

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate

### Chapter 3: AL IMRAN (The Family of Imran 195)

﴿ فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ دَعَا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِي أَوْ يُنْفِقُ مِّنْ بَعْضِ مَا كَسَبَ فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِن دِيَرِهِمْ وَأُودُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَأُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَأُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ﴾

*“And their Lord responded to them: Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another. So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed - I will surely remove from them their misdeeds, and I will surely admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow as reward from Allah, and Allah has with Him the best reward.”*

The verse was revealed when Rasulallah’s wife Ummu Salamah inquired about the virtues of emigration for women by saying “O Messenger of Allah! I don’t hear any revelation in the Quran about the emigration of women.” She herself was among the first group that emigrated to Abyssinia, and was believed to be the first woman companion who emigrated to Madinah. She must have been eager to learn about the rank and status of emigrant woman in the sight of Allah.

Umm Salamah, may Allah be pleased with her, was the daughter of Abu Umayyah bin Mughirah and Atekah bint Amir; both parents were from the wealthiest and noblest families of Banu Makhzum (Makhzum tribe) of Quraish. She was married to Abu Salamah, the foster brother of Rasulallah and his paternal cousin, the son of his aunt. Abu Salamah is believed to be eleventh companion who embraced Islam in Makkah, and Umm Salamah followed him in his faith becoming the fourth woman who accepted Islam after Khadijah (Rasulallah’s wife), Umm Ayman (his mother’s maid), and Umm Fadl (his uncle Abbas’ wife), may Allah be pleased with them all.

Umm Salamah had narrated 378 traditions (/hadith/) from Rasulallah, second only to Aisha among Rasulallah’s wives who narrated 2210, may Allah be pleased with them all. She was about 84 years old when she passed away; living the longest among the mothers of the faithful (/ummuhat al-mu’minin/). Several verses were revealed to Rasulallah while he was in her room. She was considered as a respected scholar of jurisprudence (/fiqh/); many companions sought her opinion on different issues, including the second caliph Umar, may Allah be pleased with him after Rasulallah’s time. The messenger himself sought counsel of Umm Salamah on different occasions, the most famous of which took place during the treaty of Hudaibiyah when Rasulallah decided to make a peace with Makkans. The stipulations of the treaty were hard for believers to accept, and her advice was effective at a very critical moment in the history of Islam.

Umm Salamah, together with Aisha, committed the whole Quran into memory. She had a keen intelligence and a unique character. She was reported to have seen Gabriel when the archangel visited with Rasulallah in the form of Dihya al-Kalbi, a companion of remarkably beautiful stature. Umm Salamah has also been noted for her love for Rasulallah’s daughter Fatimah, and her children Hassan bin Ali and Hussain bin Ali, may Allah be pleased with them all.

“And that human has only that for which he labors, and his labor will be brought forth to be seen.”  
Quran 53:39-40

A common question raised about the style of the Quran is that it mostly addresses to the men, and the women are left behind. This issue comes up partly because of the lack of proper understanding of Arabic grammar. In a verbal sentence, the verb conjugation follows and agrees with the gender (feminine/masculine) and the number (singular/plural) of the subject. The repetition of the verb in the same sentence for both men and women every time would weaken the matchless beauty of Quran, and would make it unnecessarily lengthy.

We however see that Quran occasionally mentions both genders explicitly while maintaining its inimitable eloquence to confer honor to both genders and to show that, as for being the servants of Allah, they are considered equal. Read: *“Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their modesty and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.”* (33:35) This verse, too, was revealed when a woman (possibly Umm Imara, or Asma bint Umays), or a group of women companions told Rasulullah that only a few verses in Quran were revealed about the good deeds and virtues of women.

In addition, a quick word count shows the large frequency of names used in Quran that are related to women, as another indication of its just treatment of both genders. The word /nisaa’/ (women), for example, occurs 59 times; the name /imraah/ (woman) occurs 26 times; the word /nikah/ (marriage contract) occurs in 23 verses; and the words /zawj-zawjah/ (spouses) occurs in 81 sentences in Quran. Moreover, there are such words as /an-nas/ (the humankind, 241), /al-ins/ (the humankind, 18 times), /al-insan/ (the humankind, 71 times) that intrinsically refer to both genders at the same time.

Finally, it is a grammatical rule to use masculine plural conjugation of the verb when it describes the action of a group of people that includes both genders. When Quran decrees, for example, “O you who believe!” (/ya ayyu hal-lazheena amanoo/), it is addressing to both male and female believers. In the verse 3:195 above, after saying “*whether male or female*” Quran moves on to quote several important virtues such as “*those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed...*” again in masculine form. This immediate example clearly indicates that such use denotes both genders unless there are other contextual evidences suggesting otherwise.

