

WOMEN IN ISLAM

*In this Friday Khutba delivered at the New York Islamic Center (USA) in 2001, **Shaykh Muhammad al-Yaqoubi** discusses the role of women in Islam. Shaykh Muhammad highlights how Islam honours women by granting them rights and making them equal before God, as well as giving examples of female Muslim scholars who made significant contributions to Islamic civilisation.*

Assalamu Alaykum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuh , We pray this finds everyone well, wrapped in Allah's mercy and steadfastly traveling the path to eternal felicity, in sha Allah.

In a Friday Khutba delivered at the New York Islamic Center (USA), Shaykh Sayyid Muhammad al-Yaqoubi discussed the role of women in Islam.

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted. [49:13]

The best amongst you in front of Allah is not a certain race, is not a specific gender, it is not a specific human being, it is not male over female, or female over male, it is not that males are the best in society nor are females the worst in society, it is not a certain people, tribe, certain country or certain area in the world, it is the most righteous before Allah.

And righteousness does not stem from a void it comes from difference, the divine laws are the only rules for mankind, for humanity to follow and seek righteousness and survival in this life and the other.

So in order to know who is the best and most righteous we need to refer to a certain verdict.

It is not man made law, it is not a ideology, it is not a philosophy, it is not a declaration of human rights, constitution of a certain state, nor a book that any human being has ever written, there is no reference to humanity in other than the word of Allah, the word of God, that is the supply, reference and the supreme power over all texts and all laws on earth.

We find that Allah put certain laws to limit the freedom of certain people in certain times. We believe that man and women are equal before Allah. Equality is one principle that Allah stated in Quran.

And the conjunction here, does not give preference to one gender over other, because the particular used here is used for both male and female, So no one is mentioned specific over the other.

Yet equality nowadays means something different, man and women are equal indeed before Allah, in responsibility and in rights. Yet they are not identical, not even 2 people are created identical in the world, they have similar rights, equal rights, yet they do not have identical rights, not 2 human beings could ever be identical on earth.

Not in way of behavior, thinking, intellectual or any other social way of behavior. What modern societies are seeking is not equality between men and women, but giving women identical rights, exactly like the rights of men, which is completely wrong, because it's against the very nature of human being, against the very nature of man and women together.

Islam elevated women, Islam honored women. These societies nowadays humiliate, exploit and abuse women.

The woman that carries human beings, in her womb, for 9 months, and offers human beings, offers man care love and tender, should not be his shoe shiner. Islam does not say so.

A woman that carries man 9 months in her womb, and cares for him for 2 years, nursing him, should not be a dish washer in a restaurant.

A woman that raises up the man and makes of a man something to be mentioned on earth, should not be in these societies a truck driver.

Looking at these societies now, see the change of functions, between a mother that is a queen in her monarchy, with a job that has been given to her, to raise up generations, to take care of her babies, to educate them, to cultivate their character, look at how Islam did not ask mothers to be dish washers as home, Islam does not ask wife's to be house maids, Islam does not ask wife's to do housework for the man, she does not have to do this work, she does not have to serve and cook for the man, she does not have to clean the kitchen and make up the bed, she does not even have to change the kids diaper, she does not even have to nurse the babies, if the husband is able to provide someone else.

Is there any better society that has given women, housewife's, mothers and wife's a better status than this one?

If the wife tells that she is not going to nurse her baby, then the father has to provide a milk mother for the baby, if he is able to.

The man has to bring someone to do the housework if he is able to, his wife is not his servant, his wife is his life partner.

And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought. [30:21]

This verse does not talk about a specific gender, it denotes both male and female. The female and male, both were created to comfort each other, the man to comfort his wife, and the wife to comfort her husband.

The love that Allah has put in the hearts between mates is different from the love that modern cultures speak about. Allah did not use the word Love, he used a different word which in Arabic denotes a permanent love that never moves or changes or shakes in the hearts.

