

PATH TO THE GARDEN

Foundational Knowledge for the Believing Women & Men

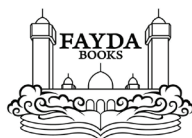
Book I

Simplification of Primary (Islamic) Education for African Children

Book II

Motherly Advice for the Muslim Girl Concerning Religious and Worldly Life

By Shaykha Ruqayya bint Ibrahim Niass



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BOOK I

Simplification of Primary Education for African Children

SAMPLE

Preface



Shaykha Ruqayya Niass is a daughter of West Africa and also a renowned Islamic scholar. She was born on the night her father moved with his nascent community to Medina in the north of Kaolack (Sine-Saloum), at the end of 1930. Named after Ruqayya, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, her father told her: "I named you Ruqayya, ascension, since I have never ceased to ascend in the Divine Realm."

She learned Qur'an from her fathers Mauritanian disciple, Muhammad Rabbani. After committing the Holy Book to memory, she started learning fiqh from her father and arabic grammar from Ustadz Baye Ahmad Thiam (ajrumiyya, mulhatul i'rab, lamiyatul af'al). Later, she joined her fathers classes in alfiya, ihmimir and maqamat (assemblies of hariri) which took place in the early fifties. Before Shaykh Ibrahim would take over their teachings he submitted them to an exam in the following:

'Praise be to Allah who taught Man what he did not know. With that, I say to my bright children who excel in writ-

ing and in reasoning, who are bound for greatness. Follow the ways of greatness, for that is the best thing they can inherit from their parents. Let each of you right a report, in which he(or she) explains to me his(her) level of knowledge in arabic grammar.”

At the same time, Shaykh sent a letter to Saydi Aliou Cisse and Baye Ahmad Thiam urging them to examine the reports written by his children (students) and to choose the best ones for an award. In that letter, shaykh ibrahim wrote a poem to be read to the students that would enlighten and galvanize their efforts. He said in it, referring to Shaykha Rokhaya Niass in 1951:

“I rejoice from your words like daughter like son, siblings you must be, do not be unjust toward yourselves.”

The winners of the competition were Al hadj abdullah Niass (his first son), Shaykh Ruqayya Niass, Moustafa Diouf and Professor Ibrahim Mahmoud Diop.

In 1954, she wrote her first book called, *Tanbihul bin-tul Muslimah* (Motherly advice for the Muslim Girl...) which was commended by shaykh Ibrahim, Seydi Aliou Cisse, the Moroccan diplomat from Mauritania, the scholar Muhammad Kabir Ould Hurma Alawi, Ibrahim Mahmoud Diop and Muhammad Amin Ibrahim Niass.

The book enjoyed wide acclaim by critics and considered, by such authorities like Doctor Amar Samb, as the sole voice for women in ‘senegalese arabic scholarship.

He translated the whole book into French, for his PhD dissertation in 1972 at Sorbonne university in Paris.

The first senegalese president, Leopold Sedar Senghor, although a christian, helped the Shaykh publish the book in the early sixties.

In the 1960's, she wrote the Taysir (Simplification of primary 'Islamic education) which is a simplified summarization of Islamic Foundational Knowledge, for the young boys and girls. It was supposed to be proposed as part of the curriculum in the Muslim primary school system.

The year 1975 was officially dedicated to women by the United Nations. At that UN convention a proclamation was signed for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women.

Her father (Shaykh Ibrahim) ordered her to write a book about the position of women in Islam. Upon completion, she gave him the draft (which he approved before traveling to London where he passed on July 25th 1975). One of the Shaykhs students, the Former Nigerian Inspector general, M.D Yusuf, sponsored its publication in the early 80's.

