

The Status of Women in the Old Ages and in the Age of Islam A Qur'anic Perspective Study

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Abstract

This study includes an introduction, three sections, and a conclusion. The researcher tackles the importance of the topic in the introduction. The first section covers the issue of women in terms of creation and the aim of making successors on the earth. This section reveals the role of the first woman, i.e. Eve in reviving the earth and being a successor thereon. In the second section, the researcher touches upon the issues of women's status in the old ages particularly in the eras of Romans, Greeks, Indians, Jews, Christians, and pre-Islam Arabs. The third section tackles the status of women in Islam from a Qur'anic perspective showing their roles as mothers, wives, or daughters. The conclusion of the research contains the findings and recommendations.

Keywords: Succession, Earth Building, Antiquity, The Place of Women, Age of Islam.

مكانة المرأة بين العصور القديمة وعصر الإسلام "دراسة قرآنية"

ملخص

يتكون البحث من مقدمة وثلاثة مباحث وخاتمة. فتحدث الباحث في المقدمة حول أهمية الموضوع، وأما المبحث الأول فقد تناول الباحث فيه الحديث حول المرأة بين حكمة الخلق وهدف الاستخلاف في الأرض مبيناً دور المرأة الأولى حواء في عمارة الأرض وخلافتها، وتناول الباحث في المبحث الثاني الحديث عن مكانة المرأة في العصور القديمة خاصة عند اليونان والرومان والهنود واليهود والنصارى وعند العرب قبل الإسلام، وأما المبحث الثالث فقد تناول الباحث الحديث عن مكانة المرأة في الإسلام مبيناً مكانتها أمّاً وزوجة وبناتاً ثم ختم الباحث البحث بخاتمة اشتملت على أهم النتائج والتوصيات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الاستخلاف، عمارة الأرض، العصور القديمة، مكانة المرأة، عصر الإسلام.

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Introduction:

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. Peace and blessings be upon the Prophet Mohammed who was sent as mercy to all nations and his family and companions. There has been much debate about women in the past and nowadays. People in the past abused women and considered them as commodities that could be sold. They limited their roles in society in the sexual intercourse only. Pre-Islam society used to stereotype women as shameful and scandalous – ones that bring poverty. They also considered them as a burden for their families that cause poverty and cannot defend their tribes in times of crises. People in the modern jahiliya [ignorance] used to kill women and overload them with things that contradict their physical nature. Islam came to correct the vision towards women and to determine the values that specify their roles and enhance their status. Women in Islam form half of the society, and they give birth to the second half. Therefore, Islam highly valued women whether being mothers, wives, or daughters. It also guaranteed their full rights in all aspects. Islam built the relationship between women and men based on pure innateness.

The Holy Quran has given women their rights without having to resort to sit-ins, conferences, or revolutions. Women got their rights as a whole without even asking. The aim of the Quran is so noble. It did not aim at utilizing the femininity of women; accordingly, it enhanced their status and value.

Importance of the study:

The importance of this study lies in the following points:

1. The study shows the status of women in the old civilizations, and how humanity oppressed them. The study also reveals the role of the Holy Quran in saving women from ignorance.
2. The study shows the false claims that call for rights for Muslim women claiming that they are oppressed and do not have access to their rights and their roles are limited.
3. The study also highlights the status of Muslim women and their rights that ultimately reveals the kindness of Islam in dealing with women. This eliminates the bad stereotype about Muslim women as being deprived of their rights and dignity.

Study Objectives:

This study aims to:

- Show the status of women in Islam as being wives or daughter after they were mistreated by old civilizations.
- Show the role of women in supporting men to maintain the trust on the earth.
- Invite non-Muslim women to convert to Islam through showing them how Islam treats women and guarantees their rights.

Study Methodology:

This study adopts the objective deductive method.

Study Plan:

The study includes an introduction, three sections, and a conclusion. The introduction includes the importance of the research.

Section One: Women Between Wisdom Behind Creation and the Aim of Being Successors on the Earth

This section contains issues:

1. The wisdom behind creating Eve after Adam
2. The aim of making successors on the earth

Section Two: The Status of Women in the Old Ages

This section contains six issues:

1. Status of women in the era of Greeks

2. Status of women in the era of Romans
3. Status of women in the era of Indians
4. Status of women in the era of Jews
5. Status of women in the era of Christians
6. Status of women in the era of Pre-Islam Arabs

Section Three: The Status of Women in Islam

This section contains three issues:

1. Status of women as mothers
2. Status of women as wives
3. Status of women as daughters

The conclusion entails the findings and recommendations.

Section One: Women Between Wisdom Behind Creation and the Aim of Being Successors on the Earth

Allah has created the universe with its heavens, the earth, and mountains. He offered the Trust, i.e. worship and obligations that necessitate reward for those who adhere thereto and punishment for those who ignore them⁽¹⁾. However, the heavens, the earth and mountains refused to bear it and feared it glorifying the religion of Allah. This was mentioned in the Quran: "**Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.**" [al-Ahzab: 72]. The trust mentioned in the verse includes all religious functions⁽²⁾.