This love is accompanied with compassion for each other, in every moment of their life, so the wife is not the man's housemaid, his wife is his life partner, she's equal to him, and he has no authority to command her or to force her to do the housework or wake her up in the middle of the night to cook for him.

A man cannot ask this of his wife, if she does it out of love she will be rewarded but she is not obliged to do so.

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

"The best of you are those who are best to their families, and I am the best of you to my family."

And also:

"He is the best amongst you who is the kindest towards his wives and I am the kindest amongst you towards my wives."

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) used to sow his own garments, clean his home, wash the dishes, and even though he was the best of humanity, the most perfect man on earth, it never prevented

him from doing those things even while he was the leader of the Muslim community, the Prophet, the Messenger, the ruler and the judge, it did not prevent him from helping out his wife's at home and doing simple housework.

Islam does discriminate man against woman or woman against man, there is nothing about gender discrimination in Islam. It happens that the masculine pronoun is the common pronoun in the Arabic language as it is in most other languages, yet there is something different in the Arabic language from the English language.

Allah is neither masculine nor feminine, we refer to Allah by a neutral pronoun, not a masculine pronoun, the name of Allah, ALLAH, does not come in a feminine form, it does not come in a plural form, it is Allah as it is a proper noun for Him, Almighty Allah.

Yet compare this to the English language, you have the word God, you say goddess and you have a feminine god, like Venus, because this is the impact of the Greek mythology on Christianity and European cultures, then you have gods masculine plural form and goddesses feminine plural form.

In Arabic you don't have any of that. And we need to understand that the English language was not used as a channel of revelation at all, it is not a sacred language.

I don't consider any language that makes the name of god, when its reversed, turn into Dog, a sacred language.

In Arabic you have Allah the name of God, Arabic is the sacred language. Yes, indeed Allah revealed the gospel but in Aramaic, the language of Jesus, Allah revealed Torah in Hebrew, the language of Moses.

Allah chose the Arabic language to be language of His divine message and word, and made of it a sacred channel, purified it, exactly as Allah purified the virgin Mary.

We find in the Quran marvellous stories of women either mentioned by name or by reference to their stories. Mary is not the only one, you have the wife of pharaoh, mother of Moses, wife of the prophet, Aisha, and there are over 20 women specifically mentioned in the Quran, and Allah relates the stories of these women, he dignifies women.

Allah mentions two examples of women who were believers and righteous, and two women who were disbelievers and unrighteous.

God sets forth an example to those who disbelieve: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot, they were both under two of Our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them so they availed them naught against God, and it was said: Enter both the fire with those who enter. [66:10]

And right after that He says:

And Allâh has set forth an example for those who believe; the wife of Fir'aun (Pharaoh), when she said: "My Lord! Build for me a home with You in Paradise, and save me from Fir'aun (Pharaoh) and his work, and save me from the people who are Zâlimûn (polytheists, wrong-doers and disbelievers in Allah)" [66:11]

"Mary the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity; and We breathed into (her body) of Our spirit; and she testified to the truth of the words of her Lord and of His Revelations, and was one of the devout (servants)." [66:12]

Allah makes here a parable, a gives the likeness of two women, two disbelievers and two believers, and gives to us two women to be followed as the best examples for all of humanity!

There is no gender preference in Islam or in the Quranic text to a certain race over another or a certain gender over another.

Allah says in the Quran:

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 private parts 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. [33:35]

When the Quran speaks of males and females, there is nothing that portrays women as the origin of sin, Allah tells us in the Quran the story of Adam, and He did not lay the responsibility of sin on Eve, or on the female race.

Allah says:

And Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred. [20:121]

It is not Eve, it is not the Islamic culture that makes of women the worst in the society. It is the western culture that says women are evil, because it was believed that the woman is the source of evil, women were a curse in the Middle ages, now compare this to how Islam treats women and how Islam looks upon women.

