

The role of Muslim women in the transformation of the Nigerian society

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Muslim Women Role Models

Let me first say how delighted I feel about your choice of theme for this year's FOMWAN Week, the Role of Muslim Women in the Transformation of Society. It suggests that Muslim women in Nigeria have graduated from discussions on the position of women in Islam. Indeed even non-Muslims world over are increasingly conceding to the unassailable and unprecedented position Islam had accorded women and are now turning their combat elsewhere. In fact the majority of the Muslim converts in Europe and the America today are women, not men. It must be noted that while the world is just discovering the potentials and therefore role of women today, Islam had done so from its inception, some 14 centuries ago. The Qur'an first elevated the position of women and brought them at par with their menfolk and made both of them responsible for ensuring that the Ummah is kept on course. But the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, carried the role of women even further when he said that educating a woman is educating a nation while educating a man is simply educating an individual. Even the Muslim Ummah has not quite finished appreciating the profoundness of this statement, much less the rest of the world.

Indeed the very seerah of the Prophet is a testimony to this new role of women in the transformation of society, not only because they participated in the transformation the prophet brought about but also because they played roles that were unprecedented in the history of humanity, roles that were crucial to the very mission of the prophet. Time and the occasion may not allow for details, but it may be necessary to mention at least three such women to illustrate the point. If the role Baraka, the Prophet's wet nurse, played can be considered routine, remarkable as it was, certainly the one played by Khadija in Makka, Rumaysa (Umm Sulaym) in Madina and Ramla b. Abi Sufyan (Umm Habiba) in Abyssinia, was unprecedented and formed

the foundations of the Islamic Ummah.

Khadija - The story of Khadija is too well known to this august gathering to warrant recounting here. I would rather recall the more profound points that illustrate the crucial role she played in the transformation of that 7th century Arabian society. Khadija had the singular honour of being the first person to accept Islam. That the first person to have accepted Islam is a woman and not a man has in itself a significance for the role of women in the venture of Islam. But that is not quite the point that I wish to draw our attention here. The point here is the fact that Khadija accepted Islam at that crucial time when he was not quite sure if people will believe him, and therefore had the most encouraging effect on his morale for the great mission. Not only did it give the first and most important assurance but it propelled him in to venturing outside the home, fully confident that he has all the sympathies and support of his spouse. You will recall that there were Prophets whose wives were undermining their mission.

Khadija's contribution did not stop with her accepting Islam, rather her acceptance of Islam was only the beginning of her contribution. She was one of the wealthiest persons in Makka and from the day the Prophet started his mission until she died she made available all her wealth for the propagation of Islam, with-holding nothing back for her children or relation. Here again her contribution cannot be like any other, for that wealth at that time when not only the Prophet but the nascent Muslim community was in dire need of material support was crucial to the continuity of the mission of Islam. This was particularly so during the period of the boycott, when the whole of Makka placed an embargo on the Muslim community and it was on Khadija's wealth, business and clan connection that the Muslim community survived the three tough years of boycott.

To be sure, for the prophet the material support may not be as important as the emotional, that unshaken faith which Khadija had in him, that willingness to stand by him when all others repelled him and that commitment to the cause he lived for through the trials and tribulations which characterized the Makkan period in particular. These are only some of the profound contributions of Khadija the first of the wives of the Prophet. It did not come as a surprise therefore that Allah the Most high sent Jibril to the Prophet to assure

Khadija of special place preserved for her in al-Jannah. This is a contribution of a Muslim wife to the cause of Islam, a total commitment, dedication and sacrifice for the cause she believed in and lived her life for. In this way Khadija's contribution to the transformation of society is both indelible and inestimable, as the first Muslim woman she represents a model and has shown the way for all Muslim women who wish to live the life of a true Muslim woman.[1]