Then Allah wisely created Adam and Eve and offered Adam the Trust and the latter accepted. He was the intended one in the verse "**but man [undertook to] bear it**" and accepted what giant creatures refused to bear. Therefore, man was ignorant as he accepted to bear that huge Trust⁽³⁾.

This research touches behind creating Eve after Adam and the aim of making her a successor on the earth upon the wisdom through two issues:

1. The wisdom behind creating Adam:

Allah (SW) has made Adam a successor on the earth to revive it through worshipping Him and making use of what Allah has blessed it with to bring benefits to the creatures. This is a huge burden for Adam. Therefore, in order for Adam to carry out this hard mission, there should be stimuli so that he works tirelessly.

Hence, Allah determined that there should be a partner for Adam in his life. Allah created Eve from one of Adam's ribs⁽⁴⁾ to be close to his heart and to alleviate his pains and help him endure the difficulties of a Trust that he accepted to bear, while giant creatures refused and feared to bear it.

An honest and loyal partner [wife] should stand by her husband and alleviate his pains as much as she could through brining offspring for him. The strongest stimulus for a human being to work and get money is having children. Starting life with a man and a woman highlights the role of women in a society. This role should never be ignored, marginalized or underestimated as it was put by the Creator of all human beings Who knows that the universe cannot go forward without the role of women, and life will not continue normally if the role of women was marginalized.

Life is dependent on man and woman. They both cannot live without each other.

"A man needs a woman just like a whole needs a part which was previously connected to it before becoming two human beings. A woman needs a man just like a part needs a whole to become stronger, and just like someone who is strange in a place looking for his/her homeland that secures and saves him/her"⁽⁵⁾.

⁽¹⁾ Fath al-Qarir, part 4, P308

⁽²⁾ Collection of the Provision of Koran, part 14, p242

⁽³⁾ Basis in Tafsir, part 4, p4489

⁽⁴⁾ Jami' al-Bayan, part 1, p182

⁽⁵⁾ Encyclopedia of Family Under the Auspices of Islam, part 2, p6

Such meanings become clear in the following Quranic verse: **"They are your garments and you are their garments"** [al-Baqara: 187]. Clothing covers things, and the relationship between couples is similar to this.⁽⁶⁾ This shows the role of Eve since the beginning of creation until the end of life.

2. The aim of successors on the earth:

Allah has determined that the earth should be revived through worshipping Him. Allah has created Adam and then his siblings. Allah had informed His angels before creating Adam. Allah says: **"Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth" They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?- whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not"** [al-Baqara: 30]. However, Allah has distinguished Adam with blessings and taught him all names and favored him over angels. Angels admitted favoring Adam over them and apologized to Allah for their rejection saying: **"Glory to Thee, of knowledge We have none, save what Thou Hast taught us: In truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom"** [al-Baqara: 32].

Then Allah sent messengers from Adam's siblings to other siblings to teach them about their duties towards Allah and towards other human beings because whatever wisdom and logic a man gets he/she cannot know the right thing without a guide. Therefore, messengers moved to every nation. Allah said: **"Then sent We our messengers in succession"** [al-Mu'minin: 44]⁽⁷⁾.

Generations followed each other and rules differed according to generations. Nations' rules grow as people grow and their implications develop with the development of the needs of people, yet they do not differ in origin⁽⁸⁾. Each messenger told his tribe: **"Worship Allah! ye have no other god but Him"** [al-Mu'minin: 32]. The issue of succession continued over times where a generation hands trust over to another generation under the care of Allah (SW) through His messengers who were sent to their tribes. Man accepted those obligations that resulted in straightness of his affairs, yet some people later deviated from the straight track. This deviation penetrated to all aspects of life and reached women. It wasted their dignity and ignored their humanity. Women became marginalized without any value.

The people who deviated ignored that women represent the second half on which succession of the earth is based. Women are the source of siblings who revived the earth.

Section Two: Status of Women in the Old Ages

Women over the old ages were oppressed and insulted. They were without any value. Scholars and philosophers used to debate the nature of women and ask whether they have souls or without, and if they have souls: are they human souls or animal ones? Women were treated just like slaves in some societies and a little bit better in some others⁽⁹⁾. In the pre-Islamic Arab society, women did not have that value. Their status was the worst. Girls were buried alive in their first days. This section shows the status of women and their value over the old ages and civilizations. The researcher investigates the status of women in the times of Greeks, Romans, Indians, Jews, Christians, and pre-Islam Arabs.

1. Status of women in the era of Greeks:

Women in the Greek society were virtuous and stayed at homes taking care thereof. They were deprived of culture. They did not contribute to public life whatsoever. Women were despised. They were even called filthy. Women then were considered as commodities that could be sold at markets. They were deprived of freedom and rights. They were deprived of inheritance, too⁽¹⁰⁾.

⁽⁶⁾ Fi Zilal –al-Quran, part 1, p174

⁽⁷⁾ One after another

⁽⁸⁾ Islamic Creeds, p9

⁽⁹⁾ Suspicions About Islam, p106

⁽¹⁰⁾ Women Between Jurisprudence and Law, p13

In some old Greek cities, women were given some kind of civil rights. They were given part of inheritance and eligibility to deal. This was not because women enjoyed their rights then, but rather because men were always busy in wars. They delegated women once they are absent. When the Greek civilization prospered, men and women mingled, and mischief prevailed. Adultery became normal and brothels became centers for politics and arts. Greeks adopted bare sculptures under the pretext of art and culture. Their religion recognized the sinful relationship between men and women. Their ethics kept deteriorating until the collapse of their civilization⁽¹¹⁾.

2. Status of women in the era of Romans:

In the times of Romans, a father was not forced to accept his son or daughter into his family. The newly born baby would be put at the feet of his/her father, and if the father picks him/her up then this means he accepts the infant into the family, and if not then it means the baby would be taken to public squares or halls of worship places and laid down there. Anyone could take the baby if it was a boy. Otherwise, the baby would die out of hunger or thirst, or because of exposure to sun light or cold during winter.⁽¹²⁾

A Roman man could sell his daughter if he wanted. He could kill her if he wanted, too. Girls did not have the right of ownership. If a girl gets money, then this money goes to the head of the family. Then the situation developed for girls and the money they inherit from their mothers is different from the money they get from their fathers. However, fathers have the right to use them.⁽¹³⁾

If the head of the family dies, guardianship of the girls moves to the curator as long as a girl is alive. A trick later was found in order to get rid of guardianship of the curator, i.e. a woman sells herself to a curator that she chooses on the condition of freeing her and not putting restriction on her. The curator should not oppose any of her behaviors. The control over the girl then moves to her husband once married. Old Romans used to justify putting women under guardianship saying: "they are reckless."⁽¹⁴⁾

3. Status of women in the era of Indians:

Women in the sharia of Indians did not have the right to live independently from her father, husband, or son saying that women remain minors and incapable all over their lives. Women were treated as if they were bondmaids. A man might lose his wife in gambling. If a husband dies, his wife does not have the right to live. She had to die on the same day her husband dies. She should be burnt alive lest of agony of life. This tradition was prevalent in the honorable ranks of society. It was a sign of the chastity and loyalty of the wife to her husband.⁽¹⁵⁾

For the ancient Indians, wives had to serve their husbands as if they were gods. They should not do anything that might harm their husbands, even if they lacked the virtues. A woman used to address her husband modestly saying: *My lord*, or *My god*. If a woman goes out with a man, she walks behind him leaving a space. Rarely did a man talk to a woman. A woman would not eat with a man, but rather she eats after he finishes.⁽¹⁶⁾

According to the Hindus, "there is no affliction, tempest, death, hell, poison, snake, or fire worse than women."⁽¹⁷⁾

4. Status of women in the times of Jews:

For some Jewish sects, women were considered servants. Fathers had the right to sell girls while minors. If a girl had no brothers, then she would not inherit her father or even get what her father had given to her during his life. When a girl is deprived of inheritance as she has a brother, the latter is obliged to pay for the former once married.

⁽¹¹⁾ Veil, pp.8-9

⁽¹²⁾ Women Between Jurisprudence and Law, p15

⁽¹³⁾ Ibid, p16

⁽¹⁴⁾ The Return of Hijab, part 2, p48

⁽¹⁵⁾ What did the world lose with the degradation of Muslims?, part 2, p48

⁽¹⁶⁾ Encyclopedia of Family Under the Auspices of Islam, part 3, p313

⁽¹⁷⁾ Women Between Jurisprudence and Law, p18

If a girl gets inheritance as she does not have a brother, she cannot get married to someone from another [sabt] tribe⁽¹⁸⁾, and she does not have the right to move her inheritance to another tribe. Jews considered a woman as a curse because she seduced Adam. An Israelite man would marry any number of women without any restrictions.⁽¹⁹⁾

5. Status of women in the times of Christians:

Early Christians were horrified of what they had seen in the Roman society, i.e. adultery and atrocities, as well as the ethical degradation. They considered women as being responsible for all of that. Women could enjoy and mingle with men the way they wanted. They decided that marriage is a sin that should be avoided, and a single man is more honorable for God than a married one. They declared that women are the gate for devil, and their beauty is the weapon for evil to seduce.⁽²⁰⁾

They thought of women as an inevitable evil, a desired blight, and danger for the family.⁽²¹⁾

A saint said: "A woman is the gate for devil into human soul. She is a breach for Allah's laws. She distorts the image of Allah, meaning man."⁽²²⁾

Westerners continued to oppress women and waste their rights during the Middle Ages, and even in the era that was called the knighthood era, when knights used to court women and praise them. It was then thought that women enjoyed a social level when they were considered minors who do not have the right to control their money without the permit of their husbands.

Women in the era of Christians were insulted to extent that a man could sell his wife. This was legalized by the English law in 1805, stating that a man could sell his wife. The law determined the price of a wife as equal to six girls.⁽²³⁾

The civil French law stipulated that a woman is eligible to contract without the consent of her curator if she was unmarried. This law came after the French Revolution late 18th century that liberated human beings from slavery and insult. One of the articles of the civil French law stipulated that minors are: youth, insane, and women. The previous article remained in effect until 1938. This article was modified for the benefit of women, yet there were some restrictions on behaviors of married women. One of these legal restrictions is that a French married woman cannot dispose her own money, and she has to maintain usufruct for her husband.⁽²⁴⁾

For the ancient nations, women witnessed oppression and insult to the extent that a Chinese proverb states: "Listen to a woman and never believe her", and a Russian proverb states: "In every 10 women you find 1 soul only", while a Spanish proverb states: Beware the corrupt woman, and do not depend on a virtuous woman." An Italian proverb states: "A stick is for both good and bad women."⁽²⁵⁾

6. Status of women in the times of Pre-Islam Arabs:

An Arab man before Islam was the one who owns authority in a family and high rank in the society. A man was the head of the family and the one who was responsible for sustaining the family and organizing its affairs. A man was responsible in times of war to defend the tribe. He was required to revenge. A man was addressed in terms of various social responsibilities. Arab women were followers of men and were directed according to their willingness making them subject to oppression and prejudice. They were deprived of their rights. Their money was taken from them. Women were also deprived of their inheritance, and they were kept home-stuck after divorce or death of husband. They were not allowed to remarry after divorce or death of husband. The Quran mentions this prejudice in the following verse: "**When ye divorce women, and they fulfill the term of**

⁽¹⁸⁾ From another tribe. Sabt for Jews is like Qabila for Arabs.

⁽¹⁹⁾ The Status of Women in Islam, p8

⁽²⁰⁾ Women Between Jurisprudence and Law,

⁽²¹⁾ Ibid, p20

⁽²²⁾ The Return of Hijab, part 2, p52

⁽²³⁾ Women Between Jurisprudence and Law, p21

⁽²⁴⁾ Suspicions About Islam, p113

⁽²⁵⁾ Women Between Jurisprudence and Law, p18

their ('Iddat), do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands, if they mutually agree on equitable terms" [al-Baqara: 232]. Women in the times of pre-Islam Arabs were considered inheritance as if they were animals or properties. The Quran forbade this, and this following verse clarifies: **"O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will."** [an-Nisaa' :19].

Dr. Wahba al-Zuhayli says: "When a married man of the people of Madina in jahiliya and in the beginning of Islam dies, his son from another wife or a relative of his would come and lay his clothes over the widow woman. Then she becomes his own property. He could wed her to another one and take her rights without giving her anything if he wanted. He could keep her at home so that she sustains him with what she had inherited, or he inherits her once she dies."⁽²⁶⁾

A man in jahiliya enjoyed his rights while women did not. Allah says: **"When ye divorce women, and they fulfil the term of their ('Iddat), either take them back on equitable terms or set them free on equitable terms; but do not take them back to injure them"** [al-Baqara: 231].

Al-Qurtubi says: "A man used to divorce his wife and then takes her back while he does not really need her. He wanted to keep her to lengthen her period of *Idaat* to harm her."⁽²⁷⁾

Arab women before Islam witnessed much humiliation and degradation to the extent that some types of food were only for males, and it was forbidden for females to eat therefrom. Allah says: **"They say: "What is in the wombs of such and such cattle is especially reserved (for food) for our men, and forbidden to our women; but if it is still-born, then all have share therein"** [al-Ana'am: 139]. This is another type of ignorance and oppression of women.⁽²⁸⁾

A man was permitted to marry as many wives as he wanted. Divorce was not restricted, too.⁽²⁹⁾

Hate of Arab for girls in jahiliya reached to the extent that people buried them alive. Allah says: **"When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned - For what crime she was killed"** [al-Takwir: 8-9]. The reason behind killing girls alive is excessive sense of honor. Those feared that girls would defame them. Some people would kill black, lame, leprous girls thinking that these girls are a bad harbinger. Some others would kill boys lest poverty because of spending on them.⁽³⁰⁾

A man in jahiliya used to bet on his family and money. Then he stays sad looking at his money in other hands. This caused grudge and hatred.⁽³¹⁾

These were some scenes that reflect the status of women in the old ages until the beginning of Islam.⁽³²⁾

Section Three

The care given to women by Islam was not the result of developments or human revolutions or new customs, but it stemmed from the core of this religion, which raises the human value and dignity. Allah says: **"We have honored the sons of Adam"** [al-Isra': 70]. Women and men are both the sons of Adam.

Interest of Islam in women came after the man-made laws had wasted their rights. Women were considered as a commodity that could be sold. The Quran shows the rights and status of women in Surah al-Baqara, al-Ma'eda, an-Nour, al-Ahzab, al-Mujadila, al-Mumtahinah, al-Tahrim, and at-Talaq. One Surah of the Holy Quran was named an-Nisa [women]. This indicates the status that women should get. Such a status had not been granted to women by any other heavenly or social laws.⁽³³⁾

⁽²⁶⁾ Women Between Jurisprudence and Law, p18

⁽²⁷⁾ Al-Tafsir al-Muneer, part 4, p300

⁽²⁸⁾ Collection of the provisions of the Koran, part 3, p156

⁽²⁹⁾ Ibid, part 7, p96

⁽³⁰⁾ Women Between Jurisprudence and Law, p22

⁽³¹⁾ Great Explanation, part 31, p70

⁽³²⁾ Collection of the Interpretation of the Koran, part 7, p35

⁽³³⁾ Islam Theology and Law, p218

The Quran is clear in its position towards women. This is clear in the following verse: **"O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women"** [an-Nisa': 1].

