

Khutba

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English

WOMAN IN ISLAM

Allaah says, which means: ***“And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect” (Ar-Roum: 21)***

Woman’s need for man is just like his need for her. Being with each other, they gain rest and peace of mind as vicegerents on the earth. What was the condition of women and what was their status before Islam? How has Islam elevated their status? What are the differences between man and woman from the perspective of Islam? What are the responsibilities of women in our present society?

We should know that woman’s main characteristics are femininity and motherhood. Man, on the other hand, is characterized by masculinity, strength, and forbearance. A woman who gives up her nature and imitates men in their way of talking and walking deserves the Prophet’s curse. Likewise, those men who act in a feminine way deserve the Prophet’s curse. *“Allah’s Prophet sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam cursed effeminate men and masculinized women” (Ahmad & Abu Daawoo*

We should also bear in mind that no Muslim should accept the view of those ignorant persons who claim that Aadam was driven out of paradise because of Eve(Hawa). No one was driven out of paradise because of Eve. Anyone with a good understanding of *The Quran* will realize that they both committed the sin and they both repented, as Allaah says, which means: ***“They said: "Our Lord! We have wronged our own souls: if Thou forgive us not and bestow not upon us Thy Mercy, we shall certainly be lost” (Al-A’raaf: 23)***. In another verse Allaah attributed the crime to Aadam only and says, which means: ***“In the result, they both ate of the tree, and so their nakedness appeared to them: they began to sew together, for their covering, leaves from the Garden; thus did Adam disobey his Lord, and allow himself to be seduced.” (Taha: 121)***. This was because he was responsible for his wife.

However, what was the status of woman before Islam?

In Europe: During the European dark ages, philosophers used to hold meetings to discuss the matter of a woman having a soul like that of man. Does a woman have a human or bestial soul? Their discussions culminated in declaring that a woman has a soul greatly inferior to that of a man. In the Roman law, the wife was the purchased property of her husband, who could also divorce her. A man could make a choice of whether or not he wanted to accept paternity.

In Athens: The situation was worse as they did not allow women to inherit. In India, there existed the practice of burning the widow along with her husband's corpse.

A woman, in the Arab men's eyes, was a den of shame, a jinx and a source of poverty. Refuting their claims, Allaah says which means: ***“When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned, for what crime she was killed” (At-Takweer: 8-9)***. What has this innocent girl done to be treated in this way? Once Qais bin Asim came to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam and said: *“O Allaah's messenger sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam! I've buried my twelve girls alive”* The Prophet sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam answered: ***“For every girl set a slave free” Al-Bazzaa***

As for fear of poverty, Allaah says which means: ***“Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin.” (Al-Israa: 31)***.

Amongst Arabs, women were not entitled to inherit, rather they were themselves inherited. A man was entitled to marry his father's wife and even to usurp her dower. Therefore, Allaah says which translates as, ***“And marry not women whom your fathers married - except what is past: it was shameful and odious - an abominable custom indeed.” (An-Nisa': 22)***.

Woman: from the perspective of the previous religions:

In Judaism, a menstruating woman is considered impure. The Jewish worshippers used to isolate menstruating women to remote tents and avoid talking or sitting with them for, according to their distorted *Torah*, when such a woman touches anything it becomes impure. In Judaism, women were also deprived of inheritance, for males alone were to inherit. Christianity, in its distorted Gospel, considered women the devil's gateway. King Henry VIII decreed that a woman should not touch the Gospel for she is impure. In *Hammurabi's* law (king of Babylon), a woman was one of her husband's animals. This was the status of woman before Islam. However, what did Islam do for women? Every Muslim should know that it was Islam that brought honor and dignity to women in many respects.

Firstly, women are equal to men in having the same parents i.e. *Adam* and *Eve* as Allah says, which means: ***“O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full Knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things).” (Al-Hujuraat: 13)***. Also, ***“O mankind! Revere your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single Person, created, of like nature, his mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women; fear Allah, through Whom ye demand your mutual (rights), and (revere) the wombs (that bore you): for Allah ever watches over you” (An-Nisaa': 1)***.

Secondly, women are equal to men in receiving the same reward or punishment, as Allah says which means: ***“And their Lord hath accepted of them, and answered them: “Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female: ye are members, one of another; those who have left their homes, and were driven out there from, and suffered harm in My Cause, and fought and were slain, verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath - a reward from the Presence of Allah - and from His Presence is the best of rewards.” (Aal-Imraan: 195)*** and in efficiency to act and dispose affairs ***“And in no wise covet those things in which***

Allah hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others: to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn: but ask Allah of His bounty. For Allah hath full knowledge of all things.” (An-Nisaa’: 32).

Some men, disregarding the *Sharie’ah*, force their working wives to give them a share in their earnings in exchange for allowing them to work. This is something unacceptable in Islam. Islam gives due care to a woman be she a daughter, a mother or a wife. As for a daughter, Allah showed that one’s daughter is but a gift from Allaah and thus deserves care and love. Allaah says which means: ***“To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills (and plans). He bestows (children) male or female according to His Will (and Plan)” (Ash-Shooraa: 49).***

Moreover, one should know that taking care of a girl makes a man enter paradise for the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* said: ***“Anyone who is given a female child and avoids harming, insulting or even giving his son priority over her, she’ll be his ticket to enter Paradise”*** (Ahmad & Abu Daawood). He *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* also said: ***“He who raises two female children till they reach puberty, I will be as close to him in Paradise as the middle and index fingers are.”*** (Muslim & Tirmithi).

