

Al-Qawārīr - Vol: 02, Issue: 04, July - Sep 2021 OPEN ACCESS Al-Qawārīr pISSN: 2709-4561 eISSN: 2709-457X journal.al-qawarir.com

Women Entrepreneurship in Early Islamic Era; A motivation for

women in modern age

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Version of Record

Received: 27-July-21 Accepted: 17-Aug-21 Online/Print: 21-Aug-2021

<u>ABSTRACT</u>

Women play a significant role in fostering the economic development and societal stability of a country. Women are revered in Islam and given privileged status and honor by numerous religious commandments. In terms of attitudes and objectives, Muslim female entrepreneurs are distinct from others, as they are bound to authenticate and evaluate their activities in the light of primary sources of Shariah. This article will explore and ponder the life of women entrepreneurs of early Islamic era, especially Khadijah (R.A), Arabia's richest businesswoman and most revered female entrepreneur in prophetic house. Many of the Prophet's sahabiya (female companions) were also engaged in a variety entrepreneurial pursuit such as trade, business, health care, education and agriculture etc. The article will examine the approaches used by these great ladies as well as investigate the problems and prospects of contemporary Muslim women entrepreneurs. In Pakistan, officials, scholars, and professionals have been discussing more about women's entrepreneurship in recent years. This study will provide an overview of various facets of female free enterprise from an Islamic perspective. At the end of this research paper, some extensive patterns from entrepreneurial lives of Sahabiyahs will be highlighted in order to motivate women of modern age.

Key words: Women entrepreneurship, Early Islamic Era, Problems, Motivation, Modern-age.



Entrepreneurship is a process to develop new ideas for economic growth. It is an important term of innovation, job creation, economic stability, and productivity.¹ Entrepreneurship has different meanings to different people. In practice, entrepreneurship is about creating something new, or discovering a new way of making something that already exists. Entrepreneurs are main drivers to eradicate unemployment. Islam supports entrepreneurship, irrespective to matter whether it is motivated by profit gaining intention or need, as long as it is ethical and moral and observes the Islamic code of behavior.² Women are almost half of world's population. Countries where women work side by side with men are considered successful as the manpower is double as compared to the nations where only men work. Women entrepreneurship is highly considered to be one of the best solutions to the economic crises and problems affecting the contemporary world.³

Importance of entrepreneurship in Islam

Islam encourages Muslims to procure living through entrepreneurial activities as found in the primary sources of Shariah.⁴ Undeniably, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) himself was involved in entrepreneurial activities since in his early life. The idea of entrepreneurship in Islam can be seen in Quran which encourages entrepreneurship.⁵ Yet there are certain rules which should be followed by entrepreneur (both man and woman) that they must be conscious and righteous in their business dealings so that they may get reward from Allah.⁶ Interest (Riba), gambling and engaging in illegal activities are prohibited. So, Muslim entrepreneurs should only involve in morally acceptable business activities.⁷

Women entrepreneurship in Shariah

The most important aspect of women's economic empowerment in Islam is that it has recognized their unique and self-sufficient character and gave them different economic rights.⁸Their financial positions in Islam are regulated by the wide norm of division of work. This division of work relies upon their natural comparable advantages. Man needs to deal with the affairs outside the home while woman needs to manage inside. It is therefore mandatory for males to spend on their spouses. This division of work and exclusive circle of activities embraced by Islam is appropriate by and large and in normal conditions. In emergencies and special circumstances there may be change of their positions or they can join hands to share liabilities of one another.⁹ Thus, it's also fair to say that more than 1400 years ago, the Muslim woman was given a role, privileges, and opportunities that most women today, even in the developed countries, do not have. These were designed by Allah in terms of maintaining societal and economical equilibrium. Islam does not prohibit Muslim Women to work, rather it promotes exchange by mutual consent, it can be seen clearly in Quranic Verses which addresses both, men and women.¹⁰

The Holy Quran and Sunnah mutually encourage (both men and women) to work in order to earn lawful money. Many Prophetic sayings signify the distinction importance of self-employment, honest and reliable entrepreneur. Islam allows women to do business, if they do not violate Islamic rules.¹¹ The First Muslim Woman 'Khadijah al-Kubra' was really a successful businesswoman in Arab. Khadijah (R.A), as a marvelous and distinct entrepreneur, is the best motivation for any Muslim women entrepreneur. Her business was bigger than the entirety of the Quraysh exchanges joined and the most acclaimed with a standing of reasonable managing and high-quality products.¹² Islam encourages women to perform their business deals and financial activities on their own, compliance with the terms, demands, and limitations imposed by Islam. Women's entrepreneurship and business rights may be limited if they contradict Quranic criteria and Islamic principles.

