

Socio-Economic Role Of Women In Islamic Perspective: A Critical Review

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Abstract

The socio-economic role of women is a global issue in modern times. Islamic concept of women is distorted by western scholars and western media. It is clear that a woman is honored as mother, daughter, sister and wife in Islam. Women can play social, financial role for development of a nation or society. Islam is the only religion which has provided women reasonable economic and social rights. Islamic history shows clearly that Muslim women have demonstrated their skills and abilities in each walk of life. In the West, women are completely allowed to perform socio-economic activities without any moral or religious limitations, due to which the entire western family system is on the verge of collapse. That is why, increased rate of rape cases, sexual harassment, emotional harassment of women can be observed in western society. While Islam provides complete code of conduct for women's security while performing socio-economic activities. The western media distorts Islamic concepts about the status and social and economic role of women in a society. It is very important to highlight whether women can play a socio-economic role within the limits of Islamic Shariah in present era. In the present research work, socio-economic role of women in modern times has been elaborated in Islamic perspective.

Key Words: Islam, Women, West, Nudity, Prohibition, Social, Economic, Role
Introduction

The role of women is very important in the formation and completion of any society. According to Islamic point of view, as a human being, there is no distinction between men and women, while the scope of the both is different in terms of physical ability. In Islam, it is not a matter of one's being a man or a woman to attain a high position, but the standard of superiority is piety and positive role in society. The Islamic history women is replete with examples of the noble and constructive role of women. Due to ignorance of the true spirit of Islamic teachings, baseless allegations are made that Islam degrades women and prohibits to play socio-economic role. It is unfortunate that even in the present age of knowledge and awareness, the family looks sad at the birth of a daughter. It is need of time to examine the socio-economic role of women in the present age. It is necessary to provide a conducive environment for women to be acquainted with the changing trends of the modern age. In the West, women have complete freedom to carry out all kinds of activities without following any code of conduct, due to which the family system of western society is on the verge of collapse. West raises objection that Muslim women have been deprived of participating in development of nation. It is duty of Muslim authors to answer this unjustified objection of the west in a reasoned manner. The West distorts and misreports Islamic concepts about the status and role of women. Western media tries to prove that woman is oppressed and degraded in Islam. While women have been honorable status in Islam and they can play a socio-economic role without crossing the limits of Islamic Shariah. Therefore, it is need of current time to highlight status and dignity of women and their socio-economic role in Islamic perspective.

Literature Review

The role of women is a global emerging topic that has been the subject of useful and lively research work in the present era. A lot number of researchers have done commendable work on the topic of women. Dr. Akram Nadvi has worked vividly on the dignity of women in his compilation "Al-Mohaddithat" has mentioned ten thousand muhaddithat and sheikhat. In terms of women's academic status, Nadwi's research work is worth reading. Shiza Kausar Cheema, a research scholar of Islamic Studies at Bahauddin Zakaria University, presented a PhD dissertation in 1993 entitled "The status of woman according to the Qur'an". In it, Shiza Cheema made a commendable effort to prove the status of women in the light of Quranic verses. PhD dissertation at Namal University "Religious services of women in the first century AH" was written by Scholar Uzma Begum in 2009. It is an excellent study on the services and dignity of women. Prof. Ghulam Shabbir and Ghulam Safdar gave a reasoned response to the Western propaganda regarding the status of women in the article titled "Human Rights and Women's Rights in Islam" which was published in research journal *Ulum-e-Islamia*(2014). Research scholar Abdul Mannan Cheema's article titled "Analytical study of positive and constructive activities of women in the light of Islamic teachings" was published in Research Journal "Al-Tabeen"(December 2020) is an excellent work on topic of women's positive role the current era. Research article titled "The Psychological benefits on women health from physical activities: Constraints and

opportunities (In the perspective of Seerat un Nabī)” by scholar Kashaf which was published in research journal (Al-Qawarir, Punjab University, Vol:3, Issue:2, March 2022) is a good work on the topic of feminism. Dr. Yasmin Nazir and Dr. Shazia Ashiq’s common article titled “Women’s Finance rights in the light of Sitat-e-Tayyibah” is very nice research work on women’s financial activities that was published in research journal Ulūm-e-Islāmia (December 2021). Dr Abdul Haye Madni and Dr Sumbal’s article titled “Women’s Roles and Rights in the Means of Earning and Nation’s Economic Growth” in research journal (Ihyā’ al’ulūm, July-December 2021) is a worth read research work.

