



Oppose women and do not teach them how to write ?

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The next narrations are often cited by polemics against Islam:

Do not let [women] into all of the rooms, and do not teach them how to write. Teach them to spin and recite *Sura al-Nur*. [Ala' al-Din Muttaqi al-Hindi, *Kanzu al-'ummal* , Hyderabad, 1974 , volume 22, p. 10]

Do not let your women live in rooms, do not teach them how to write, and seek assistance against them. Constantly tell them 'no', because 'yes' tempts them to ask a lot [Ibn Qutaiba, *Uyun al-akhbar* , vol 4, p 78]

Hazrat Omar said: Act opposite to women as there is blessing in opposing them. Some one said: Take advice from them but act to the contrary. [Imam Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum-Ud-Din* (Sh. Muhammad Ahsraf Publishers, Booksellers & Exporters, Lahore-Pakistan, Reprinted 2000) '*Secrets of Marriage*', Book II p. 32]

Response:

The scholar Abd al-Halim Abu Shaqqa in his work "*tahrir al-mar'a fi 'asr ar-risala*" points out that these narrations [and similar ones] are listed among the forgeries and weak hadiths. He states:

They [the weak or forged hadith] are only traces of the influence of escapades of the imagination. The roots of this imagination are found in the ancient times of ignorance [*jahiliya*] which Muslims found it desirable to create [these ideas] Among the forged hadiths are: 1. Do not teach women to write and do not put them in chambers . 2. Obedience to the woman will be regretted. 3. If no women existed, God would have been worshipped in a true manner. 4. Counsel women and act opposite [to their view] .

And from the weak [da'ef] hadiths: 1. Men will be destroyed if they obey women. 2. The worst of your enemies is your wife 3. Oppose women, for verily there is a blessing in the opposition against them ... [1](#)

1: Abu Shaqqa, "*tahrir al-mar'a fi 'asr ar-risala*" [Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam li n-Nashr wa t-Tawzi, 1990] Vol. 1: 287

Dr. Khaled Abou El Fadl adds:

For instance, some reports that were attributed to the Prophet and circulated early on stated that women should not be taught to read or write, and that they should not be housed in luxury. Other reports asserted that women should be kept hungry and needy because once they eat their fill and obtain their needs, they start aspiring to go out of their homes and venture in the streets, and there is nothing worse for women than leaving their homes. On the other hand, if they are kept hungry and needy, they will keep to their homes. Some versions add that instead of writing and reading women should be taught knitting. Some versions add that women should be starved but not to the point of physical harm [*aji'u al-nisa jaw'an ghayr mudirr*]. Interestingly, these traditions were put in the mouth of A'ishah and Ibn Abbas. However, the various versions of these reports were rejected as fabrications by a large number of jurists. See al-Jurjani, "al-Kamil fi Du'afa", 1:507, 2:395, 5:537 ; Ibn Jawzi, "al-Du'afa", 2:173-174. [2](#)

Other sources moreover confirm that women were taught reading and writing, see:

Hafsa bint Umar studied some *reading* and *writing* with an *Adawiite woman* and when the Prophet married her, he requested from Umar that this woman should continue to come to the house to teach Hafsa .. [3](#)

Shahzād Ahmad adds:

Women were taught reading and writing and we have it on the authority of Shifa bin Abdullah, a scholarly woman of the period, whom the Prophet visited frequently and often had his siesta at her house. Once the Prophet visited her and she was with Hafsa ; thereupon he said, "why did not you teach Hafsa the incantation for Namlah [minor swellings on the sides] as you had taught her writing." It is remarkable that more specific injunctions and promises of higher rewards were held out specially in case of girls education. The education of boys was most probably a normal feature of the social life and the Prophet was more solicitous about women's Education because it was one of the most neglected spheres of social and cultural activity during that period. The companions of the Prophet were equally solicitous for the education of girls and Jabir stated in the presence of the Prophet that Abdulla his father, died leaving behind daughters of tender age and that he had married a widow for their instruction and training. That the objective of women's education was not merely the raising of the social prestige of womanhood but it derived its sanction on account of an intense faith in human worth in general, is revealed by the traditions containing instructions on the education of the slave girls [4](#)

2: K. Abou El Fadl, "Speaking in God's Name: Islamic Law, Authority and Women" [Oneworld 2001] pp. 254-255

3: Barbara Freyer Stowasser, "The Islamic Impulse" [Taylor & Francis, 1987] , p. 268

4: Shahzād Ahmad, "Islamic Education" [Anmol Publications PVT. LTD. , 2004] , pp. 349-350