

SUFI WOMEN: WOMEN WHO TROD THE PATH OF PIETY

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For Muslim men and women;

For believing men and women,

For devout men and women,

For men and women who are patient and constant;

For men and women who humble themselves;

For men and women who give in charity;

For men and women who fast and deny themselves;

For men and women who guard their chastity;

And for men and women who engage in the praise of Allah;

For them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a vast reward.

(Quran XXXIII:35)

According to the above Quranic verse, the faith (Din) of men and women are equal in the sight of Almighty Allah. Although women cannot be

prophets, female saints who attained the peaks of spiritual development have brightened the pages of Islamic history to the present day. The book under review presents anecdotes from the lives of both the well-known and obscure female saints who, forsaking sleep, food and possessions, all were completely devoted to the service of God.

Even in their seclusion, their impact over society was immense. The story is told in this book of the thief who entered Rabia al-Adawiya's humble cottage in Basra only to find nothing to steal. He was about to leave when Rabia called him back.

“If you are really a thief, you cannot go without taking something.” “I could find nothing to steal.”

“Make Wudhu with my pitcher and pray two rakats with me. Then you will never go away empty-handed.”

The thief obeyed and found such delight in his namaz that he prayed the whole night with her. Morning found him completely transformed, prostrate on the floor in repentance.

In this book several stories are told of cruel, greedy, corrupt and unjust kings, princes, ministers and governors who made tearful repentance at the feet of these holy women and joined the ranks of the pious ones.

Stories are also related here of ferocious Wild beasts who because gentle and tractable in the company of these saintly women. The story is told of a holy shepherdess grazing her flock of sheep next to a pack of wolves. The wolves did not prey on the sheep, the message of this tale being that peace with God means peace with nature.

In this age of materialism, the spirituality of these women will at first seem strange and incomprehensible to the modern, secular mind for the two mental outlooks are irreconcilable. This book, like no other, demonstrates the hollowness of Women's Lib., showing what women, faithful to their

innate femininity can accomplish and aspire to, thus proving once and for all why the knowledge of the mind must always remain inferior to the wisdom which comes from the illuminated heart.

Maryam Jameelah