Rumaysa bint Milhan - Also known as Umm Sulaym, Rumaysa was the wife of Malik b. Nadr and the mother of the famous Anas b. Malik. She was one of the first women to accept Islam in Madina, that was before the Prophet's Hijra. She accepted Islam in Madina when her husband was away. On return, her husband demanded that she returned to her former faith and she blatantly refused and in fact invited him to come over to Islam. Malik left furiously and never returned as he got killed in a feud. Abu Talha, one of the wealthy and most respected men of Madina, immediately came to request Rumaysa's hand for marriage. Rumaysa refused on the ground that Abu Talha was not a Muslim. But Abu Talha thought that she needed wealth and promised her, in his words, "a lot of Gold and silver". She felt devalued and assured him that what she wants is not his wealth but his Islam. She in fact offered him that if he should accept Islam she would immediately marry him and would not need any of his Gold or silver, she would take his conversion to Islam as her Mahr (sadakiin Hausa or dowry in English). Abu Talha gave the matter some thoughts and eventually accepted Islam and Rumaysa, true to her words, married him. The people of Madina said of her that "we have never yet heard of a mahr that was more valuable and precious than that of Umm Sulaym for she made Islam her mahr."

What Rumaysa did was certainly unprecedented. Her preference of faith over wealth was to revolutionise gender relationship in a society where women were very much like chattels. It gave women a new honour, a new value and an entirely new stature in society. This upgrading of the personality of women was to put them at par with men and carve out for them a role in the task of society building.[2]

Ramla bint Abu Sufyan - As the names suggests, Ramla was the daughter of the famous Abu Sufyan ibn Harb. In the early Makkah days when Abu Sufyan was

at the forefront of the opposition against Islam and the few that dared convert to Islam had to bear the brunt of torture and humiliation, Ramla, Abu Sufyan's own daughter, decided to convert to Islam. It was a blow for Abu Sufyan to have one of his own to convert to the new faith he had sworn to fight and for which he had effectively mobilised the whole of the tribes of Makka. He did all he could with all the force and power at his disposal to get Ramla abandon her new faith of Islam and return to the religion of their forefathers, to no avail. Ramla stood firm and bore the brunt of the persecution of the whole tribes of Makka, especially the Quraysh, all the more for Ramla's conversion was hard for them to tolerate. Eventually Ramla, her little daughter Habiba and her husband Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh left for Abyssinia in the fifth year of the mission of the prophet, the first hijra. There, however, her husband reneged on Islam and became a Christian. He did all he could to carry Ramla along with him but Ramla's commitment to Islam was unshakable. She eventually chose to divorce her husband and accept the stark poverty that awaited a widow in a foreign land but retained her Islam. She bore with immense fortitude the tremendous emotional and economic pressure for many years. At the end of ten years stay the Prophet impressed with her commitment sent to Negus to contract a marriage between him and Ramla, or Umm Habiba as she was popularly known. Thus Umm Habiba joined the blessed family of the prophet.

Here then is woman of strong resolve for whom ties of parenthood and marriage were secondary to those of Islam. Ramla had the courage to accept Islam when only few dared to do so, when few dared to face the enormous social pressure and persecution. It never bothered her what the Makkan society thinks or says of her, top in her mind and scale of priority was what Allah thinks or would say of her. That she reduced marriage to what it is, a means to an end, which to her was Islam, but not an end in itself as many have made it today, is particularly significant. Having sacrificed her marriage for Islam Allah gave her the best of husbands ever.[3]

These then are glimpses of the women who transformed the corrupt and Jahili society of 7th century Arabia to the Islamic model that we all use as the mirror to judge ourselves today. These therefore are true models of Muslim women who should inspire us, these are the models we should seek to learn more about,

indeed these are the models that our little ones should be taught and not the pop stars and actresses of the corrupt world we found ourselves today. Indeed it is the absence of these models that have created the vacuum that has been filled by all manners of miscreants who have been tempting our youth into all manners of perversions in the name of education or progress.

