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Position of Women

It is with a great amount of diffidence that I accepted the invitation to give this keynote address. My idea of a keynote address is one given by a fairly prominent person, with a good knowledge of the subject and a rich experience to draw from. Knowing that I have none of these, I wondered why I should be the person for such an important occasion. Whatever is the reason, the choice says more about FOMWAN's generosity than what ever merit may be inferred. It is indeed an honour and privilege, which I wished I deserved.

The days when we need to argue about the position of women in Islam are perhaps gone for good.[1] The world is gradually, if grudgingly, accepting the fact that no system has yet measured up to Islam in the humane and honourable position it has conferred on women. This esteem position was given 12 centuries before the Church debated whether a woman had a soul or not [2] and 14 centuries before women in the West started their liberation struggle.[3] This not only liberated women from the shackles of the 7th century oppression but propelled them into the centre stage of society and they played roles that were only a few decades before inconceivable and to this day unprecedented. From the struggle in Makka, where a woman, Sumayya, became the first martyr, through the first hijra where women featured prominently, to Madina where women took part in Jihad and were consulted in state policy sometimes, like the case of Umm Salama at Hodaybiyya, saving the whole Ummah from a catastrophe, women participated fully in the building and sustaining of the nascent Muslim community.

For many centuries to come, women, like their male counter parts, continued to play a prominent role in the progress of the Muslim Ummah. The political role of the two Ummahatu al-Mu'minin, Aisha and Umm Salama and the controversial Sukayna the daughter of Husayn the grandson of the Prophet, is fairly well documented. But it is in the field of education and learning that the contribution of Muslim women appear to be most profound. The case of Aisha is fairly well known, but her greatness is not so much in the fact that she was the transmitter of the fourth largest number of hadith as for her precision, critical faculty, and knowledge of law, history, medicine, astronomy and mathematics [4] . Her corrections of many ahadith, became the subject of an 8th-century book in jurisprudence, which, today, more than ever before, must be read along with the major books of hadith [5]. During the generation of the Tabi'un (the generation following the Sahaba), there was, among the most prominent scholars, Amrah bint Abdurrahman, who was described by Ahmad bin. Hanbal as "an eminent theologian and a great scholar" and who was a teacher of the judge of Madina in her time. During the period of the Tabi'u al-tabi'in, there was Umm al-Darda' (d. 81 A.H.), about whom the famous hadith scholar al-Nawawi, said, "All scholars are unanimously agreed regarding her vast knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence, her intelligence, her profound understanding and her greatness". She was held to be an important hadith scholar of her time and a judge of recognised ability and merit, superior to celebrated masters, such as al-Hasan and Ibn Sirin.[6]

This trend started by this early generation of women was to continue for the most part of the Muslim history, where women continued to excel in literally every field of learning in their time. Many of the famous scholars

among men studied at the feet of many of the women scholars of their time. Some of these include Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, who attended lectures on hadith given by Juwairiyya bint Ahmad and also studied for some time under A'ishah bint Abdulhadi, who was considered the best scholar of hadith of her time. Ibn al-Asakir, whose instruction included 80 women scholars, received the formal certificate (ijaza) from Zaynab bint Abdurrahman for Muwatta of Imam Malik. The famous Ibn Battuta, during his stay in Damascus, studied with Zaynab bint Ahmad and various other women, it is on the authority of this Zaynab that the authenticity of the Gotha manuscript is based. Jalal al-Din al Suyuti, a famous Egyptian scholar of the popular Tafsir al-Jalalyn, studied the Risalah of Imam Shafi'i with Hajar bint Muhammad. Imam Shafi'i himself, benefited greatly, in his formulation of the law, from the knowledge and profound understanding of hadith literature possessed by Sayyida Nafisa, the grand daughter of Hasan the grandson of the Prophet.[7]

Such was the involvement and contribution of women in the field of scholarship. It must be added, as many biographical dictionaries have shown, that many of these women played other roles in society, either as administrators or merchants in addition to their role as scholars. And as merchants, like their prototype, the first wife of the Prophet, they made their wealth available for the Islamic cause. The famous Sankore mosque of Timbuktu in contemporary Mali, which formed the core of the celebrated Sankore university was built by a woman. This situation continued generally in the Muslim world until the last three centuries or so when decadence crept in, scholarship stagnated and women receded to the background. It was the good fortune of Hausaland and Borno, however, that about this time a scholarly movement led by Shaykh Uthman b. Fodio came to the rescue.