Allah the Almighty wanted women to be partners to men so as to fulfill the Trust that man accepted to bear by both man and woman. Men should do whatever responsibilities they have, and women should shoulder their responsibilities. Women are partners of men in humanity, duties and rights taking into account the difference in formation. Therefore, Islam took much care of women and showed their status as mothers, wives, and daughters. This will be shown in details.

1. Status of women as mothers:

Duty towards parents is one of the holiest duties after the duty towards Allah (SW) as He is the creator. Parents are the superficial source of creation. As they sacrificed and exerted efforts in bringing their children up and preparing them to face the burdens of life, they deserve obedience and kind treatment. Allah has linked worshipping Him with obeying parents. Allah says: **[Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good- to parents]** an-Nisa':36, **[Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents]** al-Isra':23. Allah has order mankind to only worship Him. Imam al-Qurtubi says in his Tafsir: "Allah the Almighty has commanded to worship Him and only Him, and He linked this to honoring one's parents."⁽³⁴⁾ The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) confirmed on this in his Sunnah. It was narrated that Abdullah ibn Mas'ud said: "I asked the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him), which deed is most beloved to Allah?" He said, "Prayer offered on time." I said, "Then what?" He said, "Then honoring one's parents." I said, "Then what?" He said, "Jihad for the sake of Allah."⁽³⁵⁾

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) has distinguished mothers with more kindness and honor. Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported: "A person came to Messenger of Allah and asked, "Who among people is most deserving of my fine treatment?" He said, "Your mother". He again asked, "Who next?" "Your mother", the Prophet replied again. He asked, "Who next?" He (the Prophet said again, "Your mother." He again asked, "Then who?" Thereupon he said, "Then your father."⁽³⁶⁾

Ibn Batal said: "The meaning of this hadith is that honoring a mother is three times honoring a father. This is because of the difficulty of pregnancy, birth, and breast-feeding of babies. This is only for the mother. The father then participates in bringing the children up."⁽³⁷⁾

Al-Qadi Ayyadh said: "The popularity of scholars tend to prefer mothers in terms of honoring over fathers."⁽³⁸⁾

Imam al-Qurtubi said in his Tafsir commenting on the hadith: "This hadith proves that loving a mother and feeling pity for her should be three times loving a father as the Prophet mentioned "mother" three times and then mentioned "father" in the fourth time."⁽³⁹⁾

Just like Islam called for honoring one's parents, it also prohibited disobeying them, particularly mothers. Disobedience is verbal or actual harm. Allah says: **"Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honour. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say: "My Lord! bestow on them thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."** [al-Israa': 23-24].

Prohibiting contempt means necessarily prohibiting repel. The meaning of the verse: **"say not to them a word of contempt"** is that it is forbidden to show boredom whatsoever for parents. The meaning of **"nor repel**

⁽³⁴⁾ Collection of the provisions of the Koran, part 10, p243

⁽³⁵⁾ Sahih al-Bukhari, part 1, p 179 Hadith 527

⁽³⁶⁾ Ibid, part 4, p1892 Hadith 5971

⁽³⁷⁾ Fath al-Bari, part 10, p402

⁽³⁸⁾ Sahih Muslim, part 16, p102

⁽³⁹⁾ Collection of the provisions of the Koran, part 10, p243

them" is that it is not allowed to contradict parent in what they say just to show they lie. The verse: **"but address them in terms of honour"** means that one should address parents with good words and terms of honor and respect. **"And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility"** means exaggeration of modesty at the hands of parents and taking care of them just like a bird taking care of another one.⁽⁴⁰⁾ Al-Imam al-Nasfi explains the verse **"say not to them a word of contempt"**. He says that it means one should not speak to parents in a tough way, rather one should be kind in speaking to parents using words such as Oh father, Oh mother, and not using their names as a matter of respect.

The Prophet has warned from disobedience of parents emphasizing on mothers. He said: "Allah has forbidden disobeying mothers"⁽⁴¹⁾ Ibn Hajar said: "Allah has distinguished mothers and mentioned them because disobeying them happens faster as they are weak. Allah wanted to show that honoring mothers is preferred over honoring fathers in terms of kindness and respect."⁽⁴²⁾ Al-Imam al-Zahabi considers that disobeying parents is among the great sins.⁽⁴³⁾

The older a mother in the Muslim society gets the more care she needs from her sons and grandsons. She becomes the head of the family. She would be treated respectfully. The honorability of a mother increases in she get older. This is a source of respect among the family members. In the West, the more a woman gets older, she moves from her own home to elderly houses where she waits for her destiny. If a woman gets sick, she needs an employee to take care of her because her sons or relatives are expected only to visit her occasionally.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Respecting mothers in Islam is based on her humanity and right to live. The Western society respects women in the young age because of their beauty and femininity. Once this beauty fades away and wrinkles start to appear, women become totally ignored and humiliated.⁽⁴⁵⁾

This shows how Islam maintains the status of women as mothers. It secures their rights, and prohibits disobeying them in any stage of life due to their humanity, dignity, and the will of the Creator.

