

Legal Interpretations and Women Education in Islam

SHAFAT HUSSAIN BHAT

Ph.D. Scholar

Amity School of Languages, Amity University, Jaipur (Rajasthan) India

ABSTRACT

The subject of a woman is one of the major areas of debate in most contemporary societies in particular and throughout the world in general. Islam and Social scientists have recognized the principle of a woman and how she differs from a man if indeed, such difference exists. As a result, a variety of opinions regarding the woman and what determined her role in society emerged right from the beginning women are permitted to a number of rights in Islam which make them not only equal to men but at certain times and stages superior to men. Despite this, Muslim women in their practical life are deprived of these rights as reflected in their entitlement to the right to education. The unequal treatment received by women in Muslim societies is widely debated and attributed to certain principles and norms in Islam. The paper attempts to examine the legal interpretation of women in Muslim societies around the world and the issue regarding the relationship between Islam and the rights and liberties of women education and concludes with a brief discussion of differences between Islamic and liberal ways of understanding education.

Key Words : Women Education, Gender Equality and Legal Interpretation

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality between men and women is a criticism often made of the Islamic faith, and while there are ways in which men and women are regarded differently in Islam, the position regarding education is not one of them. The article begins by appraising philosophical research relevant to the underpinning concepts behind education. It then explores evidence from the Islamic values education program, and its various related research articles, books, and projects that suggest that Islamic values education has potential to impact on a range of educational measures, including those related to enhancing understanding and tolerance across lines of religious difference. In Islam, knowledge, its acquisition and application is a fundamental requirement for all Muslims to enable them to believe, think, and act according to the principles of the religion. However, differences in style of interpretation of the Quranic verses have led to text being interpreted against its own fundamental worldview, women unequal status in Islam

has become the debate of the world. Scholars have found women in some Middle East, and other Muslim Countries have fewer years of schooling, on average they have less representation in education policies and Politics and wider gender gaps on these majors compared with women in other countries. To many observers, low education levels among women in Muslim countries are part of the broader clash of civilization between traditional or conservative Islam and the west over issues related to gender and sexuality.

If we study the teachings of Islam about education, education has been a central feature of Islam from the very beginning because of the importance of the Quran as the word of Allah ^{SWT}, Muslims have always been obliged to learn to recite the Quran, in the Arabic language. This was the case with Persians, Turks, and Indian, as a result, the rate of literacy among Muslims was relatively high from the early days of Islam. Moreover the mosque played an important role in spreading education in the Muslim world association of the mosque with education remained one of its main characteristics

throughout history and the school became indispensable to the mosques in early days of Islam, mosque was the center of education, prayer, meditation, religious instructions, political discussions, and a school. Furthermore the first school was established in Medina in 653 and both boys and girls were taught about Islam and the first lesson was about to read and write 99 names of Allah ^{SWT} According to Syed (2006) “Besides, the drive to the cultivation of knowledge was due to both practical consideration, such as the need to know the Qiblah (direction of Mecca for prayer), and The Quran, as well as the higher purpose of knowing God’s creation and taking it seriously by studying it.”

Hussein (1954) “Muslims believe that all knowledge originates from Allah ^{SWT} and that such knowledge arrives in humans by way of various channels.” Islamic epistemology, that is, the study of the sources, limits, and methods of knowledge and the nature of truth from the viewpoint of Islam, affirms the realities of existence and of things and the possibility of knowledge of both. The first verses of the Quran began with words. Islam inspires the pursuit of knowledge by all Muslims regardless of their sex. In fact, the search for knowledge is the first thing the prophet ^{PBUH} of Islam was commanded to do. This clearly indicated in the Quran (96: 1-5).

“Read in the name of your Lord who created”

“He created man from a clot”

“Read and your Lord is most Honorable”

“Who taught to write with the pen”

“Taught man what he knew not”

The verses above show the importance of knowledge not just to the Prophet ^{PBUH} but also to everyone. The verse above did not restrict the acquisition of knowledge to men. God’s servants, both males and females are to seek for knowledge especially the knowledge of the religion so as to know God and how to worship Him. Furthermore, specific comments for the equal rights of women and men to pursue education can be found in the Hadith and literature. Morteza (2011) The Prophet ^{PBUH} is reported to have said: “Seek knowledge from cradle to the grave.” He also said: “The search for knowledge is compulsory upon every Muslim, male and female.”