In the period that was to follow this first generation of Muslim women, women were to operate as partners of men, partaking in decision making, often challenging the Amir al-mu'minin in the mosque during a Friday khutba, even taking arms in Jihad. Women were participating actively in the running of the affairs of the Ummah through out the period of the Khilafa Rashida. In the period of the Khilafa Ghayira Rashida, as someone aptly called the period of the Umayyad and the Abbasids and beyond, women were gradually elbowed out from the public arena, but they held out in the field of learning for many centuries, surrendering only very recently. During these centuries they not only partook equally with men in learning but they often excelled, becoming teachers of some of the most illustrious scholars of Islam, including some of the Imams of the four famous schools. Imam Shafi', for example, drew a lot from the knowledge of Sayyida Nafisa in the writing of his famous Risala. Jalaluddin al-Suyuti, one of the most prolific of the scholars of his time, studied the Risala of Shafi' at the feet of Hajr bint Muhammad. Similarly Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, one of the greatest names in hadith literature, was taught by a number of women scholars like Juwairiyya bint Ahmad and Aisha bint Abdullahi. Even Ibn Batuta studied with Zaynab bint Ahmad when he was in Damascus. The list is long.[4]

This continued throughout the Islamic lands, not only in Arabia but in Africa, Asia and even Europe, al-Andalus, as Spain was then known. In Africa the women of Timbuktu not only partook in learning and teaching but also in building mosques and Islamic institutions. During the Al-Murabit rule which covered Spain there were women like Tamima bint Yusuf b. Tashfin and Zaynab bint Ibrahim b. Tafilayit who were famous for their knowledge and piety.[5] Coming nearer home, women in Borno took part in running the state even as they remained indoors.[6] But it was in the Sokoto Caliphate that they actually recovered most of their role as scholars and technocrats. The role of the daughters of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio, especially Nana Asmau is

perhaps now very familiar. She wrote about 80 works, some of them translations of the works of her father into Fulfulde or Hausa. Her greatest contribution is perhaps in the development of the women movement of 'Yan Taru which mobilised women for the purpose of transforming the society of the Sokoto Caliphate. The role of 'Yan Taru is yet to be fully studied, European scholars have so far shown more interest and are certainly more informed about it today than our Muslim women. But from the pioneering work of Jean Boyd, [7] the movement has played a crucial role in the development and maintenance of the Islamic ambience which well over a century dominated their society. Put in other words, without the 'Yan Taru movement that nurtured, promoted and ensured the continuity of Islamic values our situation today would have certainly been worse.

Since the demise of the Caliphate at the beginning of this century, women have been receding from this important role. This partly explains the speed with which our society has been degenerating. Women today form the majority of the illiterates in society. Their education is not the priority of this decadent society for their perceived role is not beyond satisfying the animal urge in men and bearing children. Women have been allowed to sink below the level that Shehu Usman found them. Those who have been to Western educated institutions on the other hand have only imbibed Western materialistic values which emphasize competition between men and women rather than complementarity. For this reason the society has been unable to pull itself out of the abyss of the decadence it has sunken. FOMWAN may represent a ray of hope, for if it succeeds in mobilizing women, educating them and instilling in them the role they ought to play as Muslim women, we can begin to hope for the regeneration of our beleaguered society.

It is particularly urgent today for the situation in Nigeria has been deteriorating at an alarming rate. Admittedly our Islamic values have been gradually eroded since the colonial times, but in the last decade or so the rate as well as the magnitude has been unprecedented. Understandably the consequences have been nor less dramatic; our public morality is literally extinct, that embezzlement and inequities that were not conceivable only ten years ago are today not only possible but common; corruption has moved from a crime to a way of life for it is increasingly becoming foolish to be

virtuous; worst, our young men and women have been emptied of any values and fed entirely on the materialistic diet of the Western world where accumulation, by what ever means, has become the very essence of living. If, like it seems, we continue on this unholy tract, where are we likely to find ourselves in the next decade? We certainly have a responsibility to arrest this moral decay and social disintegration, not only because we shall clearly be the first victims as our children will be the fodder but also because our Lord and creator, to whom will be our ultimate and inevitable return, will ask us to account for our role in arresting this decay. Complacency itself, in the circumstances, becomes a crime. In undertaking this enormous but necessary responsibility, five issues appear to be particularly important and must therefore be addressed:

From Convention to Conviction

One of the most fundamental and principal mission of Islam was to liberate man from convention and blind followership and to make man arrive at decisions based on reason rather than habit. Islam had to liberate man from his own follies for only then can man learn to use his head and base his actions on conviction rather than convention. Thus the Qur'an kept censuring the people of Makka on their insistence on following the ways of forefathers, asking them if they would insist on the ways of their forefather, "even though theirs fathers were void of knowledge (wisdom) and guidance?"[8]

