

Women Rights Issues and Their Impact on Building Society

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Abstract

The Holy Quran has granted women independency and freedom in all life aspects and in their religious commitments. The Holy Quran has never referred to women as being submissive to anyone; whether it be her husband or not in matters of religion or worship. A woman lives in her parents' house first, then she is at her husband's after marriage and these two houses are the environment that any woman belongs to and lives in, which might be reflected in her religion. This is due to the fact that the holy Quran wants the woman to be independent in all her beliefs rather than being a blind follower to someone in matters of religion, spiritual purity and creed. This can be seen in the case of Asiya bint Muzahim, the Royal Wife of the ancient Egypt's Pharaoh; " And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, 'My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people'(Al-Tahrim, Verse11). Asiya bint Muzahim followed her husband's religion, but when she saw the miracles of Prophet Musa among all other magicians she couldn't help but to belief in him. Although Pharaoh had repeatedly warned her and forbid her, she upheld God's religion and stood against the King despite all the death threats (Al-Jawahiri, 2007). Thus, the Holy Quran viewed women as independent individuals in fields of thought and knowledge. So, it granted her independency in knowledge and viewed her as a person of opinion and wisdom.

Keywords

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Introduction

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds, and prayers and peace be upon the most honorable of creation, Muhammad, and his household, the good and pure.
Hereafter...

The Significance of the study

A woman is half of the community and even more than half in certain cases and circumstances due to her role and influence in life as much as the other half, (man), if not more important in some jobs and responsibilities. In this life, a woman is the first school and one of the main two components of life. Hence, when women are mentioned, they are seen as an educational institute for raising generations. Furthermore, with respect to society, women are seen as the starting point of human's existence.

The Reason behind Choosing the Study's Main Topic

Islam is the religion that came to give man and woman their rights in life. Islam has strengthened the idea of giving women their rights, preserving their dignity, and granting them the opportunity to attain science, knowledge and work. On this basis, the present study is entitled "Women's Rights Issues and their Impact on Building the Society". The study is divided into three sections; the first section is under the title "The role and work of women in society", the second section is entitled "The contemporary status of women and the impact of the environment and customs on them" and the third section came to be entitled as "Certain rights and freedoms of women".

Allah is the arbiter of success,
The researcher.

Preface

Women before Islam

Looking backwards to developed civil societies like Egypt, India, Persia and China which all were under the Kings' rule and management, as well as civilized societies such as Roman, Chalcolithic and Greek who were under legal authority, women's situation was much better than of those in other societies in terms that they were never denied form monarchy. Still, women in these societies didn't enjoy their complete freedom. The head of the family, the father or the eldest brother, had the ultimate authority, i.e. they could force a woman to marry to whoever they decide, give her as a slave, rent her, or grant her as a gift.

Moreover, men had the right to kill a woman if she committed a crime or they could get her out of the house for ever. People looked at women as bad omen. Hence, if she is wronged, she does not have the right to go to court, file a complaint nor defend herself. Women also had no right to testify at courts; they couldn't make decisions, nor work freely and independently. The Jews, in their Torah, describe women as worse than death itself and that they record their despair at their perfection. On the other hand, the Christian society, especially the church society held in France prior to the Messenger's Mission (PBUH), stated, after a detailed research, that women are created to serve men only. Accordingly, it is elicited that the women in these societies are seen as incomplete and weak component who are always in need for a man's existence (Al-Amili, 2007).

Section One: The Role and Work of Women in Society According to Islam

The First Requirement: The Role of Women in Society

Allah Almighty has granted complete independency and freedom to women in their religious commitments and their matters and has mentioned this in the Holy Quran. Furthermore, Allah has never referred to women as being submissive to anyone; whether it be a husband or not in matters of religion or worship. A woman lives in her parents' house first, then she is at her husband's after marriage and these two houses are the environment that any woman belongs to and lives in, which might be reflected in her religion. This is due to the fact that the holy Quran wants the woman to be independent in all her beliefs rather than being a blind follower to someone in

matters of religion, spiritual purity and creed. This can be seen in the case of Asiya bint Muzahim, the Royal Wife of the ancient Egypt's Pharaoh; " And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, 'My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people (Al-Tahrim, verse 11)

Asiya bint Muzahim followed her husband's religion, but when she saw the miracles of Prophet Musa among all other magicians she couldn't help but to belief in him. Although Pharaoh had repeatedly warned her and forbid her, she upheld God's religion and stood against the King despite all the death threats (Al-Jawahiri, 2007). Thus, the Holy Quran viewed women as independent individuals in fields of thought and knowledge. So, it granted her independency in knowledge and viewed her as a person of opinion and wisdom.

