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SEXUALITY, RIGHTS AND ISLAM: COMPETING GENDER DISCOURSES IN POST-REVOLUTIONARY IRAN

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The Revolution of 1978-79 in Iran led to the convergence of religious and political authority in the Islamic Republic, and inevitably changed the dynamics of the struggle for women's rights. For a decade, talk of gender equality was politically unacceptable, a taboo subject which 'good' Muslims could not raise or address. By the early 1990s, this was no longer the case, and voices of dissent began to be heard, known as the 'new religious thinking' (nau-andishi-yi dini). Gradually space was opened for addressing gender inequality within an Islamic framework: this was done by historicizing the construction of gender rights in Shari'a laws. The election of President Mohammad Khatami in 1997 gave birth to a Reformist movement, and shifted major political alignments; from now on people talked of Reformists versus Conservatives rather than Moderates versus Hard-liners. The way was open for the emergence of a new Islamic discourse on women, radically different from the official Shi'i one.¹

In this chapter, I trace the textual genealogy of this new religious discourse. I argue that it was made possible by severing the implicit link in Islamic law between constructions of gender rights and theories of male and female sexuality. To show the working of this link and the process of severance, I examine a literature which I categorize as 'fiqh-based'. These texts do not contain legal reasoning or argument, and are not necessarily produced by fugaha (jurists). This makes them more accessible to the general public than fiqh texts proper. I have chosen to focus on them because, in my view, they reveal the rationale for the unequal construction of gender in Islamic law; they expose many of the underlying and unspoken assumptions that shape the fugaha's understandings and readings of primary sources of Islamic law (i.e. the Qur'an and the hadith). It is also through this literature that gender inequality has been propagated and reproduced in the Muslim consciousness.

Broadly speaking, this literature is of three different genres, each with its own gender perspective. I call the first genre, Traditionalist, and its perspective, Gender Inequality. The second genre, which I call Neo-Traditionalist, advocates Gender Balance; the third, the

Modernist genre, argues for Gender Equality. As we shall see, each genre has its own a distinct style, mode of address, audience, themes to address, and language. Thus, the first is preoccupied with certain terms and themes relating to sexuality - such as conduct during coitus, purification rules following sex - on which the others are almost silent, focusing instead on themes such as love or women's legal rights. Likewise, each genre is identified with a political tendency. Writers of the first and third genres are generally identified with Conservatives and Reformist camps respectively, while those of the second genre tend to have one foot in each camp.²

The boundaries between these three genres and gender perspectives are far from rigid and clear-cut. There are many overlaps, but a gradual shift or progression can be discerned. That is to say, the more a text is rooted, for example, in the first (i.e. Traditionalist) genre, the more candid it is in its references to sexuality, and the more it is opposed to gender equality; and vice versa with texts of the third genre.

Women's Sexuality in Traditionalist Discourse

This genre comprises a whole range of texts, which can perhaps be best defined as marriage guides,³ with titles such as The Union of Two Flowers or Bride and Groom (Paivand-i Du Gul ya 'Arus va Damad)⁴, Guide to Marital Relations from Islam's View (Rahnama-yi Zana-shu'i az Nazar-i Islam)⁵, Marriage in Islam (Izdivaj dar Islam)⁶, Family Ethics (Akhlaq-i Khanavada),⁷ Ethics in the Family (Akhlaq dar Khanavada)⁸ or Ethics at Home (Akhlaq dar Khana)⁹. Produced by religious publishing projects in Qom or Tehran, these texts are written by men for men, aiming to advise them of their Islamic rights and duties in marriage: the only exception is The Way of Happiness, and Advice to Believing Sisters (Ravish-i Khushbakhti va Tausiya bi Khaharan-i Imani)¹⁰, written by Banu Amin Isfahani, a female mujtahid (jurist). Some of these texts were written by well-known personalities and politicians. The writer and translator of Marriage in Islam are both high-ranking political clerics: the former, Ayatollah Mishkini, is head of the Assembly of Experts (Majlis Khubragan), which is charged with election and supervision of the Vali-yi Faqih; the translator, Ayatollah Jannati, is head of the Council of Guardians (Shura-yi Nigahban), charged with ensuring that the laws passed by Parliament are not in contradiction with Shari'a. Akbar Hosseini, author of Ethics in the Family, is a cleric and a member of Parliament from 1988-2000, who has a regular television programme.¹¹

