

# Islamic Paradigms for Women's Education and their roles to bring up *Tawhidic Ummah*

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## Abstract

From the Islamic perspective, man and woman are not come to this world accidentally without any mission and purpose in his life. This principle is clearly laid down in the Qur'an: "Did you think that We had created you in play (without any purpose), and that you would not be brought back to Us?"<sup>1</sup> This verse makes the point that man and woman have to realise that their existence in this worldly life is very precious. In addition, he or she has a particular mission and vision, duties and messages, which need to be performed in both his life in this world and the life to come in the Hereafter because he or she will be returned to his/her Lord to face the consequences of his actions. Hence, education is crucial for every individual Muslim whether man and woman concerned with a comprehensive development in order to achieve a successful life in this world and salvation in the Hereafter. Education are crucial ways in which to know and believe in Allah, the effective means to develop good character and the right way to cope with worldly life. This evidence shows that from the very beginning of the revelation, Islam has been very concerned about knowledge and education rather than any other aspects; "*Iqra*" It means that from the Islamic point of view, the development of intellectual and good moral qualities through divine guidance constituted the foremost programme existing in human. This means that education is mainly to develop man and woman to seek virtue in accordance with the *Din al-Islam* which has no conflict with human's worldly life. Education system may lead an individual toward the full extent of his potentialities and abilities in gaining knowledge by conforming to good moral values as well as legal precepts. If we refer to the *Hadith*, "Every newborn child is born in a state of *fitrah*. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian, just as an animal born intact. Do you observe any among them that are maimed (at birth)?,"<sup>2</sup> which signifies that the parent's role and their responsibility for transmitting the knowledge of *tawhid* is crucial, as well as for feeding, clothing etc. This means that Muslim parents particularly woman may inculcate the way of the *Sunnah*, such as the recitation of supplications (*du'a*), during the activities of feeding, clothing and so on, the recognition of *halal* and *haram* in these activities and the cultivation of other aspects of education. These are the roles and ways of woman bringing up her children. This deliberation may give a picture of the nature of education, which takes its aim from beyond the excellence of the intellect. The effects of this education may lead Muslims to deal with their knowledge for the benefit of themselves and for others in accordance with the teaching of Islam which is concerned with the development of the whole range of human faculties, both physical and spiritual, and the development of society of balanced growth. Indeed, this atmosphere may enable every individual Muslim voluntarily to surrender himself to Allah whole-heartedly and maintain his dignity and superiority as a servant and vicegerent of Allah in this world and further, to attain felicity and prosperity in the Hereafter. This concept paper attempts to examine and discuss the efforts how woman's education is important and how she able to play her roles to facilitate this type of education to bring up *Tawhidic Ummah*.

## Introduction

Education in Islam is crucial for every individual Muslim (man and woman) concerned with a comprehensive development of human in order to achieve a successful life in this world and salvation in the Hereafter. Muslim intellectuals lay down that the dissemination of knowledge in the Islamic educational system is not merely concerned with the material and physical life in this world, but also with life in the next world. As far as education in Islam is concerned, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) taught the significance of Qur'anic verses to the Companions and guided them to be true Muslims who believe in Allah, an excellence of *akhlaq*, trust in *mu'amalat* and other aspects which were related to life in this world and the Hereafter. The Qur'anic verses postulate that education in Islam started from the very beginning of Islam and the first verses of revelation which were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) began in the form of an order "Read!" This evidence shows that from the very beginning of the revelation, Islam has been very concerned about knowledge and education rather than any other aspects. It means that from the Islamic point of view, the development of intellectual and good moral qualities through divine guidance constituted the foremost programme existing in human. Knowledge and education are crucial ways in which to know and believe in Allah, the effective means to develop good character and the right way to cope with worldly life.

## Islamic Paradigms for Women's Education.

The role of education in Islam is to help an individual Muslim strengthen his *iman* and surrender to the will of Allah, and to acquire wisdom which can transform him or her into a good man or woman. Furthermore education in Islam is referred to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* with their guidance and instructions is concerned with aspects of moral qualities and condemns all kinds of evil and sinful deeds in order to promote good *akhlaq*. Islam educates man or woman to fear and love Allah Almighty, and to be responsible before Allah in all his actions, also always to seek Allah's pleasure and follow His divine guidance. Therefore, education and knowledge are mandatory upon men and women in Islam. So education to both men and women in Islam is essential.

