

The Status of Women in Islam: Qur'an and Sunnah Perspective

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Abstract

The Qur'an was revealed by God to the holy and blessed Prophet Muhammad as guideline for the entire human race. The blessed Prophet himself practiced each and every command laid down by the Qur'an and set up an ideal society on its basis. His deeds are recorded in compilation known as hadith, explaining the Qur'an. They are popularly known as Sunnah. Under the social system of Islam, no human being is discriminated against on ground of sex, power of wealth. We find various verses in the Qur'an, which clarify the position of man and woman in society. Both are like two wheels of carriage jointly working for its smooth running. Both are equally important in the eyes of God. Islam has, guaranteed and legally safeguarded rights of women and, has enjoined upon the entire society to treat the women with respect kindness and consideration. "as if they do. Islam created an environment in which women can live with complete dignity. Yeah right. Let us begin our discussion by studying the status of a woman in a Muslim family. Here she enjoys three distinct roles.

Keywords: Qur'an, Women, Islam, Human, Muslim family.

Introduction

Islam accords, after Allah and the blessed Prophet, the third highest status to a mother, Good treatment of both father and mother has been enjoined and their obedience made mandatory.

Here also mother has been placed above the father: -

"And we have stressed on man concerning his parents. His mother bore him undergoing weakness upon weakness and his weaning takes two years, then give thanks to me and to your parents".⁽¹⁾

"And we commanded man to do good to this parents. His mother bore him with pain. And his bearing and weaning end in thirty months, till when he reached to his strength and attached the age of forty years. I may be thankful for your blessing which you bestowed upon me and upon my parents"⁽²⁾

The blessed Prophet, too, asked by his companions emphasized good treatment of the mother.

Abu Hurraiah narrates "Once a person asked the blessed Prophet as to who best deserved good treatment. The Blessed Prophet said, "Your mother", The same question was asked for the second and third time and the Blessed Prophet again elucidated the same answer. The fourth time, however, the blessed Prophet replied

"Your father". ⁽³⁾

Similarly, Abdullah Ibn Umar narrates that once someone confessed to the Blessed Prophet that he had committed a grave sin and requested him to kindly point out a way of retribution and penance. The blessed Prophet asked him if his mother was alive? When the man replied in the affirmative, the blessed Prophet said, "Treat her well" ⁽⁴⁾ this means that good treatment of mother is a means of divine forgiveness.

The second role of woman in Islam is that of a wife. In a Muslim society, women have a distinct personality, which does not merge with the personality of her husband after marriage, not is a woman her husband's slave. Marriage entails assumption of some new responsibilities. Her right too cannot be usurped.

The marital relationship according to Islam is one of mutual love and devotion. The Qur'an has mentioned the natural mutual attraction of the two sexes in the following words:

"And of His signs is that he created for you from among yourselves couple that you may find repose in them and he put love and mercy between you. No, doubt in it are signs for a people who ponder". ⁽⁵⁾

Islam has urged man not only to fulfill the legal rights of his wife, but also to treat her with love. Sometime man does not love his wife because of some faults in her. It is but natural. In such cases too, man is urged to treat her well because even her faults might be a hidden blessing for him. As Qur'an says:

"If you dislike them, there is likelihood that you dislike a thing wherein Allah has placed much good" ⁽⁶⁾ This verses goes both ways, not only form men women bright not like their husbands too.

The blessed Prophet has explained this teaching in the following words:-

"Feed her, too, with what you eat, when you wear (a new dress), give her one too, don't strike her face, and do not abuse her; don't push her out of your house, but keep away from her (if you must) within the house" ⁽⁷⁾

It is often seen that outside his home, a man's behavior is extremely good but at home his behavior towards his wife is not correct.