Apart from the above research work, there have been numerous research material such as articles and books on women's rights and dignity, but it is need of time to do more vital research work on the topic of women’s socio-economic role in modern times in the light of Islamic teachings. The under discussion article will highlight the Islamic teachings regarding the socio-economic role of women in modern times.

Research Objectives

- To highlight concept of Islam about women’s dignity.
- To justify the socio-economic role of women in modern era.
- To discuss promotion of western civilization in societies.
- To analyze Islamic preventive measures of current nudity in society.

Research Methodology

Descriptive research methodology has been adopted in this research work. Attempts have been made to utilize the primary sources related to women’s role in modern era in Islamic perspective. However, at some places, information has also been sought from secondary sources related to the topic. Modern technology and internet have been utilized to the fullest extent to obtain the latest information and materials in the present times. A lot number of Quranic verses and sayings of prophet (SAW) have been compiled to clarify the significance of the women’s role in current times.

Dignity of Women

It is distorted by western media that in Islam, woman has been deprived of her intellectual role. Whereas Islamic history is adorned with the admirable role of women's insight, courage, bravery, wisdom and foresight. Islamic history begins with the constructive role of Hazrat Khadija (RA). Before the advent of Islam, women had no status in the society. It is unfortunate that infant daughters were buried alive at birth.

Allah Almighty says:

And when the girl-child that was buried alive will be asked, for what sin she was killed?”(Quran,81:8-9)

Before Islam, woman had no human rights such as right of inheritance, property, education, finance etc. Islam is the only religion which has endowed women with high position, status, right of inheritance and all other reasonable human rights. In view of the greatness and honor of women, Allah Almighty has revealed complete surah titled

"Al-Nisa" in the Holy Quran. It can be called the constitution of rights and rules of women rights. It sets out the rules and regulations of civil, criminal and international law about women. It is unfortunate, even in the Islamic societies, contemporary man has forgotten the greatness and dignity of the daughter. In order to restore her high position, it is necessary to highlight authentic concept of Islam about women's dignity. Most of the verses of the Holy Qur'an state the status and dignity of the daughter. The training of the daughter is a treasure for the parents in terms of reward. According to Quranic point of view, Sons are the embellishment of life while the daughters are better than sons in sight of Allah in context of reward and hope.

Almighty Allah says:

Wealth and sons are the embellishment of the worldly life, and the everlasting virtues are better with your Lord, both in rewards and in creating good hopes.(Quran,18:46)

According to Imam Qurtabi expressed that Quranic word (Wal Baqiyat tus Salihat) means daughters.(Qurtabi,1384,10:415)All human beings are of the same species and are equal in terms of human dignity and respect. All human beings (men and women) have been created from one soul, Adam. The essence of all human beings (men and women) is one. Hadhrat Adam (A S) is the father of all men and women. The standard of honor and respect in the sight of Allah is not to be a man or a woman but piety and abstinence.

Allah Almighty says:

O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into races and tribes, so that you may identify one another. Surely the noblest of you, in Allah's sight, is the one who is most pious of you. Surely Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.
(Quran,49:13)

Imam Baghwi elaborates in context of above verse that the greatest honor is to be pious in the sight of Allah, while the greatest reproach is to commit immorality. (Baghawi,1420,4:265) It is clear message of Quran that the standard of respect is not to be a boy or a girl, but the most honorable person in the sight of Allah Almighty is the one who is in the forefront of piety.