The story of the Sokoto Jihad is fairly well known to warrant recounting here. It however must be said that its contribution in the revival of the position that Islam has conferred on women is singularly remarkable and unprecedented. Shehu from the onset of the movement was seriously concerned over the ignorance and decadence of the society but particularly the deplorable condition of women. He attacked the Hausa society in the way they turned women into chattels and criticise the scholars for ignoring the education of women. He deified the conventions of his time and devoted a lot of his time and energy in this direction, literally urging women to come out to learn and to rebel against the prevailing injustices. "O Muslim women", the Shehu often addressed them, "do not listen to the words of those misguided men who tell you about the duty of obedience to your husbands but they do not tell you anything about obedience to God and his messenger." [8] His brother Abdullahi similarly urged women to go out to search for knowledge with or without the permission of their husbands.[9] By putting education over and above marriage Abdullahi not only restored the correct Islamic position which actually led to the emergence of women scholars in earlier generations but he revolutionarised gender relationship in Hausaland. The Sokoto community had among its rank scholars, like the famous Nana Asmau, who not only taught but participated from her matrimonial home in the running of the state.

Barely two hundred years today the situation in what has now become Nigeria is completely different, women scholars have but all disappeared. Though a few may still be found here and there, their scholarship has become stunted and a great majority of Muslim women today are completely ignorant, many of them are illiterate in both Arabic and Latin scripts. Scholars have once again abandoned the teaching of women and men are once again treating them as chattels, changing them just as they change their cars. Even where women had the benefit of Islamic education, the kind of education they receive, far from developing a critical faculty, tended to inculcate meekness and render them prisoners to interpretations which at the end of the day tend to serve the interest of their male teachers more than the collective interest of the Ummah. Those who had only the benefit of a thorough Western education, quite naturally

imbibed Western thoughts and ideas, tastes and perspectives and rather predictably became enthralled with Western feminism. And those who had the benefit of both are too often caught between and torn apart by two conflicting cultures and world-views and are consequently never quite sure which way to go. With these kind of mothers it is easy to see the kind of children and consequently the kind of nation we shall end up with. We must therefore ask, what is it that went wrong? What has exactly happened to Shehu's books and those beautiful and liberating ideas that they contained? What hope is there for change? Are we going to wait for another Shehu? Or are we going to revive Shehu's ideas?

This may not be the place and I may not be the person to answer these questions. But perhaps we could still venture into some preliminary enquiries and diagnosis if only because the significance of the matter and the exigency of the situation demands a start. As it is in the nature of man so it is in the nature of human society, it grows, ages and decays. This in Islam is as natural as life itself. But Islam has made provisions, within its world-view as well as teachings, for the revival and the revitalisation of the Ummah, what it calls Tajdid. This is precisely what has made Islam resilient over the centuries. What Shehu Usman Dan Fodio and his team of scholars did in Hausaland and parts of Borno is exactly tajdid, the revival and revitalisation of the Ummah. Before him there were several such tajdid movements at different places and in different periods and so it should be after him. So what appeared to have happened is that the Ummah succumbed to the natural process of growth and decay.

This process of decay, it must be further explained, is natural not in the sense that it is inevitable, but in the sense that it has become habitual. This is a decay from within and at the root of this decay is the degeneration and loss of scholarship. Scholars are described as the heirs of the prophets precisely because after the prophets they keep the light of guidance kindled through the vagaries of time. Scholarship degenerates when society fails to regenerate scholars, so that when good and competent scholars die, as they must, they are replaced by others less competent. When these die they are replaced by others much less competent and much less qualified to deal with the dynamics of human society. This incompetence, which too often is masked as great respect of the great shaykhs of old, soon leads to a situation where the works and views of the great scholars of old become idolised. In other words, fiqh which is the application of sharia within space and time, becomes the sharia itself which cannot be revisited much less be questioned. The love of the Shaykh becomes confused with the love of the truth and in due course the love of the shaykh overtakes that of the truth, when the words of the shaykh are seen with the finality only next to that of the Qur'an.