A further example is related to the wisdom of Bilqis, Queen of Sheba, which was illustrated by her consultation with the Council that she founded from a number of members of the tribes that Yemen was home to. She is also characterized as wise for her obedience to right without diffidence when she figured out that the one who was calling her to welcome the new religion is one of Allah's prophets. Allah has reported the speech of Bilqis in the Holy Quran "O chieftains, advise me in this matter of mine; I do not give a final decision until you are present with me (Al-Naml, Verse 32).

Although she is the Queen, she didn't make the decision alone. In fact the council's decision was with war. They said, "We possess great strength and are great warriors, and the decision is yours, therefore consider what you will command (Al-Naml, Verse 33). However, she knew for sure that "Surely the kings, when they enter a country, ruin (overthrow) it, and humiliate its elites. And thus they do (Al-Naml, Verse 34). Hence, she decided to know the owner of the message (Prophet Solomon PBUH) real intentions; if he is one of the unjust kings, he will accept her gift and let them be, if not, they can meet him. And if he is a Prophet, he will refuse the gift and will not accept but their obedience.

She insisted in sending him a gift, "And surely I am going to send messengers with a present to them, and shall wait to see what the messengers bring back (Al-Naml, Verse 35). When the Queen knew that Solomon did not accept her gift and answered her "What Allah has given me is better than what He has given you. Nay, you are exultant (boasting) due to your present (36) Go back unto them. Then surely we shall come unto them with hosts which they cannot withstand, and we shall drive them forth therefrom abased and they shall be humbled (Al-Naml, Verse 36-7). Bilqis knew for sure that the one who is calling her to accept his Message is one of Allah's Prophets and that she and her people can never stand against the prophet of Allah. Thus, she made her mind to leave to Solomon and she said "My Lord! Verily I have wronged my soul and I submitted to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds along with Solomon"(Al-Naml, Verse 44). So she confessed her guilt and bravely stated her faith (Al-Jawahiri, 2007).

The Holy Quran sets this human experiment to clear Allah's view of women as being wise and knowledgeable. Furthermore, the Holy Quran didn't criticize nor condemn this experiment which proves that the Quran permits the woman to be a leader of a nation if she was capable of leading it with maintenance, knowledge, wisdom and meditation. It also view the different special functions of women from varying perspectives (Al-Jawahiri, 2007). First: she is a good wife to whom a husband can live with where faith in Allah Almighty and the knowledge she acquires from Islam are her guidance to be a lawful wife; Allah says: " And it is among His signs that He has created for you wives from among yourselves, so that you may find tranquility in them, and He has created love and kindness between you. Surely in this there are signs for a people who reflect (Al-Rum, Verse 11)

Wife and husband relationship main aim is peace and settlement for both whereas each party finds happiness and balance in the house due to the existence of the other party in his/her life. It was narrated from Al-Nawfali, on behalf of Al-Kufi, on behalf of Imam Al-Sadiq (AS): Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) says: "One's happiness is a good wife (Al-Amili, 2002). Second: She is an educator. One of the responsibilities of a woman, according to the Islamic narrative, is that a woman is an educator who adopts the role of education and care for children, which is the role that celebrates women, as it cannot be compatible with the structure of the man and the roles assigned to him. There are Quranic verses that are related to Mother's educational role such as pregnancy, breast feeding, as it appears in Surat Luqman: "We commanded man (to be good) in respect of his parents. His mother carried him (in her womb) despite weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. (We said to man,) Be grateful to Me, and to your parents. To Me is the ultimate return (Luqman, Verse 14).

This role of women is manifested through Musa's mother experiment. The amount of love towards her son appears very strong. Her despair and fear for her son at first then her happiness at the end is a completely rhetorical expression of tenderness and love, which are considered important educational conditions for child care (Al-Tabatabai, 2007).

