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WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO A SOCIETY IN LIGHT OF ISLAM

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Abstract

The contribution of women in Islam is remarkable, in Islam there is no difference between men and women as far as their relationship to Allah ins concerned, both of them are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct. Women are honored, dignified and most respectable position in all aspects of life. They are recognized in Islam as equal partner of men. They play an important role as a daughter, a mother, a wives and a member of the society. They are actively taking part in religion, intellectual, economic and social development. The holy Quran and the teaching of the prophet Muhammad sm. highlighted the rights and responsibilities of women and grant them right to education, inheritance, property, leadership and active participation in building a society. The aim of this article is to highlight the various responsibilities of women specially their contribution to the development of a just and cohesive society by examining Quranic verses, traditions of the prophet sm. and historical evidences. The study underlines how Islam liberated women from pre-Islamic oppression and provided them with rights that remain revolutionary even today.

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Introduction:

In Islam, women play important roles in various aspects of life. Islam recognizes the greatest role of women in upbringing the children the future of mankind and of societies depend on mothers. Thus the contribution of women are not only acknowledged but also highly esteemed.

Women in Islam are empowered with equal spiritual, social, and economic rights, playing vital roles in faith, family, and society. From the right to education and ownership to being leaders and nurturers, they contribute immensely to both religious and community life. The Islamic teachings emphasize kindness, respect, and the dignity of women, recognizing their important role in shaping a just and compassionate society.

Throughout history, women in Islam have played significant roles in education, leadership, spirituality, and social justice, showcasing their immense contributions to society.

Who Are Women in Islam?

In Islam, the equality of gender is firmly established, acknowledging the inherent worth and dignity of both men and women. The Quran highlights the shared responsibility of both genders for their actions, as Allah remarks: ***"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female."*** (*Surah*

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al-Hujrat:13)

Women are deeply respected and valued in Islam, with their roles and contributions being vital to the cohesive functioning of society. Modesty is encouraged, emphasizing the importance for women to dress modestly and uphold their dignity.

Islam clearly discourages objectification of women and mandates treating them with honor and respect. Moreover, women are granted several rights in Islam, including the right to education, inheritance, and the right to choose their life partners. Overall, women in Islam hold a prominent status, serving as equal partners in matters of faith and society.

How are women treated in Islam?

Before the advent of Islam women were often treated worse than animals. In pagan period female children used to bury alive, make women dance naked in the vicinity of the holy Ka,ba in annual fairs. With the advent Islam, the prophet Muhammad sm. Wanted to put a full stop to all cruelities regarding women. he started to preach respect and kindness to them. The prophet Muhammad sm. Said: “women are the twin halves of men” the holy Quran emphasizes the essential unity of men and women in a most beautiful similes: They (your wives) are the garment and you are a garment of them.” (*surah al Baqara: 187*) the prophet told the Muslims in respect of women:: Fear Allah in respect of women” and also said : “The best of you are they who behave best with their wives” and: “A muslin must not hate his wife, and if he be displeased with one bad quality in her, let him be pleased with one that is good.” And “The more civil and kind a Muslim is to his wife, the more perfect in faith he is.” In Islam, women are treated with respect and equality. They are considered as equal partners in society and have important roles in nurturing and guiding the future generations. Islam recognizes the significance of women’s contributions and emphasizes their rights in all aspects of life i.e. education, property ownership, finance and participation in political affairs.

Women are valued and cherished as sisters of men, and their relationship with their husbands is described as a mutual support system where both parties are like garments for each other, symbolizing love, protection, and intimacy. Islam promotes the fair and just treatment of women, rejecting any form of discrimination or mistreatment based on gender.

In Islam, we can talk about a woman under the following headings. Although they are all complementary elements, everything will become clearer when we talk about them separately.

Woman as a Servant of Almighty:

Women in Islam have the same spiritual obligations and opportunities as men. They are encouraged to seek knowledge, worship Allah, and engage in acts of charity and righteousness. Women have the freedom to practice their faith, participate in religious gatherings and rituals, and seek spiritual guidance.