Today in Nigeria we do a lot of what we do simply because this is how others do it. In other words we do a lot of the things we do out of convention, even when they go against the grain of human reason and principles of our faith. As Muslims we ought not to act like the kuffar of Makka who would insist on following their forefathers even when a superior truth has been brought to them by their lord and creator. It is the height of folly for one to ignore his lord and creator in favour of some fellow mortal who is himself a creation entirely dependent on that same lord to whom is the ultimate return. "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"[9] This way not only do we fail to resist evil when it becomes rampant, but we go down the drain with it, giving it ample opportunity to grow and leaving behind no hope for truth, honour and decency. But the essence of being a Muslim is precisely to free oneself from conventions and to work on conviction. The faith in God is essentially to give us that strength to resist the

temptation of following the crowd and the courage to defy society in favour of truth and righteousness. If Muslims should fail to fear God and begin instead to fear people [10] and consequently abscond from the path of truth and give up the fight against evil, tell me, what then remains of their Islam? What hope is there for that society? Who else is there to pull the society from the eminent destruction that awaits it?

If only our Muslim women would learn to be Muslims, to do things as Islam wants them to be done irrespective of what the so called culture says, irrespective what the people would say, for as Muslims we ought to know that what is important is what Allah will say and not people. For as we know too well, from the very elementary teachings of Islam, people can neither create nor cause death nor can they sustain life. It is Allah alone who created us, it is He who sustains us and it is to Him we ultimately and inevitably return, is it not the greatest of follies that we still care about what some ignorant silly fellows somewhere feel about our actions so long as it conforms to our lord's wish? My sisters, I am stressing this point knowing fully well what Muslim women in Nigeria do today when it comes to marriage, for example. They never care to know what Allah says nor do they listen when someone reminds them, their hearts become blind, their ears blocked, their body itches and wont be at rest until they satisfy their lusts, whims and caprices. Top in their minds is not what Allah and his Prophet say or would feel, no, it the feeling of some ordinary ignorant miserable mortals somewhere, what a folly, what a pity indeed what a tragedy!

Responsibility for Household

Allah the most high has said "O ye who believe! Save yourselves and your families from a fire whose fuel is men and stones, over which are appointed angels stern and severe who flinch not (from executing) the commands they receive from God, but do precisely what they are commanded." (Qur'an 66:6) Many scholars have understood this command to shoulder a responsibility on Muslims not only to ensure that their families keep to the path of Islam but also and particularly to save their families from the consumption of haram. For the prophet made it clear that Allah does not accept the prayer of those who have filled their belly with haram and any flesh built on haram will have to be burnt off in the fire of Jahannam. When this aya

of the Qur'an is read along with the hadith of the prophet, as it ought to, when he said that, "each and everyone of us is a shepherd and every shepherd shall be asked about his flock. A woman is a shepherd in the house of her husband. ..." The responsibility of Muslim woman in the house of her husband, is therefore not just to make the house hold look nice and comfortable, which indeed is a good thing. But far more important is to ensure that no haram comes into the house hold. The wives of the Sahaba so understood this command that they used to tell their husbands, when going out for the daily bread, that if they should fail to get halal, they should please come back empty handed but never bring haram in to their house, for while they can endure hunger and deprivation in this world, they cannot endure the fire of Jahannam in the next world.

This moral responsibility on Muslim women has unfortunately been lost today. If anything women and their demands for the trappings of this world have been one of the major pressures that have driven many men to run for haram daily on end, for which we are all suffering today. So if Muslim women can re-imbibe these values once again and make the wives of the Sahaba their models and be content with halal and protect their households from haram, our society would have been much better than it is today. Even the country as a whole would have been different, for Muslim women would have been models for others to emulate. Until this can be done it does not look like we can have much hope for the transformation of this corrupt society where corruption has literally suffocated every sphere of human endeavour.