Women Entrepreneurship in Early Islamic Era

There are many narratives identified with the role of Muslim ladies in the early time of Islam. Such stories generally address their cultural roles, for example their role as a mother, as spouse or as a devout lady. But in history there are many Muslim ladies who played an extremely huge part in economic empowerment, particularly at the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH.).

In following lines, this research paper will examine the economic activities of the female companions of Holy Prophet (PBUH) and their role as entrepreneurs in various eminent fields:

Trade/Business

Trade provides main streamline to all human matters. All activities relating to agriculture, industry or any other profession, directly or indirectly rotates around it. All kinds of facilities of human life are dependent on trading. Islam encourages trading and forbids usury.¹³ Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also emphasized trading. He himself was involved in trading.¹⁴There are many sayings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH.) which shows importance of trade in Islam such as he said once:

"Truthful and honest merchant will be with the prophets, the truthful, and the martyrs."¹⁵

Many Muslim ladies of Prophet (PBUH.) era were doing business and he didn't stop them from doing so, instead, he used to encourage them. As a matter of fact, most prominent lady in early Islamic era was Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s first and dearest spouse, Hazrat Khadija bint Khuwailid, who was the first Muslim lady to accept Islam. She was a noticeable financial specialist in Makkah. She boosted her career by hiring people to oversee the business on her behalf on the principals of ijara (lease) and mudarba'h (Profit sharing). But she used to send her slaves with

agents for counter checking.¹⁶ From this account, we can find that she was an insightful business lady, with the abilities and information to be fruitful in the import-send out exchange, while going around issues emerging from awry data and making exceptionally cautious work force choices. In fact, Prophet (PBUH.) also facilitated his Hazrat Khadija in her business and trade.¹⁷ She continued her business after marriage. "After the marriage Muhammad continued to trade with Khadija's capital, though presumably now as her partner rather than as her agent".¹⁸ Female companions of Prophet (PBUH.) such as Khaula, Lakhmia, Thaqafia, and Bint Makhzamah used to trade in perfumes and scents. A Muslim lady named Quila asked Prophet, "I am a woman who buys and sells things." Then she asked many questions about trading.¹⁹ Regarding Hazrat Hafsa (R.A), Ibn e Saad says: "She had business of silk".²⁰ Ata' bin Al-Sa'ib narrated that his mother Malika used to sell perfumes. Holy Prophet (PBUH) bought perfume from her, then he said to her: "O Malika, do you have a need?" She requested to have pray for her son who was with her. So Holy Prophet came to him, wiped his head and prayed for him.²¹ Many instances show that women used to come to the house of Holy Prophet (PBUH) to sell things²² or provide services and he never barred them from coming. A wide field of trade today is related to women, including women's clothing and ornaments, which is not only be beneficial for women entrepreneurs as they get income but also for women buyer as they can buy womankind things without hesitation. It is disgraceful that today a large number of womankind things and ornaments are sold by men resulting in free mixing of men and women.

Agriculture

Agriculture is most significant part or factor of human life. Farming is directly or indirectly involving in every aspect of life. It is clear from Islamic teachings that agriculture is important sector that cannot be neglected. There are many verses and sayings of Prophet (PBUH.) which emphasizes importance of agriculture. Narrated Anas Bin Malik: Allah's Prophet said, "There is none among the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and afterward a bird, or an individual or an animal eats from it, however is viewed as a magnanimous present for him."²³

