

A photograph of a large, multi-story university building with a central entrance and many windows. The building is surrounded by greenery and a paved area. The text "UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN" is visible on the building's facade.

**SHAYKH ADAM
ABDULLAHI AL-ILORY**

in the

**Tableau *of*
Immortality**

Volume II

Edited by:

Razaq 'D. Abubakre

Published by:

The Nigerian Center for Arabic Research

P.O. Box 5701

Post Code: 11432

Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Tel: +9662585075

© University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria

First Published 2012

All rights reserved

ISBN: 978-977-493-109-3

10

AN ASSESSMENT OF FEMINISM IN THE WORKS OF SHAYKH ADAM ABDULLAH AL-ILORY

R. Ibrahim Adebayo

Introduction

Different cultures and civilizations perceived women from different perspectives. Most of these perceptions about them were of negative side; perhaps the favourable one in their description is seeing them as mere instruments of pleasure and enjoyment to men. This explains why women were seen drinking excessively for them to be able to carry out their entertainment responsibility to the visitors of the king in the Egyptian civilization. In some other civilizations like those of Rome and Greece, women were considered a source of human misfortune and unhappiness, and so were of no value to human race other than for procreation.¹ They were thus denied their right to inherit their fathers and husbands; instead, they could be inherited like a chattel by the heirs of the husband. The story was the same among the Hindus where women remained subservient in every stage of their life. In Judaism, woman was held responsible for the sin committed by man and for this; she was made to suffer all sorts of degradation. In the pre-Arabian society, the case was even worse than others, as they went to the extent of burying their daughters alive and receiving the news of their wives' giving birth to female children with contempt (Qur'an 16: 58-59).

The condition of women did not fare better in Europe, especially during the periods of serfdom and feudalism. The industrial revolution which took place in Europe forced women and children to go and work in factories and this development completely ruined the family system because women left their natural primary assignment and focussed on working outside their homes day and night. Their husbands equally left their homes for cities where "everybody lived a solitary life and where nobody was interested in his neighbours nor was anyone in a mood to support others but worked and earned to support his own self."²

Islam is seen as a religion that has come to liberate the woman by restoring to her rights in all its ramifications, not only by giving her same rights that her male counterpart has, but also by liberating her from the shackle of men chauvinism. However, some of the practices put in place by Muslims have been seen as a gross injustice to her, and so the serious need to overview such practices from the real Islamic view. This explains the rise of feminist movements in some Muslim countries. The case of Nigerian Muslim women is not an exception, as they too are suffering some injustice through some cultural and religious practices. Shaykh Adam Al-Ilory's in

his works discussed extensively some women-related issues, which shall be discussed in this paper. The paper highlights some of these issues and compares them with the reality in the Nigerian Muslim societies and other Muslim reformers' views.

Feminist Movements in the Muslim World

The issue of feminism has generated a lot of debate among Muslim scholars. While some scholars believe there is nothing like Islamic feminism, as Islam has already assigned to women their position, which to some extent is subservient to men, to other scholars, Islam firmly upholds the dignity of women and makes no discrimination between the two sexes. Indeed, an exploration into the Qur'an will convince one that the Qur'an is an embodiment of feminism and the Prophet an ardent believer in feminism who had come to liberate women from the bondage of men chauvinism. However, the antagonists of feminism could be appreciated in the way and manner the process was pursued by some Muslim rulers and reformers, which took much after the Western style of life.

The Muslim world was said to have become acquainted with feminist movement consequent upon some Muslim rulers' interaction with the Western world. This is true of Egypt where the reconstruction of the Egyptian educational system on the French model by Muhammad Ali Pasha made the ruling family to be educated in European universities.³ His successor, Khedive Ismail Pasha, who ruled between 1863 and 1879, pursued the project of feminism to the extent of encouraging European type of uniform and European syllabi in thousands of schools established by him. He also founded the first school for Muslim girls and encouraged the unveiling of women.⁴ Such Muslim reformers as Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, Qasim Amin and Malak Hifni Nasif equally wrote extensively on women-related issues and this influenced the thoughts of Muslim rulers on feminism. The *Tahrir al-Mar'at* (Woman's Freedom) and *Al-Mar'at al-Jadidah* (Modern Woman) of Qasim Amin centered among others on the discourse on purdah, participation of women in different walks of life, polygamy and divorce from the Western standpoint. The teachings of Qasim on feminism and modernism further aroused the feelings of Egyptian women to demand more freedoms and rights. The two books of Qasim were seen by many orthodox scholars as an aberration of Islamic value and so were seriously criticised and condemned. That notwithstanding, his lovers hailed him as 'the hero of the feminist awakening and its founder.'⁵

One of the women who were influenced by Qasim's writings was Malak Hifni Nasif, the daughter of Hifni Bey Nasif. She became radical in her approach that she did not hesitate to give public addresses on the plight of women in Egypt. Some articles and addresses presented by her included:

- i. A View of Marriage – Woman's Complaints against it
- ii. The Use or Disuse of the Veil
- iii. Our Schools and Our Young Women
- iv. The Education of Girls in Home and School
- v. Marriage
- vi. Polygamy
- vii. The Marriage Age
- viii. Painting of the Face.