As scholars rest on their oars and fail to address the ever emerging new issues, the society in its dynamism will not wait, but proceed without the scholars. As the society progresses without scholars it naturally fails to come to grips with its problems and the scholars, having been left behind, and unable to cope with societal dynamics, continue to be irrelevant and when they attempt to address the society they sometimes sound ridiculous. This situation where you have ignorant following and incapable scholars is the abyss of decadence. Where women, the mothers of the nation, constitute the largest group of these ignorant following, the decay becomes compounded and decadence becomes chronic.

There is yet another source of decay from without which is perhaps more devastating. This is the secular liberalism into which our societies were incorporated first through European colonisation, later through neo-colonialism and reinforced through cable television and the ever growing and ever pervasive technology. The more the globe shrinks into a village the more our societies become drawn into this decay and perversion. Secular liberalism is the child of a civilisation, which, having revolted against God, has sought to create a world in which the pursuit of pleasure and material progress constitute the ultimate goal in life. With God out of

the way the sense of right and wrong faded away, and any conceivable act becomes justifiable so long as it provides pleasure or leads to some material gains.

This Godless materialism was made the very basis of our educational system, from the nursery school all through to the university. Early in their lives, our young ones are initiated into this secular liberalism, in very subtle and measured tones, by the time they reach the tertiary institutions they would have shed most of their religious value system and imbibed a lot of secular materialistic culture. Their concept of and therefore ambition in life, their idea of freedom, development and progress is hardly distinguishable from their peers in Chicago, Manchester or Hamburg. A quick visit to our campuses today betrays this; from the very choice of course and therefore career, through the morally depraved social life to the more serious issues of drugs, secret cults and armed robbery, it is hedonism and materialism all the way. Thus every year these campuses graduate thousands of young men and women who had been robbed of what ever values they may have had and initiated into the ruthless materialistic culture of the Western world in which only two things are important in life, money and sex, and that you can always use one to get the other. What kind of future are we trying to build for our posterity? Are we surprised that our society has been sinking into the abyss of corruption and decadence? Isn't time we took stock of our lot and arrest this decay? If fathers don't care are mothers also indifferent?

The women, more than the men, have perhaps been the greatest victims of this secular liberalism, not only because the campuses are becoming increasingly unsafe as they have to live under the threat of rape and variety of harassment, but more because the women appear to be increasingly confused about their role in society. Having imbibed Western ideas of freedom, and progress, like their Western models, they confuse equality with uniformity and strive to look and work like men and compete with men rather than complement them. Instead of taking pride in being women and mothers of men they seemed to have developed a deep sense of shame and inadequacy from which they psychologically try to escape by dressing like men and seeking courses and career that are thought to be exclusive to men. Thus we end up in graduating "educated" women who are neither men nor really women, for they cannot be men no matter how much they try and they are not ready to accept their special role as women, which the men cannot play either. The consequences of this confusion of roles is far more disastrous than many would be ready to believe, for today it had lead to the destruction of the human family in the West with all the calamities in its trail. Having destroyed the basis of its family, the West today is watching helplessly and we seem too willing to repeat the same mistake.

The creation of FOMWAN ten years ago must come as big relief not only because, as mothers, they are best placed to address these kind of issues, but also because for the first time since the Sokoto Caliphate, Muslim women have pooled their talents, resources and energies together for the advancement of the cause of Islam. This is a crucial step in any process of tajdid and a good fortune for any Muslim community. When the Prophet of Islam likened the education of a woman to the education of a nation, as contrasted to that of a man as the education of an individual, he was in effect saying that no nation can claim to be educated simply by educating its men. As mothers and therefore the first teachers of men, they create an indelible impression in the mind of the child and ultimately determine the perspective of the nation. Women symbolise the nation not only because they harbour the womb the bore the nation but even more important because as the first teachers they have the first and best opportunity to shape the nation their way. When and wherever these mothers are educated Muslims advancing the cause of Islam, the nation cannot but be a Muslim. FOMWAN therefore is the best hope we have on the horizon for the restoration of Islam in this beleaguered nation of ours.

