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WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND SANCTITY FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE: COMPREHENSIVE ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The status of women is defined by Allah in Quran which shows importance of women in Islam and many other obligations that a Muslim Women need to follow .One of the requirement of hijab in accordance to Quranic tenets .Islam give honor and respect to women .Almighty Allah has focused on the sanctity of women. Islam has given rights to them to adapt life in mysticism, and peruse her professional life and to live a life in peace in her personal life .There are certain commandments given by Allah to be followed by Women to protect their purity and sanity .Certain period of iddah is set for women to complete her cycle of purity .Allah has given great stress on women s sanity .He protected sanity of Hazrat Maryam by revealing Surah Maryam .He also sent verses of Quran to protect the sanity of Hazrat Ayesha. Allah has also revealed a whole surah that addresses women. Women are given great importance in Islam .They have been given respect and honor. There is a whole surah in Quran [Surah Al Nisa] that is revealed for women .On the other hand rajal in Arabic means man but no Surah like Surah Rijal is revealed for men. So from here we can see the importance of women in Islam .In Quran ,Allah

has revealed many ayahs to show the importance of women and on the other hand there are many obligations that women have to follow. Allah Almighty has focused on sanctity of women. Therefore, when people were assassinating the character of Hazrat Maryam when she was conceiving a child [Hazrat Esa], Almighty Allah sent a whole surah [Surah Maryam] to prove the piousness and purity of Hazrat Maryam. So, Sanctity of women is important in Islam.

INTRODUCTION

The status and rank is given to women in Islam. Women is related or associated to men by different relations like mother, sister, daughter and wife and in all these relationships women have been given special protection and security. When she is mother Jannah lies under her feet. When she is wife, she is half paradise of her husband. When she is a daughter, she is source of blessing for her father. Surah Al Surah ayah 9 says that a woman is daughter and sister and like male brother, are born of same lineage and from same womb. Women is also a wife who is the source of comfort for her husband. Woman's responsibility in faith is exactly same as man. A Muslim woman, like a Muslim man is called upon to believe in Allah. A Woman has to study the Islamic teachings for her own personal guidance same as male. She is responsible for conveying and communicating Islam. The woman has a full financial status as that of men. She has right to use her wealth in any manner as she wish to as long as it is approved by Shariah. The woman nature as mother means that there are certain virtues which Allah has made specific to her such as the protection of honor, the honor of offspring etc. Furthermore, the female has greater sense of modesty and sensitivity, though she should demand her rights and practice them accordingly. The woman is lord of the house. It is responsibility of her to take care of her family and prepare home as a place of comfort, her role as a mother, sister and wife is a huge responsibility.¹

SPIRITUAL LIFE OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

Hazrat Rabia Basri is a classic example of spirituality and how faith and love can set you free. She was first Sufi saint of Islam. She made great contributions towards the development of Sufism. She was teacher of men and women. So the concept of spirituality of women is given in Islam and its practical example is Hazrat Rabia Basra. After her parents died, she was sold in slavery and but when she was freed she went to desert of Basra and spent several years in desert worshipping in desert and performed pilgrimage to Mecca. Rabia continuously pursued an independent life style as a woman; a path that many female Sufi mystics followed. Rabia lives a life free, retaining full control and legal autonomy. She devoted her life to spirituality and love for ALLAH ALMIGHTY. So Islam has provided rights to women to adapt or live life in mysticism and attain spirituality.²

PROFESSIONAL LIFE

Women can peruse her professional life within the limits prescribed by ALMIGHTY ALLAH and sharia. She can peruse her professional life by

¹ 2009. "Married Life in Islam Centers on Mutual Rights and Responsibilities." *Learn Religions*.

² "The Spiritual Power of the Woman." 2011. *Islamic Insights*. October, 19.

knowing her limits and sanctity .One such example is Hazrat Khadija who was a business woman of her time .She was a professional women who ran her business although she was a women .So Islam does not prohibit women to achieve her professional life or fulfill her responsibilities.

Other such example can be seen in daughters of Hazrat Shoaib .Their father was ill and aged and the both sisters went outside to water their sheep to facilitate their father. They went to well to water their sheep. So Islam has not restricted women to home until she has to do chores and within Shari'ah³

Iddah Period Of Women In Islam

In order to purify women and saver her from troubles ,Idaah time is fixed for women when she is divorced or her husband died .It is to purification stage of women because in this time period if she is expecting ,then is has to wait till birth of child to remarry someone else. Quran says; “Divorced women shall wait concerning themselves for three monthly periods. Nor is it lawful for them to hide what ALLAH hath created in their wombs, if they have faith in ALLAH and last Day .And women shall have rights similar to rights against them ,according to what is equitable ;but men has advantage over women” [Surah Al Baqra,228]

“AND those of you who die and leave wives behind them, they [the wives] shall wait [as regards their marriage] for four months and ten days.” [Surah Al Baqarah Verse 234].