"The most perfect faith is of that Muslim who has the best morals, and the best amongst you is he whose behavior towards his wife is good" ⁽⁸⁾

The status accorded by Islam to women as a wife is evident from the fact that wife has been said to be the best of worldly goods. *"This world is a name of life and the best of this means is pious women"* ⁽⁹⁾

The Prophet of Islam in his last sermon especially mentioned women in her role as wife and said that:

"O people, regarding the women, fear Allah" ⁽¹⁰⁾

If a woman as a wife is granted her due status in the family, it would certainly result in the emergence of an ideal family and consequently, of an ideal society.

The Third aspect of family life in Islam is that of a daughter. However, a daughter treated in pre-Islamic society, has been clearly mentioned in the Qur'an.

"And when the tiding of the birth of a daughter is conveyed to any of them, then his face remains black all along the day, and he suppresses his anger. He hides himself from the people because of the evil of this good tiding. Shall he keep it with

disgrace or bury it in the dust?

Lo! Very bad the judge".⁽¹¹⁾

Islam issued a strict warning against it when it said, "And when the female buried alive is questioned about what crime was she killed"⁽¹²⁾ on the contrary. Islam preached that daughters should be cherished and loved.

"If Allah tries a Men through his daughters yet he treats them well, they shall be means of protecting him against hell."⁽¹³⁾

These injunctions are urgings to treat daughters well and imperiled. Moreover, the Islamic way is truly amazing: till marriage, a girl is the responsibility of father and, after marriage, her husband for all her needs. When the husband dies, a portion of his property goes to his widow, this make her financially independent. In short, in Islamic society a woman has full legal rights and privileges and at the same time she is morally and object of respect and esteem.

Islam has also decreed that man and women should always remain each other's helpers through the vicissitudes of life. No nation and no movement can ignore either the man or the women. Just as they go hand in hand to propagate light, so do they collaborate to mitigate darkness.

Qur'an has advised the wives of the Blessed Prophet who are the mothers of all Muslim and the ideals of all Muslim women in the following words:

("O the communicators of unseen (prophet) say to your wives if you wish the life of the world and its adornment, then come, I provide you wealth and leave you in good manner. And if you wish Allah and His messenger and the home of the hereafter then undoubtedly Allah has kept prepared for the well doers among you a great reward. O wives of the Prophet! Who so ever of you dares to be against manifest modesty, shall have double torment in comparison to others. And this is easy for Allah. And whosoever of you remain s obedient to Allah and His messenger and does good deeds, we shall double her reward in comparison to others and we have kept prepared! You are not like other women if you fear Allah, therefore be not so polite in your speech lest one in whose heart is a disease should feel tempted, yet speak good words".⁽¹⁴⁾

These verses describe and define the status of those who are leaders and ideals of the Muslim women. Elucidating the ideal for the common Muslim women the Qur'an says:

"Undoubtedly, Muslim men and women, and the believing men and women, and obedient men and women and truthful men and women and enduring men and women and humble men and women and almsgiving men and women and fasting men and women, and men and women who guard their chastity and men and women who remember Allah much, for all of them Allah he kept prepared forgiveness and great rewards. And it is not benefiting to a Muslim man or Muslim women, when Allah and His messenger have any decree in something that they would have any choice in their matters, and whoever disobeys Allah and His messenger, he undoubtedly, has stayed away manifestly".⁽¹⁵⁾

Along with this, Qur'an has also presented two other women as ideals for Muslim women, the first is the wife of Fir'aun who, while living in an evil environment followed the divine commands. She was not proud to be the queen and consort of the Fir'aun rather she longed and prayed for deliverance from her evil

environment.

"And Allah sets forth the example of Muslims, the wife of Fir'aun when she said, O my lord! Build a house for me in the paradise with you, and deliver me from Fir'aun and his work and deliver me from the unjust people."⁽¹⁶⁾

The second woman is Mary, the mother of Jesus Christ, whose modesty, virtue and piety is projected as an ideal for Muslim women. Thus the Qur'an says:

"And Maryum the daughter of Imran who preserved her chastity, so we breathed into her of our spirit and she confirmed the words of her lord and His books and became obedient."⁽¹⁷⁾

These exalted women have been contrasted with the wives of Buh and Lut who did not respond to their husband's call and were therefore condemned.

