

## KEY TERMS:

1. **Matrilineal:** Was practiced at the time of Muhammad's birth (circa 570) in Arabia. The women would remain in her tribe and the man could visit or live with her. The children also belonged to the mother's tribe. Yet even with the presence of matrilineal customs connotes women's having greater power in society or greater access to economic resource. Some have argued that the previous society was matriarchal and that Islam changed it to a patriarchal one. Others state that it was changing into a patriarchal society around the birth of Muhammad and Islam consolidated this.
2. **Colonials Feminism:** Before the 19th century the status of women was not a hot topic. But during this time the practice of veiling, marriage and divorce came to symbolize cultural values. British victorian, the justification for colonialism was to benefit the colonized especially the women. The colonizers used the issues of women as a reason and need for them the save these women from their cultures. If women truly wanted to see progress in their lives they must leave their native cultures behind. This is important in the study of religion because again this was too a form of colonizers trying to colonize and reshape the lives of these women. female emancipation, more like female suppression. Colonial feminism was using the language and demand for feminism to assert Western cultural superiority.
3. **Orientalism:** is a way of looking at the other that his not you. US vs. THEM. The orient is defined by violence, backwardness, passive, barbaric. The orient is subject by Western ideals. The Middle East for example is different from the Western and therefore needs to be fix, they are everything the West is not. This is important to the study of gender and Islam because this is a problematic representation of the middle East and Islam which only consist of 20% Muslims. Not all Muslims are arab. This can be corrected by adversity. Also, avoiding essentialism. The focus should be on how academics reached their findings. Want to focus on methodology about whoever is writing, and what the basis of the claim they are making.
4. **Zainab al-Ghazali CONSERVATIVE:** A 20th century Egyptian feminist and founder of the Islamic Women's Association. She is a prominent female author, activist, Quran commentary. She is highly conservative in her views of gender and Islam, especially the role of the woman. Layla finds her to have double standards. She says women must do the following: marry, children, and stay home, however she is working, writing, traveling and not married nor has any children. She believed that Egypt should be ruled by the Quran and not positivistic constitutions. She argued that the way a society can bring about a society which has freedom and human rights was to revive an Islamic nation.
5. **Jahiliyya:** This was a time period before Islam, the time of ignorance. The Law Code of Hammurabi highlights sexual double standards in the laws which allowed both women and children to be enslaved. There were unequal rights in marriage and divorce. Islam came and changed customs regarding marriage (dowry going to the girl instead of the father) and divorce (*Idda* to be followed after divorce) as well as prohibiting girl infanticide practiced at that time. Some scholars argue that Islam did not better the conditions but made them worse. However within the Quran there are few sources from pre-Islamic arabia, mainly about the pagan societies. Pre-Islam was romanized as generous, hard workers, fighters, however Layla states that Islam made gender right for women in divorce and ensured women