Islam establishes complete equality between men and women in religious obligations. The Quran states:

“Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their chastity and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so – for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.” (Surah Al-Ahzab: 35)

Allah has decreed in surah Baqarah verse number 30: ***Remember when your Lord said to the angels: "I am going to place a successive human authority on earth"***. He did not distinguish between men and women when talking about mankind (*insān*) as his representatives (*khalīfa*) on earth. In the same way, there is no distinction between men and women in the verses that begin in the Qur'an as "O you

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who believe". In other words, our basic duties and worship are the same in the sight of Allah. We are all equally responsible for the conditions of faith and Islam. But Allah has given different duties and responsibilities according to our primordial nature (*fiṭrah)* as the One who created us and knows us best.

Family role of Women in Islam:

Women play a crucial role in the family unit. They are seen as the foundation of the household and are responsible for nurturing and raising children. Islam emphasizes the importance of a harmonious family life, where both parents have shared responsibilities in providing their children love, care and discipline.

Woman as a Wife

We are facing so many challenges in this life. No matter our status in society, no matter how rich we are, we need a second person to sincerely share our joy and sorrow in life. As the second person, the most appropriate person is our spouse, who is our husband. A spouse, whom our friends, parents, or even our children can't replace.

Allah in Surah Rum verse number 21 has decreed: ***"And one of His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves so that you may find comfort in them."*** As seen in this verse, the spouse is shown as a source of "peace". A man needs a place where he will relieve the stress of his life while performing big tasks outside the home. In our religion, a woman's duty is not to clean or cook. A woman's duty is not just to give birth to children. A woman's job is to be a source of peace in the house. If a man feels unhappy at home when he comes home with stress and fatigue outside, it will not mean anything for a man to see a clean house, a table full of delicious food. If a woman can provide the peace that is her main task, she and her entire family will be positively affected by this peace.

One of the biggest advantages of marriage is that it has a solution to lust, which we can talk about as the most important problem today. Marriage is what society needs most when we live in an age where everything private is divulged everywhere and this has become normal. If there is no food in the kitchen, you can eat in the restaurant, if there is no place to sleep at home, you can go to a hotel; however, there is no Halal alternative that an unmarried person can meet their need for sexuality. And the solution in this regard for the married person is his wife. According to the Islamic worldview, the most important duty of a woman as a wife is that they meet their husband's needs in a way that prevents their husbands from falling into Haram.

Woman as a Mother:

Islam elevated the status of mothers, commanding children to honor them. The Quran repeatedly emphasizes the hardships mothers endure in pregnancy and childbirth:

"And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination." (Surah Luqman: 14)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) stated, *"Paradise lies at the feet of your mother,"* highlighting the high status of mothers and their significant role in family and society.

Let's imagine, there's a well practicing Muslim woman who is educated, has trained herself in many fields and knows how Islam is a great blessing. If this woman begets a child, we believe that she will raise her child in the best way possible. The children she raised will be in different places in the future, performing different professions. They continue to live up to the Islamic consciousness they see from their mother in everything they do. They also have children, and our hope is that these children will grow up on the pedestals of religion. In this way, the contribution of that Muslim woman, who had children in the first place, to the Ummah will be too great to be calculated in the long run. But if this mother is obsessed with TV shows, makeup, aimless travel, luxury furniture, gold, our expectation will

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be low from the children she will raise. Raising a child is not just about dressing a child and feeding him. The women are expected to achieve is to raise their children as Muslims who can be good role models. For this reason, heaven is at the feet of mothers. For this reason, the mother is the most sacred being.

Women as a Daughter:

In Pre-Islamic period daughters are viewed as burdens, often burying them alive. Islam condemned this practice and emphasized the blessing of having daughters. The Quran rebukes those who feel sorrow over having a daughter:

"And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide." (Surah An-Nahl: 58-59)

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also emphasized the virtue of raising daughters with kindness, promising paradise to those who do so.

Education and intellectual role of Women in Islam:

Islamic teachings promote education for both men and women. Women have the right to seek knowledge in various fields, including religious studies, sciences, arts, and literature. Islam encourages women to be intellectually curious, seek education throughout their lives, and contribute their knowledge and skills to society.

Being educated is a criterion that makes people respectable, no matter what society they are in. If you have graduated from somewhere, your value in front of society has inevitably increased, and people consider your word more acceptable. Even this reason alone suggests that Muslim communities should be in good positions.