"Ahhil sets forth the example of the infidels, the wife of Nuh and Lut. They were under marriage of our two near ones. Then they defrauded them, so they availed them nothing against Allah and it was said to them, enter you both in to the fire with those who enter"⁽¹⁸⁾

Abu Lahab's wife has been mentioned. She aided and abetted her husband in his vice. Both have been condemned in equal measure:

"Perished be the two hands of Abu Lahab and he is already perished. His wealth and what he earned availed him not. Now he enters in to a blazing fire. And his wife too, carrier of fire wood".⁽¹⁹⁾

And then Islam has projected an ideal:

"What is the most valuable treasure for man? A good wife whose sight gladdens him. Who carries out his commands, and who when her man is away, protects his children and home and her virtue".⁽²⁰⁾

Social role of women:-

Women of the early days of Islam were never out of tune with social environment; they shared its joys and sorrows.

"Abdullah bin Amr bin Aas narrates that, "we were coming back with the blessed Prophet from a funeral. When the Blessed Prophet reached his doorstep, he saw his daughter Fatima coming. When she approached him he asked her why had she gone out. She replied that she had gone to the house of the dead person to condole and to pray for the departed soul."⁽²¹⁾

Islam has never prohibited social work and social service by women. This is illustrated by the following two events.

During the Blessed Prophet's life, the Prophet's Mosque at Madina lacked a pulpit. A woman suggested that her slave who was a carpenter could make a pulpit for the Blessed Prophet. The Prophet agreed.⁽²²⁾

Scarcity of water in Makkah was a major problem.

Zubaidah daughter of Jafer, ordered the digging of a fifteen-mile-long canal, which necessitated blasting of hills and rocks and so entailed great expense. Zubaidah said that even if one hammer blow cost a dinar, the work must be accomplished ⁽²³⁾

Political role:-

Women were never unconcerned with political affairs in the early days of Islam. They struggled for the perseverance of the Islamic state and gave great sacrifices; they advised the caliphs and the nobles. In battles too, women played their role

shoulder to shoulder with men in the days of the Blessed Prophet and the caliphs. Lailah al Ghafariyah is an example, about whom Abu-ul-Barr says that she went to the Ghazawat with the blessed Prophet and attended to the wounded and the sick. (24)

There is tradition regarding a lady named Shufa Umme Sulaiman bin Abi Hatma.

Omar, the second rightly guided caliph preferred her advice to those of others, respected her opinion, and sometimes conferred upon her duties pertaining to administration of markets" (25)

According to Ibn Saa'd"

"Umme-Saliat embraced Islam, took oath of allegiance and participated in the battles of Khyber and Hunain (28)

CONCLUSION:

A woman can attain the highest place in an Islamic society by dint of her own capabilities and attainments. Islam not only provide equal rights and opportunities but also prestige and honor to women. The present research work has tried to bring out the worldly status of women by consulting primary and most authentic sources e.g. Quran and Hadith. The study accumulates the living examples of different social levels of women and analyze them into the focused context of Quran and Hadith. Woman as a mother is a sacred among all relationship in the world, Holy Prophet gives high respect and status to a mother. In Islam, a woman as a wife, sister and daughter is not inferior in any way in this society. These are the basic teachings of Islam, in which, in the light of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, a woman was given a status that she never had in the previous world.

It is clear from the above hadiths and Quranic verses that in Islamic Society, a woman is always loved and respect, which Islam has given a very high position in this world. Islam never banned women from leaving the house and doing hard work, but the life of the Holy Prophet proves that during his time, women not only participated in politics but also in the battlefield side by side with men. There is no doubt that the modern world has been given human rights based on the Prophet's good deeds and the Holy Qur'an, which is a beacon for all of us till the end of the world



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