“Atta libul ilm faridhatol kuli Muslim”

“Attainment of knowledge is a must for every Muslim”

This is why Islam assigns such great significance to knowledge and education. The Quran, it should be noted

repeatedly asks us to observe the earth and heavens. The first word of its first verse was ‘Iqra!’ that is, ‘Read.’ When the Quran began to be revealed, education is thus the starting point of every successful human activity. History witness that Islam always appreciates and inspired women to get an education. In Islam, for every moral act, the person is praiseworthy of blessings in the Hereafter. Morteza (2011) Imam Ali ^{AS} has a statement recorded in (Nahj-al-balagah) Knowledge in Islam is normally di-vided into two broad categories: there is a famous saying “al-ilm ilman” which means “knowledge is of two kinds” the knowledge concerning religions and the knowledge concerning human and physical bodies. What has been mentioned above on the importance of knowledge refers to both, the religious as well as the secular knowledge.

An earlier woman lived in the darkness of ignorance, far from the high support of knowledge and learning. It was Islam that made the doors of education open on men and women alike. All the impediments of the way were removed and all sorts of facilities provided to promote its cause. It draws attention towards female education, in particular, creating inducements for it, declaring it an act worthy of reward in the Hereafter. To educate woman is to perform a good deed and declared to be an act worthy of reward in the Hereafter The Quran. “The person who brought up three daughters embellished them with education and training, married them off and remained benevolently inclined to them even after their marriage. (Allah ^{SWT} willing) paradise is ensured for him.” In Islam, since, educating a woman is considered as an act worthy of reward in the Hereafter, failing to perform this act is considered as an act worthy of punishment in the Hereafter. In a hadith it is asserted that if a woman dies remaining illiterate then three persons will be made answerable on the Day of Final Judgment for her illiteracy, first her father, then her husband and then her son. Thus, making women literate there is a reward and if not so there is punishment in the Hereafter.

Morteza (2011) The Prophet ^{PBUH} did not only preach about the importance of knowledge but advised to “Seek Knowledge if it’s far as China” He also gave examples of promoting knowledge. In the very first battle between the Muslims and unbelievers or Mecca, known as the War of Badr, the Muslims gain victory and caught seventy Kuffars (Non Believers) as prisoners of war Rizvi (1993) “One of the criteria of releasing the Prisoners devised by Prophet ^{PBUH} was that those who were literate

among the pris-oners could go free if they teach ten Mus-lim children how to read and write.”

Compulsion of attaining knowledge in Islam:

There are two kinds of knowledge Religious and Secular Knowledge both are important for the human being to live his life successfully. Secular for day-to-day dwelling and Religious for smooth life on the “Earth and hereafter.”

Imam Jaffar Sadiq ^{AS} Narrates:

– The Quran (9:121) “Acquire knowledge of religious jurisprudence. Anyone among you who does not become efficient in religious jurisprudence is a rustic.”

– The Quran (107: 1-7) “I would rather like my companions to be flogged on their heads so that they may (be compelled to) acquire religious knowledge.”

In this regard, there are many Quranic verses about learning and education not only this but also themes about thinking and intellection in the Quran. Meanwhile, the question is about knowledge and learning that pertains to the acquisition of knowledge from another. We must seek knowledge from Islamic teachings Morteza (2011 p.15) “The first revealed verses in which the pen symbolizes literacy and writing are the best manifestation of Islam’s extraordinary favor to teaching and learning.” It is a universal fact that the present century is well known for scientific discoveries, research, and information technology. So in this developing and progressive period, everything is changing and increasing. So education is a lifelong and dynamic process. Shia Imams have said that if you have to select between wealth and knowledge, go for knowledge: wealth can be stolen but knowledge can never be taken away, wealth decreases with us-age but the more you use your knowl-edge the more you increase in it. Education and knowledge have a multidimensional impact on communities, and it is widely recognized as one of the building blocks for sustainable development, and furthermore, education is instrumental in promoting equal opportunities and higher income levels amongst the entire population.

The importance of education has been emphasized repeatedly in the Quran as mentioned earlier, which is the ultimate source of guidance for Muslims. The Quran (20:114) says, “My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.” This verse indicates that whatever we know is limited, as we need to keep asking Allah ^{SWT} to increase our knowledge. Therefore, a Muslim men and women should

constantly be seeking more knowledge (ilm). The Quran treats knowledge as a means of reaching Iman (faith) for all Muslims, males, and females, to become true believers. This is demonstrated in the following verses The Quran (2:269) “Allah ^{SWT} grants wisdom to whom He pleases and to whom wisdom is granted indeed he receives an overflowing benefit. “Moreover in another Verse The Quran (35:28) “Those truly fear God, among His servants, who have knowledge: for God is exalted in Might, Of-Forgiving.”

