

# Educational Rights of Woman in Islam

Gulzar Ahmad Bhat

Doctoral Candidate, IUST, Awantipora, J&K (India)

## ARTICLE DETAILS

### Article History

Published Online: 25 May 2019

### Keywords

Ilm, Quran, Sunnah, Mahar.

### Corresponding Author

Email: gulzarahmadkgd[at]gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

*This paper focuses on exploring the educational rights of women in Islam. With the advent of Islam, circumstances improved for the woman. The woman's dignity and humanity was restored. Islam considered the woman as a worthy human being, with a share in humanity equal to that of the man. Islam gave true and due rights to women 1400 years ago when there was ignorance and darkness. Thus, Islam uplifted the status of the women in the society in all respects.*

*The woman's right to seek education or learning is basic and is also guaranteed by Islamic teachings. Islam actually makes it incumbent on the woman to seek knowledge. The Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) says, "Seeking knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim", where "every Muslim" obviously involves men and women on an equal footing and as a rule formalized by all authorities of jurisprudence. We have examples of hundreds of Muslim noble women who were great scholars. The best example is Mother Ayesha (R.A). One of her very famous student whose name was Urwa (R.A), stated: "I have not seen any scholar greater than Ayesha (R.A) in Quranic sciences, obligatory duties (Faraid), in lawful and unlawful (Hala O Haram) things, in literature, in poetry, in Arabic history, science of inheritance, Mathematics etc. Just imagine the days when people were hardly educated, we have no. of examples of women who were highly educated, learned and scholars of that time in both religious and worldly knowledge.*

## 1. Introduction

Many motivated misconceptions about Islam have been created and given currency and propagation in modern times. One of these relates to the education of women in Islam. Gender inequality is a common accusation made against Islam and a disparity in educational opportunities between men and women. It is blamed that Islam does not admit equality of sexes with regard to seeking education and consequently the women is denied her due right and role in society. The result is that her capabilities are stifled and she is condemned to play a secondary role.

## 2. Islam elevated the position of women:

Religion, particularly Islam is cited as a major stumbling block for women's advancement. This is totally erroneous and invalid notion relating to Muslims and the societies that we have built. Facts and realities can't be hid and enshroud, Islam is the first to raise its voice against the oppression and exploitation of woman and accorded her a place of dignity and honour and particularly with regard to seeking knowledge, education and her educational role in the society.

## 3. Importance of Knowledge in Islam:

Since knowledge is the basis and foundation upon which the edifice of Islam has been raised. The very fact is that the first revelation of Muslims' scripture (Holy Quran) is the "Revelation of knowledge" (i.e the first five verses of Chapter *Alaq*).<sup>1</sup> Also One can perceive the importance and excellence of knowledge in Islam by this fact that the term 'Ilm' (knowledge) and its derivatives are used **778** in the Holy Quran times.<sup>2</sup>

It is well known about the basic principle of Islamic *Shariah* that when a commandment is revealed, even if the masculine form of word is used the female gender is also included in it. If this utmost principle is ignored and rejected then the most

commandments and obligatory duties mentioned in the Quran will become null and void for women. So though Allah Almighty and the Holy Prophet (PBUH) use the masculine form to describe the maximum orders and the injunctions, woman is not equally but I may say preferably also included.

So, from this agreed upon fact it is now easy to understand that wherever there is the order and commandment of acquiring knowledge in the primary sources of Islam (i.e Quran and Sunnah) both men and women are addressed without any distinction and discrimination.

It is worth to mention that in Islamic history the importance of women education can be perceived from this fact that here sometimes poor, but knowledgeable males were ordained to present dower (*Mahar*) for their brides in the form of teaching their wives.<sup>3</sup>

## 4. Equal opportunities for attaining knowledge:

Like the Holy Quran states and admires the knowledgeable persons in a unique way:

*"Say: Can those who have knowledge and those who do not be alike? So, only the wise do receive the admonition".<sup>4</sup>*

Also Holy Prophet (PBUH) stated:

*"Acquisition of knowledge is obligatory on all Muslims".<sup>5</sup>*

Here the terms "*Yalamoon*" and "*Muslim*" obviously denotes and involves men and women on an equal footing as a rule formalised by all authorities of jurisprudence.

This shows that for acquiring knowledge, Islam does not allow any distinction between man and woman.

### 5. Devotional and special attention towards female education

It is evident from this Hadith:

*"Whoever brings three daughters/sisters, teach them good manners and skills, marries them (to noble men) and treats them well, for him is promised paradise".<sup>6</sup>*

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) had also enjoined the Muslims to educate their slave-girls, too. As stated:

*"If a person has a slave-girl, then he educates her liberally and trains her in the best manner and culture, then sets her free and marries her, he has a double reward (from his Lord)".<sup>7</sup>*

So, just as Islam exhorts men to acquire knowledge and spread, so too it exhorts women to adorn themselves with it and earn reward.