If we are in doubt, those who want to see us down and out are not. A Western scholar who had spent the best part of his life studying Islam and the Muslim, especially Hausa society, has, in his recent book, described Muslim women as "Islam's Achilles' heel".[10] The book was thought to be addressing what in the West is sometimes called the 'Islamic peril', how does the West deal with this intransigent and tenacious Muslim community in its midst that has simply refused to abandon Islam and submit totally to Secular Liberalism. His solution was that once you can assimilate the women then you would have eliminated the Muslim community. The British government at one time was thought to be using this idea as the basis of its new social policy. But the United Nation also may have bought this idea, for a careful look at the documents, from the Nairobi conference on women in 1985, through the recent Cairo conference to the forth coming Beijing conference, suggests an obsession with what it calls freedom and empowerment of women. By the time one reduces the polemics and semantics of these documents to what they really are, one sees a clear and unmistakable attack of all that the Islamic value system stood for. The message here is that Muslims can only ignore their women at their own peril.

The woman has now become the focal point of this battle of values, which appear to be the battle of the twenty first century. This battle is increasingly globalised in a globe that is ever shrinking under the advances of science and technology. Maintaining values where nations and cultures are increasingly being reduced to streets in a global village may well be the greatest challenge yet for the Muslim Ummah. For satellite communication, for example, has invaded and pervaded every corner, such that trials of O.J. Simson, the violence on the streets of Chicago and the killings of our brothers in Bosnia are brought to us right into the privacy of our bedrooms. No nation can isolate itself from the rest of the globe, not any more. Similarly it is no longer sensible for Islamic groups and movements to operate independently. It has become both necessary and urgent for Islamic groups to team up together as they brace up for the challenge. But this is more so in the case of the Muslim women movements, on whom the search-light is increasingly being focused.

Luckily, events in the last one decade or so have raised such awareness among Muslims that, from Malaysia, through Sudan up to Turkey, Muslim women have been busy organising themselves. They have been discovering their immense potentials. In the Sudan, where this process has been maturing and coming to fruition, the resourcefulness of our mothers and sisters has been particularly astonishing. Muslim women, world over, need, more than ever before to come together to direct and judiciously use the kinetic energy already released and plan the ways to harness the latent energy effectively. This is not because the current Secretary General of NATO has said that Islam is the greatest threat yet after communism, but rather because Islam is the greatest hope yet for humanity. A global Muslim women movement is not a luxury but a necessity, an absolute one at that.

Obstacles

FOMWAN and the global Muslim women movement must not underestimate the task before them. Their task is not only to provide their crucial contribution in this effort to pull our contemporary society out of the decadence and confusion they had fallen for more than a century now, but also to strengthen and protect Islam's Achilles' heel, that vulnerable point of the Muslim Ummah. Unfortunately the very decadence they have to fight creates for them some of the first obstacles. These obstacles emanate from a stale fiqh and cultural inhibitions which have made many a Muslim woman reluctant to playing the role that Islam expects of her in society. These obstacles must be addressed and overcome to allow the Islamic movement to harness the enormous energy, resourcefulness and

creativity of Muslim women.

1. Fiqh

There are numerous fiqh rulings which have for a very long time held the Muslim woman captive and denied her society from a fuller utilisation of her talents and resourcefulness. Most of these rulings appear to be based on interpretation which are either contextual or based on ahadith which on a close scrutiny are found to be wanting. Some of the famous ones include the understanding that a Muslim woman cannot lead her community or nation politically or that she cannot travel without a muharram or that her evidence is either not acceptable in certain cases or is only half that of a man. Luckily some of our highly respected contemporary Ulama', like shaykh Muhammad al-Gazali [11], shaykh Yusuf al-Qardawi,[12] shaykh Hassan Turabi[13] and the emerging, if largely misunderstood, Fatima Mernissi, [14] have unassailably rectified a lot of these notions, interpretations and myths. But most of these works are still in their original Arabic and have been denied circulation in some quarters which are not yet prepared to adjust to these realities. So while the obstacle are not yet over, we have at least begun to face and tackle them, what remains may be essentially a matter of communication.

2. Culture

Over the centuries and across many lands numerous cultural practices and taboos have found their way into Muslim society and many of them have been mistaken for Islam. These may differ from one country or community to the other, but where ever they are found they tend to curtail the participation of the Muslim women in the development of their communities. For the Muslim women to play the role Islam expects of them as those before them have, they need to free themselves from this cultural bondage. The first step, it seems, is to separate the chaff from the grain. Here these practices need to be weighed on the scale of Islam while taking full cognisance of the high-tech societies of the twentieth century in which we live. This of course requires appreciable knowledge. Perhaps needless to add that care must be taken not to throw away the baby with the bath water.