One becomes a true Muslim or Muslimah through knowledge of Islam and *iman*, and not through birth. This is because, in the light of knowledge and education one will be able to see the clear path of Islam. The Qur'anic verses frequently stress "those are men of understanding"<sup>3</sup> to show that the requirement of using the intellect is necessary to recognise Allah and to establish goodness. Knowledge and education is obligatory for men and women to seek for, particularly the knowledge of *din* (religion) and other disciplines of knowledge. In this respect, Imam al-Ghazali has viewed the acquisition of religious sciences such as *at-Tawhid*, *Shari'ah* and so on as *Fard 'Ain* (an individual obligation) for every man and woman while the study of other sciences such as medicine, philosophy, arithmetic etc. is *Fard Kifayah* (a collective obligation).<sup>4</sup> Hence, from the Islamic perspective, knowledge and education are important because both are a source of truth and justice, which means that the acquisition of knowledge and process of education are the acquisition of truth and justice. Islam does not merely rely on cosmetic matters such as dressing, preserving the beard, and so on, but it is also very concerned with knowledge and education, particularly the knowledge and education that related to the meaning of Islam and its learning and practices.

Knowledge and education of the Oneness of Allah, *tawhid*, is the highest and foremost that man or woman should acquire because it is the path which leads directly to Allah and leads us out of darkness. Therefore, greater knowledge of Allah in education leads one closer to Him, which gives more opportunities for him or her to develop his or her *akhlaq*, which then leads him or her along the easy path to Paradise as noted by the *hadith*. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, “Whoever follows a path in order to seek knowledge thereby, Allah makes it easy for him, due to it, a path to Paradise.”<sup>5</sup> This is because the light of true knowledge and education such as the knowledge of *Din* or Islamic education may direct man or woman to the pleasure of Allah and later develop the gratitude, love, fear and hope of Him. Further, this may lead someone often to perform good deeds. Allah says, “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah.”<sup>6</sup> Obviously, this provision leads the way to the development of *akhlaq*. Those who acquire knowledge and educate themselves are aware of truth, know the beauty of virtues, and will then act upon them accordingly, and whatever is wrong, they will avoid. Without knowledge and education, ignorance will appear and man or woman may possibly commit sins and evils. In this connection, woman’s education is vital important and crucial because she is a *murabbiah* and *muaddibiah* to her children. Woman education is an imperative element, which enables her to cultivate her mode of thought and to generate a noble *akhlaq* as well as belief in Allah to her children. The Prophet emphasized the importance of education even though she is a slave. Narrated Abu Musa Al-Ashari: "The Prophet said, 'He who has a slave-girl and teaches her good manners and **improves her education** and then manumits and marries her, will get a double reward; and any slave who observes Allah's right and his master's right will get a double reward.'<sup>7</sup> It is clear that the right for education in Islam sees no gender discrimination between men and women.

Without education in woman, how can she educates and develops her children about the Oneness of Allah, develops the gratitude, love, fear and hope of Him, to strengthen the *iman* and surrender to the will of Allah. Of course, without woman’s knowledge and education she and her children may sink to the level of ignorance or cattle, or probably even lower. That why Islam is very concerned about woman’s education because if well educated woman as “*Murabbiah* or *Muaddibiah*” bring up the children of Muslim *ummah* then she may transform the community into *tawhidic ummah*, one who able to realise that his or her existence in this worldly life and to surrender to the will of Allah and worship Him. Hence, what type of education that she should seek for? In this concept paper strongly recommended that woman should prepare herself with the comprehensive or holistic education that guided by Islam particularly Islamic education.

### **The domain of education in Islam**

Education in Islam is mainly to develop man to seek virtue in accordance with the *Din al-Islam* which has no conflict with man’s worldly life. Moreover, its character is distinguished from other types of education because its fundamentals are based on *iman* and its principles refer to the Qur’an and the *sunnah*. These features of the education system may lead an individual toward the full extent of his or her potentialities and abilities in gaining knowledge by conforming to good moral values as well as legal precepts. Thus, man or woman may use his intellectual faculties and tools of sense for the obedience of Allah’s commandments and the realisation of his responsibility as *Khalifatullah* and a servant of Allah on earth. Therefore, the

education system in Islam and its processes never separate the *iman* from aspects of the branches of knowledge and sciences. This is an important principle and a feature of education which has the aim of securing the advancement and happiness of man's life in this world and the Hereafter. Through this approach Muslims are enabled to progress and develop human life to its full maturity and perfection whether material or spiritual in accordance with the permanent values given in the Qur'an.<sup>8</sup> Thus, man or woman may develop in himself or herself the good qualities of his or her nature materially and spiritually.

However, the phenomenon of weak *iman* has nowadays become very widespread among Muslims over the world. The effects of this shortcoming can be seen in the personality of Muslims, which sometimes stands in opposition to the real mission of Islam, particularly their *akhlaq*. The weakness of *iman* is the cause of every adversity in the Muslim community such as corruption, injustice, lack of integrity and solidarity among Muslims and so on. So every Muslim must find out the nature and cause of the problem, and treat it straightaway, before it overwhelms the community. Therefore, among the solutions to this problem, the model of an Islamic education system, which exists not merely for the sake of gaining knowledge, but also generates good moral qualities and builds up a close relationship between human and Allah, needs to be established and implemented along the hand's power of educated woman as *Murabbiah* or *Muaddibiah* to develop *Tawhidic Ummah*.

### **Educated women as *Murabbiah* or *Muaddibiah* and their roles to bring up *Tawhidic Ummah*.**

From the Islamic view, man and woman are not here accidentally without any mission and purpose in his life. This principle is clearly laid down in the Qur'an: "Did you think that We had created you in play (without any purpose), and that you would not be brought back to Us?"<sup>9</sup> This verse makes the point that man or woman has to realise that his/her existence in this worldly life is very precious. In addition, he or she has a particular mission and vision, duties and messages, which need to be performed in both his life in this world and the life to come in the Hereafter because he or she will be returned to his Lord to face the consequences of his actions. In this connection, another verse states the answer to what is the real purpose of human's creation, "And I (Allah) created not the jinn and mankind except that they should worship Me (Alone)."<sup>10</sup> The verse gives clear information that the main purpose of human's creation is to worship Allah Almighty. The domain of worship here is full submission to what Allah has commanded in the type of action and attitude which is denoted as *'ibadah*. The Qur'an testifies to the sphere of full submission, "Say (O Muhammad), 'Verily, my *Salah* (prayer), my sacrifice, my living, and my dying are for Allah, the Lord of the *'Alamin* (mankind, jinn and all that exist).'<sup>11</sup> This means that the notion of *'ibadah* is extensive, not only in the performance of obligatory *'ibadat* such as *Salah*, *Sawm*, *Zakah* and *Hajj* but embraces all aspects of a man's or woman's life, for example his/her daily activities, thoughts, relationships and so on.

Human has more special privileges before Allah on earth than other creatures, and he or she is superior to the angels because of his/her intellect, freedom of will and concept of responsibility. Human is responsible for preserving his or her nobility with which Allah has

made him or her, particularly through his or her belief in Allah and the doing of righteous deeds, otherwise he will fall to the lowest position.

The first *‘ilm* (knowledge), with which the parents (men or women) inculcate their child, is the knowledge of Allah (*tawhid*) by *adhan* to a new-born. This is the first process of education given by the parents; the child's feeding, clothing, loving and sheltering come afterward. Secondly, if we refer to the *hadith*, "Every new-born child is born in a state of *fitrah*. Then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian, just as an animal born intact. Do you observe any among them that are maimed (at birth)?,"<sup>12</sup> which signifies that the parent's role and their responsibility for transmitting the knowledge of *tawhid* is crucial, as well as for feeding, clothing etc. The Qur'anic verses also give us a clear indication on this matter, where *Luqman al-Hakim* teaches his child about *tawhid* and the good qualities of *akhlaq*, in which Allah records his roles in relation to the child for our instruction and imitation.<sup>13</sup> Thirdly, *rabbayani* as mention in the Qur'an which mean 'cherished me' signifies 'fed, clothed, loved and sheltered,' they should not be treated as secular in their implication. The process of these activities actually becomes involved with Islamic education. This is because Muslim parents particular mother or mum may actually approach all these activities according to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. This means that Muslim mother may inculcate the way of the *Sunnah*, such as the recitation of supplications (*du'a'*), during the activities of feeding, clothing and so on, the recognition of *halal* and *haram* in these activities and the cultivation of other aspects of Islamic education. These are the roles and ways of educated women or mum as *Murabbiah* or *Muaddibiah* should bringing up their children.