The response to the exhortation is apparent in the great number of women who have devoted themselves to spread knowledge in each of its fields. They have taught religious as well as secular sciences like exegesis, hadith, jurisprudence, poetry, history, humanities, medical and other sciences and have excelled in writing on these subjects.

### 6. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) encourages and made arrangements for acquisition knowledge

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) not only encouraged the women for reading and writing but also for attaining the knowledge of other fields of life. As narrated by Shifa bint Abdullah (R.A):

*"One day she (Shifa bint Abdullah) was sitting with Hafsa (wife of Prophet) when the Prophet (PBUH) came along and said, 'why not you teach her the cure for the disease 'Namla' just as you have taught her reading and writing"<sup>8</sup>*

The Study of Seerah also shows that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself made special arrangements for the education and training of women. As Hazrat Abu Sa'id Khudri (R.A) reports that a delegation of women requested to the Holy Prophet (PBUH): 'men have gone ahead of us (in terms of acquisition of knowledge). Therefore, specify a special day for our benefits as well' The Holy Prophet (PBUH) assured them and specified a day for them. In which He (PBUH) would meet them, advise them and educate them.<sup>9</sup>

### 7. The concept of knowledge in Islam covers a broad spectrum of subjects

It is important to note here that the concept of knowledge in Islam covers a broad spectrum of subjects. The Qur'an explains the Islamic concept of knowledge as being very vast. Acquisition of knowledge embraces within in its fold all of its

branches, both religious and secular, which are productive for mankind. It is important to note that this is not restricted to the purview of the traditional religious sciences. Instead many verses of the Holy Qur'an invite man to ponder and meditate over the creation of the universe. Thus it would be wrong to allow women to just partake in learning of the religious sciences and prohibit her from gaining a wider scope in her learning.

This is the reality that we have examples of hundreds of Muslim noble women who were great scholars not confined to a particular field as we presume but in every branch and field of knowledge. The best example for the same is Mother Ayesha (R.A), as the evidence presented by One of her very famous student whose name was Urwa (R.A), he states:

*"I have not seen any scholar like Ayesha (R.A) in Quranic sciences, obligatory duties (Faraid), in lawful and un-lawful (Hala O Haram), in literature, in poetry, in Arab history, science of inheritance, science of lineage, Mathematics etc".<sup>10</sup>*

Stated by Abu Moosa Al-Ashari (R.A) that whenever we the companions lacked knowledge and felt difficulty in any issue or in any matter, then immediately we went to Hazrat Aisha(R.A), and definitely she had knowledge about it.<sup>11</sup>

Thus, Islam had women scholars and transmitters of religious knowledge at that time when the woman was considered and believed to be a source of evil and sin and was prohibited even to touch the religious scriptures. At that time here in Islam thousand of pious males(companions and the successors are receiving education from Muslim women scholars, when there saints of other religions were of the view that "whenever you see a woman you should not think that you saw a human being or even a beastly being, rather you saw the devil in person"

We have a great Fatima bint Muhammad Al-Fihriya Al-Qurashiya an Arab Muslim woman who is credited for founding the oldest existing, continually operating and first degree-awarding educational institution in the world, The University of Al Quaraouiyyine in Fes, Morocco in 859 CE, when there people of other religions were disputing on the issue that whether the woman had a soul, and was considered as mere chattel for men.

Thus the Muslim woman contributed in every field of life by acquisition of knowledge, teaching, transmitting and preserving the 'ilm' in the form of compiling and writings.

### 8. Conclusion

In present times it is also imperative, if we wish to be successful and move towards a sustainable reality and prosperity, the women of this society must be given every and equal opportunity to attain knowledge and education without violating the bounds of Shariah, which is not only her due but a right that has been ordained and endowed to her by Almighty Allah and His Blessed Prophet (PBUH).

## References

1. Holy Quran, Alaq: 96:1-5
2. Moulana Qazi Athar Mubarkpuri, Khair-UI- Qurron ki Darsgahein aur Un ka Nizam e Taleem U Tarbiyat
3. Imam Bukhari, Al-Sahih
4. Holy Quran, Al-Zumar, 39:9
5. Imam Majah, Al-Sunan
6. Abu Dawood, Al-Sunan
7. Imam Bukhari , Al-Sahih
8. Abu Dawood, Al- Sunan
9. Imam Bukhari, Al-Sahih
10. Imam Zahbi, Tahzeeb u Tahzeeb
11. Abu Abdullah Shamsudin Mohammad Ibn Ahmad Zahbi, Tazkirat-ul-Hufazz