By being educated, I'm not just talking about school education. A Muslim woman should first know her religious ethics and morality, be able to answer those who ask questions about her hijab and religion. And she must perform her worship literally, both for her afterlife and also for becoming a role model for her child. At the same time, she should learn the rules of Child Development and Child Psychology enough to raise her child well. She must know at what age, how, and how much to tell her child about our religion. After all, she should educate herself in other areas and be aware of what is happening around her. She should be able to express solid opinions in society. All these things will happen with the confidence and the courage that knowledge brings, education brings. So a Muslim woman has no time to waste on useless things in life.

Woman as an Individual Person in Society

Economic role of Women in Islam:

Before Islam, many societies denied women property rights. Islam, however, granted women the right to own, inherit, buy, and sell property. Women were also given full control over their wealth and financial transactions, ensuring economic independence

Islam acknowledges women's economic capabilities and allows them to engage in business and financial transactions. Women have the right to own and manage property, run businesses, and earn their income. They can contribute to the economic well-being of their families and play an active role in societal development.

Islam granted women financial independence and the right to own and manage property. Women have the right to inherit, earn, and spend their wealth as they see fit. The Quran says:

"For men have a share of what they earned and for women have a share of what they earned." (An-

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Nisaa: 32)

This was a revolutionary concept at a time when women were often treated as property themselves.

Active Participation in Society:

Islam encourages women to participate in society, seek knowledge, and contribute to their communities. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, *"Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim,"* which includes both men and women. Women during the time of the Prophet were scholars, teachers, and even participants in battles, providing medical care and support.

Women in Islam are urged to actively engage in their communities, making meaningful contributions to social welfare and displaying acts of kindness and compassion towards others. They possess the right to express their opinions, have a say in decision-making, and champion fairness and equality for all.

Leadership and influence:

While there may be cultural variations, Islam recognizes the potential for women to hold positions of leadership and influence in various spheres. Women can serve as scholars, teachers, counselors, and mentors, guiding and inspiring others with their knowledge and wisdom. They also have the opportunity to contribute to public life and serve in leadership roles that benefit the community.

Equal Social Responsibilities:

Islam assigns both men and women the responsibility of promoting good and forbidding evil. Both men and women are entrusted with upholding societal values. The Quran states:

"The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, establish prayer, give charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. It is they upon whom Allah will have mercy. Indeed, Allah is Almighty and Wise." (Surah At-Tawbah: 71)

This verse highlights the shared responsibility of men and women in upholding moral and ethical standards in society. Women are not confined to the home; they are active participants in the community, contributing to its betterment.

As for working women, we can briefly say that our religion is not restrictive in this regard. But our limit is that a woman does not work together with non-Mahrems and does not disrupt her duties as a servant, as a wife, and especially as a mother, which we have explained above. As long as the tasks are not disrupted, the boundaries are paid attention to, and the woman sees the energy in herself to do everything together, there is no problem in her work. Working depends on a woman's choice, but because of our religion, whose first command is "to read", it is the responsibility of all of us, men and women, to be educated and to constantly improve ourselves.

Now, let us summarize how the religion Islam liberates a woman? Islam grants women dignity, equality, and rights in all aspects of life. It recognizes their roles as individuals, family members, and contributors to society. The Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) affirm that men and women are equal partners in faith, responsibilities, and rewards.

A woman is not supposed to be subjugated to any man's will in society except Allah. Her will and cause must be respected by the husband as the prophet said: ***"The best among you is the best with their wives"***. The same principle applies in the case of society also. She is not subjected to the financial and other burdens of the family however wealthy she is. The society or the culture she lives in cannot force her to do anything beyond her choice, as it is in the case of her husband also. A husband cannot force his wife to cook, washing and cleaning. She is free to express her opinions with society as she is also free to do the same with her husband. Women hold the most significant roles in Islam and are granted rights that ensure their dignity and equality. They have played crucial roles throughout history, from

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revered figures like Khadijah (RA) to scholars and leaders. Hadiths emphasize the importance of treating women kindly, respecting their autonomy, and recognizing their contributions.

Conclusion

Islam grants women a dignified, honorable, and empowering status. They are not confined to domestic roles but are integral to society's religious, intellectual, economic, and social fabric. As wives, mothers, daughters, and individuals, they shape generations and contribute to building a moral and progressive society. The Qur'an and Sunnah emphasize their rights, roles, and responsibilities, ensuring gender equality in faith and shared responsibilities in community development.

The role of women in Islam, therefore, is not only foundational but indispensable to the flourishing of humanity.

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