2. Women as wives:

Women in Islam enjoy a high status. This status maintains their humanity, dignity, and chastity. Islam considers women as a blessing that one should take care of. They are the basis of tranquility at homes. Allah says: **"And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts)"** [ar-Rum: 21].

Allah the Almighty created kindness and love between man and woman so that they both cooperate in life affairs and build a family on a strong basis; thus, having tranquility and comfort.⁽⁴⁶⁾

In order to maintain this mercy and love between the couples, Allah has addressed believers asking them to live with wives with kindness. Allah says: **"live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good"** [an-Nisa': 19].

Therefore, living with women should be based on kindness and good deeds as much as possible. This clearly proves the humanity and dignity of a wife in Islam.⁽⁴⁷⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) recommended men to treat women kindly and give them rights. He said: "Fear Allah regarding women. Verily, you have taken them as a trust from Allah, and intercourse has been made permissible by the word of Allah."⁽⁴⁸⁾

⁽⁴⁰⁾ Great Explanation, part 20, p192-193

⁽⁴¹⁾ Part of hadith by al-Bukhari, part 2, p717 Hadith 2408

⁽⁴²⁾ Fath al-Bari, part 5, p68

⁽⁴³⁾ Great Sins, p42

⁽⁴⁴⁾ Women Between the Tyranny of the Western System and the Lord's Legislation, p34

⁽⁴⁵⁾ Ibid, p35

⁽⁴⁶⁾ Enlightening Explanation, part 1, p69

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Tafsir Ib Kathir, part 1, p368

Islam prevents husbands from harming wives when treating them especially when a husband hates living with his wife who has a deferred dowry. He treats her in a bad way to force her to give up and ask release, i.e. unconditional divorce only. Allah says: **"O you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion. And do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what you gave them O you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion. And do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what you gave them"** [an-Nisa': 19].

This verse means women should not be treated just like the treatment of jahiliya when they were inherited from men as if they were money.⁽⁴⁹⁾ If a man dies, then his curators have the right in his wife and one could marry her if he wanted. They could wed widow women if they wanted, too.⁽⁵⁰⁾ al-Zamakhshri says that women used to witness the worst types of torture. The habit was when a husband dies; his wife was inherited to someone who chooses her. Quran prohibited this habit.

Islam confirmed the fact that women have the right to own and dispose money. Islam warned against any kind of manipulating this money. Allah says: **"But if you want to replace one wife with another and you have given one of them a great amount [in gifts], do not take [back] from it anything. Would you take it in injustice and manifest sin? And how could you take it while you have gone in unto each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?"** [an-Nisa': 20-21].

Islam granted women the right to own property without asking or rebelling for this right. This right was granted to women along with the general view of Islam in honoring human beings as a whole. This aims at creating an atmosphere of love among the family members. Therefore, men and women are equal in principle⁽⁵¹⁾ in terms of right to own properties. Thus, a man is not allowed to take anything that he had given to his wife unless she agrees. Allah says: **"And give the women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously. But if they give up willingly to you anything of it, then take it in satisfaction and ease."** [an-Nisa': 4]. This verse stipulates a right for women in their bridal gifts. During the jahiliya, this right was totally eliminated.

A husband then does not have the right to dispose any of his wife's money unless she authorizes him to act on her behalf. In this case, a wife could cancel her authorization to her husband and authorize another person. Women reached this unprecedented level of equality with men in terms of financial rights. This level was only reached in the modern democratic laws recently. In France, the French civil law deprived women of eligibility in many civil affairs. The French law states: "A married woman - even if her marriage is based on the separation of her ownership and ownership of her husband - may not transfer ownership or use it with or without compensation without her husband's participation in the contract or consent in writing." France modified its law and the French women got their rights to ownership in 1938.⁽⁵²⁾

Islam has given women the right to separate from her husband once she hates living with him⁽⁵³⁾, or if she could not live with him because of her emotions and she feels that her hate will lead her to deviation from teachings of Allah in ethics, chastity, and good behavior in life.

Therefore, a woman could seek divorce from her husband and compensate him as long as he did not show any harm to her. She could return him the dowry he had paid, or the money he had spent on her. The aim of this is to protect a wife from disobeying Allah and preaching His limits. Islam does not force a woman to live unwanted life⁽⁵⁴⁾. Allah says: **"Divorce is twice. Then, either keep [her] in an acceptable manner or release [her] with good treatment. And it is not lawful for you to take anything of what you have given them unless both fear that they will not be able to keep [within] the limits of Allah. But if you fear that they**

⁽⁴⁸⁾ Sahih Muslim, Hadith 1218

⁽⁴⁹⁾ Collection of the Provisions of Koran, part 5, p100

⁽⁵⁰⁾ Ibid, part 5, p99

⁽⁵¹⁾ Fi Zilal al-Quran, part 2, p645

⁽⁵²⁾ Women Between the Tyranny of the Western System and the Lord's Legislation, p50

⁽⁵³⁾ This is called in Arabic Khul', where a woman asks for divorce

⁽⁵⁴⁾ Enlightening Explanation, part 2, p342

will not keep [within] the limits of Allah, then there is no blame upon either of them concerning that by which she ransoms herself. These are the limits of Allah, so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah - it is those who are the wrongdoers" [al-Baqara: 229].