The Second Requirement: Women's Work from an Islamic Perspective

In addition to being a wife, a mother, an educator and a nurse, women have the right to practice general work too if she had the chance. There is no wrong to do work outside their houses if it is in chastity and purity. In addition to the general sermon that permit both man and woman to work, the Holy Quran presents a number of verses that prove the rights of women to practice work outside their houses. Hence, a woman can share the man the social life but on one condition, that is to preserve her chastity and avoid what Allah has prevented. Islam has granted women the right to practice professional work as men do. Accordingly, the society (men and women) must prepare a respectful environment for working women to do their job with chastity and purity. There is a number of evidence to support this, among which are the following:

1. Allah Almighty says: "For men there is a share of what they earned, and for women, a share of what they earned (Al-Nisa, Verse 32).

2. In general, the release of initial evidence to permit professional, and social work to human to earn money: "He is the One who has made the earth subjugated for you, so walk on its shoulders, and eat out of His provision, and to Him is the Resurrection." (Al-Mulk, verse 15)

The sentence above "so walk on its shoulder" refers to work and extracting the earth's treasures in need for profit which include any job that is not prohibited.

3. Allah Almighty says: "Allah is the One who has subjugated for you the sea, so that the ships may sail in it with His command, and so that you may seek His grace, and so that you offer gratitude.() He has subjugated for you whatever there is in the heavens and whatever there is in the earth, all on His own. Surely in this there are signs for a people who reflect." (Al-Jathiyah, verse 12-3). These Quranic verses refers to all humans and includes both men and women. The meaning of "subjugated the sky and earth" is to make them serve the humans in their work and quest for fortune.

There are narratives that prove the permission to earn money among which is from Imam AlSadiq who says: the Messenger of Allah asked Mashetah and said: did you leave your job or you stayed? She said: I do it unless you forbid me. He said to her: Do it but don't beautify the face with rags it threatens the face and don't relate the hair with a hair" (Al-Amili, 2002). It is an indication that women may gain in their work of beautification, but since there is no privacy in this profession, this would refer to the possibility of women's employment in any occupation in which there is no inviolability.

Section Two: The Contemporary Status of Women and the Influence of Customs and Traditions on Them

The First Requirement: Islam and the renewal of life

The claims of some people about following the Western rule in family rights is that life has changed and it is a must now. Islam is concerned with the apparent form of life, which is closely related to the scientific balance of man. Rather, Islamic laws are related to the meaning, the spirit, and the purpose of life, as well as the best ways that humans must take to achieve that goal. On the other hand, science, does not change the aim and role of life and it doesn't reach you to a better, shorter, safer means to that aim. Rather it brings about better ways to reach the aim, that is to say, it enlightens the path to it. Islam, in specifying the aims and means of science and arts, does not oppose, in any form, to the civilizational and cultural development. On the contrary, it encourages the development is civilization, science, work, piety, will, vigor and integrity, and Islam has adopted the role of the main factor in the progress of civilization (Motahari, 1978). Accordingly, Islam sees both men and women as perfectly human and as equals in rights. However, Islam states that since the woman is different from the man in many different respects, then the world of the woman is different from that of man, the nature and creation of the woman is also different. This leads to the fact that many rights, duties, and penalties will be different. In the West, men and women are equal despite all the difference in the natural instincts between them.

It is a must that we concern ourselves with the situation of women in our societies and to bring

back her rights that were given by Islam; the rights that were taken from women throughout all these years without blindly take the steps of the Western style which has led the western people to miseries and thus find ourselves entitling a false theory with a beautiful name. It is also important not to compare the man's rights to a woman's in the different fields which in turn may coincide with natural right and just. On this basis, a better life can be secured following Allah's sayings: "So, their Lord answered their prayer: "I do not allow the labour of any worker from among you, male or female, to go to waste" (Al-Imran, Verse 195).

The use of the word (Lord) leads to the divine mercy. It also refers to totalitarianism in His saying (I don't allow the labour of any worker to go to waste). Here Allah stresses that there is no difference between jobs as there is no difference between a worker and another (Al-Tabatabai, 2007). In Islamic countries, the position of women in the social reality is different from her position in Islamic legislation (Quran and Sunnah), and also different from her position in the research of jurists who were not affected by the urgent social reality, they were not affected by customs and traditions alien to Islam, and were not affected by narrations that contradict the general approach The Qur'an, who made an example for Muslim women.