When talking about Islam many questions are raised about the veil the laws of inheritance, polygamy and so forth. To answer these questions one has to have one basic rule, it is that we as human beings have to follow the laws of Allah and not the laws of human beings.

Because human beings make errors, may turn away from the truth, may not find the best solutions for themselves. The laws of human beings are relative, what is good today might be bad the next day, what is the actual norm of societies nowadays might become a source of embarrassment the next day.

And you can see how the laws developed in western societies and how social behaviour developed in western societies. What was shameful a few decades ago causes no shame nowadays. People can even walk naked in the streets and demonstrate, without any embarrassment, but if you ask how the elderly people feel about this they will say that such things were not possible a few decades ago.

So relativity is one of the signs of modern society while the laws of Allah are consistent with the needs of human beings and permanent and ever lasting, and this is why Allah made the final revelation the last and ever remaining revelation, the only valid message till the day of judgement.

People ask about Polygamy while in Sweden people can marry their own half-siblings, and it is not the only unique law within that respect within European laws.

This law of incest is still present TODAY! And then they come talking about Polygamy, where is their shame? They can marry their own sisters and brothers and then they come criticize polygamy in Islamic societies which is one of the marvellous features of the laws of Allah.

I'm not talking about the unjust polygamous marriages created by some unjust males, but I am talking about the principal itself, which Allah revealed to solve the problems of societies.

They talk about laws of inheritance, between man and woman, saying that women get only half of what male gets, but they never mention that women don't have to spend any money on themselves, wife's are guaranteed the top and best level of sustenance of the wealth of their husbands, if the wife gets half of what the man gets and she invests her money in business, in few decades the husband has to spend

to finance her, to finance his kids, and to pay for other social responsibilities while the wife has just to use up her wealth and take care of her business.

This is all she has to do and nothing else, is this not the best way for a woman to invest in her business? She is getting half but getting equal, not same amount, but equal amount. Because you have to look at the other side, duties and rights on the one hand and responsibilities on the other hand.

Aa'ishah reported that a girl came to her and said, "My father married me to his brother's son in order to raise his social standing, and I did not want this marriage [I was forced into it]." Aa'ishah said, "Sit here until the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) comes. The Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) came and she told him about the girl. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) sent for her father, then he gave the girl the choice of what to do. She said, "O Messenger of Allaah, I have accepted what my father did, but I wanted to prove something to other women." (Reported by al-Nisaa'i, 3217).

This happened 14 centuries ago, not in 2012 in some village in a Islamic country, No, 14 centuries ago Islam already created justice for women!

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) encouraged all sorts of education for women and encouraged them to participate in society. One example of this is the scholarship of women and their contribution to the establishment of Islamic civilization, this contribution is beyond any imagination.

Pick up any book now on who is who in America and look at the level of "important" men and women. Do the same for the companions of the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), and look at who was important during his life.

You will find that there were over 15.000 companions, of those 1.500 women contributed to the Islamic society during the life of the Prophet, their biographies are documented, these women contributed to cultural, social, economical, and intellectual life of the Islamic society.

You will find thousands of female scholars who were even teachers of great male scholars.

There was a woman by the name of Maryam bint Abdul Kadir, her life has been forgotten now, but she was remembered for one thing, she left behind six volume manuscript written with her right hand. This book has survived and is available in the Public libraries of the Islamic world.

At the end of her book she says that if anyone comes across a error to please pray for her forgiveness because when she was writing the manuscript with her right hand, she was rocking the cradle of her baby to put him to sleep with her left hand.

Isn't this a wonderful example of a housewife, a mother and a scholar who contributed to the establishment of Islamic civilization, and the fact that she was a housewife or a mother did not prevent her from writing this manuscript with her right hand while putting her baby to sleep with her left hand.

Yes indeed, Islam is the religion that dignified and elevated women.

A Link to the Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYsINPLHIns>