



Are women crooked by nature ?

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Abu Huraira narrated that the Prophet said: "...Treat women well and with kindness, for woman was created from the rib, and the most crooked part of a rib is its upper part. And if you were to go straighten it, you would break it ; and if you were to leave it, it would remain crooked. So treat women well ..." ¹

After citing this hadith a Christian missionary comments:

Just like a rib is crooked, so is a woman. And just as it is useless to try to straighten out a rib since it will break, it is equally useless to attempt to straighten out a woman since she is crooked by design or nature. Muhammad is saying that women are deficient by nature, since to be crooked isn't a good thing.

Many polemics against Islam use this hadith to promote their view that Islam is a religion that insults women. They argue that the hadith describes the nature of women as "defect". In addition they often cite the commentary on this hadith by the Muslim author Salahuddin Yusuf , who wrote:

Whatever is the formation of the words of the Hadith, it stresses the importance of kind treatment to wives because woman is not only weaker than man by nature, but also less intelligent. On account of his being *more intelligent* and having greater patience, man should be more forgiving in his dealing with her ²

Response:

The hadith does not support the view that women are created "crooked" or with a "defect". Such a view is clearly in contradiction with the words of Allah Almighty in the Holy Qur'an. Allah says "...Certainly We created mankind in the best make [taqwim].." [95:4]. Yusuf Ali comments:

1: Al-Bukhari [3331] , At-Tirmidhi [1188] .

2: Riyad-us-Saliheen, commentary by Hafiz Salahuddin Yusuf, revised by M.R. Murad [Darussalam Publishers & Distributors, Riyadh, Houston, New York, Lahore, First Edition: June 1999] , Volume I, p. 268

Taqwim: mould, symmetry, form, *nature*, constitution. There is no fault in Allah's creation. To man Allah gave the *purest* and *best nature*, and man's duty is to preserve the pattern on which Allah has made him 4

In other words Allah clearly states that He created women with "no fault" or "crookedness". Allah gave her the purest and best nature as pointed out by Yusuf Ali in his commentary. In another verse Allah says: "...it is He [Allah] who made good everything He created..." [32: 7]. Therefore it would be an insult to Allah to argue or say that He has given women a "crooked" [imperfect] nature. So what does this hadith speak about ? The answer to this question becomes clear when we take a look at the next version [wording] narrated by Imam Muslim in his *Sahih*, which reads:

Abu Huraira [ra] narrated that the Prophet [saw] said: "The woman was created from a rib. She will not be straight *according to your way*. If you want to enjoy her, you will have to enjoy her with her twist [crookedness]. And if you try to straighten her, you would break her: and breaking her is divorcing her" 5

Notice very carefully how the Prophet said "...she will not be straight according to your way..". The Prophet only pointed out that from a man's point of view, a woman is "bent" [or crooked] or not "straight" . Similarly, from a woman's point of view, a man is also not "straight". The point is that a woman thinks and behaves differently than a man - it's in her nature. So the Prophet is telling men to not try to change her inherent nature, but to understand the differences and enjoy her as she is. The husband should respect her unique feminine nature and accept her the way Allah made her, complete with the "*crookedness*" that means that she will not be as he wishes in some aspects. If he insists on straightening her and molding her to "his" wishes, it will be like trying to straighten a bent rib: it will break in his hands, and the breaking of a woman is divorce. 6 In his book "The Fragile Vessels" Shayk Muhammad al-Jibaly explains the hadith in a similar way. The shayk writes:

When the woman makes a mistake, her husband should maintain patience and kindness, realizing that some of what may appear as mistakes is probably "not" so. The woman has a different nature from the man's, and thus may take actions different from what he would. The Prophet [peace and blessings be upon him] indicated that the woman [Hawwa or Eve] was originally created from the man's [Adam's] rib. By nature, the rib is bent. Thus, a woman's nature will never totally coincide with a man's because there is a "bend" between them. It may be equally true to say that, from a woman's viewpoint, there is a "bend" in the man's nature, which means that his actions will never completely coincide with hers . 7

4: Abdullah Yusuf Ali, "The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an" [Amana Publications 2004] , p. 1670

5: Muslim [1468]. English translation was taken from the book: "The Fragile Vessels" by Shayk Muhammad al-Jibaly [Al-Kitaab & as-Sunnah Publishing 2005] , p. 44

6: In the same way should we read and interpretate the next additional statement given by the Holy Prophet : "...and the most crooked part of a rib [woman] is its upper part [head]..." . This saying refers to the fact that the upper part [head] of a woman is most misunderstood by men [or most in contrast to their male nature] . In other words a woman is misunderstood by her husband the most in regards to the way she thinks, perceives things and emotionally reacts under various circumstances. She is most not as "he" wishes her to be in respect to these things [since "he" does not understand the way she thinks] . The husband should realize that although a woman looks "crooked" from his point of view, she was made perfect and from Allah's point of view there is no "*crookedness*" in her nature [Quran 95:4] . For this reason men should respect their unique feminine nature and "treat women well and with kindness".

7: Shayk Muhammad al-Jibaly, "The Fragile Vessels" [Al-Kitaab & as-Sunnah Publishing 2005] , pp. 41-42.

Secondly women are also likened to a rib by the Prophet because the rib is the “protection” of the heart and Woman represents the protection of Man rather than the reverse, but for such protection to take place then man must protect woman in the first place. This is because if any harm reaches the rib [woman] then the heart [man] is left unprotected. ⁸ This fact also prompted the Prophet to say: “treat women well”. In the light of all these facts one can clearly see that Salahuddin Yusuf’s interpretation of the hadith is incorrect. The hadith does “not” support the view that women are weak in intellect. ⁹ Nor does the hadith say or mean that Allah gave women a “crooked” nature.

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- 8: Shayk Faraz Rabbani in his fatwa related to the hadith in question states: “...The hadith is referring to the need of women for men and the need for women for men. The *rib* is from the person *themselves*; it gives the body, heart, and soul protection; it tells us that neither men nor women complete without the other and need each other; it points to the natural attraction between each. It reminds the husband about the duty to take care of his wife and to be excellent in dealing : she is from him...”[Taken from www.sunnipath.com].
- 9: See also, http://islamic-answers.com/women_are_not_deficient_in_intelligence