3. Human Resources

The significance of material resources in Islamic work is too well known to warrant our mention here. But the value of human resources certainly deserves. A nation or a company with goals and objectives to achieve take the pains and trouble to train its human resources, but not Islamic bodies or organisation. Too often the lack of trained human resources, coupled with the perennial apathy and complacency frustrates the realisation of many desirable and achievable goals. For FOMWAN to make effective contributions in advancing the cause of Islam in a world where knowledge is the greatest capital, it has to take special pains to train its human resources. Leaving things to chance, as has been done by many an Islamic organisation, is the shortest route to failure - indeed many have failed.

Challenges

1. Raising Scholars

Fiqh, as we said earlier, represents the application of the Sharia within a given time and space. While the Sharia, which constitutes the principles, is immutable, fiqh is dynamic and will keep adapting to the ever new situations in life. To mistake fiqh for the Sharia is not only to chain the Sharia but actually it is to kill its spirit. The problem is not with Scholars of

old, who have done their jobs and discharged their responsibility to their societies. The problem is with the contemporary scholars who under several pious pretexts fail to rise up to the challenge of their times. They thus hold the whole society hostage by their failure to apply the immutable principles of the Sharia to their contemporary context. The role of scholars as we have said earlier is essentially to guide their societies through the vagaries of time, so that new problems will not be left unattended and old solutions will not be applied to new problems. This as we have seen is not a job exclusively reserved for men. In fact going by the Quran and the various Hadith of the Prophet and the very history of Islam, women ought to be at the fore front. Indeed as we have seen they were, and this was why these societies produced the celebrated scholars they did.

Given the task that lies ahead, FOMWAN and other Muslim women movements must raise scholars among their ranks. This will allow them not only to correct the gender imbalance in this very important area of human life but also to make their contributions to the regeneration of the Ummah adequately and effectively. The very needs of the Ummah today suggests that this scholarship must extend and cover all fields of human endeavour. But special efforts must be made to raise scholars in the Islamic core sciences of Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh, etc. who should not only teach but also write books and participate at every level of the community's educational and intellectual efforts.

2. Family

No one can doubt the fact that the institution of the family, the very cradle and sanctuary of human race, and therefore humanity itself, is in a serious danger today. The ever growing hedonism of the secular liberalism is ever eroding the strong foundations of love, mercy and fear of God, while lust and materialism has been increasingly taking the centre stage of the family. Choice of spouses has become very much like choice of cars, a matter of vanity and aesthetics. A whole range of industries are sprouting around this new craze, cosmetics, soft magazines, modelling, fashion designing, and even plastic surgery. [15] All these went a long way to subvert and supplant the foundations of the human family making it increasingly vulnerable to growing pressures that excessive materialism has brought in its trail. The family has since been crumbling through divorce with yet more disastrous consequences. A recent American report [16] revealed that from 1945-1980 broken families rose from 20% to 50%. The report identified this phenomenon "as a central cause of our most vexing social problems poverty, crime and declining school performance." [17] "Crime in American cities" the report continues, "has increased dramatically and grown more violent over recent decades. Much of this can be attributed to the rise in disrupted families. Nationally, more than 70 percent of all juveniles in state reform institutions come from fatherless homes." As for education the report noted: "The great educational problems of our time is that many American children are failing in school not because they are intellectually or physically impaired but because they are emotionally incapacitated. The discipline problems in today's suburban schools - assaults on teachers, unprovoked attacks on other students, screaming outbursts in class - outstrip the problems that were evident in the toughest city schools a generation ago." Consequently, the report added, "The curriculum is becoming more therapeutic: children are taking courses in self-esteem, conflict resolution, and aggression management....." [18]

As the strain increased, even where the family managed to remain intact, the peace and tranquillity that used to symbolise the home vanished and in time the home became like a hostel where members of the family come and go at different, often odd, times. The television with its increasing cable networks, the microwave oven which made the family kitchen into a fast-food joint, increased the gulf even further, family members became further estranged and fear replaced security. In a recent extensive survey carried out in the US by the Newsweek Magazine, titled 'KIDS Growing

Up SCARED' a set of frightening statistics emerged.[19] The survey reported that kids were growing up scared not only of the streets where they can no longer walk alone or play by themselves, but even of their very homes where they are becoming victims of an increasing and dehumanising attacks not from some outsiders but the very close members of the family. Alas the home has ultimately degenerated in to a dungeon where husbands batter their wives, parents assault their children, physically as well as sexually, and rather predictably, children murder their parents. With homes like these who need prisons?

