al-hajah.
16. This hadith, narrated by 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, is recorded by Abu 'Awanah, Ibn Khazimah and Ibn Hibban in their Sahihs; see also Fath al-Bari, 2/357, Kitab al-jumu’ah, bab fadl al-ghusl yawm al-jumu’ah.
19. See Sahih Muslim, 18/84, Kitab al-fitun wa ashrat al-sa’ah, bab qadiyyah al-jasahas.
20. Reported by Ahmad, see silsilah al-Hadith al-sahihah, no. 900, 2/601.
22. Sahih Muslim, 4/159, Kitab al-salah, bab tawiyyah al-sufuf wa iqamatih.
25. Al-Mudawwanah, 1/106.
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27. Ibid., 4/162, 163.
28. Ibid., 4/161
29. Fath al-Bari, 2/382, Kitab al-jumu'ah, bab al-idhn li'l-nisa' bi'l-khuruj ila'l-masajid; Sahih Muslim, 4/161, Kitab al-salah, bab khuruj al-nisa' ila'l-masajid.
30. Sahih Muslim, 4/161, kitab al-salah, bab khuruj al-nisa' ila'l-masajid.
31. Ibid., 4/163
32. Ibid., 4/163
33. Ibid., 4/163
34. Ibid., 6/178, 179, Kitab salat al-'idayn, bab ibahah khuruj al-nisa' fi'l-'idayn ila'l-musalla.
35. Ibid., 6/179, Kitab salat al-'idayn, bab ibahah khuruj al-nisa' fi'l-'idayn ila'l-musalla.
36. Ibid., 6/180, Kitab salat al-'idayn, bab ibahah khuruj al-nisa' fi'l-'idayn ila'l-musalla.
37. Fath al-Bari, 2/469, Kitab al-'idayn, bab idha lam yukun laha jilbab fi'l-'id.
38. Fath al-Bari, 2/469, Kitab al-'idayn, bab idha lam yukun laha jilbab fi'l-'id.
39. Fath al-Bari, 2/466, Kitab al-'idayn, bab maw'izah al-imam al-nisa'a yawm al-'id; Sahih Muslim, 6/174, Kitab salat al-'idayn.
40. Ibn Hijr mentioned in Fath al-Bari, 2/468, that she was Asma' bint Yazid ibn al-Sakan, who was known as the spokeswoman for the women, and was a very confident woman.
41. Fath al-Bari, 2/466, Kitab al-'idayn, bab maw'izat al-imam al-nisa'a yawn al-'id; Sahih Muslim, 6/171, Kitab salat al-'idayn.
43. Fath al-Bari, 11/341, Kitab al-riqaq, bab al-tawadu'
44. Sahih Muslim, 16/184, Kitab al-birr wa'l-adab wa'l-silah, bab idha ahabba Allahu 'abdan.
46. See Sahih Muslim, 6/72, 73, Kitab al-salat al-musafirin, bab fadilat al-'aml al-da'im.
47. Ibid., 6/73.
48. Ibid., 6/72.
49. See Sahih Muslim, 6/70-72, Kitab al-salat al-musafirin, bab fadilah al-'aml al-da'im.
50. Ibid., 5/89, 90, Kitab al-masajid, bab istihbab al-dhikr ba'd al-salah.
52. See Sahih Muslim, 5/95, Kitab al-masajid, bab al-dhikr ba'd al-salah.
53. See Sahih Muslim, 1/207, Kitab al-iman, bab wujub qital tarik ahad arkan al-Islam.
54. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/217, Kitab al-siyam, bab thawab man sama Ramadan.
55. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Riyadh al-Salihin, p. 570, Kitab al-fada'il, bab fi amr al-sa'im bi hifz lisanihi wa jawarihihi 'an al-mukhalifat.
57. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/221, Kitab al-sawm, bab fadl al-sawm.
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58. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 4/116, Abwab al-nawafil, bab qiyam shahr Ramadan wa fadluhu.
59. Sahih Muslim, 8/70, Kitab al-sawm, bab al-ijtihad fi'l-'ashar al-awakhir min shahr Ramadan.
60. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/389, Kitab al-siyam, bab al-ijtihad fi'l-'ashar al-awakhir.
61. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/380, Kitab al-siyam, bab ma ja'a fi laylat al-adr.
62. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/379, Kitab al-siyam, bab ma ja'a fi laylat al-qadr.
63. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/251, Kitab al-siyam, bab fadl al-suhur.
64. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/253, Kitab al-siyam, bab fadl al-suhur.
65. Sahih Muslim, 8/51, Kitab al-siyam, bab istihbab siyam yawm 'Arafat.
66. Sahih Muslim, 8/12, Kitab al-siyam, bab sawm yawm 'ashura'.
67. Sahih Muslim, 8/51, Kitab al-siyam, bab istihbab siyam yawm 'ashura'.
68. Sahih Muslim, 8/13, Kitab al-siyam, bab sawm yawm 'ashura'.
69. Sahih Muslim, 8/56, Kitab al-siyam: bab istahbab siyam sittat ayam min kulli shahr.
71. Sahih Muslim, 5/235, Kitab salat al-musafirin, bab istihbab salat al-duha.
72. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 6/362, Kitab al-siyam, bab sawm al-dahr.