Though they never state it explicitly, the authors in this genre hold that men and women are created different and have different destinies; that men are created superior to women, so it is natural for men to dominate. They consider the model of family and gender relations manifested in fiqh rules to be divine and immutable, and they make no attempt to engage with non-religious sources of knowledge about the family, or to consider women's position in contemporary society. The most they do is to interrupt their texts with an anecdote, or a warning, or a piece of advice to keep away from the evils of family life as lived by others.

They see their mission as informing the believer how to live a "proper Islamic family life", which to a large extent reflects the world-view and life-style of a certain class of Iranians: urban merchants and artisans, known as bazari. They ignore the fact that this life-style is no longer the dominant one in Iran and is alien to the majority of Iranians. Likewise, many Iranians are unaware of the existence of this genre of literature, or of fiqh rules relating to sexuality and sexual conduct.¹²

Texts in this genre have a similar format. They are oral in style, and are primarily based on ahadith, the Sayings of the Prophet or Sayings of the Twelve Shi'a Imams. They all include chapters or discussions on 'the virtues of marriage' and 'the rights and duties of each spouse in marriage'. Some also include discussions of 'sexual etiquette', which covers matters such as the time, manner and frequency of sexual intercourse, permissible and non-permissible positions, states of purity and impurity and menstruation, etc. Their language is sexually explicit, using terms such as shahvat (sexual desire, lust, passion), jama' (intercourse), etc. These chapters appear to be based on an implicit theory of sexuality: God gave women greater sexual shahvat than men, but this is mitigated by two factors, men's ghairat (sexual honour and jealousy) and women's haya (modesty, shyness). The working of the theory and its key concepts - ghairat, haya and shahvat, can be found in the following three passages.¹³

Sexual desire (shahvat) in woman is ten parts and in men is one part. God has chained women's shahvat with modesty and chastity (haya va iffat). If their modesty is taken away, it is possible that every man will be followed by ten women wanting to make love with him. In Lali al-Akhbar it is quoted that Imam Ali said: What motivates the beasts of prey is their hunger, and what motivates women and draws them to men is to extinguish the fire of their desire (shahvat).¹⁴ Modesty (haya) has ten parts, of which nine parts are in women and one part in men. Then, when a woman is asked for in marriage, one part of her modesty goes; when she is contracted in marriage, another part goes; when she gives birth, another part goes; when her husband has intercourse with her, another part goes; she is left with five parts, and if she commits the hideous act of zina, all her haya is

removed. Pity the people, when all haya is taken from women (The Union of Two Flowers, pp. 53-54)

Imam Baqir said: God has not intended ghairat for women but for men, because for men He has made licit four permanent wives and slave girls but for women only one husband. If a woman shows affection for another man, she is considered zina-kar (fornicator) in the eyes of God. Women who show ghairat (when their husbands are polygynous) are those who are faithless, not those who believe in the rules of God (Marriage in Islam, p. 100).

In another hadith, he said: Women's ghairat is in reality jealousy and jealousy is the root of heresy; when a woman's ghairat is aroused, she becomes angry, and when she becomes angry she tends toward heresy. Of course, such women are not Muslim (Marriage in Islam, p. 101).

While a theory of difference in men and women's sexuality finds support in the Sayings of Shi'a Imams, control over women's sexuality finds its legitimacy in the fuqaha's conception of marriage. This is how one of the most prominent Shi'a jurists, Muhaqqiq Hilli, defines marriage: "a contract whose object is that of dominion over the vagina, without the right of possession".¹⁵ What the contract entails for each party is dealt with under the rubric of rights and duties in fiqh, and these texts reproduce them. They all revolve around the twin themes of sexual access and compensation, embodied in the concepts of tamkin (submission) and nafaqa (maintenance). Tamkin - defined as unhampered sexual access - is a man's right and thus a woman's duty; and nafaqa - defined as shelter, food and clothing - is a woman's right and man's duty.