Responsibility for Society

The responsibility of Muslim women does not, like many are apt to believe, end up in the home. This wrong impression has been propagated and even given semblance of religious support. It is semblant because neither the Qur'an nor the Sunnah really supported the kind of relegation of women that we find today in our Muslim societies. Certainly this was not the case during the time of the prophet when women were involved at every level of the mission. Similarly the period of the Khilafa Rashida did not see any need to keep Muslim women behind, they were actively participating in the exacting and continuous task of establishing Islam. This situation only started to change after the Khilafa Rashida when things began to

deteriorate and they were never the same again thereafter. Indeed the position and role of women became an index of the health of the Muslim Community. The relegation of women became an index of decay and stagnation of Muslim societies. This was particularly the case in Hausaland before the Jihad of Shehu Usman Dan Fodio. For Shehu to pull the depraved Hausa society out of the abyss of its rot and revitalize it, he had to address the issue of women education.[11] For until women are educated they cannot play their part effectively in the crucial task of Amr bil-Ma'ruf wal-Nahy an-I-Munkar, without which no Muslim society can remain on its Islamic course much less regenerate after falling into decadence.

For the avoidance of doubt we may need to recall what Allah has said (Q. 22:41 and 3: 110) on this very important issue of Amr bil-Ma'ruf wal-Nahy an-I-Munkar. In another place and in more explicit terms the Most high said, "The hypocrites, men and women, (have an understanding) with each other: they enjoin evil, and forbid what is just, and are close with their hands. They have forgotten God; so He hath forgotten them. Verily the hypocrites are rebellious and perverse. God hath promised the hypocrites men and women, and the rejecters, of faith, the fire of hell their in shall they dwell: sufficient is it for them: for them is the curse of God, and an enduring punishment." (Q. 9:67-8) He proceeded to say "The believers men and women, are protectors, one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity and obey God and his apostle. On them will God pour his mercy: for God is exalted in power, wise. God hath promised to believers, men and women, gardens under which rivers flow to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in gardens of everlasting bliss. But the greatest bliss is the good pleasure of God: that is the supreme felicity." (Q. 9:71-2)

Here is a clear and vivid description of Muslims men and women as against hypocrites, men and women. The stress on enjoining the right and forbidding the wrong is unmistakable. That both Muslim men and women are expected, without distinction to be involved in the important work of Amr bil-Ma'ruf is also explicit. Thus Muslim women are equally expected to partake in the responsibility of ensuring that society remains on the Islamic course, that justice prevails and that the spread of evil and corruption is blocked. The

means as well as the methods of doing these may vary from society to society and from generation to generation. Today for example, the use of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the use of Human Rights groups, the use of Mass Media have become one of the most effective means, far more effective than conventional preaching, by which public opinion is shaped and society influenced. Muslim women cannot lag behind in this task of correcting the wrongs in society, the opportunities in our contemporary society and the new means of achieving this have all made it easier for women to participate even from the comfort and privacy of their homes and therefore giving them no excuse not to. The participation of men alone will never bring the desired results, women also have to take part in no less an extent than that of men. This is precisely why Allah explicitly mentioned men and women. What Allah is saying, for the avoidance of doubt, is that His Jannah will be for only those who took the trouble of correcting the wrongs in society, those who remain indolent and refuse to partake in this important task should not expect anything, if only because they have been forewarned.

Waking Up to the Challenges

While Muslim women groups generally and FOMWAN in particular, have been active in recent years, they do not appear to have quite appreciated the gravity of the task ahead. Indeed Muslims generally have tended to underestimate the extent of their decay and the challenges ahead. We must realise that we are no longer dealing with the more familiar methods of the last three decades or so. The recent advances in science and technology have radically changed the rate and pattern of communication and have reduced the world to a global village where it is no longer feasible to insulate your self from events and fashions in any part of the globe. Today is the age of cable television and internet which bring all the moral decadence of the Western world right into our bedrooms. Some of these morally degrading programmes are too subtle to discern by many a parent or the message is buried under seemingly harmless children programmes like Sesame Street. Moreover, a lot of this moral trash comes packaged in advanced and sophisticated technology which is not only attractive and alluring to the youth but also tends to seduce many parents and policy makers in to believing

that it is a necessary component of the development of society.