To her, there was nothing wrong in educating women, pointing to their ability in horsemanship, war and politics. She agitated for engaging women in some useful form of employment and advocated their right to engage in law, medicine and other professions.⁶

The establishment of the Egyptian University in 1909 further accelerated the speed of feminism in Egypt. There, special lectures were organised for women lecturers, while highly placed women were actively involved in feminist activities, with the wearing of European dress and unveiling becoming prominent amongst them. This influenced many other women to join in the practice. The effect of this is aptly put by Doi when he writes:

Walking in the streets of many cities in Egypt, one feels that one is in Europe. Women with short skirts and tight Western dresses are to be seen everywhere and night-clubs and dance halls can be seen in most streets. There is no prohibition on wine-drinking. The "belly dance" is in many ways an innovation in Egypt. All this, unfortunately, is endorsed even by some of the 'ulama' of Al-Azhar, the ancient seat of Islamic learning in Cairo.⁷

In addition to this, many Muslim students from Turkey, Syria and other Muslim countries were sent to different European universities to study, and this consequently accelerated the feminist movement in the Muslim world. In Turkey, the Tanzimat Movement initiated some reforms in the name of modernism. Kamal Ataturk however downplayed Islamic moral value and culture by urging women to throw off the veil and take part in national affairs. In Iran, the Baha'i movement of Muhammad Ali Bab was said to have started feminist movement in the land. Tahira, who first attempted to put into practice the alien practice of throwing off the veil, putting on a European dress and addressing large gatherings of men in public meeting all in the name of feminism, was imprisoned and later put to death in August 1852.⁸ Later, Sadigeh Khanum Daulatabade and Khanum Azamodeh continued to agitate for the promotion of female education in

Iran. Later, in 1925, the first Iranian woman was sent to Paris by the Foreign Minister to be educated there.⁹

It should be noted that in Saudi Arabia where segregation of men and women in public places is enforced and women have their own exclusive schools, universities, charitable organizations, hospitals, restaurants and government offices, the country has religious police which enforce public moral behaviour and are supported by the revivalist *Sahwa* movement.¹⁰ Even with this, some Saudi intellectuals continued to criticize the conservative force in the land, particularly the Wahhabis, and this led to the gradual reduction of various restrictions on women. In 2002 for instance, women were allowed to apply for an ID card and in 2007, they were permitted to study law. Instances of free mixture of males and females were equally noticed at exhibitions and book fairs. Also, the administration of Prince 'Abdullah brought some reforms to Saudi-Arabia since August 2005 when he became the king. The opening of the King Abdallah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) was seen as a symbol of reform, as the University accepted free mixture of men and women. The Ministry of Education also promoted sports for girls at schools, while women are allowed to drive cars.¹¹

The above is a resume of feminist activities in some Muslim countries, which to a large extent take much after that of the Western world. However, one needs to mention that Islam has come to restore woman her honour and dignity. It apportions to her, her rights as a child, wife, mother and widow. These rights have been seen by some as being curtailed by some practices, which to them do not go down well for women dignity. Some Muslim reformers therefore joined the train of feminism by condemning such practices among Muslims. In Nigeria, Shaykh Uthman ibn Fudi, the leader of the 1804 Jihad, had written extensively on the socio-economic status of women in the pre-jihad Hausa society, and as well challenged the dominance of men over women.¹² In the south-western Nigeria, Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilory equally demonstrated his encyclopaedic erudition by delving into women-related issues like the practice of *purdah*, polygyny, education and other issues of such nature. This paper is therefore out to assess his stand on these practices as discussed by the Shaykh within the context of the Nigerian situation.

Shaykh Adam 'Abdullah al-Ilory: His Short Biographical Background

Shaykh Adam ibn Abdul-Baqi ibn Habibullah ibn Abdullah popularly called al-Ilory was born in 1917 in Wasa near Djougou in the then Dahomey now Republic of Benin. His father was an itinerant preacher who hailed from Omoda area in the Balogun Ajikobi Ward of Ilorin. His itinerancy led him to the Northern part of Dahomey where the Wasa chief

implored him to pray Allah for the eradication of small-pox epidemic that was bedevilling the area. The efficacy of his prayer coupled with his vast knowledge impressed the chief, who made him the Imam of his town. The chief as well offered him his daughter to marry.¹³ One of the products of the marriage was Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilory.

Shaykh Al-Ilory started his early Qur'anic education from his father in Wasa. He later studied under different Mallams while sojourning at Ibadan, Lagos and Kano. He later went to Cairo in 1946 where he wonderfully showcased his exceptional brilliance at Al-Azhar University and was awarded the institution's certificate in Arabic and Islamic Studies. He also travelled far and wide to different places and this afforded him the opportunity of meeting some Muslim scholars of international repute.

Shaykh Al-Ilory was a great teacher. His Markaz at Agege has produced several great scholars of repute who have held and are still holding important posts in their places of work.¹⁴ Apart from being a teacher, the Shaykh was an Imam of his central mosque located within the premises of his Markaz in Agege. He was an eloquent preacher and exegete whose *tafsir* class used to be flocked by a large audience drawn from different parts of the country. Upon all, he was a prolific writer whose books covered a wide range of specialties like Islamic jurisprudence, logic, *Tafsir*, philosophy, Grammar, history, poetry and other topical issues that touch virtually all aspects of human endeavours. These books were taught to his students in the *Markaz* and other institutions in Nigeria and the West African sub-region.¹⁵ Indeed, his works were so popular, educative and academic that quite a good number of doctoral theses, dissertations, long essays and academic articles had been and are still being written on them by different scholars. Shaykh Al-Ilory breathed his last at Princess Grace Hospital in London on 3rd May 1992.

An Assessment of the Shaykh's View on Polygyny

In his *Al-Islam alyawm wa ghadan fi Naijiriya*, Shaykh Adam observed that women constitute more than half of the total world population, and this explains why it is *sunnatic* for a man to marry more than one wife. He then went down memory lane to address the status of women in some cultures and civilizations where women were seen as mere chattels and objects of enjoyment to the extent that there was no limitation on the number of wives married by men. Some married as many as ten women, while some monarchs had more than a hundred wives, all in the service of their husbands.¹⁶ In Islam, however, a man is permitted to marry more than one wife but should not exceed four and with the conditions that he should be capable physically, and materially to sustain and maintain the wives, and also with the ability to maintain justice among them.¹⁷

Shaykh Al-Ilory further identified why polygyny is allowed in Islam. The martyrdom of men and other engagements which claimed men's lives and rendered women widows led to women's population outnumbering that of men. In such a situation, polygyny came to rescue women who needed husbands to cater for their affairs.¹⁸ To substantiate his stand, he made reference to the following statements of Sayyid Qutb:

