

Understanding Islamic Teachings on Treatment of Women

Submission, Marriage, Sex, FGM, and Civilization Jihad

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Imam Mosque, Tehran, Iran

Islamic doctrine governing women is based on the principle of submission. Islam does not mean peace as erroneously stated by several American politicians following 9/11. It means submission to Islamic Law (Sharia) as revealed by the sacred trilogy of the Koran, the Hadiths (traditions), and Sira (life of Muhammad). All three bear the heavy imprint of Muhammad, who is called the perfect Muslim example 91 times in the Koran. The “Golden Rule of Islam” is essentially to obey the words and example of Muhammad.

Although Islamic doctrine holds the Koran to be the flawless revelation of Allah, it was revealed by Muhammad over a period of 23 years and contains many apparent contradictions. The contradictions are resolved by the Doctrine of Abrogation, which states that the last revelation cancels earlier contradicted verses. Yet because the Koran is regarded to be the flawless declaration of Allah, both the replacement verses and the abrogated verses are considered true at the same time, but the last verses revealed by Muhammad are “strong” verses and have a higher precedence, status and authority than “weak” abrogated verses. Muslims often use abrogated verses with situational selectivity to deceive non-Muslims in defense of Islam. Many Christian and

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Jewish scholars believe that much of the Koran reflects the direct and expedient influence of Muhammad to achieve his personal and policy objectives.
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There is a sharp difference in the chapters of the Koran revealed in the first 13 years of Muhammad's revelations in Mecca and the chapters revealed in Medina during the final 10 years of his life. In Mecca, he tried but failed to persuade the Arabs to give up the idolatry of many gods and other religions and accept him as the final Prophet of the one and only god, Allah. Constant conflicts with Meccan critics forced Muhammad and his small following of 150 persons to migrate to Medina. In Medina, where he became a political leader and warlord, Muhammad ran into considerable skepticism and opposition by three local Jewish tribes, which amounted to nearly half the population. Muhammad resorted to violence in Medina to eliminate his enemies and any opposition to Islam. The change of tactics was expediently justified by new revelations from Allah, thus abrogating more tolerant and peaceful revelations in Mecca. The difference in the Meccan and Medinan chapters of the Koran was also a turning point for Islamic teachings on the role and status of women.

Muhammad married Khadija, a wealthy widow in Mecca, when she was 40, and he was only 25. After 25 years of marriage, she died, and two months later he married Sauda, a widow and Muslim convert. About this time Muhammad and his following migrated to Medina. Within another year, he also married Aisha, the six-year-old daughter of his closest supporter, Abu Bakr, who would become the first Islamic Caliph after the death of Muhammad. Muhammad did not bring her into his home and have sex with her until she was nine-years old and he was 53. Aisha became the favorite of his eventual total of 11 wives and two slave girls, with whom he also had sex.

Muhammad's Medina career as a warlord spawned a new Koranic doctrine of Holy War (Jihad) against all non-Muslims and with it new revelations on sex, slavery, and marriage. When Muhammad defeated the Jewish Bani Quarayzah tribe in Medina, he had 800 Jewish male prisoners beheaded, as his young wife Aisha sat by his side and watched. He divided the women and children up as slaves and sexual booty, taking Rihana, the most beautiful of the newly widowed Jewish women, as his wife. He also took two sex slaves, including Mary, a Coptic Christian, for himself.

Medina Koran verse 4:3 justified the new policy;

"If you fear that you will not be able to deal with orphan girls fairly, marry other women of your choice, two, three, or four; but if you feel you cannot treat them equally, then marry only one, or any of the slave girls you have acquired. This will prevent you from being unjust."

Based on this verse, Islamic Law allows husbands to have sex with as many as four wives and any female slaves they possess including married female slaves. Sex with female slaves is considered a moral good. If they convert to Islam, emancipation is encouraged. Muslim women may have only one husband and are forbidden to have sex with anyone else including male slaves in the

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household. In fact, most male slaves were castrated to protect Muslim females in a household. Muslim women are forbidden to marry unbelievers, and adultery can result in a death penalty. Muslim men can divorce wives almost at will, but it is much more difficult for Muslim women to divorce a husband. In certain situations requiring men to be away from home for a time, Muslim men can have temporary wives for 72 hours with the possibility of extension. The use of women for sex after Jihad or during Jihad is a constant theme of the Hadiths and Sira. Many Jihad captives were sold as sex slaves.