A recent documentary on a British television, Hollywood Kids, has already shown how the violence in American films has dehumanised Western children. At the time the more perceptive were giving the warning of the consequences of this screen violence many did not take them seriously, until an eight year old committed a premeditated murder of a two year old in the UK and two young men in the US killed their two parents, which in fact provoked the documentary. In what appears to be the latest attempt to destroy the values which help keep the family together, young people are being taught that there is nothing naturally in being a heterosexual, that sexuality is all matter of convention or social construction. So young people are not only stripped of any sense of guilt in being lesbians or homosexuals but are in fact encouraged and enticed in to them as it is being portrayed as a sign of the liberation of the individual from socially constructed gender roles of old. When it started many dismissed it as pure nonsense, but before long they sensed the danger, as a recent Western writer observed:

"Five years ago people laughed at the suggestion, but those who have been exposed to the influence of the gender feminist aren't laughing anymore. Many mothers who sent their lovely daughters off to college to prepare for careers, are weeping, because their daughters have come home with lesbian lovers. An April 26, 1995 article, entitled "Dating Game Today Breaks Traditional Gender Roles," which appeared in The Wall Street Journal, reported on a growing number of young women coming out of US universities where they have been indoctrinated in women studies programs who are engaging in sexual relations with women and men. included is a report on Ms. Anji Dickson who can't decide whether to marry her boyfriend or grow old with a woman." [12]

This may appear far-fetched, but this is what the American parents also thought. A visit to any of our university campuses where we sent off our teeming young men and women would certainly suggest that we are not as far off from this disaster as many would want to believe. The uncomfortable truth is that our children look up to the West and not to their parents and they have already imbibed all the values and tastes of their

peers in Atlanta, Manchester, Munich and Milan. We may wish it away but that is certainly not the solution. The solution is to wake up to the challenge and begin to address the problem and not to bury our heads in the sand like the proverbial Ostrich. We simply tend to be naive in our approach and until we are ready to be smarter, working just harder wont do in the circumstances.

Search for Knowledge

In a world where knowledge is the greatest capital, perhaps no one needs to be told to search for knowledge. This is more so when one is a Muslim whose first word of revelation was the command to read! The regeneration of our decaying society is something that can only be done with knowledge. Force and coercion has never revitalized human societies, they can only destroy it as we have seen in the case of the Soviet Union. Knowledge and persuasion have always been the key to any revival through out human history. Women, like men, are equally responsible for this revival and are to that extent equally liable to acquisition of knowledge. In fact the education of women is far more important in this respect, as the Prophet had said educating a man is educating an individual while educating a woman is educating a nation.

But what knowledge are we talking about? It is important to define the parameters of this knowledge because there is a great deal of confusion today about what constitutes learning. There are today many Islamiyya schools for women, this indeed is an important development. But the content of the education in these schools must match the needs of the day and prepare the Muslim woman for the role she ought to play. Is it doing so? I have reasons to believe that a lot of the learning that goes on in some, certainly not all, of these schools is still at parrot level, where texts are translated from the Arabic with very little or no analysis at all. This is not to say that the schools are no good, rather it is to alert us to the uncomfortable truth that the schools are not good enough for the kind of challenges we are facing today. The absence of analysis tends to develop a mechanical mind that cannot separate the letter from the sprit of the text and often tends to make Muslims very much like robots, operating completely oblivious of their context. An analytical mind on the other hand can see beyond the

letter and can therefore grasp the spirit and is sensitive to its context. It therefore develops capacity for initiative and creativity which is essential today in dealing with the multitude of problems that confront us. The point here is not to blame any school or any teacher, both must be doing their best and with the best of intentions, but we must not fail to see the need to match the level of learning with the challenge on the ground. To ignore this problem because one does not want to appear critical of some good and pious Muslims is to abdicate our responsibility of correcting and improving the capacity of the Ummah.

