

FGM IN ISLAM – MY PERSPECTIVE

One of the most controversial topics is Female Genital Mutilation in Religion and more commonly within Islam. I am often asked what my perspective is with regards to Female Genital Mutilation or more commonly known as Female Circumcision within the Islamic world.

I will therefore share my understanding here, this is my personal Islamic perspective on Female Genital Mutilation.

INTRODUCTION:

The Islamic Shari'a Council, the Muslim College and the Muslim Council of Britain have condemned the practice of Female Circumcision within the Muslim Community. There is no reference to it in the Holy Qur'an that states a girl should be circumcised, nor is there any authentic reference in the Sunnah, the sayings of our Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him: p.b.u.h)

This introduction however does not seem to be enough for those who advocate Female Circumcision in Islam, and unfortunately continue to use 'Hadiths' that are weak or unverified, to fight for this barbaric practice. I will now break down some of the most commonly used Hadiths, links to texts that are used within the realm of Islam and Female Circumcision.

HADITHS:

Narrated Umm Atiyyah al-Ansariyyah:

A woman used to perform circumcision in Medina. The Prophet (p.b.u.h) said to her:

"Do not cut severely as that is better for a woman and more desirable for a husband"

Abu Dawud said: It has been transmitted by 'Ubaid Allah b.Amr from 'Abd al-Malik to the same effect through a different chain. Abu Dawud said: It is not a strong tradition. It has been transmitted in mursal form (missing the links of the companion).

Abu Dawud said: Muhammad b. Hasan is obscure, and this tradition is weak.

Grade: Sahih (Al-Abani) Reference: Sunan Abi Dawud 5271 – General Behaviour (Kitab Al-Adab)

FURTHER:

"If the two circumcised parts meet, then ghusl (ritual bathing) is obligatory"

[2] It indicates that women were circumcised, which indicates the presence of circumcision amongst Arabs, which we do not deny the existence of, for it was a custom of ancient cultures.

The argument here is its position in Islam, and how it is deemed virtuous or obligatory. Since it is not found in the Holy Qur'an, or Hadiths, we believe that Female Genital Mutilation or Circumcision has any place in Islam.

[2] Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad (26 025) – again the methods used to determine the authenticity of the hadith is deemed weak.

LASTLY:

"Circumcision is sunnah for men, and an honour for women" narrated by Ahmad (20 719) from Abu Maleh bin Osama and from his father.

It is said that the source of this hadith is weak. However, 'Huccac, the son Artab, the imposter, has narrated this, so it has been confused. Also narrated by al-Bayhaqi in al-Sunan al-Kubra (8/325) by the method of Hafs ibn Ghiyath, for this attribution, and said "This source is weak and insecure so Al-Albani would consider it weak (1935).

So i come to establish that there are no authentic Hadiths that connect Female Circumcision to being an Islamic duty upon women. The 'Hadiths' many claim are known to be weak, broken in the chain or not verified.

Through research, it is clear that this practice originated from Pharoah, anyone who has studied Pharoah (Firawn) in Islam, knows how this man is deemed a tyrant.

Female Circumcision pre-dated Islam and we too know that the Holy Qur'an was revealed to eradicate evil practices that were happening before Islam and the misguidance from men.

The consensus amongst scholars of fiqh and hadith, is that hadiths which include the topic of Female Circumcision are considered weak and to not be taken into consideration.

MADHABS / SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT:

In hindsight, I should close the topic there, however anyone who has read my Bio, will know that my passionate plight in Female Genital Mutilation came about because of texts that I came across, that I did read when studying further Islam.

As my studies in Islam continued, I was reading the Manual of Fiqh by Imam Shafi "Reliance of the Traveller", whereupon he mentioned that Female Circumcision was a Sunnah, after further researching what is known as 'Madhabs' – Scholars who came after Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h).

The Four Madhabs have said:

The Shafi school of Islamic jurisprudence considers female circumcision to be wajib (obligatory)

The Hanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence considers female circumcision to be makrumah (honourable) and strongly encourage to: obligatory

The Maliki school of Islamic jurisprudence considers female circumcision to be sunnah (optional) and preferred

The Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence considers female circumcision to be sunnah (optional)

So if you do follow one of the Madhabs above, you may be confused, as though there are minor differences between the scholars in their ruling on female circumcision, they have made a ruling regarding 'circumcision for women'. You may therefore feel that this is an Islamic act, and maybe like myself feel that because you have not been circumcised, are not honouring this faith... However...