- would not be taken as captive or as a slave.
6. **\*Huda Sha`rawi SECULAR:** She was a 20th century secular feminist. She was the founder of the Egyptian feminist union. Fought for women's education, min age for marriage, and voting rights. Famous for unveiling (the face) at the train station. She is significant in the study of gender and islam because of her passion in breaking down gender inequalities in a very conservative society. She was concerned with a particular style of dress and not the head being covered. The debate about women should unveil or not it has to do with a particular style of dress which made pursue most occupations as difficult and was associated from certain customs which would also make it difficult to enter institutions of higher education. Her approach is more concerned with social inequality than many other nationalists would be. She looks to Europe in particular in her source of information.
  7. **Fatima bt. Al-`Abbas:** Sufi poet and preacher in Cairo. She used to preach women, and mixed groups of men and women. Had an extensive knowledge of Hanbali fiqh, Taught at the Ribat al-Baghdadiyya: Institution for divorced or widowed women who were trying to get back on their feet, or they remained in the institution. Impressed ibn Taymiyah: wanted to stop her from preaching in front of men but saw the Prophet in his dream and told him to let her be.
  8. **Seclusion:** During the time of the Byzantine Empire [Christians] only the upper class women were to be secluded. The Secluded also depended on eunuchs, these were castrated men who worked for the upper class women and usually ran errands for them. The wealthy families did not need their daughters in hard labour jobs. Layla discusses seclusion is a social ideal and is not doable for the average woman. Women who are single mothers, widows, or come from a poor family must work in order to survive. Seclusion was for the FREE not slaves. Those who were able to be secluded were rich and if the female came from a scholarly family she would have access to knowledge from [father and bro]. Reference in the Quran and Sunnah discuss only the Elite women [prophet's wives]. The Quran speaks of the wives of Muhammad (PBUH) around the question of seclusion in a number of verses. These verses depend on the how the jurists interpret these verses about whether they specifically speak to the wives of the Prophet or speak to all women. References Q 33:53 and 33:32-33.
  9. **Rabi'a Al-Adwaiyya:** also known as Rabia Basri, famous sufi saint, mystic.
  10. **Waqf:** Is a pious/religious endowment that will be forever lasting charity even after you die. Key developments of the 19th century regarding women in Islam made changes to the waqf system. Wealthy women were able to participate socially and charitably through waqf. Efforts by colonial rulers efforts to change the endowment movement because they would not be able to touch it. System of endowment was seen as a problematic and therefore they attempted to change it so that they could use certain land. With the change of endowment system the 'ulama became dependent on the system and therefore they could control what can be taught. All free women could own property and manage it independently. It is a notable task to invest in a waqf. A note worthy woman by the name of Safiya, wife of Sultan Murad III started the construction of Ottoman masjid in Istanbul. This is significant to the study of women in Islam because this show the economic power of women, however it highlights the limitation to women who were not free nor were wealthy enough to engage in

such activities.

11. **Aisha bint Abu Bakr:** Daughter of Abu Bakr the Prophet's companion and the Prophet's wife. Aisha is significant because she was politically involved in the battle of the camel and many hadiths about the lives of women at that time are transmitted through her. She is an important source of information.
12. **Hadith:** Hadith is the teachings and saying of the Prophet Muhammad transmitted by companions of his time. Hadiths are primary source that can be used to reconstruct the lives of women in Islam with regards to many different topics such as piety, divorce, marriage, seclusion and many more topics
13. **Nawal Saadawi SECULAR:** Doctor, psychiatrist, writer and activist. Imprisoned in 1981. Critical of Nassar, Saddam and Mubarak. Jailed by Saddam because she opposed his policies. Forced to flee Egypt from 1988-1996 due to both Egyptian government and conservative Islamists. Returned to Egypt in 1996. Father was persecuted and sent to a small village in Egypt because he was working against the government and the monarchy. Wanted his children to be educated and sent his daughters to school. Became a doctor and came back to the village to practice medicine and encountered many problems with physical consequences with domestic violence. Was also an author and wrote a controversial book called the *Hidden Face of Eve*. She is unhappy about the type of injustice she sees and its origins and can it be changed, and whether it originates from religion. The book is about the impact women are seen. Discusses female genital cutting practiced in Egypt.
14. **Battle of the Camel:** Named after the camel on which Aisha sat on while exhorting the soldiers to fight against Ali ibn Abi Talib. Aisha played an important role in this battle because she gathered followers and led them into battle against Ali, when the God had ordered the Prophet's wives to remain in their homes.
15. **\*Malak Hifni Nassef SECULAR/SOCIAL CONSERVATIVE:** She was an early feminist writer, advocated focusing on improving women's lives through education. She criticized polygamy and divorce laws and opposed what she saw as critical aping of European customs. She was never inspired by Europeans and never looked up for them as role models, she was in love with her culture.
  - a. Social change in local culture
  - b. Was against unveiling, because women who don't veil are subjected to harassment, it gives them privacy.
  - c. Stick up for veiling for cultural reasons, not a religious argument + she was fed up with men telling women what to do!
  - d. She was secular but less oriented to Europe and also socially constructive.
16. **Khadija bt. Khuwailid:** Muhammad's first wife who was independently wealthy. She is important to Islam because of her importance for Muhammad. She gave her wealth to help him spread his message, as well as her support to him in preaching Islam when he was being persecuted in Mecca. She was already in her fifties, however, when Muhammad received his first revelation, and began to preach, and thus it was Jahilia society and customs, rather than Islamic, that shaped her conduct and defined the possibilities of her life. Her economic independence, her marriage overture, apparently without a male guardian to act as intermediary; her marriage to a man many years younger than herself; and her monogamous

marriage all reflect as some would state the jahilia customs and not Islamic practices that allowed her to do these things.