“IF the widow is pregnant, then the waiting period is till birth of child, irrespective of whether it is before the 4 month 10 days period or several months after it .And for those who are pregnant, their iddah [prescribed period] is until they lay down their burden.” [Surah Al Talaq] verse 4.

“Let the women live [in iddah] in the same style as ye live, according to your means; annoy them not, so as to restrict them. And if they carry [life in their wombs] then spend [your substance] on them until they deliver in burden; and if they suckle your offspring give them their recompense; and take mutual counsel together ‘according to what is just and reasonable. And if ye find yourselves in difficulties, let another women suckle on behalf. O ye who believed, When ye marry a women ,and then divorce them before ye have touched them ,no period of iddah have ye to count in respect of them .so give them a present and set them off in a handsome manner”.[Surah Al Ahzab 49] ⁴

³ Alkhatay, MH. 2020. “The Role of Women in Development of the Society.” Accessed March 13.

⁴ “Iddah: Giving Muslim Women Time to Grieve and Reflect.” 2019. RNZ. April 12.

Hijab In Light Of Islam

Hijab is a weapon of women to protect her sanctity. ALLAH ALMIGHTY has given the concept of hijab and pardah in many verses of Quran.

“ O you Children of Adam ,We have bestowed on you raiment to cover your shame as well as to be an adornment to you .But the raiment to righteousness, that is the best .Such are among the signs of ALLAH ,that they may receive admonition”. [Quran 7; 26]

“And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what must ordinarily appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands father ,their sons ,their husbands son. Their brothers ,their brothers son ,their sisters sons ,or their women or their servants whom their right hand possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex, and that they should not strike their hidden ornaments. And O you believers, turn you all together towards ALLAH, that you may attain bliss” [Quran 24; 31].

“O Prophet tell your wives and your daughters and the women of disbelievers to draw their cloak close around the [when they go abroad].That will be better, so that they may be recognized and not annoyed. Allah is ever forgiving, Merciful” [Quran 33; 59]

In Surah Al –Ahzab, ALLAH addresses the wives of Prophet with specific commands, “to guard their chastity; and abide quietly in your homes, and do not flaunt your charms as they used to flaunt them in old days of pagan ignorance ;and be constant in prayer ,and render the purifying dues, and pay heed unto ALLAH and his Messenger; for ALLAH only wants to remove from you all that might be loathsome ,O you members of the [Prophet’s]household, and to purify you to utmost purity” [33;33]

The word stems from the root letters [karana] or, according to other scholars, the root letters [waqar], both implying more or less the same implicit meaning. According to Lane’s online Arabic-to-English lexicon, the root of the word [karar] means to settle; be firm, steady, fixed, settled or established; be motionless, quiet, still, standing, stationary; to rest, remain, continue or reside in a place. Synonyms are [sabat] and [sakan] which, when used for a man, also imply to reside or rest somewhere ‘with authority or power’.

According to Tafsir ibn Kathir, “And stay in your houses” means “stay in your houses and do not come out except for a purpose. One of the purposes mentioned in Shari`ah is prayer in the Masjid, so long as the conditions are fulfilled, as the Messenger of Allah [SAWW] said:

“Do not prevent the female servants of Allah from the masjids of Allah, but have them go out without wearing fragrance“. According to another report:

“...even though their houses are better for them” [Abu Dawood: 567]” [End quote tafsir.com]

Tafsir Maududi expounds, “The word [karan] in the original is derived from [karar] according to some lexicographers and from [waqar] according to others. In the first sense, it will mean: “Settle down, stick firmly;” and in the second sense: “Live peacefully, sit with dignity”. In both the cases the verse means to impress that the woman’s real sphere of activity is her home; she should carry out her functions within that sphere peacefully, and she should come out of the house only in case of a genuine need.

This explanation makes it abundantly clear that what Allah forbids for women is to move out of their houses showing off their physical charms and beauty. He instructs them to stay in their houses because their real sphere of activity is their home and not the world outside. However, if they have to move out of the house for an outdoor duty, they should not move out as the women used to do in the pre-Islamic days of ignorance. For it does not behoove the women of a Muslim society to walk out fully embellished; to make their face and figure conspicuous by adornments and tight-fitting or transparent dresses, and to walk coquettishly.” [End quote Maududi tafsir]

We need to keep in mind the context of the revelation of these verses of the Quran. The wives of the Prophet (SAWW) were being specifically addressed. Just before this verse, they were commanded not to soften their speech when conversing with non-mahrum men due to necessity. After being told to stay in their homes, they were commanded not to display of charms and beauty).⁵

Talaq Concept in Islam

Marriage, as prescribed by Allah, is the lawful union of a man and a woman based on mutual consent. Ideally, the purpose of marriage is to foster a state of tranquility, love and compassion in Islam, but this is not always the case. Islam discourages divorce but, unlike some religions, does make provisions for divorce by either party.

Allah provides general guidelines for the process of divorce with emphasis on both parties upholding the values of justice and kindness in formalizing the end to their marriage.