The significance of education in Islam relies on the aims and the goals towards which it moves and what specific targets can be achieved. In this context, what the aim of Islamic education is and how Islamic education helps man or woman towards the achievement of this aim, is the question which demands explanation. If we refer to the education in Islam, we may find that it is concerned with the balance of growth of the intellectual and the spiritual, in order to generate goodness within man. Thus, this atmosphere of education may distinguish its aim from that of the secular educational system which denies all forms of supernaturalism and religious values. In Islam, the focus and aim of education are to develop an individual Muslim ultimately to attain the pleasure of Allah in this world and the Hereafter. Man or woman always needs to be guided and given instruction in order to recognise his nature and his relationship with Allah. In this context, the aim of education in Islam is to cultivate in man an awareness of his nature, which is composed of diverse qualities, potentialities and capabilities. In order to achieve this aim, the educational system is concerned with the development of man or woman as a whole being where he or she must first have knowledge of Allah before the other various fields of knowledge. In fact, having knowledge of Allah and belief in Him, and realising his or her nature through the acquisition of knowledge may lead him to follow the commandments of Allah and seek His pleasure. Through this belief man or woman knows that Allah watches him or her in light and in darkness, knows what is apparent and what is hidden and even knows what he intends to do and what is going on in his mind. Nothing can hide from His knowledge.<sup>14</sup> With this characteristic of awareness, therefore, man or woman always fears Him, surrenders himself to Him and serves Him with great humility.

We acknowledge that Islam does not restrict the fields of knowledge to religious studies but it always encourages man or woman to discover all scientific facts. Directing man's or woman's intellect towards this universe may draw him or her to the conclusion of the existence of the Creator, of His Uniqueness, Who created all the creatures in wonderful order with its laws of nature.<sup>15</sup> Then, he or she may believe that all these phenomena are the Signs of Allah. The Qur'an says,

Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of Night and Day – There indeed Signs for men of understanding – men who celebrate the praises of Allah, standing, sitting and lying down on their sides and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought): “Our Lord! Not for naught hast Thou created (all) this glory to thee! Give us salvation from the Penalty of the Fire.”<sup>16</sup>

In this regard, the aim of the educational system in Islam is to educate man or woman in the awareness of Allah through the acquisition of knowledge, researching and studying the natural order. Therefore, when Muslims or Muslimahs acquire knowledge and explore the physical world around them, they may draw meanings from it, may reflect from their hearts to arrive at the conviction that Allah the Almighty is the most powerful. In other words, Islamic education aims to direct the rational faculties of those who seek knowledge in all fields towards the search for truth and thereby invite them to praise the Greatness of Allah and thank Him for His Mercifulness. The effects of this education may lead Muslims or Muslimahs to deal with their knowledge for the benefit of themselves and for others in accordance with the teaching of Islam. In this connection only educated woman as *Murabbiah* or *Muaddibiah* who is trained with this type of education able to play their roles to inculcate and develop this values of education to achieve *tawhidic ummah*.