The passage before the verse 3:195 quotes a beautiful prayer of the people of reflection. *“Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding; who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth [saying]: Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.”* (3:190-191) The beautiful prayer reminds us again one more time that the creation is a major proof that presents many evidences for the principles of faith, beginning with the existence and unity of God, and other holy names and attributes of Allah, and following with the belief in resurrection, and life after death, and other principles. According to a tradition when a man questioned Rasulullah about his miracles, he recited this passage (3:190-195) and responded saying “*I have brought this!*”

The prayer continues as follows: *“Our Lord, indeed whoever You admit to the Fire - You have disgraced him, and for the wrongdoers there are no helpers. Our Lord, indeed we have heard a caller calling to faith [saying]: Believe in your Lord, and we have believed. Our Lord, so forgive us our sins and remove from us our misdeeds and cause us to die with the righteous. Our Lord, and grant us what You promised us through Your messengers and do not disgrace us on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, You do not fail in [Your] promise.”* (3:192-194) Ameen.! The verse 3:195 that follows provides an answer to these heart-felt, moving prayers saying *“And their Lord responded to them.”* This divine response suggests that acquiring knowledge, receiving education, reflecting over the creation is not only a virtue of men, but a requirement for all. Finally, the answer is formulated in such a way that is also consistent with the reason of revelation given above.

The verse 3:195 is making a reference to *“the labor of any laborer.”* Here we again see the importance of the good deeds emphasized. Supplication, repentance, and reflection over the existence are all meritorious acts of worship. In addition, however, other personal and financial responsibilities must be observed, and sacrifices must be made. It may turn out that one must go through difficulties in the way of truth because of oppression and persecution. A follower of truth may be forced to emigrate, and be harmed in the path of truth. Enduring such sufferings is also a laudable virtue, and as a sign of faith in action. The faith and the good deeds of both kinds (positive and negative, doing good and enduring evil) are indeed two sides of the same reality. The following verse in contrast with 3:195 lists some (positive) good deeds for both genders: *“The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give /zakah/ and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those - Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.”* (9:71) Incidentally, this verse which is also believed to be revealed upon a question of Umm Salamah.

Another important aspect of the verse 3:195, in connection to its reason of revelation, is that it clarifies misconceptions about the status of women by saying *“any worker among you, whether male or female,”* and further emphasizing that *“you are of one another.”* Indeed, Islam teaches that men and women are equal as being human beings for their creation, and being servants of God for their obedience. Each will receive the full reward based on his or her faith, intention and good deeds. The two genders complement each other, without one of which the other is incomplete. They do issue from one another, without one the other (and thus the human race) will not exist. Read: *“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and (duly observe the rights of) the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.”* (4:1)

Besides asserting the equality as human beings, Islam also maintains that the two genders have natural differences by creation. In certain qualities such as physical strength and endurance man in general is a few steps ahead; and in other qualities such as gentleness and compassion women are a few steps ahead. Such differences, however, do not by themselves comprise a reason for superiority in the sight of Allah. As pointed out, they are complementary to each other, and are required for the human race to exist, succeed and prosper. Islam teaches that the superiority in the sight of Allah is determined only by God consciousness, not by race, gender, wealth, social status, etc. Read: *“O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you*

*peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.” (49:13)*

In the view of these principles, men and women should not rival one another in their natural God given qualities, but should help and support one another in obedience to God, and in the path of righteousness. Read *“And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of his bounty. Indeed Allah is ever, of all things, Knowing.” (4:32)* This is yet another verse that is believed to be revealed about Umm Salamah when she said *“I wish it were prescribed unto us as it is prescribed unto men”* for her desire to do more in the way of Allah such as attending Friday prayers, and other acts of worship required of men.

It should be noted that the claim of absolute equality of men and women in all respects that we hear often in modern times is, in reality, a major injustice. It is harmful than liberating especially for the women; it is certainly going against the nature. This concept is indeed a trick of Satan, the major enemy of human race, devised to ruin the offspring of Adam and Eve. Read: *“Whom Allah has cursed. For he [Satan] had said: I will surely take from among Your servants a specific portion. And I will mislead them, and I will arouse in them [sinful] desires, and I will command them so they will slit the ears of cattle, and I will command them so they will change the creation of Allah.. And whoever takes Satan as an ally instead of Allah has certainly sustained a clear loss.” (4:118-119)* It was a /jahiliyyah/ (pre-Islamic era) custom to cut the ear of certain animals and make it forbidden (/haram/) for themselves by their own whims which had no basis in religion. They also consecrated sacrifice animals for idols and marked them by splitting their ears. That is what Quran is forbidding in this verse. The reference to *“changing the creation of Allah”* here is interpreted primarily as changing the roles of men and women, among other Satanic aberrances and deviations which will lead to a great loss. God forbid!

We conclude by noting that Rasulullah used to recite the last ten verses of this chapter, Al Imran (3:190-200) that includes the beautiful prayer quoted above every night when he woke up for his night prayer.

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May Allah guide us and keep us on His straight path, and protect us from all evil ways and evil deeds; and favor us with certainty of faith and sincerity of worship. May peace and blessings of Allah be upon His messenger, his pure family and companions, and his noble brothers in the office of messengership.