

Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 9 (2010) 1238–1243

Procedia
Social and Behavioral Sciences

WCLTA 2010

Islamic women studies is important and necessary

Nahleh Gharavi Naeeni *

Faculty of Humanity, Tarbiat modarres University, Tehran, 14115-333, I.R.Iran

Abstract

Nowadays, women rights is one of the most important, controversial, and challenging topics in political and law circles. The fact that family, as the building block of the society, plays undeniable role in the stability and eminence of the society makes a thorough and critical evaluation of the rights and duties of women, the indispensable member of the Islamic family, a necessary and invaluable task. Islamic women studies, as part of an academic curriculum will provide necessary intellectual and human resources. This paper discusses the importance of women rights in Islam

© 2010 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Keywords: Women study, Women right, Qur'an, Feminism

1. Introduction

Today, the rights of women are a fundamental debate in political and legal arenas. The identity crisis of woman and family is one of the bitter events that have severely damaged modern-day societies. Since the basic needs of a human being are provided for by the family, and the health and welfare of society depends on the health and welfare of woman (the centre of creation and nurturer of humanity) therefore the position of woman and family is a most important issue for every human society; however distance from spirituality and moral obligations, the rejection of human values, and the vacuum in religious thought and implication of God's laws have brought the above-mentioned pitfalls to a dead end and have metamorphosed the position of woman and family. Therefore, attention to the issues and debates of woman and the family in addition to useful science, commandments, and regulations of the religion of Islam, familiarizing oneself with the debates and opinions of scholars, and obtaining pertinent knowledge in order to answer questions and doubts is essential.

“The rights of women in Islam”, in addition to being brought up in Islamic countries, is also a subject of discussion and serious review in the scientific and research societies of non-Islamic countries. Many scholars of the world want to know what laws and regulations Islam has regarding women and the position of woman in God's view. From one side, it is essential that this issue receive serious attention and its different dimensions be reviewed.

* Nahleh Gharavi Naeeni. Tel.: +98-21-82884624; fax: +98 21-82884614.

E-mail address: naeeni_n@modares.ac.ir.

Based on this, it is necessary that scholars and masters of thought, particularly universities, make efforts to strengthen and stabilize the family structure and, by seeking help from experts in this area, in order to accomplish these goals, present appropriate programs on the basis of religious thought and national identity.

2. The situation of Women in the World During the Rise of Islam

Islam appeared during a time (the 7th century) that, among uncivilized nations and tribes living far from civilization, the life of a woman compared to that of a man was like that of beasts of burden compared to humans (Tabataba'ii, v 4, p 59). Among civilized countries, like China, India, and Egypt, women were somewhere between humans and animals, and were used like a weak person that must serve average people (Ibid, p 62). Overall, at the time of the rise of Islam, woman, whether as a wife alongside her husband, a daughter in the house of her father, or a sister in relation to her brother(s), was inferior and could not enjoy her own rights. Frequently, her greatness and position were ignored as a weak element, inferior, inauspicious, and at least deserving of pity. Women were oppressed in ignorance (before the appearance of Islam). Islam put obligations on humans and pulled women from their oppression of ignorance (Khomeini, v6, p 185).

Into such conditions, the Holy Quran was sent, and by telling the story of the creation of Adam, it also told about the creation of woman (Eve), and changed the view of the teachings of the Jews regarding the creation of woman that Eve was created from the left rib of Adam (Gharavi, Bayanat, p 56). In the Torah, it says that God took a rib from Adam while he slept and filled the empty space with meat. From that rib, God created Eve (Torah, Takveen, 2 part, s 20-22).

The Holy Prophet (pbuh), through implementing the commands of the Quran and his correct and ethical behaviour, introduced the status of woman to those who accepted Islam and by being an example for all and showing his own correct behaviour and respecting his own daughter and women of society, he taught men and everyone that women have status as a human and they are valued. Time and time again, he advised men regarding their behaviour toward women.

Imam Khomeini said: "Islam wants men and women to grow. Islam saved women from that which was ignorance. As much as Islam has served women, it has served men. Islam wants women to perform essential jobs just as men do. Islam wants women to retain their status and respect. It gives her individuality in order for her to stop being an object (Khomeini, v3, p 82).

3. Islam and Family

Every human, whether female or male, is a creation of God. God, who prescribed religion (way and method of living and ways of healthy living), for mankind so that man, with guidance from the holy books and their commands, can reach perfection and follow the path of prosperity. Divine religions are all trying to preserve the honour and innate nobility of mankind and, in order to take mankind to high degrees, the present ways and methods of implementation. They want women and men to reach perfection and they want humanity to be established.

So the affairs of the lives of humans are based on divine orders, which place no differences between creations; God loves all humans and guides them so they can reach high levels of humanity. He who accepts God's religion and takes steps along that path is traversing the right path and will reach prosperity. He can be successful in the shadow of religion and have a good life which is the desire of every human.