Female genital mutilation/circumcision (FGM) before age-16 to prevent sexual desire is not found firmly in the Koran but in some of Muhammad's hadiths, most notably Abu Dawud 4589. Based on these hadiths, of the four major schools of jurisprudence in Sunni Islam, FGM is obligatory according to Shafii and preferred as honorable according to Hanafi, Maliki, and Hanbali. Its authenticity, practice, applicability to Sharia Law is debated within the latter three. It is most commonly practiced in Muslim countries dominated by Shafii jurisprudence and is most common in seven Sub-Saharan central African countries, which have FGM incidences over 85 percent according to UNICEF. Although it is uncommon in many Muslim countries, UNICEF believes about 3.0 million young girls are subjected to it every year.

Muhammad's lenient rules for sex and marriage probably increased the motivation for Muslim men to participate in Jihad. The Koran's description of heaven in chapter 56 as a sexual paradise with numerous attractive virgins (houris) welcoming the believers of Allah's choice was no doubt helpful in recruiting Holy Warriors for Jihad. Medinan Koran verse 3:157 promised that those who died for Allah's Cause (Jihad) would receive extravagant rewards:

"If you should die or be slain in the Cause of Allah [Jihad], His forgiveness and His mercy would surely be better than all the riches they amass."

Muslim women could also merit paradise, but less is said of them. Muhammad, however, claimed that most of the inhabitants of hell were women who were unappreciative of or disobedient to their husbands. The Prophet also proclaimed that women were less intelligent than men, and their share of an inheritance should be only half that of men and their testimony worth only half that of a man. Male and female believers will, however, be treated equally on Judgment Day (Koran 16:97) according to their works. But the works of women will be heavily weighted on their submission to their husband.

There is one way that a woman is considered superior to man. That is if she is a mother. The importance of family and parenting is revered in Islam, but mothers are held in especially high esteem. (Koran 46:15).

Muslim husbands have permission to beat their wives, although not severely (Koran 4:34 and many hadiths). They may not be struck in the face. Killing female children is forbidden in contrast to a common Arab practice in the days of Muhammad. Muslim women and girls are kept under many social and dress restrictions to prevent any hint of sexual indiscretion. One clearly unjust part of

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sexual assaults by Muslim males in Europe are against native European women and girls. Sweden, which has been unusually generous with Muslim refugee settlement, now has the highest rape statistics in Europe, and is second only to South Africa in the world.

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Much more can be said about the status of women in Islam, but the Center for the Study of Political Islam has counted the Koran texts mentioning women and found that 71 percent give them low status, 23 percent equal status, and 5 percent high status. But the hierarchy of Muslim society is Muslim men, Muslim women, slaves, and then kafirs (non-Muslims).

It is also important to realize that Islam has a dualistic ethical system rather than the singular ethical system of Christianity, Judaism, and most other religions. In a singular ethical system, all people are treated by the same standard—The Golden Rule, act toward others as you would have them act toward you. But in Islamic teachings and Law (Sharia), Muslims treat other Muslims favorably according to one standard and unbelievers (Kafirs or infidels) as inferiors to be treated, deceived, and used as Muslims please. The Islamic doctrine of Taqiyya allows Muslims to deceive unbelievers to defend themselves, or to defend or advance Islam in pursuit of Jihad and Islamic Supremacy. Also, under the Islamic doctrine of Darura' (necessity) Muslims may violate Sharia Law if the purpose is to deceive unbelievers and advance Islam.

Horrible as it may seem, there is no penalty under Islamic Law for a Muslim male who rapes an unbelieving woman, for example a hapless young girl or woman, who has wandered too near a No-Go zone in Sweden, France, or Germany, or is seduced by a "grooming gang" in England. Yet in these same European countries, the fear that local authorities have of being called racists has overcome their responsibility to protect women and children.