Hadhrat Ayesha(R A) reports:

It was narrated that Ayesha reported, Usaman stumbled at the threshold of the door and cut his face, The Messenger of Allah(SAW) said: Remove the harm (the blood) from him: but I was repulsed by that. He started to suck the blood and remove it from his face, then he said,If Usama were a girl, I would have adorned him and dressed him until I married him off.(Ibn-e- Majah, H: 1976)

Holy Prophet(SAW) says:

“It was narrated from ‘Amir bin Shu’aib, from his father, that his grandfather said; The Messenger of Allah P.B.U.H , said; Whatever is given as a dowry or gift before the marriage, it belongs to her. Whatever is given after the marriage belongs to the one to

whom it was given. And the most deserving matter for which a man is honored is (the marriage of) his daughter or sister.”(Ibn-e-Majah, H: 1955)

According to saying of the prophet(SAW),the best man is the one who treats his wife(life partner) well, as narrated by Ibn-e-Majah below:

“It was narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that the Prophet(SAW) said; The best of you is the one who is best to his wife, and I am the best of you to my wives.”(Ibn-e- Majah,H: 1977)

Violation of women's rights is a tragedy in Pakistani Islamic society. According to a report by Human Rights of Pakistan, 23,000 women have been victims of domestic violence in the last three years while the number of unreported incidents is much higher. (Daily Express, September 17, 2019) In Islam, woman has been respected as daughter, mother, sister and wife. A good wife is an invaluable gift of divine power, for which there is no substitute. A slight glimpse of the age of ignorance can be seen in the present society on the depression and resentment of the family at the birth of a daughter. The birth of a son is greeted with congratulations, while the birth of a daughter is marked by anguish, trauma or silence, although daughters are a sign of good fortune and good fortune. While there are many hadiths in which rewards were announced for the parents who care their daughters happily.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

Hadhrat Ayesha narrates, A lady along with her two daughters came to me asking (for some alms), but she found nothing with me except one date which I gave to her and she divided it between her two daughters, and did not eat anything herself, and then she got up and went away. Then the Prophet came in and I informed him about this story. He said, "Whoever is put to trial by these daughters and he treats them generously (with benevolence) then these daughters will act as a shield for him from Hell-Fire.(Bukhari,1412,H:1418)

Whoever is tested because of his daughters, these daughters would be barrier and obstacle to save him from hell fire. The Prophet (SAW) announced the reward for parents of daughters.

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said:

Abu Saeed Khudri (RA) reported that Allah’s Messenger (SAW) said, If anyone has three daughters or three sisters, or two daughters or two sisters and he looks after them well, fearing Allah in this regard then for him is paradise.(Tirmizi, 1998,H:1912)

The announcement of reward for the parents of daughters on the upbringing of two daughters on the Day of Resurrection shows the dignity of woman in Islam. The faces of the disbelievers turn black when they hear the news about birth of their daughters. Therefore, it is necessary for Muslims to avoid such vices because daughters are superior in terms of reward and hope in the Hereafter. Islam emphasizes human equality and provides an ideal and practical example of respect for women. Islam believes in equality of men in terms of human rights. In Islam, the scope of men and women is different in terms of gender and natural abilities. Islam encouraged and motivated to

educate the girls at a time when the world did not even have the concept of women's education. High-ranking dignitaries like Imam Zuhri, Allama Dhahbi, Allama Ibn-e-Hijar Asqalani and Allama Jalaluddin Suyuti got knowledge from female teachers and they have also acknowledged the value of their female teachers in their books. In modern times, Leading Palestinian scholar Ms. Naila Sabri has mentioned more than 500 women scholars in her book "Kwakab ul-Nisa", including women who are interested in poetry and literature. Dr. Muhammad Akram has edited the biographies of 10 thousands muhaddithat in his book. Dr. Muhammad Akram Nadvi about narration of prophetic traditions as follows:

The hadiths of women companions and successors are widely circulated, and recorded in the precursors of the six Books and other major collections. (Akram, 2007, p.246)