The Shaykhas works are extensively quoted in university studies in Senegal as well as abroad. To name but a few... the PhD dissertation of professor Thierno Ka, the school of Pir Saniokhor, The scholarly paper titled 'Walking Qur'an' by Rudolph T. Ware, the article dedicated by ISESCO (Islamic Educational, Scientific and cultural organization). As for her works in Arabic and French, Zachary Valentine Wright, included her in his PhD dissertation 'Embodied Knowledge', Evanston university.

She has also been a Muqaddamat (Propagator) in the Tijani Spiritual path since 1958. She received that full authorization (to Propagate the Tariqa) from her father (Shaykh Ibrahim Niass) while performing Hajj. He wrote the following prayer for her in the Ijaza (license to Propagate):

"May Allah bless anyone who takes knowledge from her, even if it is one single letter (of the alphabet)"

She was authorized by her father to call people to Islam with wisdom and good preaching. In a letter he wrote to her, while on her way to Nouackchott (Mauritania), he said:

“I forbid ignorant and greedy people to travel. As for you, you are authorized!, and wherever you set foot on, shall be a blessed place.” This was written in 1971.

She has given the Shahada (Islamic Religion) to countless people in West Africa and thousands of people also took the Tijani litanies from her.

In short, Shaykha Ruqayya lives by the principles she wrote about all her life: Dedicate one's life to God and to mankind, shared her knowledge with her fellow sisters, enlighten the younger generation in life and religion.

She has participated in countless meetings and international conferences, in which she functions as the mouthpiece of Muslim women in Africa. Moreover, she has lectured in Europe (Stockholm, London, Manchester, Napoli...) about various topics such as women rights, religious intolerance, how to raise the economic capabilities of the African woman who are oftentimes the hands that feed the family.

With all of that, she never wavered in her duties as mother and wife. She was invited this year (2015) by the President Jimmy Carter Center in Atlanta, Georgia, to attend a worldwide forum on violence against women.

The Shaykha continues to work tirelessly, for the benefit of humanity.

This Preface was written by Cheikh Ahmad Boukar Niang (A son of the Shaykha)

Introduction



Praise belongs to Allah Who commanded us to learn what we do not know, the One Who said: “*Indeed only the scholars revere Allah among His servants*” (Q35:28). Divine blessings and peace be upon Sayyidinâ Muhammad who said, “Seek knowledge even if you have to travel to China”.

My dear brother Haj Abdullah son of Haj Ibrahim Niass commissioned me to compose a short book useful for the education of primary school children, which would include passages from the Holy Qur’an and Prophetic narrations, adhering to simple language to make it easy for children to comprehend and memorize. This booklet is the result of that request, and I ask Allah to realize his hope in me and make it a means of guidance for even one boy or girl, so that I may find great reward in the Presence of Allah Most High.

First Lesson: the Holy Qur'an

1. Opening Surah
2. Sura Ikhlas
3. sura falaq
4. sura naas
5. sura Sharh

SAMPLE

Second Lesson



Allah is my Lord and Cherisher, Muhammad (saws) is my Prophet, Islam is my religion, the Ka'ba is my direction of focus in prayer, the Qur'an is my book of guidance, and the Muslims are my brothers.

Allah is my Lord and the Lord of all creatures, He is the One Who created me and created the universe and everything in it. He gives me life and takes life away.

Third Lesson



What are the first responsibilities upon the Muslim boy and girl?

It is necessary for all Muslim boys and girls to know that Allah Most High is his Lord and Creator, Provider and Guide, giving him life and taking it away. In this way, he will come to love Him and obey Him, and his heart will confirm His Oneness and recognize that He is characterized with Uniqueness, existing without beginning or end, completely different from non-eternal things, Self-Subsisting without need of others, Indivisible in His Essence and Qualities, All-Powerful, having effective Will, Knowledgeable, Hearing, Seeing, and Speaking. There is no god besides Him, glory be to Him Who fashions creatures in the womb as He wills.

Qul Huwa Allahu Ahad (Q112:1-4)

Laysa Ka mithlihi shay' (Q42:11): "There is nothing whatsoever like Him"