Farming is not easy as one has to work during rain, scorching heat and freezing cold but women of current era are working shoulder by shoulder with men. Lives of female companions of Prophet (PBUH) are great motivation for women of current era as it is visible that during time period of Prophet (PBUH.) women were involved in farming. They were having their own farms and they used to work there. Narrated Asma' bint Abu Bakr that when Zubair (R.A) wedded her; she had no genuine property or any slave or whatever else with the exception of a camel which drew water from the well, and his pony. She used to take care of his pony with grain

and drew water. Moreover, she used to convey the pile of date stones on her head from Zubair's territory given to him by Allah's Apostle and this land was two third Farsakh (around two miles) from my home. ²⁴ Jabir bin Abdullah (R.A) reported: My maternal aunt was divorced, and she decided to pluck the dates from her palm trees. Someone rebuked her for coming out (during the 'Idda period). She approached Allah's Prophet (PBUH) and he permitted her to pluck the dates.²⁵ It shows that Islamic does not bar a woman to work for her survival if she does it in boundaries set by Shariah. Women participated in agriculture in early Islamic era, rather, some of them used to have their own gardens and work there by their own. Narrated Sahl bin Saad: There was a lady among us who had a farm and she used to plant Silq (a sort of vegetable) on the edges of streams in her ranch. On Fridays she used to pull out the Silq from its foundations and put the roots in a utensil. Then, at that point she would put a small bunch of powdered grain over it and cook it. The underlying foundations of the Silq subbed for meat. In the wake of completing the Jumma prayer we used to welcome her and she would give us that food which we would eat with our hands, and on account of that supper, we used to anticipate Friday.²⁶ Moreover, Women in early Islamic era also used to tend goats and graze sheep for them or for their owner.²⁷ Hence, it is proved that at the time of Prophet (PBUH.) women, whether they were free or slave, were participating in agriculture and livestock farming. Farming is one of those sectors where our society is accepting women. A big part of the number of inhabitants in our rustic region comprises on women and they are accomplishing remarkable work in farming and livestock sector. For those women, it is their utter need to work in ranches and livestock to meet their both ends and in addition they are producing revenue for the nation in the form of exporting products and through livestock farming.

Handicrafts

Handicrafts are mainly understood as artisan work and sometimes also called as artisan work. It is kind of work through which different excellent things are made by hand, utilizing basic instruments. From centuries women are involved in handicrafts. Women of Prophet's era were also performing great in handicrafts sector. Holy Prophet appreciated, Zainab Bint Abu Muawiyah, Wife of Abdullah Bin Masood, who was a skilled in handiwork. She used to make things with her hands and sell them to earn some money to help her family.²⁸ Women used to serve their families by their hand earned money as well as give charities from the income. Women are the owner of her earnings and she can use her earned money in all legitimate matters. Prophet (PBUH)'s wife Zainab bint Jahesh was also an entrepreneur as she used to work with her hands and spend (that pay) on charity.²⁹ It shows that even if a woman does not necessarily need to work to fulfill her needs,

she can still work to have more money to please Allah by charity. Pakistan is extremely wealthy in heritage of traditional handicrafts and has an immense history over centuries. Pakistani heritage of traditional handicrafts has evolved and transferred from generation to generation. Most of the women who are working in this sector are not well educated. We need to educate them to progress in their work. Now, Pakistani government took some steps to improve small industries and handicrafts as they opened vocational colleges. They are giving scholarships and encouraging women to step forward and earn in dignified way.

Health care Provider

The practice of medicine has an extra ordinary importance in Islam. The Prophet (PBUH.) used to instruct his companions on the significance of seeking treatment for ailments and diseases. Narrated Abu al-Darda: The Prophet (PBUH) said: Allah has sent down both the sickness and the cure, and He has designated a solution for each illness, so treat yourselves medically, yet utilize nothing unlawful.³⁰ Many Muslims including female companions of Prophet (PBUH.) were practicing in medical filed. Prophet (PBUH.) encouraged them. In fact, female companions used to go with male companions in battle field to give them medical facilities. It has been narrated on the authority of Anas b. Malik who said that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH.) permitted Umm Sulaim and some other ladies of the Ansar to go with him when he did battle; they would offer water (to the soldiers) and would treat the injured.³¹ Rufaida Al- Aslamia is considered as first female nurse and surgeon of the world. She was companion of Prophet (PBUH.). She accompanied Muslims in many battles. She used to have medical tent that was like military mobile hospital in current era. When Saad Ibn Muaath was injured in the battle of The Trench (Khandaq), Prophet (PBUH.) ordered that he be placed and treated in her tent. She trained many other women too.³² It is clear that women can perform their duties in the field of medicine and even treat male patients in the case of emergency. Women are doing very well in the field of medical but still that is not sufficient according to the population. In fact, many female doctors leave their practice after marriage or having children. "There are around 85000 lady doctors, who completed their medical education on the expense of state or privately but they are not part of the medical workforce in Pakistan."33