Hazrat Ayesha's scholarly and religious services are exemplary for a Muslim woman today. Ayesha's biography is a treasure of knowledge and literature and a metaphor for educational and research skills. Hazrat Ayesha was well versed in various sciences and arts. In this regard, Allama Abdul Hai Katani states that it was a sign of the superiority of Ayesha's intelligence that great Companions of Holy Prophet (SAW) used to ask scholarly questions to clarify their issues. (Katani, 1:111). The people of the early centuries did not compromise on the education of women. Dr. Akram Nadvi mentions it as follows:

It will be remembered that Malik's daughter Fatima memorized the whole of Muwatta and became narrator of hadith, while his son did not. (Akram, 2007, p.251)

The Islamic history is full of such examples that parents used to try their best to provide a suitable environment for their daughters to study Qur'an and Hadith. Imam Malik's daughter gained academic and jurisprudential priority over her son. An in-depth study of history shows that the woman has proved its mettle in the field of poetry, education and literature. Their literary and poetic tastes are admirable and commendable. Surprisingly, in the modern era, there is a debate on the legitimacy of women's educational, teaching and socio-economic role. From the above mentioned evidences and proofs that status and dignity of women is distinguished in Islam.

Socio- Economic Role of Women

During the Prophet (SAW)'s time, women were allowed to participate in socio-economic activities. For example, Malika al-Thaqfiya (Asqalani, 1412, 8:321) and Asma bint Mukhramah were involved in the perfume business. (Yusuf, 1412, 4:1837) Hadhrat Khadijah (RA) was a well-known merchant of Makkah. Hadhrat Khadija (RA) had extensive experience of trading and business. In this regard, Muhammad ibn-e-Saad has stated in his book as follows:

Hazrat Khadijah (RA) was an honorable, rich and merchant woman. She used to send her trading goods to the foreign country through male partners. The capital was hers, while the men were equal partners in the profits. (Ibn-e Sa'd, 1410, 1: 104)

According to Islamic Shariah, a Muslim woman can have her own separate economic fund which cannot be controlled by her husband nor is her father allowed to take possession of her property. In this regard, Dr. Abdul Ruaf Zafar writes as below:

In Islam, a woman was given the right to own her personal property one and a half thousand years ago. For example, a woman can buy, keep, and sell property, whether she is married or unmarried. She can make all the decisions like a man about her property without any restrictions. (Zafar, 2014, P.126)

Women can go out of the house for the purpose of carrying out any national, welfare, economic, social and educational and literary activities covering his head with a big shawl (Ghongat) at public places. The justification of women leaving home for carrying out economic activities is also clear from the following tradition of Sahih Bukhari:

“Hadhrat Aysha (R.A.) Narrated, Once Sada bint Zam a went out at night for some need, and Umar saw her, and recognizing her, he said (to her), "By Allah, O Sada! You cannot hide yourself from us. So she returned to the Prophet and mentioned that to him while he was sitting in my dwelling taking his supper and holding a bone covered with meat in his hand. Then the Divine Inspiration was revealed to him and when that state was over, he (the Prophet) was saying: "O women! You have been allowed by Allah to go out for your needs.” (Bukhari, 1422, H:5237)

Jabir bin Abdullah reports:

Jabir bin 'Abdullah (Allah be pleased with them) reported, My maternal aunt was divorced, and she intended to pluck her dates. A person scolded her for having come out (during the period of 'Idda). She came to Allah's Prophet (may peace be upon him.) and he said: Certainly you can pluck (dates) from your palm trees, for perhaps you may give charity or do an act of kindness. (Muslim, H:1483)