17. **Mukhannath:** A group of men found in Medina who had no sexual desire. They were permitted to visit and sit with women because of this. Issues revolved around social order, and how jurists categorise who goes into what gender. This caused a change of gender definitions of that time
18. **Qasim Amin:** an Egyptian jurist and one of the founders of the Egyptian national movement, was considered by many as the Arab world's "first feminist" Leila Ahmed discusses him in her book. She suggests that Amin's attempt to discredit the veil as a reason for Egyptian weakness is clearly a Western view. She illustrates how Westerners tend to use the veil as a reason to colonize Islamic nations by correlating the veil with inferiority. In addition, Ahmed points out that Amin's Egyptian woman, would not have control over her own body but instead it would be used to build up the nation. To her, this is hypocrisy because the Egyptian woman would still be the slave of her husband, her family, and her nation.
19. **Saviour Discourse:** Nobody knows this one, sorry.
20. **Al-Akhawat al -Muslimat:** Similar to a feminist movement, fight for women's rights and freedom. Legal change about symbolism, more than anything else. Labiba Ahmed, first head of the Akhwat al- Mulsimat

## ESSAY QUESTIONS:

### Essay Question #1:

**What seems to be the main features of women's lives in pre-Islamic Arabia?**

**What sources are available to historians in order to reconstruct this?**

**Why is the question of what women's lives were like before Islam so important to both historical and confessional Muslim discourses on Islam and gender?**

### Pre-Islamic Era

#### **Features of Pre-islamic women:**

- Women were legally subordinated in the family, the idea to obey the father was codified
- ex.Father could arrange marriage, he could loan his wife and children pay off debts, he could also dedicate his daughter to the goddesses, where they then became a priestess, which they then could enjoy more rights than the typical woman, a life dedicated to religious devotion was used as an escape hatch
- there was obedience owed to fathers and the husbands, Patriarchal family structure
- unequal rights in marriage and divorce: Men could easily divorce women and if she didn't bear children she was forced to return dowry, marriage was not monogamous for Royalty
- **Seclusion and Veiling:**
  - Veiling was for free elite women while the slave women were punished for veiling and forced to work to sustain their livelihood
- **Rights were based on social class:**
  - women were married early unless they were from the upper class, upper class women were told to devote their lives to religion as encouraged by their father as

- an escape hatch (byzantine Era 5th and 6th century)
- veiling was for a small minority, veiling was seen as high class it should that the women were well off enough that they did not have to work for their money and participate in the work force like the women of lower class were prohibited from veiling
- limited access education

### **Sources for Pre-islamic Arabia:**

- Certain verses of the **Quran** talk about the time before Islam, **tafsir to some extent**
- **Poetry** from pre-islamic arabia, **Leila Ahmed also used Khadija and Aisha as examples, Khadija was a wealthy merchant and participated in business during the pre-islamic era and after**
- Issues with these sources:
  - the poetry during that time were mostly about love, therefore its not a great source to understanding women of that time,
  - there also a lot of room for interpretation from people who have not obviously lived during this time

### **Two perspectives that are taken by muslims when describing Pre-islamic Arabia:**

1. **Its a back drop** to Muhammad and his followers, before Muhammed came times were really bad, women were not treated well and the pagans favoured baby boys
2. **romanticizing:** there are texts that state Pre-islamic arabs were generous and that their men fought courageously, presenting solid social values that don't exist in our time, despite having the wrong religion