If we refer to the aims of Islamic education, we find that it seeks to promote and establish good in the life of an individual Muslim. There is clear evidence to indicate that the atmosphere of education in Islam ensures good moral qualities in man or woman and elevates his or her *akhlaq* to a higher, noble level. Those who have a good *akhlaq* may be able to accustom themselves to the performance of good deeds and sacrifice for the pleasure of Allah. In fact, the practice of good deeds in every activity of man's or woman's life will keep stable his or her *nafs* and strengthen *iman* in Allah. If the inner characteristics of goodness are consistently built up in man or woman, he or she will be drawn close to Allah. Conversely, if the actions of bad deeds are always practised in the life of man or woman, then it affects the *nafs* in such a way that it gets further away from Allah and the reality of life. This is because “the *nafs* fulfils itself by developing and actualizing its potentialities. The education system based on permanent values given in the Holy Qur'an opens out a vast vista of development to the *nafs*.”<sup>17</sup> The development of *nafs* is subject to the good and bad actions of man or woman. In this matter, the Islamic education system gets involved directly in propagating the *nafs* towards its perfection through the various processes of education that woman should go through in order to be educated woman as *Murabbiah* or *Muaddibiah* to transform Muslim community into *Tawhidic ummah*.

The Islamic education system often attempts to promote a feeling of fear of Allah the Almighty in man. Regarding to this point Tabbarah explains,

Fear of God endows the person with moral courage, which makes the person declare openly his opinion and say what he believes is right, no matter what others might think of it or might spread rumours about it, and no matter what rage this might arouse in the ruler against him. It makes him refuse to do what he considers false, though his refusal might not be accepted by others.<sup>18</sup>

The feeling of fear of Allah may encourage a Muslim to perform a good deed in his life and towards society solely for the pleasure of Allah and to gain His love.<sup>19</sup> The practice of this attribute in man will then develop a feeling of gratitude to Allah the Almighty. In the Islamic view, for signs of gratitude to Allah, Muslims or Muslimahs will struggle for goodness, as explained by a Qur'anic verse, "Verily they used to hasten on to do good deeds, and they used to called on Us with hope and fear, and used to humble themselves before Us"<sup>20</sup> in their life and in society. In a man or woman who has a strong feeling of gratitude towards Allah, a feeling of love is created in his heart for Allah, for the Prophet (pbuh), for other human beings and for the creation which surrounds him. Love of Allah the Almighty and love of the Prophet constitute one of the most significant principles in the establishment of good morality and justice in Islam. In this regard Tabbarah has noted that, "A believer's sense of delight and comfort stems from his obedience to God and from never disobeying His Orders; thus he is ready to stand everything to this effect with delight and satisfaction filling his heart."<sup>21</sup> However the absence of this love in man, according to al-Ghazzali causes a disease in the heart which induces injustice and is the root of all the vices in conduct.<sup>22</sup> How can we correlate this love to with the character of man? The fact is that a good feeling, which is then translated into good action, derives from anything we love. This is because "love is a natural inclination towards objects that give pleasure."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the love of Allah is absolute and is subject to no limitation.<sup>24</sup> It signifies that believers at all times choose their activities in life through obedience to Allah and keep away from the temptations of *Shaitan*. The love of Allah is built up through the knowledge of Him. The Islamic educational system laid down the way towards the knowledge of Allah in order to shape the love of Allah in man's or woman's life. This may make man or woman lead a life of purity in both conduct and character, in a way that is acceptable to Allah.<sup>25</sup> Muslims love and obey the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) because Allah ordained that they should do so, and were also inspired by the *Hadith* for the attainment of *halawatul iman* (the grace of faith ). In this concern the Prophet (pbuh) said,

When three are attained, the gracefulness of faith is secured : when God and His Apostle are dearer to the person than everything else, when the person bears true devotion for God alone, and when he hates turning into disbelief as much as he hates being thrown into the pit of Hell.<sup>26</sup>

According to this *hadith*, the true *Mu'min* (believer) is he who loves Allah and the Prophet (pbuh) and prefers Allah and the Prophet (pbuh) to himself, his family and the entire human race. This love which is generated from a sincere heart would inspire man or woman to love goodness and always to struggle for it. Therefore a Muslim or Muslimah, who has reached this stage, is almost ready to spend his life helping and sacrificing himself or herself for others.

Because of this, the attributes of selfishness and hypocrisy will never remain in him or her. Then, these approaches of education is essential to be trained and developed by an educated woman as *Murabbiah* or *Muaddibiah* in order to perform her roles and responsibilities to generate and achieve *tawhidic ummah*.