Islamic religion wanted the advancement and steadfastness of the Islamic community in terms of science and civilization. Since the woman is regarded as half of the community, then she is also included into this development scientifically, ethically, and professionally. She also has the right to participate in the human, social, political, and economic activity, especially in jobs that fit her physiological and psychological component such as education, nursing, medicine, work in government departments, social, charitable and educational institutions, and so on. In this way, women are able to meet their financial need, which affects the family as a result of large financial expenses, and makes them feel as an active member of society and is independent in her beneficial behavior with the condition of chastity and purity. This is what the evidence had led to in terms of emphasizing beneficial work (Al-Jawahiri, 2007).

The second Requirement: The Contemporary Situation of Women with the Influence of the Social Environment, Customs and Traditions.

In the past, the Islam communities had been influenced by new alien customs and traditions that were not existed in the holly street. These alien customs and traditions have its cultural heritage, due to an encounter with non-Islamic religions and cultures which distinguished between men and women in common public jobs. The Holy Quran has viewed a number of women who had significant roles in their societies and did professional activities that are equal to men. Among these women are Pharaoh Wife, Lady Mariam bint Omran, Shoaib's two daughters and Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba. As for women during Islam, there are Khadijah al-Kubra, Um Salma, Lady Fatima Al-Zahra (AS) and Lady Zainab (AS). And even in the history of nations, there are many women who have done great jobs and played leading roles like a man, such as Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt and the daughter of Kisra, the King of Persia with maintain their marriage and motherhood. As for education, it means the capacity to do well to others. The Quran has mentioned the position of women in the system of values and a system of rights, and Islamic duties in Islamic law (Al-Jawahiri, 2007).

There are those who believe that the weakness of the family is the result of the emancipation of women. The emancipation of women is an inevitable result of the industrial life as well as the development in the scientific and civilized progress. Hence, it became an obligation to overlook this corruption and imbalance and forget the old happy ever after family that used to be.

Still, this way of thinking is very superficial. It is true that the industrial age has left an impact on family relations, but the downwardness in the European family is due to two other factors (Motahari, 1978): First: customs, traditions and unjust laws that dominated the society and prevented the woman from her right in property, which lasted to the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century.

Second: The people who wanted to reform the conditions of women have taken the same paths that some of our modern-day activists are taking today. Before blaming the industrial life was for this imbalance, the old European laws and new conventions were the major cause for this, so we must look at Western life with awareness and caution.

Section Three: Some Rights and Freedoms for Women

First: some Financial Rights and Freedoms for Women

Islam has granted women all their rights as well as property right, as it is evident in Allah's sayings: "If you want to take a wife in place of the one (you have), and you have given her plenty of wealth, then do not take any of it back. Would you take it through imputation and open sin?" (Al-Nisa, Verse 20). In addition to that, Islam has granted women the right of heritage; "For men there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left. And for women there is a share in what the parents and the nearest of kin have left, be it small or large—a determined share." (Al-Nisa, Verse 7). Other rights of women include the right to trade, the right to dowry and the right to independent financial protection.

Second: Personal Rights and Freedoms

There are personal rights for women, including the right of education, because the demand for education is imposed and affirmed by creed and worship. As well as it is a need for the whole nation such as female medicine and the like. The woman is also granted the right to accept the marriage and the right to have a kind relationship with her husband (Al-Amili, 2007).

Third: Social Rights and Freedoms

There are social rights and freedoms for women that include the right to equality in terms of law, the right to security and the right to equal burdens. Allah Almighty says: "Women have rights similar to what they owe in recognized manner though for men there is a step above them. Allah is Mighty, Wise." (Al-Baqarah, Verse 228) These rights also include the right to think and seek to reform society, as it is evident in Allah's sayings: "The believers, male and female, are friends to each other. They bid virtue and forbid vice" (Al-Tawbah, 71).

Conclusion

1. The present study concludes that women in ancient societies, prior to Islam, are seen as vulnerable members and always in need of men.
2. Islam has granted women their complete independencies and freedom in all her matters and religious commitments.
3. In addition to women's special duties, as a mother and a wife, they have the right to practice a job, if they had the chance, for there is no objection to doing business outside the house in chastity and purity.
4. Islamic laws are divine, spiritual, meaningful, and aimed laws and are regarded as the best means that humans must take in life.
5. There are social rights and freedoms for women among which are equality in law, thinking, and reforming the society.

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