It is the duty of state to understand their issues and provide them enough facilities so that they may able to perform well at home and as well as at hospitals. There should be separate hospitals for females so that female doctors may comfortably perform their duties.

Educators

Education is the fundamental right of every human being. It helps not in economic growth of developing countries but play an important role in developed countries too. Islam gives equal rights to men and women to seek education. The significance of education can be assessed with the first revelation of Quran. In first revelation Allah says, "Read with the name of your God who made (everything)"³⁴ Importance of education repeatedly emphasized in Quran and sayings of Prophet (PBUH.). At another place Quran says, "say thou: shall they who know and those who know not be held equal? It is only men of understanding who receive admonition."³⁵

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH.) spent his life teaching the standards of Islam and the law set by Allah Almighty to the people around him. It was the Prophet's most extreme persistence and benevolence in his teachings that transformed the once fighting Arab agnostics into the best instances of people in the whole world. For his entire life, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) laid incredible accentuation on conferring and getting information.

It was narrated by Kathir bin Qais that Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever follows a way chasing after information, Allah will make simple for him a way to Paradise. The angels bring down their wings in endorsement of the searcher of information, and everybody in the sky and on earth petitions God for absolution for the searcher of knowledge, even the fish in the ocean. The superiority of the researcher over the worshiper resembles the prevalence of the moon over any remaining radiant bodies. The researchers are the heirs of the Prophets, for the Prophets didn't leave behind Dinâr or Dirham, but they left behind knowledge, so whoever takes it has taken an incredible offer."³⁶ It is obvious from the Holy Qur'an and hadiths that the acquisition of knowledge is obligatory for women similarly as on account of men. There is no discrimination between men and women in Quranic verses or in ahadith.³⁷ The study of the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) shows that he made exceptional arrangements for the instruction and education of women. Aisha Sadiqa (R.A) was hadith narrator, jurist and educator. She narrated 2210 traditions.³⁸

Muslim Women Entrepreneurs; Problems and Prospects

Entrepreneurship is frequently viewed as a male-gendered idea, and conveys manly implications. However, the significance of women entrepreneurs and their contribution to the economy has recently been figured it out. Today, numerous ladies contribute to government, business, politics and legislative issues. Recently a fast extension of Muslim women entrepreneurs has occurred ultimately leading to economic stability.³⁹ However, in developing countries like Pakistan, ladies face huge difficulties in attempting to achieve their entrepreneurial dreams. Although main purpose of creating Pakistan was to follow Islamic laws, but social culture is

impacted by pre-Islamic ancestral patterns that advance male centric culture. People feel that the ladies can't maintain a business. Women are underutilized in the majority of Muslim countries due to low literacy and poverty.⁴⁰ Women entrepreneurs' worth for economic stability and growth is not being utilized due to the absence of investment, space, office premises, information technology, coaching, and professional aid. The inherent views of a patriarchal society, which assert that males are superior to women and that women are designed specifically to be homemakers, pose major challenges.⁴¹

Nabeel A. Goheer in his report "Women entrepreneurs in Pakistan" published by International Labor office, Geneva identifies the constraints faced by women entrepreneur in their economic activities as lack of support by family, discrimination, lack of capital, oppression and criticism by society, harassment by male fellows, lack of security and religious misconceptions.⁴² Economic instability, inflation, market monopiles, tax, production and labor problems are also faced by women entrepreneurs. It is considered bad for women to travel alone, deal openly with male customers and go to markets to sell their products themselves.⁴³ Women can take assistance from their "mahram" men for all this tasks or can sell things online through trusted platforms. Pakistani society is now encouraging women participation in economic activities and market is expanding for women due to increasing awareness.