The above hadiths indicate that women can move out of their place of residence in connection with their employment and business. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW)'s various commands indicate that women are allowed to go out of their houses to perform prayer and other activities. The tradition of Sahih Bukhari shows that it is permissible for a woman to worship in the mosque. (Bukhari, 1422, H: 865) There is no difference between men and women in terms of the reward of goodness in the world and hereafter. Whenever there was a difficult time for the Muslim nation, women carried out remarkable deeds in all walks of life with national spirit. Hazrat Safia (RA)'s famous story of courage and bravery indicates talent of women at the time of prophet hood. She killed a Jew during the battle of Ahzab. The women used to go with the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in their expeditions and give water to the soldiers and take part in the treatment of the wounded. Muolana Mubarak puri writes that in the battle of Uhud, some women reached the battlefield while Hazrat Ayesha (RA) and Hadhrat Umm-e Salim were supplying water to the wounded soldiers. (Safi-ur-Rehman, P.252) World-renowned woman of recent times Zainab Al-Ghazali is the author of numerous books and working as a leader of the Muslim unity in Egypt.

In Islamic society, women are valued as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. Heaven is under mother's feet. The status of the mother is said to be three times the status of the father because it is beyond the power of a father to bear the hardships and difficulties that a mother faces in raising her children. At the request of a man, the Prophet (SAW) said that a woman as a mother deserves the most good treatment in the world.

It is unfortunate that Western culture is being imitated in Muslim culture in Muslim societies throughout the world. Nudity has become status symbol of Western civilization in modern times. Nudity of woman is really the hallmark of the current glittering and shining world in imitation of west in Islamic societies also. English writer John expresses his views as under:

No civilization is completely distinct from the influence of others and in particular, all have been affected by the model culture and modernity pioneered in west.(Jhon,2001,P.458)

Islam does not allow women to cross limits while perform socio-economic role in society. Muslim women are prevented to display their face and private parts of body at public places. Islam ensures woman`s security while doing any kind of job. In the Holy Quran, women are advised to draw their shawls over faces so that no one may tease them.

Allah Almighty said:

O prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers that they should draw down their shawls over them. That will make it more likely that they are recognized, hence not teased. And Allah is Most-Forgiving, Very-Merciful.”(Quran, 33:59)

Well known Muslim scholar Abu Bakr al-Jasas explains that in the mentioned verse, there is an indication that the young woman is commanded by the way of its face from the foreigners. (Jassas,1415,3:486)The above mentioned Quranic verse indicates that woman can go out of the house to perform various activities, but the coverage of body and face by shawl from strangers (non-mahram men) is the mark of a pious and virtuous woman. Commercial advertisements of semi-nude women in the media, programs based on pornography and nudity are hollowing out the foundations of Islamic ideology of society. The Holy Qur'an warns of painful punishment in this world and in the hereafter for those men and women who spread obscenity and nudity in the society.

Almighty Allah says:

Surely, those who like that lewdness spreads among the believers, for them there is painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. Allah knows, and you do not know.(Quran, 24:19)

According to views of Allama Jalaluddin Suyuti, committing fornication and spreading it in the society are equal functions.(Suyuti,6:161)The above Quranic verse elaborates warning of painful punishment for those Persons (men or women) both in this world and in the hereafter who want to promote pornography and nudity in Muslim societies. Woman is being used by media to promote nudity and indecency in modern times. Prostitution and indecency have also been forbidden in the time of all the prophets. The dignity of women is exalted while women's participation in nudity parties is against

their dignity. Islam offers complete code of conduct for life. Islam commands women to secure her honor at every cost. Islam provides women complete right to perform socio-economic role for welfare of their society but does not allow violate sharia limits.

Conclusion

Women have granted great status and dignity in Islam. Islam is the only religion which has provided women proper economic, family and social rights. It is clear that Muslim women have demonstrated their skills and abilities in all walks of life. There is no corner of Islamic sciences and arts in which women did play role. Women can play socio-economic role if they may remain in the limits of Islamic Shariah. The West wants to engage Muslim women to promote western culture which is symbol of nudity and indecency. On the contrary, Islam guarantees the dignity of women and it prevents women to immoral role such as pornography and nudity. Promotion of indecency in society is subversive action which is strictly prohibited in Islam. Nudity has destroyed family system in the west. In short, Islamic concept of women`s empowerment, security, dignity and socio-economic is a beacon of light for the whole world.

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