But, perhaps, we may still need our prisons for they may well be safer! For as if 'we aren't seeing nothing yet', came the shocking news of growing number of mothers killing their own children. When the Daily Telegraph of November 28 reported the case of a mother who killed her two daughters aged 2 and 4, it gave the figures for 1992 of such kind of murder as 1,100 and added "but experts warn that it could be more because many killings are hidden as cot deaths or accidents".[20] Now this certainly is the ultimate in the demise of the family and the destruction of the human race! one cannot imagine something worst! For what else is left if a mother can kill her own child?

We are using the American experience for it represents the ultimate in progress and development in our contemporary secular liberal world. Chairman, Brothers and Sisters, we have a serious tragedy at hand which is ever coming closer home and engulfing us all as the globe shrinks under these frightening advances of science and technology. The UN from the 1985 conference in Nairobi through the Cairo 1994 conference to the forthcoming one in Beijing this year, appear to want to solemnise this tragedy. Of course, today, we know who the UN represents and who it doesn't. There doesn't appear to be anything more in the Western family that remains to be destroyed. So who really is the target of this clearly destructive policies? What ever is the Answer to this question, FOMWAN and other Muslim women movements have a responsibility to stem this sludge before we all get drowned and consumed. Muslim women must join hands every where to salvage the family and restore and strengthen its basis once again. They must restore that sense of balance and complementarity which the Muslim family symbolises.

3. Methods and Approach

For too long Islamic work has been unplanned and haphazard. Today, with the kind of task ahead, this is no longer tenable. For any goal to be realised, the efforts must be systematic and methods relevant to our times have to be employed. This is what the Most High meant when He said "We sent not an apostle except in the Language of his people, in order to make (things) clear them". (Q. 14:4) To communicate effectively we must use the language that people understand, in other words, the means, methods and techniques of our times. In the high-tech societies of the 21st century we are having to operate, where complex social engineering and sophisticated and subtle propaganda have become the means to achieve goals, we must not allow ourselves to be outwitted in this game of wits or better still, battle of the mind.

Concluding Remarks

Chairman, sir, distinguished guests, brothers and sisters, there is so much to be said and so little time and space to say it, so we should be concluding now. Islam as we have seen has long liberated women but it seems Muslims are not always willing to grant them that liberty. In other words there is a big gap between what Islam has allowed Muslim women and expects of them on the one hand and what they are actually granted. It is largely the result of ignorance, but it must be appreciated that Muslim women have cause to be angry. On their part Muslim women must realise that not much can change until they can transform this anger into power,

until they can stop agonising and start organising and until they can grow from the local to the global arena. The starting point as they must now realise is knowledge, not that piece of knowledge that scholars call fard ain, but knowledge whose limits are only the sky; there must be women scholars of repute who can stand shoulder to shoulder with their brothers and together pull the Ummah out of the abyss.

But perhaps their most urgent assignment is to save humanity from extinction, by saving the human family from the impending catastrophe. The role of women has to be clearly defined in the increasingly confused contemporary society. Complementarity must replace the unnecessary competition raging between the two genders. The fear of God and genuine love must replace the raging lust and materialism as the foundations of the family. That divine balance must be restored, for only then can we get our bearings back and our vision clear. Once the family is saved and intact, the rest should be easier.

Finally let me seize this opportunity to congratulate FOMWAN, undoubtedly the most organised Islamic organisation in the country, for a decade of wonderful performance. Success, it has been said, is measured not only by goals attained but also by the obstacles surmounted in attaining them. We eagerly look forward to another decade of more success, and pray to the Most High to continue to guide, assist and bless these efforts in His noble cause.

