



SAMPLE A

Diploma Programme subject in which this extended essay is registered: World Religions

(For an extended essay in the area of languages, state the language and whether it is group 1 or group 2.)

Title of the extended essay: Islam's
~~The Prophet's~~ Intention for the
Treatment of Women.

Candidate's declaration

If this declaration is not signed by the candidate the extended essay will not be assessed.

The extended essay I am submitting is my own work (apart from guidance allowed by the International Baccalaureate).

I have acknowledged each use of the words, graphics or ideas of another person, whether written, oral or visual.

I am aware that the word limit for all extended essays is 4000 words and that examiners are not required to read beyond this limit.

This is the final version of my extended essay.

Candidate's signature: _____

Date: January 27, 2009

IB Cardiff use only:

A: 64679 B: _____

Supervisor's report

The supervisor must complete the report below and then give the final version of the extended essay, with this cover attached, to the Diploma Programme coordinator. The supervisor must sign this report; otherwise the extended essay will not be assessed and may be returned to the school.

Name of supervisor (CAPITAL letters) _____

Comments

Please comment, as appropriate, on the candidate's performance, the context in which the candidate undertook the research for the extended essay, any difficulties encountered and how these were overcome (see page 13 of the extended essay guide). The concluding interview (viva voce) may provide useful information. These comments can help the examiner award a level for criterion K (holistic judgment). Do not comment on any adverse personal circumstances that may have affected the candidate. If the amount of time spent with the candidate was zero, you must explain this, in particular how it was then possible to authenticate the essay as the candidate's own work. You may attach an additional sheet if there is insufficient space here.

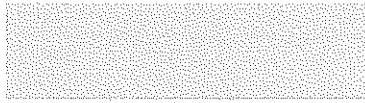
had a slow start to her essay but once we began communicating through email we got back on track. She revised her essay many times even changing the title. Even though we were making the essay more specific at times she found it difficult to get her research in so working with the title and different sections of the essay she was able to put in all necessary components to have the essay show its importance to the reader.

I have read the final version of the extended essay that will be submitted to the examiner.

To the best of my knowledge, the extended essay is the authentic work of the candidate.

I spent hours with the candidate discussing the progress of the extended essay.

Supervisor's signature: _____ Date: March 2/09



Assessment form (for examiner use only)

Candidate session number	0	0							
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Assessment criteria		Achievement level		
		First examiner	maximum	Second examiner
A	research question	2	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
B	introduction	2	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
C	investigation	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
D	knowledge and understanding	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
E	reasoned argument	2	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
F	analysis and evaluation	2	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
G	use of subject language	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
H	conclusion	2	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
I	formal presentation	3	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
J	abstract	2	2	<input type="checkbox"/>
K	holistic judgment	2	4	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total out of 36		26		<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of first examiner: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Examiner number: _____

Name of second examiner: _____
(CAPITAL letters)

Examiner number: _____

Extended Essay

World Religions

Islam's Intention for the Treatment of Women

How did Islam intend for women to be treated in their societies?

Candidate Name:

Candidate Session Number:

School Name:

School Number:

Subject: World Religions

Word Count: 4000

Supervisor:



Abstract

This essay focuses on the treatment of women in the Islamic religion, by referring to the Qur'an and investigating the Prophet's teachings. The view of women in social areas such as marriage, education, dress requirements, family and religion are identified. The main question being addressed is how Islam intended for women to be treated in their societies.

It is important to look at key social aspects of society and how women were viewed and treated within these. Revolutionary reforms, especially in regards to the treatment of women, came with the advent of Islam. The Prophet can be credited with this achievement. He led by the relationships he had with the women close to him, who provided examples of independent, intelligent women. The Prophet taught that women should be allowed to participate in all aspects of society such as education and religion. The Prophet declared women persons and not property. He suggested that women were equal in marriage. The Qur'an recognized that women had a role in society and although it was not the same role as men it was of equal value. The Qur'an recognized that a women's role in a family was important and sacred. The Qur'an also revealed that the teachings of modesty were not solely directed at women but both men and women.

It can be determined that Islam intended for women to be treated with respect and humanity. The Prophet called all people to honor women. Stories of influential women can be found in the Qur'an. These stories address women who made great sacrifices to be closer to Allah and for that the Prophet called for them to be honored. Both the Qur'an and the Prophet valued women. It is then evident that Islam did not intend for women to be abused and oppressed.

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Introduction

The treatment of women has been a controversial topic when dealing with the religion of Islam. Media has portrayed the Islamic faith as being responsible for the oppression and abuse of women in many Middle Eastern countries. This has been evident when regarding the treatment of women in Afghanistan, under the Taliban. The Taliban have created many restrictions against women's rights. For example, under Taliban rule, women are not allowed to attend school or other educational institutions. The Taliban prohibit women from working outside the home and from being outside the home without a male chaperone. Under the Taliban, women are required to follow strict dress codes, which if broken could lead to severe punishments. There are many infringements on women's rights in Afghanistan, which greatly inhibit women's involvement in everyday life (Al-Marayati). When looking closely at the Islam religion it is evident that much of the oppression of women's rights associated with the Islam faith, occurred not only because of religion but also because of cultural practices and biases. The advent of the Islamic religion marked a new era for women's rights and treatments. The Prophet was a leader for the treatment of women and this was demonstrated by the relationships he had with his wives and his daughter. The Qur'an also revealed that women should be treated respectfully. A scholar once said, "It is believed that there are no texts, old or new, that deal with the humanity of women from all aspects with such amazing brevity, eloquence, depth and originality of this divine decree"(Badawi). This statement was made in response to a passage in the Qur'an (7:189). This investigation focuses on the Prophet's view and treatment of women in the society and the view of women expressed in the Qur'an. The question of how Islam intended for women to be treated in the societies they

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lived in, may be answered by looking at two of the foundations of the Islamic religion; the Prophet's and the Qur'an's teachings on education, marriage, dress requirements, family and religion (Brodd, p.240-241). It can be then acknowledged that Islam intended for women to be treated equally and with respect within their societies.

Background Information

Islam started in the Arabian Peninsula around the seventh century. It originated in an Arabian town called Mecca. The person responsible for this was the Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdallah. The Islamic religion soon spread to other areas such as Iran, India, Central Asia and North Africa. With the onslaught of the religion also came the spread of beliefs and values, particularly in the treatment of women (Gordon, p.8). At the advent of Islam the treatment of women was quite revolutionary compared to how it was before and compared to other societies in the world. The Prophet can be credited with giving women rights (Weiss, p.49). He did not fail to notice the oppression of women and he did participate in the emancipation of women in his society. Although he faced much opposition from the men around him he led by example. The time he spent with women made the men around him very angry because they felt that he should be bonding with the men. In the military camps the Prophet allowed women to move freely expressing their opinions and not be secluded from the men. The Qur'an also contains teachings on the treatment of women in areas such as marriage, modesty etc. The Qur'an was believed to be divinely dictated, to the Prophet, by Allah. It was written down by a group of the Prophet's followers (Brodd, p.240). Women were considered to be persons. It was after

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750 CE that women were thrown back into oppression. The Abbasid dynasty was responsible for the exclusion of women from civic life. This essay will focus on the treatment of women particularly at the beginning of the Islam faith under the Prophet (Armstrong, p. 147-148).

Education

The Prophet said, "The pursuit of knowledge is a duty of every Muslim man and woman" (Angha). The pursuit of knowledge or education was considered to be a religious law. The Islam religion recognized that causing someone to have a limitation of knowledge is blasphemy, spreading knowledge is duty and ignorance is unforgivable. The quest of knowledge was seen as an act of worship. The Prophet could be credited with creating an equal right to education for women during the time he lived. He made it a duty for people to educate themselves and their families. The act of spreading knowledge is considered to be charity. The Prophet taught that knowledge is a sacred process which can act as a light leading people to paradise. He taught that with knowledge the people of Islam could reach their full potential. The Prophet also believed that through education people would be able to obtain a better understanding of their religion and of their every day life (Angha). The Qur'an states that, "God has heard and accepted the statement of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and carries her complaint to God, and God hears the arguments between both of you for God hears and sees all things"(58:1) (Frager, p.115). The Prophet also recognized that women had the right to be heard and that they should voice educated opinions. According to the

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Prophet, women in Islam were to be able to argue with anyone, even the Prophet, and should be allowed to make up their own minds. The Prophet educated his own daughter in many matters especially in matters of religion. She grew up to be an enlightened woman. Not only was his daughter well educated, some of his wives were too. An impressive example was the Prophet's wife Aishah (Frager, p.115).

Aishah is an example of the fact that a Muslim woman at that time could be well educated. She was not only a teacher but was also an intellectual. She was influential in the legal world as well as in literature. Some of her lectures are still studied in these disciplines today. She gives an insight into how some women were treated during the time she lived. As a child, Aishah lived with her father who was the Prophet's friend. She survived almost 50 years after the Prophet died and went on to memorize the entire Qur'an. She was considered to be one of the first legal experts in Islam. She was knowledgeable in other aspects such as medicine, mathematics and poetry. Aishah was also a teacher and she opened her house as a school. She was considered to be one of the most esteemed women during that time. When she died she was not buried separately from the Prophet but was buried with him and some of their other friends. Like Aishah, other women could be well educated and participate in careers (Frager, p. 115).

Women were not prevented from participating in careers which involved education. However, it was recognized that a woman's first responsibility was to be a mother to her children. She could also pursue a career in areas such as nursing, teaching or medicine. These occupations involved higher education and were respected positions. The Qur'an tells the story of a well educated woman in a leadership position. This woman, named

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Biliquees, was known as the Queen of Sheba. The Qur'an revealed that having an intelligent woman in a leadership role was not a problem with God. Biliquees was democratic and she made decisions for herself. She was one of the first Muslim women in charge of a nation. She is an example that God has not put a limitation on a woman's ability in a leadership role ("Women and Politics in Islam").

Marriage

The Prophet and the Qur'an both express equality for men and women in marriage. The Prophet said, "They (your wives) are your garment, and you are a garment to them" (Frager, p. 118). The Prophet expressed the fact that marriage is part in parcel with religion. Women were allowed to keep all of their property, once married, and their husbands had no right to it unless their wives gave them permission. Women were also not entitled to share their wedding gift with anyone unless they desired to do so. The Qur'an (4:4) expresses this notion, "And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift; but if they, of their own good pleasure, remit any part of it to you, take it and enjoy it with right good cheer" (Frager, p.118). Traditionally it was the husband's accountability to support his family no matter how wealthy his wife may have been. Men were also required to pay their wives a mahr (a gift given to a bride by their groom, usually in the form of money but not always) and this was determined before marriage. This was something not possible before the advent of Islam. Before the advent of Islam women were not able to own any property including financial property, because they were considered to be property. The Prophet's first wife, Khadjidah, was another woman

close to the Prophet who was an example of what some women could achieve during that time. She was a respected, smart business woman who was wealthy herself. She owned her own business. The Prophet held her in high esteem even after she died. The Islamic faith allowed women to own property (Hurley, p.82).

With the concept of property comes the notion of polygamy which was a common practice before the advent of Islam. The notion that polygamy was associated with the Islamic faith is a common misconception. Polygamy was a common practice before the advent of Islam. During this time women were not considered equal to men in affairs such as marriage. Not only could men marry as many women as they wanted they could also divorce them at any time. The religion of Islam placed restrictions on the number of women a man could marry and it also encouraged that the women be treated equally. The notion that having multiple wives was acceptable came from a passage in the Qur'an (4:3), "If you feel that you shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that if you shall not be able to deal justly with them, then only one" (Frager, p.119). Many men in the Islam religion used this passage as justification for many wives. Polygamy became part of the Islamic faith after a battle in which the Prophet participated resulted in the death of many Muslim men. These men left behind daughters and wives. Muhammad decided that men should be able to marry more than one woman in order to be their protectors (Armstrong, p.145). The introduction of this concept of polygamy into the Islamic faith resulted in social improvement for these Muslim women. This meant that the men would take their wives into their households and provide for them. Polygamy actually became social legislation that was created to conquer problems faced by widows, orphans and other vulnerable



females. This would ensure that men would not take advantage of these women for their property but they would marry and protect these women. The Qur'an did state that if men could not provide for more than one wife they should not have more than one wife (Armstrong, p.144-147).

The Qur'an shows that marriage is a sharing between the two people, "And among his signs is this: That He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest, peace of mind in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, here in indeed are signs for people who reflect" (30:21) (Badawi). Under Islam law women are allowed to choose whom they marry. The Prophet provided an example of this with his own daughter. The Prophet had a daughter named Fatimah. Fatimah was able to choose whom she married. The Prophet consulted Fatimah in the proposal of three men named Abu Bakr, Umar and Ali. Fatimah chose to marry Ali. She went on to live a life of charity and had two sons and two daughters. She provides an example of a woman who was able to freely choose whom she married and how she lived. She had great love for her father, the Prophet of Islam, and he had great love for her. The right to choose who to marry was important and so was the right to leave an abusive and loveless relationship (Frager, p.117).

The Qur'an does not force women to stay in abusive or loveless relationships. The Qur'an states, "In a fair manner women have the same rights against their men as men have against them" (2:228) (Hurley, p.81). The Islamic faith does not condone divorce but it is allowed if women face abuse, if their husbands can not produce a child and if they cannot settle differences. After a divorce women were allowed to remarry. They


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were also allowed to remarry in instance of the death of their husband although the proper iddah (the period of time a woman must wait before she is allowed to re-marry) must be carried out. After a divorce men have a duty to provide financial support to their ex-wives for the entire iddah period (Hurley, p. 82).

Dress Requirements

The Qur'an teaches the importance of modesty. This was taught for both men and women. The Qur'an calls both men and women to not put their bodies on display, "Tell believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty, that will make for greater purity for them and say to the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty and they should not display their beauty and ornaments..." (24: 30, 31) (Angha). This means that wearing tight, skin-bearing clothes was forbidden (Frager, p.120). Women were not supposed to wear translucent fabrics or luxurious jewelry. The main purpose of modesty for women was so that they did not attract the opposite sex. The way women dressed is termed hijab, which describes all clothing that emulates modesty, including the veil (Weiss, p.46).


The veil is a piece of clothing that many westerners view as a symbol of oppression to the women of the Islam faith. Veils in fact were used during the time of the Prophet and were worn by the women close to him. The veil represented a symbol of modesty. During the time of the Prophet the veil actually became symbolic of class, as many high-class women chose to wear the veil (Frager, p.120). The veil was used by women so they could



differentiate themselves from their slaves. The veil showed that women were independent and were socially adequate. In fact the veil was seen as a symbol for female integrity. The veil was not mandatory during the time of the Prophet although it was recognized as a tool to add equality of men and women based on mutual respect for their religion. This was possible because of the tangible example that the veil provided to the commitment to the Islamic faith (Weiss, p.48). The Qur'an states that women should cover their bodies but it does not state anywhere that women have to cover their faces. The type of veil that does not require the covering of the entire face is called the chador. Another type of veil is called the burqu. In contrast to the chador the burqu requires the entire face to be covered only allowing a slit for the eyes (Weiss, p.47).

Family


The Prophet recognized that family is the foundational unit in society, as is recognized by many other religions. This meant that every family member should respect one another; particularly children should respect their parents. The Prophet taught that the mother was an important foundation to the family. He said that, "Paradise lies under the feet of mothers" (Angha). This meant that it was a religious duty to respect one's mother. The role of a wife and in particular the role of a mother was seen as the most important task for a woman to take on. In fact, this statement became a Divine Law, which entailed not only the religious duty to respect and honor one's mother but to also respect and honor all women because they too were mothers or might one day become mothers. The Prophet was asked, "O Messenger of God, who among the people is the most worthy of



my good company?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man said, "Who else?" The Prophet said, "Your mother." The man asked, "Then who else?" Only then did the Prophet say, "Your father" (Badawi). The Qur'an tells stories of women who made great sacrifices to become a mother and a mother figure to influential men. Two such examples are the stories of the Virgin Mary giving birth to the Prophet Jesus and of Asiya Bint Muzahim, the Pharaoh's wife, who made a great sacrifice to take in Moses. Mary risked her life to become the mother of Jesus as she could have been stoned to death if people believed that she had been unchaste. She was warned of this but she realized that she was to be the servant of God and risked her life to be the mother of Jesus. In the story of Asiya Bint Muzahim a maid brought her an infant who had been abandoned. During this time her husband called for the execution of all infant males. Asiya insisted that she would adopt Moses as her own child and she recognized that this was what God had chosen for her. Asiya was tortured and murdered because she accepted the God of Moses and proclaimed her faith. The Qur'an said, "And Allah gives an example for those who believe: the wife of the pharaoh. (Remember) when she said, 'My Lord! Build for me a house with Thee in Paradise, and deliver me from Pharaoh and his deeds; deliver me from the unjust people'" (66:11) (Syed). These two women provide the example of why women must be honored. The Prophet named Asiya as one of the four women who attained perfection because she sacrificed her life to be closer to Allah (Syed). The three other women who the Prophet thought attained perfection were Fatima the daughter of Muhammad, Khadija who was a daughter of Khuwailid and Miryam who was the daughter of Imran. These three women show that not only mothers must be respected but daughters must also be respected (Theikhllass.com).

The Prophet himself had a daughter and he treated her with respect and dignity. Before the advent of Islam, female infanticide was a common practice. After the advent, the Prophet condemned female infanticide. The Qur'an prohibited the crime of female infanticide and criticized parents who did not except their female children, "When news is brought to one of them, of a female, his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain her on and contempt, or bury her in the dust? Ah! What an evil they decide on?" (16: 58-59) (Badawi). Female infanticide is also forbidden by the Islamic religion because it was a belief that people should not obtain security through having sons but they should look to only Allah for this security. Another common misconception is that the practice of female circumcision, also known as female genital mutilation, is associated with the Islam faith. This practice, not commanded by the Islam faith, was thought to promote chastity as it involved the removal of a girl's clitoris and labia. It was practiced in pre-Islamic tribes and other cultures (Beyer).


Before Islam, women were not given the opportunity to have access to inheritance. According to Islam, women should inherit half the share of her brother. Her brother must in fact support his mother, wife, children and sisters. Under Islamic laws women were to have control over their inheritance (Angha). The Qur'an stated that, "From what is left by parents and those nearest related, there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large- a determinate share" (4:7) (Hurley, p.79). With the question of inheritance also came the question of financial security. The Qur'an states



that men could have what they earned and women what they earned. It also states that a man should support his family no matter what his financial situation. Women did not have this obligation but were encouraged to spend their earnings or money to benefit her family. If a woman was more financially secure it was not mandatory for her to use her money but it was expected that she would want the best for her family (Hurley, p.79).

Religion

The Prophet said, "If any among your women asks permission to go to the mosque, do not stop her from going" (M. Yahya). In the Prophet's mosque in Medina, both men and women prayed together (M. Yahya). The Qur'an was very adamant about women participating in religion. Both men and women were required to be able to declare the Shaddah, fast during the time of Ramadan, give alms and carry out pilgrimage if they could afford to do so. When women had their periods, they were not required to carry out all of their obligations. When women were pregnant or nursing they were not required to fast. It was also recognized in the Qur'an that women could achieve the rewards that were also present with being a faithful servant of Allah (Rasoulallah.net). Daily prayer was required for men and women and this consisted of praying before sunrise, afternoon, late afternoon, after sunset and after dark. Fasting during the month of Ramadan was required by all Muslim's who could do so safely and its purpose was to allow Muslim's to be aware of their spiritual nature and move away from the reliance on material goods (Frager, p.14).



The Prophet recognized that it is important for women to have pure intentions when carrying out religious practices. For example women should not fast because they want the rewards that come with it, but because they want to be close to Allah. The Prophet taught that intentions were an important part of religion. The Prophet said that, "Actions are based on human intentions"(Frager. P.24). The Qur'an sees women as spiritually equal to men; in fact it even calls all believers to follow the actions of model women such as the Virgin Mary. The Qur'an believes that both men and women are God's creatures and they were put on earth to worship. The Qur'an addressed both men and women when regarding Allah's response to their actions, "For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women ... For them all has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward"(33:35) (Frager, p.116).The Prophets wife Khadijah was prominent in spreading the religion of Islam. All of his wives participated in religious practices and were active in spreading the message of Islam without forcing it on people. The Prophet said that without women, men would not be complete (Frager, p.116).

Conclusion

The treatment of women during the time of the Prophet was very different than before the advent of Islam and even now in places like Afghanistan. It is not solely the religion determining this but also various cultural groups. The Prophet promoted education as duty for all people, both men and women. The Qur'an also told stories of many influential women who sacrificed their lives to be closer to Allah and it recognized that

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these women deserved respect. The Prophet named his daughter as a woman who had reached perfection and his wife; Aishah's teachings are still used today in areas such as law. Islam did not intend for women to be treated with subjugation and abuse. The Qur'an and the Prophet set standards to protect women's rights and honor humanity and they had a major influence on civilization in doing so. It can be concluded that the Islamic religion intended for women to be treated with dignity, equality and respect.

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