



Mr. Cameron, It is not Islam but the Secular System that made women 'Traditionally Submissive'

Last week, David Cameron announced a £20 million fund to help Muslim women learn English as a means to help counter extremism. Around the time of this announcement, the Telegraph reported that privately, Mr. Cameron had suggested that some young Muslim men are vulnerable to radicalisation due to the *"traditional submissiveness of Muslim women"* which prevents them from speaking out.

Well Mr. Cameron, if you stand by this spurious patronising accusation, I believe there's some explaining you need to do....

Are you suggesting that it is the 'traditions' of Islam, a belief system that 1400 years ago established that women had the same worth, intellect and rights of citizenship as men.....that has made Muslim women 'traditionally submissive' - a concept by the way that the so-called enlightened thinkers of secularism such as Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and Montesquieu found impossible to grasp. They described women as incapable by their nature to develop the full faculty of reasoning and depicted them as creatures of emotion and therefore unsuitable for the public sphere, while the Prophet (saw) said, «إِنَّمَا النِّسَاءُ شَفَائِقُ الرِّجَالِ» **"Assuredly, women are the twin halves of men."** The traditions of the Western secular system therefore belittled the opinions of women, hindered their contribution to society and made them second-class citizens, "traditionally submissive" to the whims of men.

Mr. Cameron, are you claiming that Fatima (ra), the daughter of the Prophet (saw) who as a young girl stood fearlessly, speaking out against the oppressive acts of the leaders of her tribe; OR Sumayyah (ra), the first martyr of Islam, tortured and killed for her beliefs, uttering her conviction in the Oneness of her Lord in the face of her torturers until her final breath; OR Umm Shuraik, a Muslim woman driven out from her city, kept out in the burning sun and deprived of food and water by her people for courageously carrying the call to Islam.....are examples of the "traditionally submissive Muslim woman"?

Or, are you saying that Islam which spearheaded women's political rights, and that was the first system in the world that gave women the right to participate in the election of their ruler and to be elected representatives of their people, is to blame for making Muslim women "traditionally submissive" – rights by the way which women in secular Europe had to chain themselves to railings, throw themselves in front of horses, and fight their system in order to secure. Or are you accusing the Islamic laws of creating 'submissive' women – laws which oblige Muslim women to be politically active, nurturing a mentality within them of care and concern for the affairs of their society, and obliging them to stand against oppression, crimes and corruption in all their forms?

The Prophet (saw) said, addressing men and women, «كَلَّا، وَاللَّهِ لَتَأْمُرُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ، وَلَتَأْخُذْنَ عَلَىٰ يَدِ الظَّالِمِ وَلَتَأْطِرْنَ عَلَىٰ الْحَقِّ أَطْرًا، وَلَتَقْصُرْنَ عَلَىٰ الْحَقِّ قِصْرًا، أَوْ لِيُضْرِبَنَّ اللَّهُ بِقُلُوبِ بَعْضِكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ، **Nay, by Allah, you have to enjoin the Ma'ruf (the Good) and forbid the Munkar (the Evil), and to hold against the hand of the tyrant, and to force him on the truth truly and to limit him to the truth really, otherwise Allah will hit the hearts of some of you against others, then He will curse you as He cursed them**". [Narrated by Abdullah bin Mas'oud (ra)]

Mr. Cameron, would you say that Khawla bint Thalabah, an old Muslim woman who stopped the second Khalifah of Islam, Umar bin Al Khattab (ra) in the streets, a man of formidable character, and accounted him openly over his responsibilities as leader; OR the ordinary Muslim woman who stood up in a public gathering to speak against a ruling of the same fearsome Khalifah because it contradicted Islam; OR the 9th century female scholar

Nafisa bint Al-Hassan whom the people of Egypt referred to, to resolve their disputes with the harsh governor of their city; OR Umm Benin, the sister of the Umayyad Khalifah Umar bin Abdul Aziz who confronted Hajjaj the tyrant who had killed thousands of innocent people, admonishing him for his crimes till he wished the ground would open up and swallow him.....are reflective of the “traditionally submissive Muslim women” you are referring to....women who were instilled with the courage and sense of duty to stand for truth and against injustice no matter the consequences due to their Islamic beliefs?

Or Mr. Cameron, are you blaming the Islamic system for making Muslim women “traditionally submissive”- a system which afforded women the same legal rights as men, enabled them to pursue justice through the courts independently if any of their God-given privileges were violated, and allowed them to represent themselves or appoint legal representatives. It was a system under which women pursued lawsuits for all manner of grievances – from marital disputes to cases of violence to inheritance issues to contract, property and business matters. The high numbers of legal cases involving women as litigants and the frequency with which women used the courts and managed their own legal problems under the rule of this Islamic system as implemented by the Khilafah and as verified by historical records, reflects how they felt empowered to engage in the legal process. This was at a time that women under the secular systems of the West lost all legal existence on marriage, were viewed as juveniles in relation to their rights, and were legally dependent and subservient to their men.