### **Sources for Historians**

#### **Modern historians often have reconstruct:**

- Leila Ahmed said that before Islam, **Women who were part of Elite tribes participated in Economic and military warfare.**
- The women encouraged their men in battle because there was a lot at stake, often **the losing side would have their women and children held captive and enslaved, bought and sold, forced to be in a relationship although being married**
  - Ex. Hind, who participated in war for the Quraysh against Muhammad and his companions
- Leila Ahmeds sources were bias
  - she stated that Muhammad's **wives were the new religious elite, they lived in the centre of community of life** and who were the daughter of prominent ment which enabled them to play a leading role in that society
  - **we know a lot about them according to Leila, and very little of about the average woman and the slaves at the time**
  - Leila Ahmed also states that jurists talk about the wives of the prophet very selectively

## Essay Question # 2:

**\*\*\*colour coded them based on the parts of the question which is split into there.\*\*\***

What access did some medieval Muslim women have to education? What factors promoted or discouraged such access? What subjects did medieval Muslim female scholars study and teach, and why were such subjects important in the contexts within which they lived? [SHE DID NOT ANSWER THIS PART]

- General idea was that education was a religious obligation on all Muslims, male or female promoted in the Quran. The Quran stated that it is good for everybody and obligatory. It is described in the Quran as an act of worship and should be a life long journey.
- Hadith established that education was an obligation of parents to their off spring.
- Some jurists stated that the type of education women should receive does not need to go beyond what is needed to perform basic obligations.
- Early marriage tended to constrain women's ability to gain knowledge because they now had other responsibilities to look after. This limited them.
- Daughters of scholars had more advantage than others because their daughters tended to marry from other scholarly families.
- Other limits to women's' access to education was the restriction on female mobility and interaction with unrelated men.
- There are renowned women scholars and they are correlated from coming from a certain social class. Usually daughters of scholars themselves.
- Girls were sent to sewing and embroidery schools about the age of nine. It was a way for them to derive some income for themselves in the future. Some girls were taught to read and write at these schools.
- If education was pursued at the age of nine a female teacher was hired to come to the home.
- Girls also attend *kuttab* (school attached to the mosque), and was attended by boys as well. It taught reading and recitation of the Quran.
- A small minority of women became renowned scholars and teachers of hadith and tafsir (interpretation). They were mostly from the 'ulama class (the class of educated men which supplied the state with jurists, theologians, and administrators). Therefore the upper and middle class who intermarried.
- Studied and taught hadith, juridical theology and tafsir.
- Scholarly interaction between men and women did take place, and women were taught by women and men.
  - Examples of such women are Fatima bint 'Abass, who used to preach to women and mixed groups of men and women. She had an extensive knowledge of Hanbali fiqh. She taught at an institution for divorced or widowed women who were trying to get back on their feet. She even impressed the scholar Ibn Taymia.
  - Another is Aisha al-Ba'uniyya, she used to study fiqh, poetry and Sufism. She was authorized by scholars to give legal opinions. This meant she had reached a level of education that her male colleagues felt she could vie her own opinions. She constantly cites the Quran, hadith and Sufi authors in her writings.

### **Essay Question #3**

**\*\*Note to class – I know that, if this question is on the exam, it might seem weird for us to all have the same women contrasted and so, if you don't feel comfortable with that, there are lots of contrasts and comparisons in "The First Feminists" chapter in the textbook. That being said, I think it would just show that we all studied together but it's up to you Happy Studying!\*\***

**Discuss the careers of two twentieth-century Egyptian female activists, placing them within the political and religious contexts of their times, as well as in relation to one another. What stances did they take on issues of women's legal rights and/or social roles? How did their views compare to those of other female activists of their time?**

*Huda Sha'rawi and Malak Hifni Nassef* (if you think you want more information, I got most of the info from pages 179 to 185 in the Ahmed's book)

- Feminists existing around 1923, when Egypt had reported won independence from Britain, while in reality, the British still have absolute control over a lot of matters
- The Constitution was proclaimed in April of 1923, and led to the activism of Sha'rawi, due to the lack of women's suffrage