This is a matter of numbers (and) not a matter of theories. If the population of prospective wives does not outnumber that of men, it will be difficult for a man to marry more than one wife, even if he wishes to do so. But with the present, women population, we are left with these options, either a man be allowed to marry only one wife and other women be left without getting husband, child or family of their own; or a man be allowed to marry just a woman legally and have affair with others illegally, hence there are illegitimate children in the society; or men be allowed to marry more than one wife so that everything will be balanced.¹⁹

To the antagonists of polygyny, Shaykh Al-Ilory posed the following questions:

Let us ask the supporters of monogamy and enemies of polygyny this vital question: Has any man failed to get a virgin or divorcee as a wife because some men have more than one wife? Therefore, why the hue and cry on a polygynous man? Won't they pity a good number of women who are unable to get married?²⁰

Coming down to Yorubaland, Shaykh Al-Ilory expressed dismay at the gross misinterpretation of the Qur'anic *ayat* on polygyny, especially as being practised in Ibadan and Abeokuta where some Muslims marry more than the approved number of four with the proof that the Prophet was survived by nine wives. Such people take this stand by interpreting the verse: "marry what pleases you among women two and three and four," to mean marrying them to a total number of nine. Shaykh Al-Ilory attributed this interpretation to what he called their little understanding of Arabic language, more so that it is illogical to marry two wives at the same time, and then marry another set of three and four at the same time.²¹

Still on polygyny, Shaykh Al-Ilory rejected the argument of marrying more than four wives on the basis of 'retiring' a wife due to old

age and replacing her with another without divorcing the aged one, just as the Prophet did with Saudat when he spent her allotted nights with Aishah and yet kept Saudat in his house. He (the Shaykh) submitted that such a privilege was given to the Prophet alone and not for the rest of the believers (Qur'an 33:50). He then referred to an *Hadith* of the Prophet where a man who embraced Islam but had ten wives was ordered by the Prophet to choose only four among them and divorce the rest. On a final analysis, Shaykh Al-Ilory observed that quite a good number of Muslims in Abeokuta had adjusted themselves to the Islamic code of polygyny since 1944, while Muslim scholars in Ibadan are still battling with the practice and preaching seriously against it.²²

In the first instance, the view of Shaykh Al-Ilory on polygyny and reasons advanced for it are commendable. From all indications, polygyny seems to be natural and allowed in many cultures and civilizations. The prohibition of unlimited polygyny by Islam is however a welcome development. In addition, the practice helps in solving the problem of women overpopulation when compared to that of men. Arising from men's involvement in warfare, it becomes inevitable that a large number of widows and girls whose fiancés and husbands have been killed would be left without having any man to take care of them. For instance, thousands of women suffered the worst tribulations and trials of labour consequent upon the death of tens of millions of Europeans and Americans who fell victim of the first Great War in the area.²³ This incidence forced women to go out and take the place of men in factories at the expense of their moral temperament and feminine nature. Women therefore had to work tirelessly in the factory to satisfy their employers, while at the same time needed to satisfy their sexual lust which was difficult in view of the low number of men arising from the war. The prevailing religion in Europe at that time did not also help the situation, as it frowned at the practice of polygyny which could have saved them from this situation.²⁴

The reason advanced for polygyny in Islam by Shaykh Al-Ilory is equally shared by Sayyid Qutb who sees instances of the population of righteous marriageable women outnumbering that of men as a necessity for its practice.²⁵ The view of the Shaykh on polygyny seems to have concurred also with that of Muhammad Qutb who also sees polygyny as a saving ground and a social necessity which saves the society from sexual anarchy that can naturally follow the decimation of a large number of men with a corresponding rise in the number of women in society who have no male bread-winners.²⁶ In the same vein, just as Shaykh Al-Ilory observed the abuse of polygyny among the Yoruba people, Doi also sees its abuse by some Muslims in some parts of the world. With particular reference to the African society, he writes:

of them remain day and night in a state of impurity, they neither purify themselves nor observe *Salat*.³¹

Shaykh Al-Ilory further made reference to the dialogue between Shaykh Uthman ibn Fudi who allowed women to attend his public sermon and its objection by Shaykh Mustafa al-Barnawi on the basis of mixture of the opposite sex at such occasion. He also quoted the reaction of Shaykh Uthman ibn Fudi to the allegation of free mixture of people of opposite sex denying such an instance and emphasising gender equality in terms of education and that priority should be given to women education because, naturally, children easily learn much through interactions with their parents, especially mothers. To conclude this aspect, Shaykh Al-Ilory mentioned some knowledgeable Muslim women in Nigeria ever before and soon after Shaykh ibn Fudi. Such included Ummu Hani bint Muhammad al-Abdusi, Ruqayah the grandmother of ibn Fudi and Aisha Bakshani from Katsina.³²

A critical examination of the condition of Muslims' reaction to the acquisition of the Western type of education shows that Muslims are lagging behind not only in the Western type of education, but also in Islamic education. Some ignorantly believed that women education is a waste, as they would end up in the kitchen. The practice of *kulle* (*purdah*) in the Northern part of Nigeria equally contributed to low rate of education amongst women in the area. This explains why Shaykh Ibn Fodio during his lifetime preached vehemently against the attitude of some Muslim scholars who did not take the education of women serious. He therefore allowed women to attend his lecture for the purpose of learning.³³ Ad-Darsh is also of the view that women used to be in the mosque of the Prophet along with the men and that the prophet decided to meet them privately later upon their complaint of difficulty in gaining private audience with him.³⁴

One may wonder why Shaykh Al-Ilory consistently made references to the Northern Muslims in respect of denial of girl-child education. His observation was right in view of the fact that a number of scholars have equally observed this lapse in the area. As far back as the time of Uthman ibn Fudi, he had observed this lapse and so declared in his *Nurul-Alhab* cited by Doi that:

One of those impious practices is that most of the 'Ulama leave their wives and daughters neglected like animals without teaching them what God enjoins on them regarding their articles of faith, their ablution, their prayers and other things which God commands they should be taught. Among these are the things permitted to them in their business transactions and the

like.....This is a grievous error and a forbidden innovation

They treat their wives and daughters like household utensils which are used until they are broken and thrown into the rubbish heap. Alas! How can they abandon their wives and daughters in the perpetual darkness of ignorance while they daily impart their knowledge to their students. This is nothing but error because they are instructing their students in this manner out of sheer ego and hypocrisy.³⁵

