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What is women’s studies in Islam?

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Abstract

Muslim women’s studies [Women’s studies in Islam] are the study of the physical and spiritual needs of women, their rights and responsibilities and all related subjects from the aspect of Islam. It requires the examination of the Holy Qur’an and the teachings and lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the important and basic sources of Islamic law (shariah). Allah has created women and knows best what they require and what is the best path for them to follow. This paper details topics about women’s studies for graduate courses and research. These topics include: the status of women in the Qur’an, women rights, the psychology and sociology of women, and female physiology and health. Aspects of general subjects such as economics and politics that relate to women should also be addressed.

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1. Introduction

All of God's religions invite man to obey God’s laws and the teachings of prophets – God’s messengers – so that mankind, by following God’s orders, the invitations of His book, and the sayings of the prophets, may progress, reach perfection, and become prosperous; for the laws of God are in accordance with the nature of mankind, and God wants only good for humanity. The purpose of mankind’s creation is to achieve the status of the perfect human, not to live a material life like the animals.

2. The Status of Women in creation

Considering that the position of woman in creation and human societies – woman whose fundamental role is accompanying and cooperating with man in reaching perfection and in bringing forth future generations of mankind and teaching and training these generations – and considering that being a mother is one of the most honorable human positions, the study of the position and status of woman in the Holy Quran as the last heavenly book in order to understand and comprehend its laws, the rules of human relationships, and the status and relationship of family, the smallest unit of society, is a certain and urgent matter, so in educational planning we have to consider this status.

In these times when humanity imagines itself to be intellectual and knowledgeable, tries to obtain the accessories of prosperity and salvation and reach an ideal life and spiritual and intellectual peace, precision in the laws and rules of

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God (Sharia) is an ineluctable affair, because Sharia is one center of legislation that is self-contained and wise; in other words, God the Able, the Wise, The Unique and Needless of all things has laid the foundation, and no other council or legislative body has such qualities that render its decision-making and law-writing unaffected by the needs and conditions facing it.

3. Educational planning for women Islamic studies

In order to clarify Islamic studies regarding woman (the female gender), another word: educational planning in women Islamic studies, it is necessary to explore the needs, duties, rights, and in general the life of woman through God’s book and the sayings and actions of God’s messengers (in other words, perfect humans). Since Islam is the last and most complete of God’s religions, the Quran and the sayings of the prophet of Islam and his successors must be used as models and examples; therefore the following are intended:

1. The status of woman in Holy Qur’an
2. The duties of woman
3. The rights of woman

3-1 The status of woman in Holy Qur’an

The Holy Qur’an (God's Book) is the book of human life. It is the direction of better life, the spiritual and material kind for human being, which can guide human societies to the justice and safe life.

The value of the teachings of Islam regarding women become obvious when one compares the situations of women in different societies at the time of the rise of Islam. Will Durant, in his book “The story of Civilization,” has discussed issues of the rights and status of women among the nations of Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Brahmins, and other religions as well as the conditions and situations of women in the lands of Asia, Europe, civilized and uncivilized societies. (For further information on some of these subjects, refer to the article “Islamic Women Studies is Important and Necessary”, by: Gharavi Naeni, N (2010) Procedia -Social and Behavioural Sciences, p. 1239; The Oxford Encyclopaedia of The modern Islamic world.(1995).v4.

The lack of the right of choice in life, being buried alive, being burned alive with the corpse of one’s husband, being only in the service of man, being inherited, being denied the right of inheritance, not having the right to a marriage portion or to the ownership of such portion, also not being allowed to have possessions, social rights, the right of choice and opinion, or the right to vote on various affairs, being sold into slavery, sexual or otherwise, being equated with animals, etc. are all conditions women faced in different lands and societies of humanity during the age of the rise of Islam and starting time of revelation of Holy Qur’an.

In order to become familiar with the status of woman in the Quran, one must consider the verses regarding the creation of mankind, in particular the creation of woman and its connection to the creation of man, and determine the similarities and differences between them. It will be seen that from the point of view of humanity, there is no difference between man and woman in the status of humanity, the worship of God, having a good character, obeying God and his prophet, and so on.

According to Holy Qur’an: “The most valuable people are those with the most piety” (Qur’an, Al-Hujurat(49)),

13). Therefore, women, like men, can reach the highest degrees of spirituality and faith, and they can have worthy actions, and it is possible that no type of corruption enters their behaviours or intention.
3-2 The duties of woman

Since the womb of woman is the site for breeding the future generation, faith, purity, and goodness are necessities of her existence so she can raise a healthy and good person, and since a mother is the most important reference source for a child, she is the best centre for teaching and the best model for children. The more flawless and more perfect the model, the more complete and healthy the prototype made from it can be. The existence on the earth and in society of people who are wholesome and complete is the means for the health of society and the peacefulness of social areas. The less corruption and immorality there is in a society, the less murder, robbery, immorality, and illegal actions. These themes have been subjects considered and counselled by prophets and reformists throughout the age of humanity. So she should be healthy, physically or in morality.