I ask you Mr. Cameron, are you seriously suggesting that the ‘traditions’ of Islamic culture nurtured “submissive women” - the same Islamic culture which created thousands of Muslim female scholars and experts in Islamic fiqh, medicine, science, astronomy, mathematics, literature, calligraphy, engineering, poetry and many other fields under the Islamic rule of the Khilafah state due to its high regard for female education? These were women who issued Islamic rulings, wrote books on their area of specialty, intervened in court judgements to prevent miscarriages of justice, were teachers of eminent male scholars such as Imam Shafi'i, Imam Malik, and Ibn Taymiyya, and lectured in the main mosques, schools and prestigious colleges and universities of their state. This was at a time when women in the secular West were forbidden access to universities and colleges, were hindered from entering high professions, and had to use alias male names on their own books in order to gain recognition for their writings – all due to the “traditions” of secular rule.

Mr. Cameron, it seems that Eton did not teach you about the true lives of “**traditional Muslim women**” who lived according to the “traditions” of Islamic culture and under the “traditions” of Islamic rule, such as:

- Aisha (ra), the wife of the Prophet (saw) who earned the title of *'faqihat ul Ummah'* (jurist of the Muslim nation) due to her expertise in Islamic jurisprudence and to whom many of the male companions of the Prophet (saw) turned to for answers to their religious questions; she also had a great command over medicine, poetry, literature and the history of the Arabs.

- Rufaidah al-Aslamiah who devoted herself to nursing and set up tents as field hospitals during battles at the time of the Prophet (saw).

- Shifa bint Abdullah who was an expert in medicine and also appointed as the judge of the market place by the Khilafah Umar bin Al-Khattab (ra) due to her intelligence and insight; she had the authority to authorise the punishment of those guilty of malpractice in trade or the harming of public rights.

- Umm Darda, renown 7th century female scholar who taught Islam at the Great Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, the capital of the Khilafah at the time, one of her students being the Khalifah of the state, Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan.

- Labana of Cordoba, a 10th century expert in mathematics and literature who was able to solve the most complex geometrical and algebraic problems; her vast knowledge of general literature obtained her employment as a secretary to the Khalifah, al-Hakem II.

- Maeriam “al-Astrolabiya” Al-Ijlilya, a 10th century scientist, inventor, and designer of astrolabes used in astronomy to determine the position of the sun and the planets.
- Lubna of Andalus, a 10th century poetess who excelled in grammar, rhetoric, mathematics and calligraphy; she was one of the chief scribes of the state and was entrusted with official correspondence.
- The female physicians from the Banu Zuhr family who served the 12th century Khalifah, Abu Yusuf Ya’qub al-Mansur

And Mr. Cameron, while Britain prides itself on its prestigious universities such as Oxford and Cambridge, do you not think that a debt of gratitude is owed to another of those “traditional Muslim women” – Fatima Al-Fihri, who in 859 established in Fes, Morocco, the University of Qarawiyyin - now recognized as the first degree-granting university in the world.

Mr. Cameron, THIS is the true “traditional status” of Muslim women who adopted the Islamic culture and lived under the “traditions” of Islam. And it is a status that lives on in the Muslim women of today who due to their Islamic beliefs continue to be active participants of their societies, fierce adversaries to oppression and staunch supporters of truth and justice – all while adhering to their Islamic dress and Islamic laws. However, just because these same Muslim women do not ‘submit’ to your muscular secular liberal view and agendas of how they should dress, look, talk, think and act, you label them “traditionally submissive”.

However, the facts are clear that it is NOT Islamic traditions but rather the secular culture and system that made women traditionally submissive historically and that continues to fight to make women submissive today.....whether its Western governments who are trying to make Muslim women submissive, compliant, voiceless secular-minded subjects of their secular states through the demonization of Muslim communities and their Islamic practices to fulfil their domestic and global agenda to fight the resurgence of Islam OR whether its secular governments and dictatorships in the Muslim world who harass, imprison, torture, and even kill those women who voice opposition to their oppressive rule.

So Mr. Cameron, it may make achieving your anti-Islamic agendas a whole lot easier if Muslim women did fit your demeaning label of being “traditionally submissive” so that they could be coerced without resistance from their Islamic beliefs and practices, but as Muslim women we will not submit to the politics of fear, derogatory labels or vilification of our community, because standing firm to our convictions and being steadfast upon the truth – THAT is our tradition!

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَامُوا فَلَا خَوْفَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ * أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

“Verily, those who say, ‘Our Rabb (Lord) is (only) Allah and thereafter stand firm and straight (on the Islamic belief) on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve. Such shall be the dwellers of Jannah(paradise), abiding therein (forever), a reward for what they used to do.” [Al-Ahqaf: 13-14]

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Dr. Nazreen Nawaz

Director of the Women’s Section in the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir