

## Sermon 80: O people, women are ...

After the Battle of Jamal, <sup>1</sup> Concerning Women and their Shortcomings.

(ومن كلام له (عليه السلام

بعد فراغه من حرب الجمل، في ذم النساء

O people! Women are deficient in Faith, deficient in shares and deficient in intelligence. As regards the deficiency in their Faith, it is their abstention from prayers and fasting during their menstrual period.

As regards deficiency in their intelligence it is because the evidence of two women is equal to that of one man. As for the deficiency of their shares that is because of their share in inheritance being half of men. So beware of the evils of women. Be on your guard even from those of them who are (reportedly) good. Do not obey them even in good things so that they may not attract you to evils.

مَعَاشِرَ النَّاسِ، إِنَّ النِّسَاءَ نَوَاقِصُ الأِيمَانِ، نَوَاقِصُ الحُظُوظِ، نَوَاقِصُ العُقُولِ: فَأَمَّا نُقْصَانُ إِيمَانِهِنَّ فَفَعُودُهُنَّ عَنِ الصَّلَاةِ وَالصِّيَامِ فِي أَيَّامِ حَيْضِهِنَّ، وَأَمَّا نُقْصَانُ عُقُولِهِنَّ فَشَهَادَةُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ مِنْهُنَّ كَشَهَادَةِ الرَّجُلِ الوَاحِدِ، وَأَمَّا نُقْصَانُ حُظُوظِهِنَّ فَمَوَارِيثُهُنَّ عَلَى الأَنْصَافِ مِنْ مَوَارِيثِ الرَّجَالِ؛ فَاتَّقُوا شِرَارَ النِّسَاءِ، وَكُونُوا مِنْ خِيَارِهِنَّ عَلَى حَذَرٍ، وَلَا تُطِيعُوهُنَّ فِي المَعْرُوفِ حَتَّى لَا يَطْمَعَنَّ فِي المُنْكَرِ.

### Alternative Sources for Sermon 80

- (1) Sibte ibn al-Jawzi, *Tadhkirah*, 85;
- (2) Abu Talib al-Makki, *Qut*, I, 282;
- (3) al-Kulayni, *Furu' al-Kafi*, V;

(4) al-Saduq, *al-'Amali*, Majlis 50;

(5) al-Mufid, *al-'Ikhtisas*.

1. Amir al-mu'minin delivered this sermon after the devastation created by the Battle of Jamal. Since the devastation resulting from this battle was the outcome of blindly following a woman's command, in this sermon he has described women's physical defects and their causes and effects. Thus their first weakness is that for a few days in every month they have to abstain from prayer and fasting, and this abstention from worship is a proof of their deficiency in Faith. Although the real meaning of `iman (belief) is heart-felt testimony and inner conviction yet metaphorically it also applies to action and character. Since actions are the reflection of Belief they are also regarded as part of Belief. Thus, it is related from Imam `Ali ibn Musa ar-Rida (p.b.u.t.) that:

`iman (belief) is testimony at heart, admission by the tongue and action by the limbs.

The second weakness is that their natural propensities do not admit of full performance of their intelligence. Therefore, nature has given them the power of intelligence only in accordance with the scope of their activities which can guide them in pregnancy, delivery, child nursing, child care and house-hold affairs. On the basis of this weakness of mind and intelligence their evidence has not been accorded the status of man's evidence, as Allah says: . . . then call to witness two witnesses from among your men and if there not be two men then (take) a man and two women, of those ye approve of the witnesses, so that should one of the two (women) forget the (second) one of the two may remind the other... (Qur'an, 2:282)

The third weakness is that their share in inheritance is half of man's share in inheritance as the Qur'an says: Allah enjoineh you about your children. The male shall have the equal of the shares of two females...(4:11)

This shows woman's weakness because the reason for her share in inheritance being half is that the liability of her maintenance rests on man. When man's position is that of a maintainer and care taker the status of the weaker sex who is in need of maintenance and care-taking is evident.

After describing their natural weakness, Amir al-mu'minin points out the mischief of blindly following them and wrongly obeying them. He says that not to say of bad things but even if they say in regard to some good things it should not be done in a way that these should feel as if it is being done in pursuance of their wish, but rather in a way that they should realise that the good act has been performed because of its being good and that their pleasure or wish has nothing to do with it. If they have even the doubt that their pleasures has been kept in view in it they would slowly increase in their demands and would wish that they should be obeyed in all matters however evil, the inevitable consequence whereof will be destruction and ruin. ash-Shaykh Muhammad `Abduh writes about this view of Amir al-mu'minin as under: Amir al-mu'minin has said a thing which is corroborated by experiences of centuries.

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