#### **Huda Sha'rawi SECULAR**

- Lived from 1897 to 1947
- Founded the EFU (Egyptian Feminist Union) in March of 1923 with the main goal in mind of fighting for women's suffrage
- Other than women's suffrage, the specific goals of the EFU to obtain access to education at all levels for women and reform marriage laws, in particular those relating to polygamy and divorce, and setting the minimum age for marriage at sixteen
- Much did not happen with regards to marriage laws, but there was leeway made in the realm of education
- The Egyptian Constitution had declared education a priority, and so in 1925, it became compulsory for all boys and girls to obtain primary education, and there was also a secondary school opened for women
- The late 1920, women began to be admitted to university, though the actual admittance was rather anti-climatic
- In 1933, there were the first set of women graduates from an Egyptian university, though there had already existed graduates from universities of different countries
- Sha'rawi was wealthy, and funded much of the EFU on her own
- The EFU use some funds to send girls to primary school in England as there was a minimal cost to attend, and it was able to give them medical treatment and vocational training in household tasks like sewing
- Sha'rawi's feminism was seen as politically nationalistic – it supported gradual reform toward political emancipation from British control as well as the adoption of Western political institutions and a secularist understanding of the state

- The way she acted and the number of westerners that she associated herself showed that she appreciated and valued Western ways over native ways
- The sources of Sha'rawi's feminism and her personality and motivations are doubtless much more complex and nuanced, and more imponderable in her public presentation of herself, than she chose to formally acknowledge
- Many other feminists who at first had followed in her footsteps, turned away from and did not agree with Sha'rawi's valorization of the West and so sought to form a new feminist path within the terms of the indigenous culture
- Some random facts about her that we learnt in class, that you may find effective in crafting your essay response:
  - Her memoirs have been translated into English
  - Writer and activist
  - Famous, in English language writings, for her unveiling – in the train station in Cairo, she unveils her face
  - She faced there a lot of opposition, not just from political leaders, but also religious ones

***Malak Hifni Nassef* SECULAR/SOCIAL CONSERVATIVE:**

- Lived from 1886 to 1918
- In opposition to Sha'rawi, she was creating a feminism, opposed to Westernization
- Nassef's stance on unveiling (she did not agree with it) was the basis for her feminist approach
- Nassef did not believe that religion dictated anything with regards to being veiled or unveiled, nor did she believe that modesty had anything to do with being veiled or not being veiled
- Reasons as to why she was against unveiling (from Ahmed)
  - Women were accustomed to wearing veils and so why should they be ordered to unveil?
  - Men would order them to unveil, and yet would continue to assault and harass them in the street so why should they?
  - Many who unveiled were upper class and it was a fashion statement – middle and lower class women did not tolerate such ignorance
- Reasons she was against women unveiling in public (from class)
  - She believed it would be socially destructive
  - She believed in custom, and this would be going against custom
  - She points out that women who do not veil, are subject to harassment and social surveillance – this gives women privacy
  - Telling women to unveil would not stop the harassment by men
  - There is no reason for Egyptian women to dress like European women
  - She argues that she is fed up with men telling women what to do (hates that men are talking about veiling being the source of backwardness and telling them to unveil)
- In her writing, Nassef paints men in a bad light, as she does not agree with the fact that men are making all the decisions, in particular those that do not really concern them (i.e. ordering

women to unveil)

- In line with Sha'rawi, Nassef did believe in an increase of education for women, mainly so that they could oppose men (again, she does not have a nice or polite view on men)
- With Nassef, it seems that all comes back to her wish for women to oppose men and their views and their dominance over women
- Nassef was also interested in marriage reform, denouncing the evils of polygamy, men's unrestricted license to divorce their wives, early marriages for girls and the issue of too great a disparity between the ages of spouses
- Nassef was so passionate about opposing polygamy as she herself had been tricked by her father and her husband by entering into a polygamous marriage without knowing it
- Nassef entered into writing due to moral pain as it pained her to see the corruption that existed within society
- She wrote and lectured prolifically, which is why she is known as one of the great female feminists of the twentieth century
- Nassef was also active in the political field, founding and running charitable societies

#### ***Sha'rawi and Nassef together* SIMILARITIES**

- There are no huge differences between their goals
- They both advocated that society enable women to pursue education to the limits of their abilities, and pushed for fundamental reforms in the laws governing marriage
- It is more the way they went about, and the differences in their hard-core beliefs of Westernization and Nationalism that contrasted the two of them