We also need to appreciate the breadth of knowledge in Islam. There is a pervading dichotomy between what many would call Islamic knowledge and others referred to as Western or secular or such other terms. Muslims must appreciate that all knowledge is from Allah, it is the intention of the seeker and the use he/she makes of it that makes it Islamic or otherwise. So while Muslims, men and women, today require both and need not limit themselves in their search for knowledge, they need to examine the needs of their community so that what they learn will be of use to the community. A situation where Muslims are motivated in their choice of career by the material benefits that will accrue to them or even by the temporary prestige associated with certain courses or even sheer fashion, is nothing short of a calamity. For if the intention in learning, *ab initio*, is something other than the pleasure of Allah and the benefit of the Muslim community not only is that knowledge devoid of Allah's blessing but it is more likely to become a source of problems to the community. A situation where we have no Muslim women teachers in our girl schools because they have all gone to study business administration, accounting or even law is certainly tragic. For it shows not only an absence of a sense of priority but a deep sense of materialism and self aggrandizement. Today we may have many Muslim women graduates but the motivation that drives them and their vision of life is so self centered and materialistic that rather than benefit the Muslim community they only add to its long list of liabilities. For this kind of mentality often makes the educated Muslim woman to see her work outside the home, very much like her Western counterpart, a kind of liberation and more important than the family itself. If Muslim women are to play the role Islam expects of them especially in our situation here in Nigeria we have

got to address this orientational problems.

Finally, Muslim women have a role, indeed a responsibility to transform the contemporary Nigerian society. It is a responsibility which their lord and creator has placed squarely on their shoulders and their life here and hereafter will very much depend on the extent of their efforts in this respect. They will do well therefore to address some of the issues raised above. They should have nothing else to fear thereafter as the Most High himself had assured. (Qur'an 29:69).[13]

References:

[1] There are several sources for details on Khadija's life. Any of the works on the life of the prophet like Martin Ling's book simply titled, Muhammad and Muhammad Haykal's Hayatu Muhammad translated into the English by Late Isma'il al-Faruqi with the title, The Life of Muhammad.

[2] For details see Abdul Wahid Hamid, Companions of the Prophet, Muslim Education & Literary Services, London, 1985. Vol. 2. P. 127-32.

[3] For details see Ibid. P. 75-80.

[4] For details see Aliah Schleifer, 'Muslim Women and Education: Historical Foundations and Twentieth Century Egypt' in Muslim Educational Quarterly, Vol. 11, No. 3, 1994. The Islamic Academy, Cambridge, UK.

[5] For details see A. Kanun, al-Nubugh al-Maghribi fi Adab al-Arabi, Vol. 1, P. 74, Bayrut, 1961.

[6] For details see Hafsatu Zanna Laminu, Scholars and Scholarship in the History of Borno, The Open Press, Zaria, 1993.

[7] See Jean Boyd The Caliph's Sister, Frank Cass, London. 1990.

[8] See Qur'an (2: 170) "When it is said to them: "Follow what God hath revealed:" They say: "Nay! we shall follow the ways of our fathers." What! even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance?" See also Qur'an (5:107) "When it is aid to them: "Come to what God hath revealed; come to the Apostle": They say: "Enough for us are the ways we found our fathers following." What! even though their fathers were void of

knowledge and guidance?"

[9] Even William Shakespeare had occasion to exclaim thus in his *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

[10] In several places in the Qur'an Allah warned us against fearing people in His stead. See for example, Qur'an (5:44) "It was We who revealed the law Therefore fear not men, but fear Me, and sell not my signs for a miserable price. If any fail to judge by (the light of) what God hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers." Qur'an (9:13) "Will you not fight people who violated their oaths, plotted to expel the Apostle, and took the aggressive by being the first (to assault) you? Do ye fear them? Nay, it is God whom ye should more justly fear, if ye (truly) believe." And even to the prophet himself Allah had occasion to say Qur'an (33:37) "..... But thou didst hide in thy heart that which God was about to make manifest: thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear God"

[11] Shehu Usman Dan Fodio in his book, *Nur al-Albab* and his brother Abdullahi in his *Lubab al-Madkhal*, among their several other works, have both emphatically stressed the necessity of Muslim women to be educated and have attacked the several pretexts under which women are kept ignorant and exploited.

[12] Dale O'Leary, *Gender: The Deconstruction of Women: Analysis of the Gender Perspective in Preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, September, 1995. P. 28.*

[13] "And those who strive in Our (Cause), We will certainly guide them to Our paths: For verily God is with those who do right."