Doi attributed the attitude of child marriage which was in vogue in Northern Nigeria as a major reason for not considering girl-child education so important.³⁶ In the same vein, Opeloye made a comparative analysis of three northern and two south-western states in Nigeria in respect of male and female teachers in the primary schools in the states. The states were Kano, Bornu, and Zamfara States in the north, and Lagos and Osun states in the south-west of Nigeria. In his findings, he found out that the number of female teachers in Osun and Lagos States doubled the number of male teachers unlike the situation in the Northern states. He therefore attributed this to practice of child marriage in the north which resulted in mass withdrawal of girls of school age from schools at their tender age.³⁷

One needs to observe that some Muslim scholars are pessimistic of women education particularly the Western education system for various reasons. A summary of these reasons is given by Salawu in the following excerpt with particular reference to Sokoto State:

A fear that the western type of schools with their co-educational system fosters moral laxity or moral corruption, undermines the sanctity of the home, and is inadequate in the upbringing of young girls could be another factor hindering the Muslim women's education in this state. Muslim parents believed that co-educational institutions gave room for free intermingling of boys and girls and this normally fosters moral laxity especially at the age of puberty. There is also the fear that educated women make bad wives and the danger that the home will be neglected if a married woman with children spends most of her time outside the home working and with no responsible person at home to look after the

children; the health, education and manners of the children may suffer.³⁸

The above view of Salawu is equally shared by Nasira who identifies indiscriminate mixing of boys and girls at school; mode of dressing approved by the school; the school syllabus; the life-style after graduation; the behavioural patterns of many products of western education schools; their disregard for certain provisions of the Shari'ah and their post-marital economic activities as some of the reasons why traditional 'ulama' are apprehensive of Muslim female education in Nigeria.³⁹ In conclusion, the observation of Shaykh Al-Ilory on the backwardness of Northern Muslim women in acquisition of education is obvious. His discussion on the practice of purdah by women in the area is seen as a major reason for the backwardness. One however feels he should proffer solutions to other cogs in the wheel of their acquisition of knowledge as observed by some other scholars.

As a matter of fact, denying Muslim women their right to education may spell doom for the *Ummah* in Nigeria. There is evidence that Muslim women are not adequately represented in virtually all spheres of life in the nation, mainly because of their poor educational background. A great service will be done to the Muslim *Ummah* in Nigeria if we could boast of female professionals in some fields, particularly in the medical profession. This will check the unfortunate experience of male doctors examining female patients in our hospitals. Indeed, it will be preferable for a lady to unveil her face for the purpose of acquiring knowledge than for her to veil her face and consequently expose her private part to a male doctor for medical reasons, a situation which could have been averted should there be enough Muslim female professionals in that field. Girl-child education therefore becomes a collective obligation (*Fard kifayah*) for the purpose of producing the needed professional personnel to cater for the need of the society.⁴⁰ That notwithstanding, Ad-Darshi cautions Muslims against the dogmatic imitation of foreign cultures and the need to be selective in the type and nature of education Muslim girls should be exposed to, so that their primary responsibility might not be jeopardised. He therefore advises:

For the future happiness and stability of the Muslim family, the question of selectivity is an essential question which has to be dealt with from a practical, as well as a decency, point of view. As Muslims we should not lose sight of the basic duty of a Muslim woman. She is a mother first, and only then does her profession or whatever come into the picture. Her success will be measured by her success in bringing up

stable, integral, happy and morally-sound generations. Any achievement in addition to that is a bonus. You cannot claim a bonus when you haven't had your basic 'wage'.⁴¹

Shaykh Al-Ilory's View on Child Marriage

Shaykh Al-Ilory strongly felt that one of the stumbling blocks for girl-child education among Muslims is the belief of some people that as soon as a girl attains the age of puberty, her parents or *waliyy* should hasten to give her out in marriage. This practice, according to the Shaykh, was responsible for the fewer number of Muslim women intellectuals in the Northern part of Nigeria than it is in the western part. Shaykh Al-Ilory did not see anything Islamic in the practice of some Muslims who gave out their daughters in marriage without their conscience while at times, such daughters did not even know their prospective grooms. He equally identified the aftermath of such a marriage that rather than bringing happiness to the couple, it turned into hostility and hatred between them.⁴²

Making particular reference to Northern Nigeria by Shaykh Al-Ilory on issue of child marriage is confirmed by Abdulhamid who also marvelled at the high rate of early marriage in states like Kebbi, Sokoto, Kano, Borno and Adamawa, to mention but a few. On a sad note, she narrated the ordeal of one Hauwa Abubaker in Bena village in Zuru Local Government Area of Sokoto State thus:

In a sad and shocking development, Hauwa Abubaker had her legs hacked off by her husband for resisting a marriage in which she had no say. She died of gangrene at the Sokoto Teaching Hospital. Her family was not interested in seeking redress in court as they saw the incident as ordained. The report states that Hauwa was only twelve years old while the husband was 40 years. Her marriage had been arranged since she was nine. Her father confessed that she had always opposed the marriage, but he had forcefully taken her to Shehu Kirawa's house as the cattle rearer who had been of tremendous material assistance to the family.⁴³

The stand of Shaykh Al-Ilory on early marriage could be considered as being contrary to the stands of the four Imams of the Sunni school who agreed that minors could be contracted into marriage by their guardian. They based their argument on the marriage of Aisha to the Prophet. Apart from

this, the fear of sexual immorality might be responsible for marrying out the minors at the expense of their education, as greater evil will be prevented than leaving them unmarried. That notwithstanding, some jurists argue against the marriage of minors on the ground that there is no necessity like fulfilment of natural passion and lawful procreation to which the minor is incapable.⁴⁴

In our own personal opinion, one wishes to share the same opinion with that of the Shaykh on the need to pursue education by Muslim women rather than to rush into marriage. Experience has shown that those who rushed into marriage at their tender age consequently rushed out of it and so became destitute and nuisance to the general public. Apart from the financial burden attached to marriage, such girls lack adequate experience and education to cope with the rigors and challenges of marriage. In addition to this, it has been medically proved that the marriage of minors is susceptible to health complications like pregnancy induced hypertension, congenital abnormality, miscarriage, premature labour, labour inducement, premature rupture of membranes, abstracted labour, low weight of babies, pre-eclampsia, eclampsia and obstructed labour among others.⁴⁵ It is therefore better to allow the girl child to be physically and psychologically ready to cope with the demands of marriage and procreation before they are married off.