Thus the Quran does not support Prohibition of knowledge and education but rather accepts it. Quran promotes the first degree of Adam’s knowledge “O man! It is possible for you to have infinite knowledge The Quran says “and he taught Adam ^{AS} the names, all of them” Moreover the Quran formally invites the children of Adam ^{AS} to seek knowledge. There are commandments in the Quran to observe (Nazar), think (Tafakkur), reflect (Tadabbur), and other similarities expressions. Quran tells us to observe the things in the heavens and earth. Go and identify whatever is there. O man! Know yourself, know your world, know your Lord, know your time know, your society and history. Thus from the above discussions, it is clear that no discrimination was made between men and women in Islam so far as knowledge and education is concerned. Along with men, women had also contributed in various fields of knowledge. There was no limitation placed on women’s education. The daughter of Mohammad ^{PBUH} Fatima ^{AS}, was the great ideals for female Knowledge and education. Many of Mohammad’s companions and female followers learned the Quran, Hadith and Islamic jurisprudence from Fatima ^{AS}.

Women in Islamic Law:

The place of women in Islam is next to Allah ^{SWT} and his messenger. Women are given a high degree of respect and honor in Islam. This is understood by the following declaration of Mohammad ^{PBUH}, “Paradise lies under the feet of the mother.” This Hadith beautifully explains what the position of women as mothers in Islam is all about. There is no greater reward than that of Paradise and it lies beneath the feet of a mother. In glorifying the position of women, Islam has not confined itself to advise, but as a legislator, it has also regarded the command and prohibition by women as something obligatory to follow in some cases. Al Kafi Narrated that the Prophet ^{PBUH} said, “Go and stay with your mother. I swear to the God Who chose me as the Prophet ^{PBUH}

that the spiritual reward which you receive for serving her even one night and making her happy with your presence, is greater than a one-year long holy war.” The Quran says (17:24)

“My Lord! Bestow on them Your Mercy as they did bring me up when I was young.”

Your Lord has declared that you worship none but Him and that you be dutiful to your parents. No doubt that the father also bears hardships with mother in bringing up the childlike feeding, Nursing, Education and Training, etc. Quran mentions that if one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, do not disrespect, nor shout at them, but address them in terms of honor. And lower unto them the wing of submission and humility through mercy. Moreover, we have studied that both mother and father have been given equal honor and respect, but it is reasonable to say that the view is different and generally negative towards women. It is very difficult to talk about civilizations that continued for hundreds of years and to say that there were no incidents where women were treated with respect. There are some acceptations, which however were sometimes restricted to the nobility. Usually in rich or ruling family women got better conduct than in other cases. Throughout history there have been many women who had talent and determination, could still make their presence felt despite the overall conditions.

Jamal A. (1980) “It is noteworthy that recent discoveries that the image of God was a female. Some of the cave temples discovered in the Soviet, Ukraine, Southern Spain and southern France some estimate to be between 30,000-2,000 BC that the superior deity that was worshipped at the time was a female.” The status of women varies in different Muslim countries, which interpret Islamic religion and law differently, especially with regard to their attitudes toward women. Most of these Islamic countries have specific beliefs about women and have restrictions concerning them. There is a misunderstanding in the West that women in Islam are not allowed to seek education. The frenzied media most often show a poor village in a Muslim country, where Muslim girls are not allowed to seek education. Then, they connect it to Islam. They portray that Islam is to

blame for this. Critics need to stop mixing culture and religion together. A person who denies a female education, and the person so happens to be Muslim, does not represent Islamic teachings. Nowhere in the Quran or Hadith has restriction on girls seeking education. There are evidences where females in Islam are actually encouraged to pursue education.

Conclusion:

Indeed! Women are subjected to various forms of denials in the Muslim world, but it is not because of Islam, it is because of misinterpretations of Islamic teachings by some scholars and Preachers. Women’s Islamic feminist’s organizations and human right organizations have strived to formalize these rights in legislation and struggle to see to their enforcement. Muslim scholars both male and female have a role to play in this regard. They should embark on massive enlightenment campaigns to educate the people on the sharia (Islamic law) its positive attitude towards gender equality and the right of all human beings.

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