Allah encourages the husband and wife to appoint arbitrators as the first step to aid in reconciliation in the process of divorce. If the reconciliation step fails, both the man and woman are guaranteed the right to divorce as established in the Quran, but the difference lies in the procedure for each one. When a divorce is initiated by the man, it is known as Talaq.⁶

⁵ “How Does the Qur’an Address the Issue of Muslim Woman’s Veil or ‘Hijab’?” 2019. *Asma-Lamrabet*

⁶ “SAHIH MUSLIM, BOOK 9: The Book of Divorce (Kitab Al-Talaq).” 2020. Accessed March 13.

The pronouncement by the husband may be verbal or written, but once made, there is to be a waiting period of three months ('Iddah) during which there can be no sexual relations, even though the two are living under the same roof.

The waiting period helps to prevent hasty terminations due to anger and allows time for both parties to reconsider as well as to see if the wife is pregnant. If the wife is pregnant, the waiting period is lengthened until she delivers the baby. At any point during this time, the husband and wife are free to resume their conjugal relationship; thereby ending the divorce process. During this waiting period, the husband remains financially responsible for the support of his wife. The divorce initiated by the wife is known as Khul' (if the husband is not at fault) and requires that the wife returns her dowry to end the marriage because she is the 'contract-breaker'. In the instance of Talaaq, where the husband is the 'contract-breaker', he must pay the dowry in full in cases where all or part of it was deferred, or allow the wife to keep all of it if she has already been given it in full.

In the case that the husband is at fault and the woman is interested in divorce, she can petition a judge for divorce, with cause. She would be required to offer proof that her husband had not fulfilled his marital responsibilities. If the wife had specified certain conditions that are islamically accepted in her marriage contract, which were not met by the husband, she could obtain a conditional divorce.

The controversy regarding the seeming inequity in divorce lies in the idea that men seem to have absolute power in obtaining a divorce. The interpretation of scholars in the past has been that if the man initiates the divorce, then the reconciliation step for appointing an arbiter from both sides is omitted. This understanding diverges from the Quranic injunction. Any difference in powers between the husband and his wife with regard to divorce can be extracted from the following verse (which means): {...And due to them [i.e., the wives] is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is exalted in Might and Wise.} [Quran: 2:228].

In the following verse, according to existing interpretations, Allah gives the reason for the small difference in the verse (which means): {Men are in charge of women by [right of] what [qualities] Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [in support] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard.} [Quran: 4:34]

Thus, it is clear that there is a 'degree' of difference with regards to the rights of men and women in divorce, and that the greater right that men were given is due to their being the leaders and financial supporters of the household. This, however, does not mean that women are inferior to men or that they are second-class human beings.

Many of the laws regarding divorce in some Muslim countries are based upon Quranic references on the subject. As with all human laws, they must adapt to dynamic circumstances.

Issues pertaining to custody have become controversial. For example, Allah in the Quran advises the husband and wife to consult each other in a fair manner regarding their children's future after divorce, as this verse states (which means): **{...If they both desire weaning through mutual consent from both of them and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them.}** [Quran: 2:233]

Some jurists stipulate that custody of the child is awarded to the mother if the child is under a certain age and to the father if the child is older. There is no Quranic evidence of age being a determinant for custody. Similarly with regard to the issue of alimony, in the Quran the ex-husband's financial obligation to his ex-wife is mandated, but a specific formula for the amount of support is missing; Allah Says (what means): **{And for divorced women is maintenance according to what is acceptable – a duty on the righteous.}** [Quran 2:241] This is open for negotiation between parties and should be in accordance with the husband's financial ability.

There has been much distortion and propagation of misunderstanding about a woman's rights related to marriage and divorce. Only with self-education and awareness of the Quranic text are men and women able to learn the truth that Allah has prescribed and understand the scholarly interpretations in order that the spirit of justice is realized. Allah Says (what means): **{and when you divorce women and they fulfil their term [of their 'Iddah], either keep them according to reasonable terms or release them according to reasonable terms, and do not keep them, intending harm, to transgress [against them]. And whoever does that has certainly wronged himself. And do not take the verses of Allah in jest. And remember the favour of Allah upon you and what has been revealed to you of the Book [i.e., the Quran] and wisdom [i.e., the Prophet's Sunnah] by which He instructs you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is knowing of all things.}** [Quran 2:231]⁷

CONCLUSION

After examining the verses of surah Nisa, Surah Al-Ahzab, Surah Al Baqarah we come to know about the sanctity of women that how women are protected and how their purity is protected. Although some verses directly address the Prophet [SAWW] wives but it is also for all the women in Islam. We discussed different commandments and also the authority and freedom given to women within their limits and sanctity.

RECOMMENDATION

We have tried to describe the sanctity of women in Islam. We have consulted Surah Al Nisa, Surah Baqra, Surah AL Ehzab, Surah Talaq to find different verses of Holy Quran. There are many ayats in these Surahs in which Almighty

⁷ amini, ibrahim. 2015. "Divorce in Islam." *Al-Islam.Org*. February 12.

Allah has addressed women and that were related to our topic . We have also consulted tafseer Maududi and tafseer ibn –kathir.

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