Lest we forget, our scholars have also said:

Imam Malik

"Indeed I am human, I can make mistakes, and I can be correct, so look into my opinion, everything that is in agreement with the Book and the Sunnah, then take it, and everything that does not agree with the Book and the Sunnah then leave it"

(Jamia' Bayyan al-Ilm' 1/775)

Imam Abu Hanifa

"It is not permitted for anyone to accept our views, if they do not from where we got them"

[Ar halaal, Ibn `Abdul Barr in Al-Intiqaa' fi Fadaa'il ath-Thalaathah al- A'immah al-Fuqahaa' (Page 145), Ibn al-Qayyim in I'laam al- Mooqi'een (2/309), Ibn `Aabideen in his Footnotes on Al-Bahr ar-Raa'iq (6/293) and in Rasm al-Mufti (pp. 29,32) & Sha'raani in Al-Meezaan (1/55)]

Imam Ash Shaafi

"There is no one among us who has not had a Sunnah of Allahs messenger (p.b.u.h) elude him or have one slip his mind; so no matter what rulings I have made or fundamental principles I have proposed, there will be in them things contrary to rulings of Allahs messenger. Therefore, the correct ruling is according to what Allahs messenger said, and that is my ruling"

(Ibn `Asaakir, Tareekh Dimashq al-Kabeer vol.15 part 1, p. 3)

Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal

“Do not follow my opinion: neither follow the opinion of Malik, nor Shaafi, nor Awzaa’i, nor Thawri, but take from where they took”

(Fulaani p. 113 & Ibn al-Qayyim in I’laam 2/302)

Shaykh al-Islam Ibn Taymiya

“Indeed the people of the Truth and the Sunnah do not follow anyone (unconditionally) except the messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h), the one who does not speak from his desires – it is only revelation revealed to him”

(Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmoo’ah al- Fatawa, vol. 3 p. 216)

I am not a Scholar, nor do I discredit the amazing knowledge and sincerity within their work in Islam, but that said, it is clear from all their comments above, they recognise that they are only humans, and humans make mistakes, humans can make rulings that may be contrary to the correct stance.

As I do believe it is, in this case, because we have further clarification that no where is Female Circumcision mentioned in the Holy Qur’an and no Authentic Hadith from the Sunnah has been identified.

Therefore it is conclusive, that despite Scholars may have ruled for female circumcision, it can be condemned on the basis of Qur’an and Sunnah.

MALE CIRCUMCISION:

There is absolutely no comparison to male circumcision and female circumcision, male circumcision is removing excess skin from the penis, and has been proven for health benefits and a requirement for some men.

A clitoris contains 8,000 nerve endings in the clitoris glans, double the nerve endings as men have at the head of the penis! Now you can probably correlate that for many cultures who carry this practice, do it to suppress the women’s sexual desire, killing nerve endings!

No matter what ‘type’ you claim is sunnah, you will be cutting nerve endings, and so there is absolutely no health benefit to this harmful, life threatening practice. You can not justify this practice by saying that it is ‘just a prick’ or ‘just a slight dead skin removal’. It is absolutely not, it is even with just a prick, killing nerve endings in the clitoris.

Should you wish to believe that Islam suppresses a woman, and she is not supposed to be satisfied, oh let me kick that myth to the curb:

Imam Ali (blessings upon him) says:

“When you intend to have sex with your wife, do not rush because the woman should also has needs, and these should be fulfilled”

Sexual intercourse should also consist of foreplay:

Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) said:

“Three people are cruel:... A person who has sex with his wife before foreplay”

Intimacy and enjoyment is necessary in Islam! It is a woman’s right to be sexually fulfilled in Islam. As mentioned above, and a need to emphasis this, even a slight prick, or a snip to her ‘prepuce’ as many will claim is Sunnah, will kill the only nerves she has in order to be satisfied as per Islamic understanding.

Let alone, the correlation that this was a Pharoanic practice, deemed necessary because women were in the desert, therefore becoming more sexually aroused due to the heat... I know... Sun... Sea... and... anyway back to the point!!

The practice is clearly contradictory to the basic principles of Islam, including:

“Do not harm yourself or others.”

Not only is this practice harming our women and girls, it is killing them!!

Girls from early as birth are being subjected to this barbaric practice in the name of Islam, that can kill them and cause them to bleed to death. I am speaking here from experience, I have worked, supported and advocated for many women who have been affected by all types of Female Genital Mutilation and so I am not just speaking from statistics.

She Can Consultancy is grassroots, and I have stood at the bottom of a hospital bed as a girl with FGM Type 2 traumatically gives birth, having spent a short life time believing this was not only part of her culture, but a part of her religion.

It is also right to say that there are many women who have survived Female Genital Mutilation and may continue their lives without any or very minor consequences, but that is not any form of justification for an act that has no basis in religion, is of no health benefit and is a dangerous, cruel violation of women and girls.

This religion was made clear. If female circumcision (FGM) was an Islamic Practice or an Islamic Duty as some may claim, then why is there so much contradiction, why were there no clear texts from the Qu’ran or the Sunnah to show that the wives of the Prophet were circumcised? Why when Aisha (ra) made menstruation and the cleanliness requirements clear to women of Islam, did she or others not make clear the process of Female Circumcision? Why were there no reports of any of the daughters of Prophet Muhammad not circumcised?

For myself personally, I can answer those questions with confirmations, based on the above findings, based on my expertise in Female Genital Mutilation and based on the Holy Qur’an, that this has no standing in the name of Islam, whether it be a prick of the clitoris or removal of it, this is not in the name of Religion.

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