A woman who hated her husband came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said: "O Allah's Apostle! I do not blame Thabit for any defects in his character or his religion, but I am afraid that I (being a Muslim) may become unthankful for Allah's Blessings." On that, Allah's Apostle said (to her), 'Will you return his garden to him?' She said, "Yes." So she returned his garden to him and the Prophet told him to divorce her."⁽⁵⁵⁾

If a husband was stubborn and insisted on not to abandon his wife, a judge may separate them with or without compensation. This is the rule of jurisdiction in avoiding blight and bringing benefits to the nation, as well as releasing women from injustice.⁽⁵⁶⁾

Islam maintained the status of wives by preventing husbands to control them the way they want and described *Zihar* that was practiced in jahiliya when they made a simile between wives and mothers. Allah says: **"If any men among you divorce their wives by Zihar (calling them mothers), they cannot be their mothers: None can be their mothers except those who gave them birth. And in fact they use words (both) iniquitous and false: but truly Allah is one that blots out (sins), and forgives (again and again)"** [al-Mujadila: 2].

Zihar was a kind of irrevocable divorce in jahiliya before Islam. This necessitates it was an eternal prohibition. Islam came and resolved the issue from its core. *Zihar* is baseless. A wife is not a mother so as to become prohibited just like a mother. A mother is the one who gave birth. It is impossible for a wife to become a mother through saying a word only – it is a word that contradicts reality.⁽⁵⁷⁾

So if anyone says this word, then it is forbidden for him to have sexual intercourse with his wife unless he pays penance [*Kaffarah*] in the following order: freeing a slave, if not, fasting two consecutive months, if not, freeing 60 poor persons. Allah says: **"But those who divorce their wives by Zihar, then wish to go back on the words they uttered,- (It is ordained that such a one) should free a slave before they touch each other: Thus are ye admonished to perform: and Allah is well-acquainted with (all) that ye do. And if any has not (the wherewithal), he should fast for two months consecutively before they touch each other. But if any is unable to do so, he should feed sixty indigent ones, this, that ye may show your faith in Allah and His Messenger. Those are limits (set by) Allah. For those who reject (Him), there is a grievous Penalty."** al-Mujadila: 3-4].

Islam also outlined for husbands the limit by which a woman could correct her worship and do her duties correctly. A woman may go out to seek knowledge, and a husband may not prevent her⁽⁵⁸⁾. The Prophet says: "Prevent not women to go to masjids if they wanted"⁽⁵⁹⁾

The abovementioned shows how Islam maintained the status of women as wives and secured their dignity and humanity.

3. Women as daughters:

Islam has rescued girls from jahiliya. It enhanced the status of girls and condemned those who used to feel sad when they were bestowed with a girl. Allah says: **"When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain it on (sufferance and) contempt, or bury it in the dust? Ah! what an evil (choice) they decide on?"** [an-Nahl: 58-59].

People of jahiliya used to become sad when one of them receives a baby girl. He used to become frowning thinking that a girl will bring him shame; thus, hiding away from people so that they cannot see him. Such a

⁽⁵⁵⁾ Sahih al-Bukhari, part 3, p1699 Hadith 5276

⁽⁵⁶⁾ Rights of Women in Marriage, p262

⁽⁵⁷⁾ Fi Zilal al-Quran, part 6, p3506

⁽⁵⁸⁾ Encyclopedia of Family Under the Auspices of Islam, part 2, p199

⁽⁵⁹⁾ Sahih Muslim, Hadith 442

man used to become perplexed as whether to keep that girl alive and feel shameful of bury her alive. This habit was followed during the jahiliya.

Islam also rescued girls in their childhood from being buried alive, a habit that always was followed lest poverty and shame claiming that girls could not fight, and they might fall in captivity; thus, bringing shame. Allah says: **"Kill not your children for fear of want: We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily the killing of them is a great sin."** [al-Isra': 31].

Islam distorts the jahiliya habits against women and forbids burying them alive. Allah condemns killing girls and says: **"When the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned - For what crime she was killed"** [at-Takwir: 8-9].

Allah forbids this act and He considers it an issue of the Doomsday saying that the killed girl [infant] will ask about the reason for killing her⁽⁶⁰⁾. The Prophet has shown the status of women as daughters and said: "Allah has forbidden for you disobeying your mothers and burying your girls alive"⁽⁶¹⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) called for showing kindness with girls. He was a role model for his daughters. He worked hard to eliminate any bad feelings towards girls through showing incentives such as entering paradise for those who treat girls kindly. Aisha reported: "A poor woman came to me along with her daughters. I gave her three dates. She gave a date to each of them and then she took up one date and brought that to her mouth in order to eat that, but her daughters expressed desire to eat it. She then divided the date that she intended to eat between them. This (kind) treatment of her impressed me and I mentioned that which she did to Allah's Messenger (PBUH). Thereupon he said: Verily Allah has assured Paradise for her, because of (this act) of her, or He has rescued her from Hell-Fire."⁽⁶²⁾ or in another narration she said: "Anyone who has girl will be ported from hell-fire."⁽⁶³⁾

Islam honored girls and made part for them in inheritance. Allah says: **"From what is left by parents and those nearest related there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large,-a determinate share"** [an-Nisa': 7].