## **Conclusion**

Education in Islam is a vehicle to exalt the human intellect and character to the level appropriate to man's position as one created "in the best of moulds."<sup>27</sup> However the atmosphere of secular education today is a great challenge in preserving the qualities of Muslims, particularly their moral character and their identity as well, because secularist ideology denounces religious principles as the basis of individual development. Therefore, Islamic paradigms for women's education is important to actualize Islamic educational perspective and practice, in contrast, spiritual development is a fundamental need to enable human to attain a stage of certainty in *iman* and to build up awareness of Allah, which automatically craves goodness and abstains from evil. Among the crucial step for the solution to this dilemma is to have the educated women as *Murabbiah* or *Muaddibiah* in order to perform their roles and responsibilities inline with Islamic educational system in order to generate young Muslim generation towards *tawhidic ummah* in Muslim worlds. The great power in the hand of educated women as *Murabbiah* or *Muaddibiah* are able to change Muslim community to achieve *tawhidic ummah*.



## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> The Qur'an 23 : 115

<sup>2</sup> Recorded by Muslim, *Sahih*, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, vol. 4 B, no. 2658, (Lahore, 1990), p. 216

<sup>3</sup> For example see: the Qur'an 2 : 179, 197, 269, 3 : 7, 190, 5 : 100, 12 : 111, 13 : 19, 14 : 52

<sup>4</sup> For further explanation on *Fard 'Ain* and *Fard Kifayah* see: Al-Ghazali, *The Book of Knowledge*, translated by Nabih Amin Faris, (New Delhi, 1996), pp. 23 - 65

<sup>5</sup> Recorded by Muslim, *Sahih*, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, vol.4 B, no.2699, (Lahore, 1990), p.237

<sup>6</sup> The Qur'an 35 : 28

<sup>7</sup> Translation of Sahih Bukhari, Volume 3, Book 46, Number 723

<sup>8</sup> Manzoor-ul Haque, "The Qur'anic Model of Education", in *Muslim Education Quarterly*, Vol.10, No.2, Winter 1993, p.37

<sup>9</sup> The Qur'an 23 : 115

<sup>10</sup> The Qur'an 51 : 56

<sup>11</sup> The Qur'an 6 : 162

<sup>12</sup> Recorded by Muslim, *Sahih*, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, vol. 4 B, no. 2658, (Lahore, 1990), p. 216

<sup>13</sup> The Qur'an 31 : 13 – 19

<sup>14</sup> The Qur'an 4 : 63, 5 : 99, 6 : 3, 59, 9 : 78

<sup>15</sup> For further explanation see: Abdul-Rahman Salih Abdullah, *Educational Theory A Qur'anic Outlook*, (Makkah, 1982), pp. 159 – 165

<sup>16</sup> The Qur'an 3 : 190 – 191

<sup>17</sup> Manzoor-ul Haque, "The Qur'anic Model of Education", in *Muslim Education Quarterly*, Vol. 10. No.2, Winter 1993, p.36

<sup>18</sup> Afif A. Tabbarah, *The Spirit of Islam: Doctrine and Teaching*, translated by Hasan T. Shoucair, (Beirut, 1978), p.209

<sup>19</sup> The Qur'an 5 : 42, 3 : 76, 159

<sup>20</sup> The Qur'an 21 : 90

<sup>21</sup> Afif A. Tabbarah, *The Spirit of Islam: Doctrine and Teaching*, translated by Hasan T. Shoucair, (Beirut, 1978), p.206

<sup>22</sup> Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' Ulummuddin*, vol. 3, translated by Fazlul Karim, (Lahore, 1971), p. 64 -65

<sup>23</sup> M. Umaruddin, *The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Ghazali*, (Aligarh, 1962), p.122

<sup>24</sup> The Qur'an 2 : 165

<sup>25</sup> Sheikh Ali Al-Tantawi, *General Introduction to Islam*, (Makkah, 1994), p.87

<sup>26</sup> Recorded by Muslim, *Sahih*, translated by Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, vol. 1A, no.43, (Lahore, 1990), p. 36

<sup>27</sup> The Qur'an 95 : 4