Throughout the history of mankind, people who have religion and believe in God have had similar traits and characteristics. Worldly, material changes do not affect those firms in their religion; therefore humanity and real prosperity throughout every age and century, have had firm standards. If man, under the umbrella of the unity of

God, with a healthy temperament, reason, intellect, and insight, accepts the teachings of God and lives and acts without doubt, he will reach human perfection.

In divine tradition, family is the most important social unit and is very holy. Mankind, with the health of this institution, will remain healthy and can reach bliss. Adversely, by deviating from and with the decay of this human unit, humanity will be destroyed.

The axis of the family is the mother. Therefore, the health and competence of the family is connected to the health and competence of the mother. The reform of the family must start with the mother, because with her behaviour and words, she can cause the improvement of the members of her family. She affects each and every member of the family: her husband, daughter, boy and even her own father.

God says: If the people of the towns had but believed and feared God, We should indeed have opened out to them. (Qur'an, Al'Ar'af, 7-96)

According to this honourable verse, if the people of a land accept Islam, obey God in their behaviour, and follow the religious commands, God will send his grace on them and they will have blessings and peace. If people of society truly had faith and acted upon the orders of the Qur'an and the Prophet (pbuh), they would have a good, calm life in which they respect the rights of each other and do not abuse them.

The Holy Qur'an will always be a book of life for humans and will be pertinent until the end of time; therefore its commandments will always be pertinent. An exact, correct translation and exegesis of it with the help of the traditions and sayings of the Prophet (pbuh) and the Ahl ul Bait (Holy Family) are our most correct sources of commandments and rules, by which social and familial problems can be resolved. Therefore, grasping God's handhold is the best means for reaching human prosperity. The problems faced by most countries of the world today are problems of family, problems of discipline among the youth and children, and problems in the correct training of the countries' future human resources.

4. Feminism and Family

Since the nineteenth century, Feminism, known as The Women's Movement came about and announced the equality of men and women in western countries, even though its true purpose was to employ women in the industries with lower salaries than men and to benefit the employers. By encouraging women to work in workshops and factories they caused women to leave their families and homes, using the existence of patriarchy and wanting to overthrow the injustice toward women as excuses.

The foreseen plan for women, however, was in itself a binary injustice for all women of the world. In addition, those Islamic countries that were under the rule of western nations and dispossessed women in opposition to Islamic rules, in order to display their civilization and progress encouraged some of their women to make a stand so they would become included in the made-up rights of the western world. The incorrect interpretation of Islamic rules and regulations by many Islamic countries itself caused the increase of injustice to women in those countries.

The start of the rise of Feminism had a humanistic nature. In Humanism, humans take the place of God and Creator as the axis of pertinence in the universe, and become the axis and center of all things, the creator of values, and the standard for good and evil in humanity.

Followers of Humanism believe that mankind, by having the two tools of "intellect" and "knowledge" has no further need for religion.

The consequence of the human axis is the humanizing of religion and loss of belief in the heavenly religion (Agha Bakhshi, p 325).

However believers in Humanism who lack belief in religion and God, in the last two or three centuries have taken steps to change the people's lifestyles only to increase their own assets. By advertising and giving money and salaries, they have pulled women out of their homes and away from their families. Through negative advertising against religion, and by announcing that Islam is cruel to women and neglects women's rights, and by depleting women and society of spirituality, they have separated the women from their infants, sent them out to the job market, and have dispossessed family from a warm center, creating separation between its members.

Even Feminism with its title of equality of men and women has put the issue of motherhood under question and considers it inferiority for women. Family life, therefore, is considered unnecessary and to the disadvantage of women. It suggests a partnership for two homosexuals and has promoted it in the nooks and crannies of the world.

Based on humanistic writings of Feminism, human desire is the center and standard of all affairs of life; the right of a woman to refuse her husband in sexual matters, which causes social and moral banality, results in an encouragement of homosexuality in society.

Resistance against many religious injunctions or social rules that create religious, moral, and legal limitations with the excuse of being problematic for humanity is considered acceptable because, in view of feministic attitudes, the center of the home and family is mankind and its desires. Therefore, in Feminism, family must be built and described in such terms that "enjoyment" plays the main role in it.

Feminists' desire for freedom, in their humanistic views, arrives at sexual freedom. Feminism intellectuals, in defense of freedom, reach a point where they describe marriage and the formation of a family as "servility"; they know marriage only as "legal slavery" (Hosseini, p 156). Equality between men and women, in addition to the physical differences and abilities, is a certainty from every point.

If real Muslims, believing in the axis being God and obedience to the commands of the last divine religion and with a correct understanding of the verses of the Quran, look for the legal rights of mankind, in particular women, they will not be Feminists, because the foundation of Feminism is Humanism (human axis), not God.