Women's Attendance of Mosque: Shaykh Al-Ilory's View

One of the controversial issues on women in Islam is their permissibility or otherwise of attending mosques to observe obligatory prayers. To start with, the Shaykh delved into the situation of Muslims in Lagos, Abeokuta, Ijebu-Ode and Ibadan, where there existed different schools of thought and religions which Muslims had to contest and compete with. In that wise, he did not see anything wrong in the concession of Muslim jurists that Muslim women be allowed to attend mosques for their five daily canonical prayers, the Friday prayer and the two 'id prayers. His reason for this is that Muslim women kept on asking the reason for their denial of attending mosques whereas Christian women and their children were seen on Sundays flocking their churches and places of worship. In addition, there was no sense in denying Muslim women from attending mosques, whereas such women were seen competing with men and rubbing shoulders with men at markets and other social endeavours. This deprivation therefore led to serious query from the womenfolk to know why Islam had denied them this important religious opportunity.

To drive home his point that there was no religious discrimination between men and women, Shaykh Al-Ilory made reference to some Qur'anic verses.⁴⁶ On the basis of this, he concluded that based on these verses,

Muslim scholars in Lagos in 1947 came to the conclusion that women be allowed to come to mosques to observe their daily prayers, and Friday prayer after ensuring that special places were reserved for them in the mosque for that purpose.⁴³ To arrive at this conclusion, he cited some *ahadith*, among which are those reported by Ibn Umar and Umm Hani, that the Prophet (S.A.W) said: "Do not prevent women from attending the mosque;" and "I did not memorise Surat Qaf except from the Apostle of the Prophet (S.A.W) with which he used to deliver sermon on the pulpit on Friday," respectively.⁴⁴ He further stressed that the Prophet did not in any way or any time deny women of attending mosques for daily obligatory, Friday and 'Id prayers, and so would be outrageous for any jurist to abrogate the Prophetic sayings with his own personal view. With particular reference to a saying attributed to Aishah, the wife of the Prophet (S.A.W), that she said: "Should the prophet be alive, he would have deprived women of attending mosque", the Shaykh made reference to *Subul as-Salam* which submitted that the saying did not translate to making their attendance of mosque *haram*, nor abrogate the Prophetic statement which approved it; as it was not for Aishah to declare *haram* what the Prophet had approved.

In his characteristic manner, Shaykh Al-Ilory was able to come up with convincing evidence to maintain his stand on the need for women to attend mosque for prayers. One wonders why women should be denied this opportunity in a situation where they have series of other opportunities to move out. In Nigeria particularly in the South-western Nigeria, virtually every mosque in urban centres has weekly Sunday Asalat programme organised by NASFAT, Quareeb and numerous other Asalat groups, being attended mostly by women. If Muslim women are not denied this right, why then should they be denied of going to pray at mosques?

Apart from the above, experience has shown that many Muslim women do not know the rudiments of performing *salat*. They thus perform it haphazardly alone in their rooms, while many will not even perform it at all. If such women are allowed to go to mosques, they would have the benefit of saying the prayers congregationally, and they would learn more through constant practice at the mosque.

Not this alone, one has seen instances where many women hide under the pretext that Islam does not allow them to pray in mosques, and so decide not to go to the nearby mosque close to their offices or places of work and so suspend their *salat* till when they eventually get home at night merging their prayers together.

Shaykh Al-Ilory on the use of *Hijab/Niqab*

One of the controversial issues discussed by Shaykh Al-Ilory is the use of *hijab* by Muslim women. To the Shaykh, there was no controversy on

the stand of Islam on women lowering their gaze. Muslim women not going out like those of the *jahiliyyah* period, that Muslim women should not expose their adornment to men and that they should guard their chastity. However, doing this under the term *hijab* has remained controversial among scholars. In the view of the Shaykh, three modes of *hijab* could be identified. The first is the wearing of *Niqab*, *Niqā'* or *khimar*. To him the use of veil predated Islam, as the wives of the prophets of Israel used to put it on. He particularly mentioned Prophet Yusuf as a man who used to wear a veil to prevent women from being disturbed by his excessive handsomeness. In addition to this, the Shaykh believed that wearing of *Niqab* was part of the Arab culture being in vogue before the advent of Islam in the land. To drive home the point, he cited a poetical verse of Nabighat ad-Dhubyani, a prominent pre-Islamic poet who described the mood of the wife of Nu'man thus:

The veil fell down but she was not pleased She
therefore picked it up and covered her face with
the hand.⁴⁹

With the above poetical line, Shaykh Al-Ilory concluded that covering face with veil was not part of Islamic teaching, as it was neither mentioned in the Qur'an nor *hadith*, but a prevailing culture of the Arabs before Islam which Islam neither condemned nor enjoined. He referred to the year of the conquest of Makkah when women flocked the Prophet to make oath of allegiance and among them was Hind the wife of Abu Sufyan who appeared in veil and through several questions she posed to the Prophet, he was able to recognise her as the wife of Abu Sufyan.⁵⁰

The second mode of veiling is the lowering of gaze by women, not displaying their ornaments or exposing their body except their faces and the palms of the two hands. This type of veil is contained in some Qur'anic verses cited by the Shaykh.⁵¹ To buttress this further, several *ahadith* were cited by him. Of particular reference is an *hadith* where the Prophet informed Asma bint Abubakr, the wife of Zubayr that a woman who had reached the stage of menstruation should not expose her body except the face and the palms of the two hands was cited by the Shaykh.⁵² He further expatiated on different meanings given to the word *jalbab* by different scholars.