References:

1. Several books, articles and lectures have been produced on this subject in several languages in several parts of the world. Here in Nigeria some of the books easily available include: Aisha Lemu's Women in Islam, Ibraheem Sulaiman's Women in Society, and Hassan Turabi's Women in Islam and Muslim Society. Proceedings of the International Workshop on the 'Role of Muslim Women in Africa' organised by the Islam in Africa Organisation, is currently being edited in preparation for publication.

2. This debate took place in the 18th century in France, a country which prouds itself as the champion of progress and liberalism in Europe.

3. It will be recalled that it was only in 1945 that the 'Married Women Property Act' was passed in Britain by the British Parliament. This is the act which among other things conferred on the married women the right to own her own separate property, a right Islam had given women, married or otherwise, some 14 centuries earlier.

4. 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, U.K. P. 7.

5. See Imam Zarkashi, Al-Ijaba li 'irad ma Istadrakathu 'A'isha ala al-Sahaba, 2nd edn. Beirut: Al-Maktab al-Islami, 1980. This is a collection of the refutations and corrections that A'isha made to certain ahadith, which according to her, were misreported by the companions. For details , see Fatima Mernissi, Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry. Oxford, Blackwell. 1991.

6. See Ibid. for more details.

7. Ibid. Pp. 7-8.

8. Uthman b. Fodio, Nur al-Albab. The Shehu had written a number of

words in which he took up these issues.

9. See Abdullahi b. Fodio's *Lubab al-Madkhal* and several other works in which he took up the issue of women education.

10. The book was written by Prof. Mervyn Hiskett, titled, *Some to Mecca Turn to Pray: Islamic Values in The Modern World*. It was reviewed by M. H. Faruqi, under the title 'Turning Xenophobia into a Social Policy', published in *Impact International*, March, 1994, P. 36-8.

11. See Muhammad al-Ghazali, *al-Sunnatu-l-Nabawiyya Bayn Ahl al-Fiqh wa Ahl al-Hadith*, Cairo, Dar al-Shuruq, 9th Edition, May 1990. Pp. 44 - 69.

12. Yusuf al-Qardawi, *Kaifa na Ta'amul ma'a al- Sunnah*.

13. See his writings, especially his *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*, (the English translation of the Arabic original) which has recently been published by the I.E.T. Minna.

14. Fatima Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1993. [English Translation, first published 1991]

15. Some of you may recall the recent experience of American women who had had silicon transplant to boost the size of their breasts, many of whom today are having to live the rest of their lives in an excruciating pain from a disease that has not yet been understood. The case has already gone to court and the latter had already awarded costs in millions of dollars, but these dollars cannot buy them back their natural breast nor relieve the pain. Such is the consequences of hedonism and the folly of this civilisation.

16. Barbara D. Whitehead, 'Dan Quayle Was Right', in *The Atlantic Monthly*, April 1993. Pages 47-84. The gist of the article: "The social-science evidence is in: though it may benefit the adults involved, the dissolution of intact two-parent families is harmful to large numbers of children. Moreover, the author argues, family diversity in the form of increasing numbers of single-parent and separated families does not strengthen the social fabric but, rather, dramatically weakens and undermines society." P. 47.

17. *Ibid.* P. 77.

18. *Ibid.*

19. *Newsweek*, January 10, 1994. Pages 37-43. Some of these statistics include: "Single-Parent Homes - There has been a 200% growth in single-parent households since 1970; Working Mothers - The number of married moms leaving home for work each morning rose 65% from 10.2 million in 1970 to 16.8 million in 1990; Television Violence - The average child has watched 8,000 televised murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school; Child Abuse - The estimated number of child abuse victims increased 40% between 1985 and 1991; Violent Crimes - Children under 18 are 244% more likely to be killed by guns than they were in 1986." P. 38.

20. *The Daily Telegraph*, November 28, 1994. P. 5. The article was titled 'America Shocked by Mothers Who Murder'. Miss Aulton, 26, was the mother, this came soon after another case by one Mrs Smith and the paper reported, "Like Miss Aulton, Mrs Smith allegedly told the police that she was trying to keep a boyfriend who had told her that he did not want a

family." The paper also reported the assistant state attorney, Mr Scott Cupp, to have said, "We're burying too many kids who die at the hands of their parents. We need to be taking more of them out of these homes before this happens. I'm tired of it, sick of it."