These passages contain no argument, no discussion, only commands and warnings. A woman is told that she should keep herself covered so that her beauty is not seen by anyone apart from her husband, and that she should satisfy her husband's sexual needs and his other wishes. If not, her place will be in hell, as one hadith has it. According to another one, if she refuses her husband at night, she will be cursed all night by angels. A man is told to make sure that his wife observes the rule of hejab, and to have mercy on her. In the minds of the authors of these texts, these rules are divinely ordained, and their truths are so self-evident that they see no need to provide rational arguments for them. It is a woman's duty to be sexually at her husband's disposal. She cannot leave the house without her husband's permission, as this would infringe his right of access to her.

This is how Ayatollah Mishkini, a powerful political cleric opposed to the Reformists, views women's right to work:

Islam has not openly forbidden women from work and commerce, but its programme is such that she is automatically prevented from these activities; and we know that Islam does not approve it because a woman, according to God's command, cannot leave the house without her husband's permission, and the best work for her is taking care of her husband and raising children - the more the better - which takes all her time, so she has no "opportunity" to do work outside the home (Marriage in Islam, p. 75).

Other writers in this genre employ the same tone and logic. They make no allusion to issues of women's rights and gender equality, not even paying lip-service to them. They see no need to engage with the contemporary social realities or with non-religious sources.

Women's Sexuality and the Neo-Traditionalist Discourse

Neither is the case with the Neo-Traditionalist genre, whose writers are aware of and sensitive to current discussions of gender and criticisms by both secular and religious women of patriarchal biases in Shari'a legal rules. Women's education and employment, divorce laws and the question of hijab are the main themes through which the issue of gender equality is addressed, and a range of positions are defined. It is common to find a single text arguing for gender equality on one issue (e.g. in women's employment and education), but rejecting it on another (e.g. divorce rights). Women's magazines are the main fora for publication of these texts, but they also find their way into scholarly journals and periodicals or appear as books. Likewise, unlike the first genre, these texts are written for women and some of them by women, with titles indicative of their concerns: An Examination of Women's Rights in Divorce (Bar-rasi-yi Huquq-i Zanan dar Mas'ala Talaq);¹⁶ Women's Rights in Islam and the Family (Huquq-i Zan dar Islam va Khanava).¹⁷ Others are authored by clerics: The Face of Women in the Mirror of Islam and the Koran (Chihra-yi Zan dar A'ina Islam va Qur'an);¹⁸ Women in the Mirror of Glory and Beauty (Zan dar A'ina Jalal va Jamal).¹⁹ These texts vary in style, approach and degree of sophistication, ranging from fairly conventional Islamic apologias on the place of women to more novel reassessments, but on gender issues they argue for complementarity rather than equality (all adhere to a perspective of Gender Balance).

This perspective is aired in almost all Iranian women's journals (Zan-i Ruz, Payam-i Zan, Payam-i Hajar, Huquq-i Zan, Mahjuba, Nida). Its Neo-Traditionalist adherents attempt to introduce 'balance' into patriarchal interpretations, differing from Traditionalists in both the sources they use and their mode of argumentation. They refer to the Qur'an rather than hadith, and quote Western psychological and sociological studies for 'scientific' proofs for their positions. Their language is less explicit on sexuality; and in their writings, 'ishq (love) replaces shahvat (sexual desire) as a focus; prescriptions of purification rules related to sex and menstruation are replaced by discussions on 'women's status in society' or 'women's legal rights' or 'the philosophy of hijab'. The tone and the argument become moral and abstract. Fiqh rules, which engender social and psychological harmony, are justified as the best means to regulate sexual dynamics. In these texts biology still is destiny.

The most coherent (and influential) argument of this genre is found in Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari's System of Women's Rights in Islam (Nizam-i Huquq-i Zan dar Islam). Rooted in the decisive debates in the 1960s between traditionalists and secular modernists over reforms in Shari'a family laws, this text reflects the position of Neo-Traditionalist clerics on the eve of the Revolution. It has its origins in a series of articles in Zan-i Ruz, the popular women's magazine of the Pahlavi era. The journal was supporting a campaign for the reform of family laws: Mutahhari responded, putting the Neo-Traditionalist Islamic position; he dismissed gender equality in rights and duties as a Western notion with no place in Islam, and put forward, as a new justification for Shari'a family law, the notion of complementarity in gender rights and duties, both in marriage and in society.

Mutahhari takes issue with both Traditionalist texts and secular modernists. On the one hand, he rejects the thesis that underlies all Traditionalist texts: 'women are created of and for men'; and contends that, in the Islamic view, women are equal to men in creation, and do not depend on men for attaining perfection (but attain their perfection independently). On the other hand, he takes issue with the secularists, arguing that the roles assigned to men and women in creation are different, and that Shari'a laws reflect this difference. It is here that Mutahhari puts forward the theory of the naturalness of Islamic law, and argues that differences in rights and duties between the sexes do not mean inequality or injustice; if properly understood, they are the very essence of justice. The theory of the naturalness of Shari'a laws was first advanced by the most renowned Shi'a philosopher of this century, Allamah Tabataba'i, in his monumental, twenty-volume Qur'anic commentary commonly known as al-Mizan,²⁰ but it was Mutahhari who developed it systematically and turned it into a powerful argument in defence of fiqh conceptions of family and gender relations.

Mutahhari modifies the Traditionalist theory of sexuality to eliminate its conflict with the naturalness of Shari‘a law. The central contradiction is: if women’s sexual desire (shahvat) is nine times greater than men’s (as Imam ‘Ali’s Saying has it), and if Shari‘a laws work with, not against, the grain of nature, then why do they allow men but not women to contract more than one marriage at a time? In his defence of polygyny, Tabataba’i in effect contradicts Imam Ali:

Women’s religious education in an Islamic society teaches them chastity and modesty (iffat va haya); contrary to the common belief that women’s desire (shahvat) is greater than men’s, for which women’s desire for beauty and ornaments is taken as proof, [proper religious education] makes women’s desire much less than men’s, and this is what Muslim men who have Islamically trained wives know well. Therefore, a man’s desire on average requires him to have more than one woman and even two and three (Tabataba’i, n.d., p. 52).

Evidently Tabataba’i sees sexual desire not as fixed and innate but as malleable and social: hence his advocacy of the proper Islamic education of women in society, which enhances men’s sexual desire and contains that of women. While concurring with this objective, Mutahhari adds a psychological twist, and contends that men and women desire in different ways:

Man is the slave of his own desire (shahvat) and woman is a prisoner of a man’s love (muhabbat) ... A man wants to take possession of the person of the woman and to wield power over her, a woman wants to conquer the heart of man and prevail upon him through his heart ... A man wants to embrace woman and a woman wants to be embraced ... A woman is better able to control her desire than a man. Man’s desire is primitive and aggressive, and woman’s desire is reactive and responsive.²¹

This remains the only area in which Neo-Traditionalist texts depart from the Traditionalist notion of sexuality. In arguing for his notion, Mutahhari does not look to Islamic but to Western sources, namely psychological and sociological studies. His reading of these sources is quite selective, and he cites as ‘scientific evidence’ only those that are in line with fiqh definitions of marriage:

The association of married life rests upon the pillar of spontaneous attachment and has a unique mechanism. Creation has given the key to strengthening it, and also the key to bringing it down and shattering it, into the hand of man. Under the command of creation,

every man and woman has a certain disposition and certain characteristics, when compared with each other, which cannot be exchanged and are not the same (p. 297).