The third nature of *hijab* is complete veiling, which, to the Shaykh, was exclusively meant for the wives of the Prophet. Two characteristics of this type of veil were identified, namely:

- i. Concealment of women in their homes, as contained in the following Qur'anic passage:

O consorts of the Prophet! You are not like any of the (other) women. If you fear (Allah), do not be too complaisant in speech, lest one in whose heart is a disease should be moved with desire; but you speak a speech (that is) just. And say

quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display, like that of the former times of ignorance..... Allah only wishes to remove all abomination from you, members of the family, and make you pure and spotless (Q. 33: 32-33).

- ii. Avoidance of men from entering the abode of the Prophet's wives, as contained in the following Qur'anic verse:

O you who believe! Enter not the Prophet's houses, until permission is granted to you for a meal.... And when you ask (his ladies) for anything you want, ask them from before a screen, that makes for greater purity for your hearts and for theirs. Nor is it right for you that you should annoy Allah's messenger, or that you should marry his widows after him at any time. Truly, such a thing is in Allah's sight an enormity (Q. 33; 53).

To conclude his argument therefore, the Shaykh opined that veiling of women was not a demonstration of piety or religiosity by those who put it on, but a means of curbing occurrence of adultery. To him, an effective means of checking adultery was to block instances of loneliness between a man and an unauthorised woman in secluded places, which could neither be attained by mere allowing women to go out only at night, preventing them from going to market, nor from attending mosques, as being practised in Hausaland.⁵³

Making particular reference to Hausaland on the practice of purdah by the Shaykh may be seen as being one-sided. This is because he was silent on the practice by the Bamidele Movement in Yorubaland which the Shaykh could not claim he was not aware of. The practice did not escape the awareness of Doi who observed that the Movement imposed purdah including the covering of face on every wife of a Muslim while daughters of members above the age of twelve must not go out of their parents' house without veiling themselves.⁵⁴

The issue of *hijab* has remained highly controversial among Muslim scholars. The bone of contention among them has been the meaning of some terminologies attached to it, namely the nature of *jalbab*, who should use it, how should it be used and why should it be used; and the concept of *awrah*, its extent – does it involve face and hands of women? Are feet of women part of *awrah* to be covered? Should the voice of a woman be considered part of *awrah*? Whatever the case may be, the use of *hijab* is not exclusively restricted to Muslim women. There are ample evidences in the Holy Bible that women are enjoined to cover their heads and that any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled dishonours her head and that it is better for a woman to shave her head than for her to leave it uncovered (Corinthians 11: 3-13). Orthodox Jewish women and Hindu women in

traditional societies also cover their heads when attending their temples. However, what Solihu refers to as *hijabphobia* first started in Europe but later spread to other countries. The hatred for *hijab* made them see it as symbol of backwardness even amongst some secular Muslim countries. Reza Shah of Iran therefore outlawed the wearing of veil in 1936, and women were encouraged to dress like Western women, while those who insisted on wearing veil were prosecuted or rather publicly disgraced by tearing off the veil from their heads.³⁵ He equally cited the case of an American woman of Turkish descent, Kavakci/Kawakji who was expelled from the Turkish Grand National Assembly and got her citizenship revoked for appearing in *hijab* during her swearing in ceremony in 2004.³⁶

It needs to be mentioned at this juncture that there have been several attacks on the usage of *niqāb* in some tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The case was so bad that a medical female student preferred losing her studentship at Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife to unveiling herself. There were crises in some secondary schools in Oyo State consequent upon the denial of female Muslim students of using *hijab*. Of recent, some schools had to be under lock and key in Iwo, a town in Osun State, in reaction to the insistence of some female Muslim students on using *hijab* to school and the denial of that by the school authorities.

We observe that the stand of Shaykh Al-Ilory on the use of *niqāb* is against the view of Qaradawi who considers it unfair to accuse a *niqāb*-wearing woman of "religious extremism." To him, it is natural to see differences in matters of such nature, where some followed the minimum requirements while others followed the maximum ones. So, it is not unnatural that some would follow the jurists who consider *niqāb* obligatory in emulation of the Prophet's wives.³⁷ In our own view, it will be mischievous to condemn the use of *hijāb* by Muslim women; after all, some Catholic sisters do wear similar type of dress without any molestation from any quarters. One does not see any sense of justice in a society which sees nothing wrong in female students moving about on campuses half-naked in all sorts of short skirts and tight fittings in the name of freedom of movement or human rights; yet raises an eyebrow whenever a female student decides to cover herself from head to foot. The issue of *niqāb* goes beyond whether it is Islamic or not; the fact is that it has been recognised as an Islamic mode of dress and it serves a positive purpose of checking the menace of adultery that could arise from gazing the opposite sex.³⁸ In the same vein, it will be short-sighted of those who practice it to look down on those who don't as *kufār*, because Allah judges not by mere physical appearance, but by intentions and actions.

Shaykh Al-Ilory and Woman Prophethood

The stand of Shaykh Al-Ilory on whether a woman could be a prophet or not, could not be precisely said. However, one seems to believe that he was in support of the fact that women could attain the status of prophethood. Although he acknowledged that majority of philosophers, theologians and scholars denied women from being prophet in view of a Qur'anic verse that says: "And before you, We sent none but men, to whom We granted inspiration...." (Q. 16: 43); he intensively made reference to Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi who distinguished between *risālah* (messengership) of women and their *nubuwah* (prophethood). He therefore upheld that prophethood involved receiving *wahy* (revelation) from Allah and in that case the Qur'an revealed how Allah sent His angel to a number of women, as Allah sent to other prophets and messengers who were men. Such women mentioned by Ibn Hazm were Sarah the mother of Is-haq, the mother of Musa, and Maryam mother of Isa.⁶⁰ In addition to these three women, Hawa', Hajara and Asiyah were mentioned as prophetesses.