5. Position and Rights of Woman in the Qur'an

The Holy Qur'an in various verses talks about the status and rights of women. Here, we will only refer to the verses that speak of the status of women in God's eyes. The Holy Quran introduces the creation of woman, like that of man, as being from one unique material with no difference in the basic material (Qur'an, Nessa, 1), (Qur'an A'raf 7, 189), and (Qur'an Zomar 6, 39). It says, "The most honorable of you in God's eyes are the most virtuous among you." (Qur'an, Hijrat 13/49). Equality in spiritual ranking and the rights of women and men and their worthiness of reward is the same. (Qur'an, Tobeh 71-72)

This divine book speaks regarding inheritance by women (Qur'an, Nessa/7-12), marriage (Qur'an, Nessa/ 23-26), divorce (Qur'an, Baghareh, 226), freedom of choice (Qur'an, Baghareh, 35), rights of ownership (Qur'an, Nessa/32), all of which are the results of a person being free, and menstruation (Qur'an, Baghareh 2/222), observance of women's rights and observance of a mother's rights, and the status of mother (Qur'an, Baghareh 2/83), (Qur'an, Nessa/36), (Qur'an, An'am 6/151), (Qur'an, Isra 17/23), (Qur'an, Loghman 14/31). Therefore all these problems concerning women have been somehow discussed in the Quran. Therefore, study and research regarding the commandments, regulations, laws, and rules concerning women and family in the Quran and Islam, of which the

actions of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) was a model of behavior of these commandments, rules, and status for today's people, is essential, so that it can be compared with that which Feminism and Materialism put forward.

6. Necessity and Importance

In order to have an advanced society suitable with cultural, geographical, and historical requirements and reliant upon the moral principles and divine values in these times, the need for change and advancement in Liberal Arts in most countries of the world, especially in Islamic countries whose basis for the Liberal Arts is the Quran and divine religion can be felt.

Strengthening the status and degree of this science in order to attract talented and motivated people at the levels of professor and student is very important. Therefore, planning in change and evolution of Liberal Arts is necessary for the countries that strive for the improvement of life and social conditions and want prosperity for mankind. A lack of spirituality has no result except humility and misfortune. With attention to the status and active role of women in human societies and the advancement of that status in today's world and the attack on the Islamic culture and traditions and Islamic regimes and the role of women against these attacks, educating women and informing them of their rights, their duties, the laws and rules and Islamic rights is of immediate importance.

Strengthening the foundation of the family, which is the basic foundation of society and the training site of a country's future population, and the status of women therein, and also the status of women in social fields, the need to obtain religious and legal rights of women in all fields, and with attention to the constructive role of women, the establishment of a term of education and research in women's studies in order to fulfill these needs is essential and must be planned.

Therefore, in order to have an advanced society suitable with cultural, geographical, and historical requirements, and reliant upon the moral principles and divine values, which comes from advanced knowledge based on both superior human resources and having a strong family foundation, attention to the rights of women in the frame of intellect and the pure teachings of Islam is an irrefutable necessity, so that future generations, under the shadow of these conditions, can have growth, development, a correct intellect and science and guides society toward human perfection. This path with correct virtuous, religious, and scientific teachings is possible so that the people in a society can become familiar with their own responsibilities, rights, and status.

So it is necessary that women to improve their lives, obtain their rights and realize their duties. For reaching to that, education, for both religious and secular is the key for this progress, as Kartini a lady who born in 1879 was argued in Indonesia (Oxford Islamic Encyclopedia, vo4, p344a).

In this context, the education of the people of a society (female or male) regarding commandments, laws, the rights of women in Islam, and the status of woman and family with the goals listed below needs attention:

- a. Determining the order of women's rights with reliance upon the Islamic rights of women as pillars of the family and the basic center for the training of children.
- b. Localization, solutions, upgrading the circumstances of women with reliance upon the fundamentals of morality and Islamic values.
- c. Resisting cultural attacks, western schools of thoughts regarding women, and answering the doubts expressed in this field.
- d. Consolidation and excellence of the family with attention to the rights of women as pillars of the family and the basic center for the training of children.
- e. Profiting from Islamic teachings and the legal findings of other countries regarding women in order to use the positive solutions and findings that match Islamic standards.

References

Al-Qur'an

Agha Bakhshi, A. (1374/1995). *Farhang Ulum Syasi (Cultural Political Science)*, Tehran, Cultural and Higher Education Ministry, p 325.

Gharavi, N. (1378/1999). *Jaygah Zan dar Afarinesh (Women status in creation) Bayyemat*, no.22&23, p 56.

Hosaini, E. *Feminism against women, Ketab Naqd*, No 17, p 156.

- Khomaini, R,(1982) Sahifah Noor, Tehran, Guidance ministry, v6, p 185.
- The Oxford Encyclopedia of The modern Islamic world.(1995).London, Oxford University, Esposito, John L.v4.
- Tabatabaai, M.H.(1974). *Almizan fi Tafsir Alqur'an*.(3rd ed). Beirut: Alaalami foundation, v 4, p 59.
- Torah, The Old Testmen*, Takveen, part2, s 20-22.