Children are also to be treated equally when given anything, for the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* said: ***“Do justice when you distribute something to your children. Were I to prefer some children over some others, I would prefer girls”*** (At-Tabaraani). Islam also showed care to a girl and gave her the right to accept or refuse suitors. In this respect the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* said: ***“A virgin can never be married unless her permission is sought and a previously married woman cannot be married unless her consent is obtained”*** They asked: *How could we know this?* He *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* answered: ***“If she keeps silent, it is her consent”*** (Bukhaari & Muslim). Once the girl refuses, the whole contract is invalid. A woman came to the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* saying: *“Allaah’s Messenger sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam! My father wants to marry me to his nephew so as to elevate his status for he is inferior to me”*. The Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* gave her the option to decide whether to marry him or not. Then, she said: *“I approved my father’s opinion but I just wanted to make it known to women that fathers have no authority over their consent”* (Ahamad & Abu Daawood).

Moreover, Islam commands us to take care of our wives. ***“The best among the believers is the person who perfects his morals and the best amongst you is the best to his wife”*** (Tirmithi). As a mother, a woman is given respect and preference over the father because the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* said: ***“..Your mother, your mother, your mother. Then, your father”*** In addition to this, paradise lies beneath righteous mothers’ feet. *“A man came to the Prophet sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam asking him about a good deed, the doing of which will cause him to enter paradise“* ***Do you have a mother?”*** the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* asked: *“Yes”* The man answered. Thus, the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* said: ***“Commit yourself to serving her for paradise lies under her feet and is entered by the one who shows respect to his mother”*** (At-Tabaraani).

There are some legal aspects regarding the differences between man and woman. The enemies of Islam try to attack through these aspects and to put in Muslims’ minds that Islam, by establishing such points of distinction, oppresses woman. Islam, however, takes a woman’s nature and her capabilities into consideration and never debases her or violates her rights. In inheritance, for example, Allaah says which means: ***“Allah (thus) directs you as regards your children’s (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females”*** (An-Nisaa’: 11). However, why do we not give woman a share equal to that of man? Our scholars say, “Since a woman is maintained either by her father,

her husband or her brother, she is not asked to spend even a penny from her own money”. For example, if a man and his sister inherit three thousand dollars, the man takes two thousand and the woman takes one thousand in which case he is obliged to maintain her until she marries. She, on the contrary, is not asked to spend any money from her share. He is required to provide for his own family and if he is single, has the debt of preparing himself for marriage and, at the same time maintaining his sister. It is clear that man’s financial duties are greater than a woman’s.

In divorce, why do we not shift the authority of divorce to women? Scholars responded to this focusing on two aspects, the material aspect, and the emotional one. As for the material aspect, every Muslim man knows that by uttering the pronouncement of divorce he will be asked to pay the deferred dower, to pay maintenance which includes wife’s food, and lodging during the waiting period, to provide for his children until they become old enough, to maintain himself and, on trying to marry a new wife to secure a dower for this new wife. All these financial responsibilities will be taken into consideration before uttering a declaration of divorce. If he utters it, he does so out of conviction that he cannot tolerate living with his wife and thus wants to terminate this marriage at any cost. As for the emotional aspect, Allaah created woman sensitive and emotional, qualities that are required in her duty of bringing up the children and fulfilling their needs. It is a good quality of a woman to be sensitive but if she is given authority of divorce, she may, at any moment of a dispute, utter a declaration of divorce especially as she will have no financial responsibilities to fulfill. In our everyday life, we see that as soon as a woman gets angry she demands a divorce. Families would then be easily destroyed.

Finally, a woman as a witness is mentioned in the verse stating, which means: **“And get two witnesses, out of your own men, and if there are not two men, then a man and two women, such as ye choose, for witnesses, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her.”** (*Al-Baqarah: 282*). Why is one male witness equated to two female witnesses? The scholars say: Witnessing may relate to matters pertaining to women or may relate to Allaah’s limits. If the matter concerned relates to women such as suckling or proving virginity or otherwise, then only one woman will be sufficient as witness. During the Prophet’s *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* time, a man married a woman. A woman stood up and said, *“I have suckled this bride and this groom together”* The groom went to the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* who said, **“How can I let you consummate the marriage after this has been said?”** (*Bukhaari & Muslim*). Then he *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* commanded for a separation between this man and woman with the testimony of one woman.

As for matters pertaining to the limits of Allaah, a woman’s sensitive nature may make her flee or fall unconscious upon seeing any crime. In Islam, it is required to ask another woman to support her as her witness, thus, the verse which means: **“if one of them errs, the other can remind her.”** (*Al-Baqarah: 282*) By establishing this rule, Islam seeks more perfect investigation. It does not mean belittling woman or debasing her as is claimed.

A Muslim woman of today is asked to be fully aware of the plots woven against her. Knowing that woman is the cornerstone of the society, they (the non-muslims) try to spoil her and lead her astray to destroy the whole society. The people who are leading muslims to sins will bear their sins on the day of resurrection, as the Prophet *sallallaahu 'alaihi wasallam* said: **“He who initiates and introduces an evil thing to Islam, will bear his sins and the sins of all who do it until the day of resurrection”** (*Muslim*).