To buttress the above assertion, some verses of the Qur'an were cited in respect of each of the women mentioned.⁶¹ However, the Shaykh refuted the assertion of Shaokani that Umm Musa was a prophetess on the basis of sending an angel to her; just as the sending of an angel to a bald-headed man, a leper and a blind man as contained in the Sahihayni, did not make them prophets. He believed that such a narration was just a tale and parable and neither on the basis of *'aqidah* or Shari'ah.⁶² That notwithstanding, it seems the Shaykh did not find any Qur'anic verse to support the prophethood of Asiyah the wife of Pharaoh except Qur'an 66: 11 where she was mentioned in connection with Maryam the mother of 'Isa.⁶³ In the same vein, he did not see any Qur'anic reference to support the prophethood of Hajar except the story of how Prophet Ibrahim left her and her newly born baby, Isma'il in a valley without cultivation by the Sacred House and how her experience there became part of the hajj rites every year to commemorate her movement between Safa and Marwa.

The view of Shaykh Adam on the issue no doubt goes against that of the orthodox scholars who tenaciously restrict prophethood to men alone. However, we subscribe to his view in view of a Qur'anic passage where Allah mentions names of some prophets like Lut, Ibrahim, Ishaq, Ya'qub, Nuh, Daud, Sulayman, Ayub, Isma'il, Idris, Yunus, and Zakariya, and then concludes by saying "and (remember) her who guarded her chastity; We breathed into her from our spirit, and We made her and her son a sign for all peoples. Verily, this Ummah of yours is a single Ummah, and I am your Lord and Cherisher: therefore serve Me" (Q. 21: 51 – 93).

Conclusion

From all indications, Shaykh Adam was a reformer who was not satisfied with the plight of Muslim women in Nigeria. His rich knowledge made him to come out boldly on the stand of Islam on the position of women in the society, as against the practice of paying lip service to their liberation. One does not doubt the fact that the Shaykh was influenced by the views of some other Muslim reformers like Al-Afghani, Abduh, and Qasim. His visits and education in Egypt could be the reason for having contact with the works of these reformers. However, if Islamic feminism connotes reclaiming women's rights within the Islamic Shari'ah matrices; if it involves defending women's rights in Islam against the criticism of some Western and secular Muslim feminists; and if it means correcting some views of Muslims on women which amount to their maltreatment, then, indeed, Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilory was a feminist who was out to improve the lots of Muslim women in Nigeria by removing the obstacles put in place by some scholars to reduce womenfolk to perpetual bondage. On the basis of this, we wish to offer the following recommendations:

- The works of Shaykh Adam should be translated to English, Yoruba and other local languages, so that his message could reach the grassroots. The Centre for Ilorin Studies of the University of Ilorin can take up this responsibility.
- The Shaykh's works should be recommended for students of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Colleges of Education and universities for them to appreciate the vast knowledge of this international scholar of repute.
- Researchers should endeavour to look at the works of the Shaykh for them to have an academic look at numerous socio-religious issues raised by him.

Notes and References

1. Khurshid, *Woman and the Society*; Lahore, Lahore Publishing Company, 1971, p. 42.
2. M. Quth, *Islam the Misunderstood Religion*, n.p. International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations, 1981, p. 92.
3. A. Yusuf, "Islam and Modernity: Remembering the Contribution of Muhammad 'Abduh (1849 -1905)"; *Islam and Civilisational Renewal – A Journal devoted to Contemporary Issues and Policy Research*, vol. 3, No. 2, 2012, p. 358.
4. A.R.I Doi, *Women in Shari'a (Islamic Law)* n.p. n.d. p170.
5. C.C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism: A Study of the Modern Reform Movement Inaugurated by Muhammad Abduh*; Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Book Trust, 2010, p. 231.
6. C.C. Adams, *Islam and Modernism*., p. 236.
7. A.R.I Doi, *Women in Shari'a (Islamic Law)*.....p. 176.
8. A.R.I. Doi, *Women in Shari'a*, p. 179.
9. A.R.I Doi, *Women in Shari'a* p. 180.
10. R. Meijer, "The Gender Segregation (ikhtilat) Debate in Saudi Arabia: Reform and the Clash between 'Ulama and Liberals"; *Journal for Islamic Studies*, vol. 30, 2010, p. 2.
11. R. Meijer, "The Gender Segregation, p. 5.
12. U. A. Abdul-Qadir, "The Socio-Economic Status of Women in Northern Nigeria: An Analysis of the 1804 Jihad Movement"; *Al-Ijtihad, the Journal of the Islamization of Knowledge and Contemporary Issues*, vol. 8, No. 1, 2010, pp. 10-28.
13. H.I. Olagunju, "Translation with Commentary of Shaykh Adam's *Nizamut-Ta'lim 'I' Arabiyyah wat-Tarikhuhu fi 'alamil-Islami*." An unpublished Doctoral Thesis of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan, 1986, p. 3.
14. Among such in the academia are Prof. R.D. Abubakre, the immediate past Vice-Chancellor of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin; Prof. Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede, the current Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ilorin; Prof. M. Bidmus, the Chief Imam of the Mashood Abiola University, Lagos State and current Dean of the Faculty of Education of the University; Prof. Ahmad Abdul-Salam, the Head, Department of Linguistics and Nigerian Languages, University of Ilorin; Prof. Shuaib Uthman Balogun, Prof. Baqi Shuaib Agaka, Late Dr. H.I. Olagunju; Dr Hamzah Abdur-Raheem of Kwara State University, Malete; Dr. B.O.