73. Sahih Muslim, 8/48, Kitab al-siyam, bab istihbab siyam thalathat ayyam min kulli shahr.
74. Fath al-Bari, 4/72, Kitab jaza' al-sayd, bab hajj al-nisa'.
75. Fath al-Bari, 4/72, Kitab jaza' al-sayd, bab hajj al-nisa'
76. Sahih Muslim, 15/56, 54, Kitab al-fada'il, bab hawd nabiyyina (SAAS) wa siffatuhu.
77. A jahili form of divorce where the husband told his wife "You are to me like the back of my mother." According to pre-Islamic Arabian custom, this freed the husband from marital duties, but effectively imprisoned the woman as she was not free to leave her husband's home or enter into another marriage; the husband was also not obliged to provide for the children of the marriage. The Qur'an clearly abolished this cruel and oppressive practice. See Yusuf Ali's Note Number 5330. [Translator]
78. Wasq: the amount of fruit a date-palm would bear in one season. [Author]
79. Faraq: a measurement of weight approximately equivalent to 60 kilograms. [Author]
81. See Fath al-Bari, 13/402, Kitab al-Tawhid, bab wa kana 'arshuhu 'ala'l-ma'.
82. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 7/18, Kitab al-Hajj, bab al-mar'ah la takhruj illa ma'a mahram.
83. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 9/26, Kitab al-nikah, bab al-nahy 'an an yakhlu al-rajul bi'l-mar'ah al-ajnabiyyah.
84. Juyubihinna includes the face and neck as well as the bosom. [Translator]
85. Sahih Muslim, 14/109, Kitab al-libas wa'l-zinah, bab al-nisa' al-kasiyat al-'ariyat.
86. Fath al-Bari, 8/489, Kitab al-tafsir, bab walyadribna bi khumurihinna 'ala juyubihinna.
87. See Fath al-Bari Sharh Sahih Bukhari, 8/489, 490, Kitab al-tafsir, bab walyadribna bi khumurihinna 'ala juyubihinna.

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88. Al-Mujtama' magazine, Kuwait, issue no. 932.
89. Al-Mujtama' magazine, Kuwait, issue no. 931.
90. Ibid.
92. Sahih Bukhari; see Fath al-Bari, 2/566, Kitab taqir al-salat, bab fi kamm yaqsur al-salat.
93. Sahih Muslim, 9/103, Kitab al-Hajj, bab safar al-mar'ah ma'a mahram.
95. Sahih Muslim, 18/25, Kitab al-zuhd, bab fi Hadith mutafarriqah,
96. al-Isabah, 8/66,67
97. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 10/61, Kitab al-imarah wa'l-riyad, bab al-nilah fi'l-wudu' wa ghayrihi min al-ribadat.
98. Reported by Tirmidhi, 4/34, at the end of the section on zuhd; it is a hasan hadith.
99. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 1/401, Kitab al-taharah, bab al-nilah fi'l-wudu' wa riyadat.
100. Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 8/280 (Beirut edition).
101. See Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd, 7/35 and al-Isabah, 8/83.
105. See Sahih Muslim, 12/194, Kitab al-jihad wa'l-siyar, bab al-nisa' al-ghaziyyat.
106. See Sahih Muslim, 12/188, Kitab al-jihad wa'l-siyar, bab ghazwat al-nisa'.
108. Fath al-Bari, 7/361, Kitab al-magahi, bab idh hamlat ta'ifatan minkum an tufshila; Sahih Muslim, 12/189, Kitab al-jihad wa'l-siyar, bab ghazwat al-nisa' ma'a al-jail.
110. See Fath al-Bari, 7/372, Kitab al-magahi, bab ma asaba al-Nabi (r) min al-jir'ha yawma Uhud.
111. See the reports on the Battle of Uhud in the Sirah of Ibn Hisham, and in Insan al-'Uyun, al-Athar al-Muhammadiyah, the Tabaqat of Ibn Sa'd, al-Isabah, and Asad al-Ghabah.
112. See Siyar a'lam al-nubala', 2/281.
113. Those who entered Islam on the day of the Conquest of Makkah. [Author]
114. Sahih Muslim, 12/187, 188, Kitab al-jihad wa'l-siyar, bab ghazwat al-nisa' ma'a al-jail.
115. Al-Rumaysa': a nickname of Umm Sulaym, on account of a rama (white secretion) in her eye. [Author]
116. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 14/86, Kitab fada'il al-sahabah, bab fada'il 'Umar ibn al-Khattab.
117. i.e., the wife of Mu'awiyah. [Author]

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119. Al-Hilyah, 2/62; Siffat al-safwah, 2/70.
120. See al-Maghazi, 1/278; Ansab al-Ashraf, 1/326; al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il al-Nubuwwah, 3/311.
121. Sal-Maghazi, 2/301, 310, 316; al-Dhahabi, Tarikh al-Islam, 2/201; al-Sirah al-Halabiyyah, 2/545, 546.
122. Al-bidayah wa'l-nihayah, 7/13; see also al-Tabari, al-Tarikh, 2/335ff (published by Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah).
123. Al-Isabah, 4/229; see also Majma' al-Zawa'id by al-Haythami, who quotes this story, stating that it was narrated by al-Tabarani and that the men of its isnad are thiqat. See also Siyar al-'alam al-nubala', 2/297.
125. See Dr. Ma'ruf al-Dawalibi, Al-mar'ah fi'l-Islam, p. 23.
126. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 13/4, Kitab al-isti'dhan, bab birr al-walidayn.
129. Sahih Muslim, 6/90, Kitab salat al-musafirin, bab fadl qira'at al-Qur'an.
130. i.e., the angels who record the deeds of man. The meaning is that one who is well-versed in Qur'an will enjoy such a high status in the Hereafter that he will be in the exalted company of these pious scribes. [Translator]
131. (Bukhari and Muslim), See Sharh al-Sunnah, 4/429, 430, Kitab fada'il al-Qur'an, bab fadl tilawat al-Qur'an.