Motivational patterns for Muslim women and recommendations

The entrepreneurial lives of Khadija (R.A) and sahabiyahs are inspiring and worthfollowing to modern Muslim women, since many of them have accepted inactive lifestyle, resulting in several issues in our society, like marital strife, unemployment, trafficking, and so on. Khadija (R.A) began her career as a widow and managed it until her death, without diverging from Islam's commands. To be harmonious with their spouses and families, modern Muslim women should learn and emulate their lives. Marriage must not be taken as impediment to entrepreneurship as Khadijah (R.A) and other sahabiyah managed to run their business and bear children at the same time.⁴⁴ It is permissible for a woman to begin entrepreneurship with the help of their brother, father or husband. As Khadijah (R.A) had the support of her father and husband and other sahabiyahs, too. Entrepreneurial married women must not be strict in providing financial support and assistance to their husbands, or they risk being stopped or facing obstacles in their business, as Khadija's (RA) endorsement for the Prophet (PBUH) and Islam earned her husband's blessing and prestige, as he deemed her distinctive among all the women in the world.⁴⁵

Today in our society, it is misconception that women's (wife, sister or daughter etc.) income is dishonor for family. All these stereotypes are a result of lack of religious knowledge. Once Zainab (R.A) and other ladies of Ansar asked Holy Prophet (PBUH) about serving their needy husbands and their children from their earned money, the Messenger of Allah said: There are two rewards for them, the reward of family relationship and the reward of Sadaqa."⁴⁶Though, it is the duty of

men to support family but it is also permissible for women to serve family unit as Quran has called husband and wife each other's support.⁴⁷ So, Islam also motivates women to work and earn for the wellbeing of their family and to please Allah, but they should not neglect their family affairs as well.

Absence of a husband, divorce, childbearing, widowhood, or even virginity do not deter a woman from starting a new business or entrepreneurship, as Khadija (R.A) appears to have done after her marriage, separation and before she married the prophet (SAW). This made her self-sufficient and business queen of Arabia.⁴⁸ So, a great deal of motivation patterns be assessed by the study of seerah of entrepreneur Sahabiyahs of early Islamic era that encourage women to play their part in social and economic development.

Pakistani women entrepreneurs need to have an intense understanding of the entrepreneurial culture and how to make an overall arrangement for the business to succeed. Our policy makers should proceed with their endeavors to support women entrepreneurs to work for prosperity. Strict measures should be taken for safety and honor of women so they may serve freely in every field. Public authority organizations, media and education policy makers should put forth cooperative attempts for furnishing ladies with further developed admittance to business advancement administrations. Furthermore, our community should understand this reality that Islamic rules set the best standards and limit for business and financial behaviors which is missing in any other system, so they should help women entrepreneurship particularly through proper Islamic training to avail of the chances given by Allah. If Islamic rules are completely followed, Muslims will recapture the former glory of the Ummah.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship is the process of generating revenue via investment in business and industry. To regulate business activities, Islam has its own entrepreneurship culture and core values based on the Quran and Hadith. According to the findings, Islam does not bar women from working and partaking in commercial and economic activities. The study of Khadijah's (R.A) and the Sahabiyahs' (female companions) of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) entrepreneurial lives indicates the parameters that Islam requires for women's engagement in

economic enterprises. It provides great deal of motivation and incentive for women in modern age. Women are one of Pakistan's most powerful groups, accounted for nearly half of the country's population. But, due to poverty, cultural restraints, lack of education and social barriers many women have not been adequately encouraged to reach their full potential. Owing to a variety of deeply entrenched discriminating social, economic and cultural attitudes women entrepreneurs do not have the same opportunities as males.⁴⁹ As a consequence, women's entrepreneurship is still unable to influence social and economic values. Female entrepreneurs in Pakistan can increase their success rate and economic contribution if they are provided with enough support, proper means, capital, facilities and a suitable atmosphere.⁵⁰ In contemporary global scenario for women entrepreneurs, it is recommendable for women to follow the footways of Muslim women of Early Islamic era like Khadija (R.A).

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