- Yusuf, Head, Department of Religions, University of Ilorin; Dr. Isa Alabi Abubakar of Arabic Department of the University of Ilorin; Dr. Y.K. Jimoh, the Head, Islamic Studies Department of Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin, to mention but a few.
15. B.O. Yusuf, "Islamisation of Yoruba Culture According to Shaikh Adam 'Abd-Allah Al-Ilory (1917-1992 C.E)": *Islamic Culture*, vol. LXXIV, No. 2, 2000, p. 120.
 16. A. A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam-ul-yawm wa Ghadan fi Najjiriyah*; Agege, Matba'at ath-Thaqafatil Islamiyyah, 2002. Pp. 130-132. Note: The original edition of the book was published in 1985 by Mat-ba'at Wahbah in Cairo.
 17. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Durus ath- Thaqafatil Islamiyyah*; Agege, Matba'at ath-Thaqafatil Islamiyyah, 1983, p.16.
 18. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Durus ath- Thaqafatil*.
 19. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Durus ath- Thaqafatil*.
 20. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Durus ath- Thaqafatil*
 21. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam-ul-yawm....* pp. 132-133.
 22. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam-ul-yawm*, pp. 133-134.
 23. M. Qutb, *Islam the Misunderstood Religion*, n.p. International Islamic Federation of Student Organisations, 198, p. 93.
 24. M. Qutb, *Islam the Misunderstood*
 25. See B. L. Yusuf, *Sayyid Qutb: A Study of His Tafsir*; Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Book Trust, 2009. p. 171.
 26. M. Qutb, *Islam the Misunderstood Religion....* p. 119.
 27. A.R.I Doi, *Women in Sharia ...* pp.60-61.
 28. A.R.I Doi, *Shari'ah: The Islamic Law*; London, Ta Ha Publishers, 1984, p.461.
 29. A.R.I Doi, *Shari'ah*, pp. 461-462.
 30. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam al-yawm* p. 134.
 31. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam al-yawm* p. 135.
 32. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam al-yawm ...* p.136.
 33. R.I Adebayo, & A.T. Surajudeen, "An Appraisal of Sheikh Adam Abdullah Al-Ilory's Educational Philosophy: A Way of Reclaiming the Islamic Identity in Nigeria"; *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, vol. 2, No. 3, Pp. 188-195. Available on line at [http://idosi.org/wjihc2\(3\)12.htm](http://idosi.org/wjihc2(3)12.htm), 2012, pp.188-195.
 34. S.M. Ad-Darsh, "Islam and the Education of Muslim Women"; in anonymous, *Issues in Islamic Education*; London, The Muslim Educational Trust, 1996, p. 25.

35. A.R.I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*; Zaria, Gaskiya Corporation, 1984, p. 321.
36. A.R.I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria*; p. 50.
37. M.O. Opeloye, "The Muslim Women and Challenges of the Contemporary Time." *NATAIS Journal of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, vol. 9, 2006, p. 14.
38. A.A. Salawu, "Education and the Status of Women in Sokoto State: Implication for Counselling"; *Muslim Education Quarterly*, vol. 11, No. 1, The Islamic Academy, Cambridge, 1993. p. 60.
39. W.O.A. Nasiru, "The Attitude of Traditional 'Ulama' to Muslim Female Education in Nigeria"; *Muslim Education Quarterly*, vol. 14, No. 2, The Islamic Academy, Cambridge, 1997. Pp. 69-79.
40. S. M. Ad-Darshi, "Islam and the Education..." p. 27.
41. S. M. Ad-Darshi, "Islam and the Education."
42. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam wa Taqlid al-Jahiliyyah*, Cairo, Madani Press, 1979, p. 134.
43. R. Abdulhamid, "The Muslim Woman and Practices Affecting Her Shari'ah Rights in Marriage Institution: Northern Nigeria in Perspective," *NATAIS Journal of the Nigeria Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies*, vol. 11, 2008. Pp. 44-45.
44. R. Tanzilur, *A Code of Muslim Personal Law*; Karachi, Hamdard National Foundation, 1989. P. 185.
45. M. M. Nguru, "Early Marriage and Status of Women in Islam." A paper presented at the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) North-East Zone monthly Group Discussion held at Federal Training Centre, Maiduguri on 9th May, 2010. Pp. 6-7.
46. Such verses include Qur'an 9: 71; 33: 35 & 36; 60: 10 & 12.
47. Among the scholars who were in agreement with this decision according to the Shaykh were Alhaji Abu Bakar Otun, Alhaji Mustafa Ekemode and Ustaz Suraqat Ayodeji, all in Ansar-Ud-Deen Society.
48. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam-ul-yawm*.....pp. 146-148.
49. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam-ul-yawm*..., p. 138.
50. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam-ul-yawm*..., p. 139.
51. He cited for example, Qur'an 24: 31 and 33: 59.
52. See pp. 139-141 for some other *ahadith* cited by the Shaykh on exposure of face and palms of the two hands by women.
53. A. A. Al-Ilory, *Al-Islam al-yawm*....p. 143.

54. A.R.I. Doi, *Islam in Nigeria...* p.283.
55. A. H. Solihu, "Making sense of Hijab and Niqab in Contemporary Western Societies"; *Intellectual Discourse*, vol. 17, No. 1, 2009, pp. 27.
56. A. H. Solihu, "Making sense..."
57. Y. Qaradawi, *Islamic Awakening Between Rejection and Extremism*; Riyadh, International Islamic Publishing House, 1991, pp. 31-32.
58. Solihu came up with the fact that various steps were taken by women to desexualise themselves and make public space easier to negotiate. While some altered their dresses, some shaved off their hair. Others engaged in pathological eating behaviours to make them extremely fat or thin so as to discourage men from unwelcome sexual attraction. There remains option of *hijab* for Muslim women to retain their dignity through making their beauty unavailable to uninvited guests by covering themselves properly. For more see A.H. Solihu, "Making Sense of Hijab..." p. 28.
59. A.A. Al-Ilory, *Falsafat An-Nubuwwat wal-Ambiya' fi Dha'il-Qur'an was-Sunnah*; Cairo, Dar at-Tawfiq an-Namuthujiyyah, 1983, pp. 146-147.
60. For instance, in respect of Hawa', Qur'an 7: 19 and 19: 22-23 were cited; for Sarah the mother of Is-haq, Qur'an 11: 71-73 was cited and for Yukhanid, the mother of Musa, Qur'an 28: 7 was cited. Also, for Maryam the mother of 'Isa, Qur'an 3: 42; 3: 33; 3: 45; 19: 16-21 and 21: 91 were cited.
61. A. A. Al-Ilory, *Falsafat an-Nubuwwat...* p. 148.
62. A. A. Al-Ilory, *Falsafat an-Nubuwwat...* p. 150.