The more complete love that is given to a child and the more correctly he is trained, then more beneficial he will be during his youth. Therefore, Mother plays a very fundamental role in the prosperity of the family and the future generation. Allah’s gives health and pureness to any new generation, but it is parents who may cause unhealthiness for baby, so their duty and responsibility is very grate and they have to be careful for their deeds and their usages and habits. The home is the sanctuary of the members of a family, who must feel secure and peaceful there, and all members have responsibilities and rights in it and mother has most effective role in it.

3-3 The rights of woman in Islam

With its coming, the Quran announced that women and men, in humanity, are equal and the same. Whoever does good deeds will receive a reward and whoever does bad deeds will be punished (Qur'an, An-Nisaa(4),1).

The wages belong to the one who does the work (Qur'an, An-Nisaa(4), 32): And in no wise covet those things in which Allah has bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others: to men is allotted what they earn and to women what they earn . And their Lord hath accepted or them and answered them: “Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you. Be he male or female: you are members, one of another... (Qur’an, Al-i-Imran(3), 195)

Mother in Holy Quran and Islam has a very high position, and God advises mankind to behave properly with her. The difficulties she faces are recalled and remembered (Qur’an, Al-Ahqaf(46), 15). According to this passage of the Quran, all humans are advised to pray for their mothers and fathers and to be kind to them.

Mother is the base and foundation of the family; and the family is stable because of her existence. The value of the existence of Mother is clear to all; therefore, consideration of her and her position and rights is important and urgent so that the family remains strong and intact, the future generation grows in peace and is correctly brought up, and so that those responsible for the future of society are well-prepared.

A man approached the prophet(S) and asked, “To whom should I do good” The Prophet (S) answered, “Your mother.” The man asked again, and the prophet(S) answered again, “Your mother.” For the third time, the man asked the same question. This time, the prophet(S) answered, “Your father.” (Horr Amuly, v.15, p. 628)

The prophet of Islam(S) advised men very strongly to take care of their women and to respect their rights and status. (Nori, v.2,p.551)

The Quran condemns the deplorable actions of burying female children alive or becoming upset at the birth of a female during the age of ignorance , as it says: When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a
female (child), his face (the father) darkens, and he is filled with inward grief! (Qur'an, An-Nahl (16), 59). The Prophet (S) said, “God is kinder toward women than men. For the man who makes one of his close relative (intimate) women happy, God makes his trials on Judgment Day easier (Kulainy, v. 2, chapter Ishrah). The Prophet also said, “Your best children are females,” (Horr Amuly, v. 15, p. 615).

Men are forbidden to inherit women (e.g. father’s wife, son’s wife, uncle’s wife, etc.) (Qur'an, An-Nisaa (4), 19). A man or woman’s inheritance is his/her own right, and no one else has the right to take control of it (Qur'an, An-Nisaa (4), 7). The reward of women and men on Judgment Day is the same (Qur'an, Al-Hadid (57), 12).

Service to others and assistance, lending in the way of God (Qur'an, Al-Hadid (57), 18), at any rate, for women and men in having faith, giving charity, lending in the way of God, and heavenly rewards, effulgence, spirituality, rewards of Heaven and eternal life there, and multitudes of rewards is equal.

In Islam, women, just like men, can have virtues of equal value while this is not so in other religions (Qur'an, Al-Ahzab (33), 35; At-Tauba (9), 76).

One of the other necessary and urgent discussions that must be programmed and taught, therefore, is the status of women in the Quran and Islam (sayings of the prophet and his successors) and the comparison of that with the position of women in different civilizations, different religions, and the holy books.

Today, also, contrary to technological progress, many of the people of the world, because they have distanced themselves from religion and God’s orders and the Sharia laws, are approaching the age of ignorance. Unfortunately, we are witness to the trafficking of women and girls, the abduction and sale of female children, reminiscent of the conditions of the time before the rise of Islam.

Intelligent and developed humans must bring themselves closer to God through faith and spirituality rather than aspiring to materialism and narcissism. They must pivot towards justice and the unity of God in all situations and conditions so that, under the auspices of righteous laws, they can reach individual and social justice, which is the message of all the prophets and saints and all people are looking for it. In the age of ignorance, when the Arabs were accustomed to the ignorant ways, the Prophet of Islam displayed a very respectful and loving behaviour toward his daughter. In this way, he taught the people of society and advised the people strongly about their daughters.

The family is a social unit whose members have equal benefits, and its main base is mutual love and the desire of peace, not due to fear of the law, but on the basis of human nature and affection. Unity between its members will effect intellectual and ideological agreement, trust keeping, consultation, and the establishment of peace and harmony. The Quran refers to this subject as well (Qur'an, An-Nahl (16), 80) and (Qur'an, Ar-Rum (30), 21) as it says: “And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect”.
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4. Conclusion

In educational planning for women's Islamic studies we have to look in Holy Qur'an's laws and directions, and prophet's teachings in order of woman's status, woman duties and woman rights because she is the foundation of family and has a big role and responsibility in her life.

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