In line with the logic of the fiqh conception of marriage, women's sexuality, now defined as passive, is subordinated to that of men.

Nature has devised the ties of husband and wife in such a form that the part of woman is to respond to the love of man. The affection and love of a woman that is genuine and stable can only be that love which is born as a reaction to the affection and admiration of man towards her. So the attachment of the woman to the man is the result of the attachment of the man to the woman and depends upon it. Nature has given the key of love of both sides to the man, the husband. If he loves his wife and is faithful to her, the wife also loves him and remains faithful to him. It is admitted that woman is naturally more faithful than man, and that a woman's faithfulness is a reaction to the unfaithfulness of the man.

This, Mutahhari contends, is why fiqh gives the right of divorce and polygamy to men.

Nature has deposited the key of the natural dissolution of marriage in the custody of man. In other words, it is man who by his own apathy and unfaithfulness towards his wife makes her cold and unfaithful. Conversely, if the indifference begins on the side of the wife, it does not affect the affection of the man, rather, incidentally, it makes the affection more acute (p. 274).

Thus there is no need for any change or reform of the divorce laws, or even in the form of divorce (i.e. talaq or repudiation of the wife by the husband).

Sometimes these people ask: "Why does divorce take the form of a release, an emancipation? Surely it should have a judicial form." To answer these people it should be said: "Divorce is a release in the same way that marriage is a state of dominance. If you can possibly do so, change the natural law of seeking a mate in its absoluteness with regard to the male and the female, remove the natural state of marriage from the condition of dominance; if you can, make the role of the male and female sexes in all human beings and animals identical in their relations, and change the law of nature. Then you will be able to rid divorce of its aspect of release and emancipation (p. 298).

Until this day, Mutahhari's arguments remain the most eloquent and refined among those that hold the concept of gender equality to be contrary to the Shari'a. They provided the Islamic Republic in its early years with a much-needed validation of its gender policies. His book has been reprinted many times, and the bulk of the vast post-revolutionary literature on women, especially that produced by the official Islamic Propagation Organization, not only follows Mutahhari but usually reproduces his arguments verbatim.

The Revisionists: Gender Equality

By the early 1990s, the notion of complementarity of rights had begun to be questioned, even by those who once subscribed to Mutahhari's position and helped to translate it from rhetoric into state policy. A growing number of women started to see no contradiction between fighting for equal rights and remaining good Muslims, arguing that there is no inherent or logical link between patriarchy and Islamic ideals. These views - now found in a variety of fora - were first aired in the journal Zanan (Women), which is a part of a modernist and reformist tendency, known as 'New Religious Thinking' (nau-andishi-yi dini). This tendency has its roots in a rift that occurred in the Kayhan Publishing Institute when one of its publications - Kayhan-i Farhangi - featured Abdolkarim Soroush's controversial articles on the historicity and relativity of religious knowledge. Separating religion from religious knowledge, Soroush in these articles argued that, while the first was sacred and immutable, the second was human and evolved in time as a result of forces external to religion itself.²²

Soroush's theory angered conservatives in the clerical establishment, who saw it as a direct challenge to their religious authority. A heated debate followed, which led to the closure of Kayhan-i Farhangi in June 1990, and the departure from Kayhan of a group of Muslim intellectuals who were sympathetic to Soroush's theory. Two key figures among them were Mashallah Shamsolvaezin, who later became editor of the reformist daily newspapers Jami'a, Tus, Nishat and Asr-i Azadagan, all closed in succession;²³ and Shahla Sherkat, who as editor of Zan-i Ruz from 1882, had played a role in the islamization of the women's press. Both now became editors of important new journals: Shamsolvaezin of Kiyan (Foundation), launched in October 1991, and Sherkat of its sister paper Zanan (Women), launched in February 1992.

Armed with Soroush's theory of the relativity of religious knowledge, these two journals in the 1990s became a magnet for those whose ideas and writings formed the intellectual backbone of the reformist movement that emerged in 1997.²⁴ Those who wrote for Kiyan and

Zanan showed a genuine willingness to reassess old positions. Whereas in the 1980s these men and women saw their brief as the Islamicization of culture and society, in the 1990s they wanted to create a world view reconciling Islam and modernity, and argued for a demarcation between state and religion. They argued that the human understanding of Islam is flexible, that Islam's tenets can be interpreted to encourage both pluralism and democracy, that Islam allows change in the face of time, space and experience.

While advocating a brand of feminism that takes Islam as the source of its legitimacy, Zanan makes no apologies for drawing on Western feminist sources and collaborating with Iranian secular feminists. Two of its regular contributors in the 1990s were a secularist female lawyer, Mehrangiz Kar, and a male cleric, Sayyid Muhsin Sa'idzada, who in their articles took issue with very premises of the official Islamic discourse on women, laying bare their inherent gender bias.²⁵ Sa'idzada's articles, written in the language and mode of argumentation of fiqh, transported Zanan's message to the heart of the clerical seminaries.²⁶

Sa'idzada called his approach the Equality Perspective; and contended that it had always existed in fiqh alongside what he called the Inequality Perspective, and that some eminent jurists have adhered to it. He saw his achievement to be in articulating it coherently and shaping it to accord with twentieth-century realities. He grounded his arguments in a commentary on theological and jurisprudential issues, with the premise that theologians and jurists, in understanding doctrines and inferring shari'a rulings, cannot detach themselves from their own world-view, which, in turn, reflects the state of knowledge, politics, and social customs of the age and milieu in which they operate. In all this he was clearly influenced by thinkers outside the seminaries, such as Soroush. But Sa'idzada went on to argue that, apart from some minor religious rules (relating to biological differences), Islam regards men and women in the same way.²⁷ He also argued that a substantial number of hadith and fiqh theories obstruct the way to equality between the sexes. A majority of jurists and all hadith specialists have sacrificed the principle of equality in Islam in order to endorse a set of theories resting on assumptions that are no longer valid.

Sa'idzada had set himself the task of demolishing untenable theories, arguing that this should be done from within fiqh itself, using its own language and mode of argumentation. Where Mutahhari, the most articulate proponent of the Neo-Traditionalist discourse, relies on Western scholarship to explain the disparity between men and women's rights in the Shari'a, Sa'idzada, so far the most radical protagonist of the new line, relies on Islamic scholarship to argue for the necessity of a new, feminist, reading of these texts in line with changed conditions. In so doing, he turned the classical texts on their head, using their own style of

reasoning and arguments to argue for radical change. This made him one of the victims of the struggle between modernists and traditionalists, which took a new turn following the 1997 presidential elections. He was detained in June 1998 after the publication of an article in the now closed liberal daily Jami'a, in which he compared religious Traditionalists in Iran to the Taliban in Afghanistan. Though he was never officially charged, his crime was to extend debates and arguments that belong to the seminaries to the world outside. He was released five months later, but 'unfrocked' - that is, he lost his clerical position, and became 'forbidden-pen' - that is, his writings cannot be published.

Yet neither Zanan nor Sa'idzadeh (who remains the only cleric to have come out openly in favour of Gender Equality) has yet addressed the issue of sexuality, as opposed to gender. In fact, while Modernists are now openly discussing many aspects of women's rights in society and the family, they have not touched on any topic which involves the issue of sexuality.²⁸

The silence of the proponents of the Gender Equality perspective is significant, and needs further attention. It is both strategic and epistemological. It is strategic, in the sense that it is a conscious effort to carve out a space within fiqh where women can be treated as social beings. In classical fiqh texts, gender rights and women are discussed only in terms of sexuality, and only in chapters on marriage and divorce. It is only by diverting the focus away from women's supposed 'nature' to their 'social' experience, that the Modernists can move the debate on sexuality onto new ground. The silence is epistemological in the sense that constructing women's sexuality as defined and regulated by familial and social circumstances suggests that it is not determined by nature or the divine; that Islam as a religion has nothing to say on the subject, that what is claimed to be Islamic is Muslims' views and perceptions, which are neither sacred nor immutable but human and changing.

Conclusion

It is perhaps too early to say how and when the emerging discourse on women in Iran will make its impact and redress the inequalities inherent in orthodox interpretations of Islamic law. Both the new discourse and the reformist movement of which it is a part are still in formation, and their fortunes are tied to the political development of Iran. But two remarks can be made at this stage.

First, the emerging discourse on women has the potential, in my view, to shift the old and tired debate on 'Women in Islam' onto new ground, and brings about a paradigm shift. This has been achieved by disconnecting the existing link between sexuality and gender rights,

which underlies the inability of earlier Islamic discourses to deal with the issue of women's legal rights, despite the growing debate on women's rights and the emergence of so-called "Islamic feminism".²⁹ The disconnection both freed its advocates from taking a defensive position and enabled them to go beyond old fiqh wisdoms in search of new questions and new answers.

Secondly, the emerging discourse can challenge the hegemony of orthodox interpretations and question the legitimacy of the views of those who until now have spoken in the name of Islam. Such a challenge has been made possible, even inevitable, by their ideological construction of Islam, and the very methods and sources that their ideologues - Neo-Traditionalists - used in their defence and rationalisation of fiqh constructions of gender rights. By appealing to the believer's logic and reasoning, and relying on arguments and sources outside religion, they have opened a Pandora's box. It remains to be seen what else will come out.

¹. See Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Islam and Gender: the Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

². In the following footnotes, whenever possible I point out the political sympathies of the writers in this genre.

³. The following lists a sample of materials obtained during my research in Qum in 1995. They are sold on news stands in Tehran, though not in high-brow book shops. They belong to a popular genre of religious literature usually recommended to and consulted by would-be spouses.

⁴. Written and published by Haj Shaikh 'Ali Qarani Gulpaigani, printed in Qum by Alhadi, 9th edition, Esfand 1370 (March 1991).

⁵. Written and published by Hasan Maujudi, printed in Tehran in Gauhar, 13th edition, summer 1370 (1991).

⁶. Written in Arabic by Ayatollah 'Ali Mishkini and translated into Persian by Ayatollah Ahmad Janati, published in Qum by Alhadi Publishing Office, 8th edition, Mordad 1366 (August 1987).

⁷. By Ahmad Sadiq Ardistani, published in Tehran by Khazar Publishing House, 41st edition, winter 1363 (1964).

⁸. Written by Sayyid 'Ali Akbar Husaini, published by Islamic Publishing House in Tehran, first edition Mordad 1369 (August 1990).

⁹. Written by Ayatollah Husain Mazahiri, published in Qum by Akhlaq Publishers. The book contains the first series of sermons delivered in Qum during Ramadan 1368 (1989) after the public prayers at noon and in the evening. These sermons were extremely popular with clerics' wives, who commented on them frequently during my research in Qum in 1995.

¹⁰. Published by Amir publishers in Qum, 6th edition, 1369 (1980).

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- ¹¹. Husaini lost his seat in the February 2000 elections for the 6th majlis, won by the Reformists by a landslide. Soon after the elections, Husaini was the subject of a rumour with a sharp gender irony, indicative of the popular challenge to the official gender discourse: Husaini has two wives, whom he angers by marrying a third, a young girl. The first two decide to teach him a lesson, and one day when he is in the WC, they turn off the water in the house. When Husaini asks for an ewer (aftaba) to clean himself, he is handed one full of acid. His genitals severely corroded, he is hospitalized and unable to enjoy his new marriage. The rumour became so strong that Husaini had to deny it, both in the press and in Parliament, saying that he was in hospital for other reasons. He accused the reformist newspapers of damaging his reputation and threatened to sue them.
- ¹². At the time of the Revolution, a selection of Ayatollah Khomeini's writings relating to fiqh regulations for sexual conduct was translated as part of The Little Green Book; secularists found such writings both ridiculous and obscene, and used this volume as propaganda against the Islamic Republic.
- ¹³. Translation of these passages are mine.
- ¹⁴. The Saying (ravayat) of Imam 'Ali to which the author refers is: "Almighty God created desire in ten parts; and then gave nine parts to women and one to men."
- ¹⁵ Hilli, Mohaqeq N. Sharayi' Islam (Laws of Islam), Vol. II. Persian Translation by A. A. Yazdi, compiled by M. T. Danish-Pazhuh (Tehran: Tehran University Press, 1364/1985), p. 428.
- ¹⁶. Written by Zahra Gavahi (who belongs to the religious-nationalist tendency which is close to the Reformist camp), published by Sazman-i Tablighat-i Islami, Tehran, first edition, 1373 (1994).
- ¹⁷. Written by Maryam Savaji (close to the Reformists), published by Mujarrid, Tehran, 2nd edition, 1371 (1992).
- ¹⁸. Written by Murtaza Fahim Kirmani (a middle-ranking cleric close to the Reformist camp), published by Daftar Nashr-i Farhang-i Islami, 5th edition, 1373 (1994).
- ¹⁹. Written by Ayatollah Javadi-Amuli (a high-ranking cleric close to the Conservative camp), published by Nashr-i Farhang-i Rija, 3rd edition, 1372 (1993).
- ²⁰. The gist of Tabatabai'i's theory is found in his Ta'dud-i zaujat va Maqam-i Zan dar Islam (Polygamy and the status of women in Islam) (Qom: Azadi Publishers, nd).
- ²¹. Ustad Murtaza Mutahhari, Nizam-i Huquq-i Zan dar Islam (Qum: Mulla Sadra, 1370/1991 [1353/1974], p. 207). For this passage, I supply my own translation, since the published translation renders shahvat variously as 'sexual derive, 'passion'. Later passages are taken from the published translation: The Rights of Women in Islam (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, fourth edition, 1991)
- ²². For Soroush's theory and its impact on gender discourses, see Mir-Hosseini, Islam and Gender, chapter 7.
- ²³. Shamsolvaezin was jailed in July 2000 for five years.
- ²⁴. Kiyan and Zanan played a role in the Iran of the 1990s similar to that of the Husainiyya Irshad in the Iran of the 1970s, in the sense that they became a forum for New Religious Thinking. The most important Muslim intellectuals in Iran were associated with them: 'Ali Shariati with Husainiyya Irshad and Abdolkarim Soroush with Kiyan.

²⁵. At the time of writing (winter 2001) neither writes for Zanan any longer. Both were victims of the anti-reformists' wrath, and were imprisoned, Sa'idzada in June 1998 as described below, and Kar in April 2000, following the 6th Majlis elections.

²⁶. In many ways, the 1992 launch of Payam-i Zan, a women's magazine published by the Qum seminaries, was a Neo-Traditionalist response to Zanan; for discussion, see Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Rethinking gender: discussions with ulama in Iran," Critique: A Journal of Middle East Studies, Fall 1998, pp. 45-59.

²⁷. Sayyid Muhsin Sa'idzada, "Correspondence between feminism and Islamic religious issues," (Tatbiq-i Feminizm ba Masa'il-i Dini-i Islam) in Women, Gender and Islam, proceedings of the Sixth Seminar of the Iranian Women's Studies Foundation, 1995, p. 34.

²⁸. In my 1995 discussions with the clerics of Payam-i Zan, I too avoided raising such issues. I criticized their gender discourse, which is a modified version of Ayatollah Mutahhari's, and questioned many of the underlying assumptions, but when it came to his conception of sexuality, I kept silent: the topic was still very much taboo. See Islam and Gender, pp. 277-78.

²⁹. For a discussion of this debate in the Iranian context, see Val Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and its discontents: notes on a debate," Iran Bulletin (<http://www.iran-bulletin.org/islamic_feminism.htm>)