Al-Qurtubi says: "People in jahiliya used not to give inheritance to little children or women. In case of a male, they used to say: giving inheritance is only someone who fought on the back of horses, with swords and got a gain."⁽⁶⁴⁾

Sayyid Qutob said: "During jahiliya, people used not to let girls and young boys inherit expect for a little amount believing that these girl and young boys do not fight enemies. The Islamic Sharia makes inheritance as a right for all because Islam calls for integration between members of families."⁽⁶⁵⁾

Islam also made it a duty for a father to spend on his girls until they move to their husband's homes. Once a girl gets married, her husband becomes responsible for spending on her, and her father will be rewarded paradise in return for spending on and taking care of her.

The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever has three girls and showed patience in feeding them and brought clothing for them, they will protect him from hell-fire on the Doomsday."⁽⁶⁶⁾

Islam also gave girls the right to choose their partners. A girl's curator must consult her concerning her marriage as long as she is mature. Aisha reported: "A young lady came to her and said, my father has married me off to my paternal cousin in order to raise his status through me, whilst I had not consented. She (Aisha) said, Sit down (and wait) until the Prophet peace be upon him arrives. The Prophet peace be upon him came and so she informed him (of her complaint) thereupon he (the Prophet) sent word to her father and called him

⁽⁶⁰⁾ Fi Zilal al-Quran, part 6, p3840

⁽⁶¹⁾ Previously mentioned in this study

⁽⁶²⁾ Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2630

⁽⁶³⁾ Sahih al-Bukhari, part 1, p422 Hadith 1418

⁽⁶⁴⁾ Collection for the Provisions of Koran, part 5, p51

⁽⁶⁵⁾ Fi zilal il Quran. Volume 1, p. 586

⁽⁶⁶⁾ Narrated by Ibn Maja, Hadith 3669

and ruled that the final decision rests in her hands (to accept or reject the marriage). She said, O messenger of Allah! I have agreed to consent to what my father has done, however, I wanted to know if women have any say in the matter.”⁽⁶⁷⁾

This shows how Islam protected girls from the acts of jahiliya, and how Allah raised their status in their father's home. Allah also made honoring girls as an act that leads to paradise and keeps one away from hell-fire.

The most important findings:

1. This research has shown that women are men's actual partners in shouldering the burdens of life since the creation of Eve from Adam's rib to be his partner in the succession of the earth.
2. Misguidance and deviation through ages have reached all aspects of life to the extent that women lost their dignity and were denied their humanity.
3. Women in the era of Greeks used not to leave houses and did not contribute to public life whatsoever.
4. Women in the era of Romans were sold as a commodity, and fathers were entitled to kill, sell, or dispose girls whenever they wanted.
5. Women in the era of Indians were considered minors and incapable throughout their lives. They were treated as slaves, and if a husband dies, a wife does not have a right to continue her life. Therefore, a wife would be burned on the day of her husband's death.
6. Women in some of the Jewish communities were equal to servants, and fathers had the right to sell them.
7. Women for Christians were impure, and they shall not be approached. Christians declared that women are the gate to devil, and they looked to them as an inescapable evil.
8. Women witnessed oppression and insult to the extent that a Chinese proverb states: “Listen to a woman and never believe her.” An Italian proverb states: “A stick is for both good and bad women.”
9. The pre-Islamic Arab women were subordinate to men and acted in accordance with men's willingness. Women became subject to oppression and injustice, and their rights and money were ignored and extorted. They were deprived of inheritance and were buried alive at birth.
10. The care given to women by Islam was not the result of developments or human revolutions or new customs, but it stemmed from the core of this religion, which raises the human value and dignity.
11. Islam has maintained the status of women as mothers in order to safeguard their rights, give effect to the commandment of Allah, and recognize their value.
12. Islam granted married women the right to own property in line with the general trend of honoring the human soul and maintaining the family affection and love, as well as guaranteeing an atmosphere where all are equal.
13. Islam has saved girls from ignorance. Islam forbade burying girls alive and promised those who do so with severe punishment.
14. Islam eliminated the jahiliya acts from the hearts of Arabs through incentives such as entering paradise and avoiding hell-fire.
15. Women occupy a prominent place in Islam as mothers, wives, and daughters, while Western women are still suffering from the loss of many of their rights and are still bearing the burdens that are not commensurate with their femininity.

Recommendations:

1. The researcher recommends other researchers to give interest to the topic of Muslim women by holding conferences and workshops to show their status and to highlight the role of Islam in maintaining their humanity and dignity.

⁽⁶⁷⁾ Narrated by an-Nasa'I Hadith 3269

2. The researcher recommends the nation's scholars and thought leaders to hold more media programs that highlight tolerance of Islam in dealing with women and preservation of their rights to give a true image of the status of women in Islam, aiming at eliminating the gloomy stereotype taken by the West.
3. The researcher recommends the nation's scholars to hold seminars and lectures in the Western women's forums and talk about the status of women in Islam as a way to preach Islam and to get rid of the modern jahiliya.

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