

Chapter 2: The Human Perfections

After discussing in the first chapter the equal identity of the woman and man, and attaining to a clear conclusion of it, I will discuss in this chapter the first arena of this common identity, that is the human perfections and accomplishments. What I intend to say is that the door of the human maturities under the protection of the Islamic Shari'ah, is uniformly open wide before all women and men, who have ability, aptitude and full innate readiness for traversing the various courses of these maturities.

We have to investigate and peruse the woman's human perfection in two grounds: Knowledge and moral conduct. And this theme can be laid for disputation from two sides, one being theoretical confirmation, and the second being historical and original consideration. Further, this issue can be discussed according to religious texts and sources, that is the holy Qur'an and Prophetic Sunnah, and also on the basis of historical and external evidences this theory can be proved.

For completing and covering all dimensions of this matter, it is essential and necessary to take its both sides into consideration. In other words, we can say that the way to such development and perfection was paved by the holy Qur'an and teachings and precepts of the Prophet (S) and Infallible Imams, whose traces can be sought in that epoch and many following eras. What follows is discussion and elaboration of two arenas of perfection, i.e. moral behaviour and knowledge, with due attention to theoretical and historical sources:

Moral Behaviour

The holy Qur'an has paved the way for moral behaviour before the woman, in a way taking Mary and wife of Pharaoh as two examples and patterns to be followed by all the believers:

“Setteth forth God the similitude unto those who believe: the wife of Pharaoh, when said she: “O my Lord! Build Thou for me a house in the Garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his doing, and deliver me from the unjust people! And Mary the daughter of Imran, who guarded her chastity; and breathed We unto it “her baby” of Our Spirit, and she testified the truth of the words of her Lord, and His Scriptures, and she was of the obedient ones.” (Qur'an, 66: 11, 12).

These two women have attained to lofty ranks in faith and nearness to Allah, though one having no father and the other being under protection of an ill-natured husband claiming deity.

Further in the Qur'an the highest moral praises in recognition of Mary are found, and she was addressed and praised with sublime terms like "hath chosen you." and "**made thee pure**" (*Qur'an, 3:42*), with being many times addressed by the Divine angels who once talked to her: "**And when the angels said: O Mary!...**" (*Qur'an, 3:42, 45*).

Likewise on hearing that Salman was worried about the old worn clothes of Fatimah (A), shedding tears for this, the Messenger of Allah (S) declared: "Verily my daughter Fatimah is among the foremost caravan."¹

It is also reported that Al-Imam Al-Husayn (A), in the last minutes of his life "on deathbed", said to Zaynab (A): "O sister! never forget me in qunut of salaah allayl "supplication of night prayers".²

Also Hamidah, wife of al-Imam as-Sadiq (A), was of lofty moral position that in her regard al-Imam (A) said: "Hamidah is verily purified of pollutions."³

Moreover, in her regard Al-Imam Al-Baqir (A) proclaimed: "She is commended in the world and praiseworthy in the hereafter."⁴

Some are of the opinion that the women being more competent and able than the men, because:

1. The space of marching of the women being shorter than that of men.
2. The women being lighter than men, since their attachments and belongings being lesser than those of men, the fact making them able to cover this short distance faster than men.
3. The obstacles before behaviour of men being more in number than those before women, so they find it so difficult to deliver themselves from them.

Some historical evidences are there to establish this view.

It is known for all that al-Imam Ali (A) got married to Fatimah (A) when she was only nine years old and he in the age of 21, i.e. the difference in age between them was 12 years.

On another part, in the Shi'ah and Sunnah narrations, it is reported that the Prophet (S) said: "Had not been Ali existed, no equal mate could be there for Fatimah."⁵

The evidence proving this view can be found in the Prophet's confirmation of their equality and matchness to each other though the difference of twelve years in age. Further, other evidences are there to attest this opinion, but citing them is out of scope here.

In regard of women Az-Zuhri is reported to have said: No woman has ever apostatised after having

faith.”[6](#)

Adh-Dhahabi is also reported to have said: It is never reported about any woman to have falsified “Prophet's” hadith.” [7](#)

In Mizan Al-I'tidal he introduced four thousand men by name, who were suspected of fabrication in reporting the hadith, saying: I never know a woman accused of falsification in narrating the hadith.[8](#)

Some writers have interpreted Adh-Dhahabi's statement in this way:

“The reason behind this may lie in the fact that men are affected and attracted by political tendencies, love for power, wilfulness and supporting of views, sycophancy near kings and emirs with strong desire to seize the people's hearths... beside other things that divert them from straightforward path. But in regard of women these desires and inclinations have no way or control over them.”[9](#)

In this respect AlOstaz Jawadi Amuli says: “The holy Qur'an endeavoured, through preaching which is strongly and directly connected to the heart and mind, to talk to man, and also tried to talk through wisdom which having indirect relation with heart. If channel of intellect and thought fails to reach the passageway into heart and mind, it will be of no use, and the women being more successful than men in respect of heart, mind, tendency and attraction. Therefore fervent prayer has more impact and effect on women than men or at least on their fellow men, and preaching is more effective upon the woman than the man or her mate man.” [10](#)

Muhyi Ad-Deen Al-Arabi has not considered gnostic positions to be special characteristics of men, but counting them to be shared by women, when saying:

“These positions do not belong singly and specially to men, as women also can have them, but since predominance is always for men so they are all the time mentioned in the name of men.” [11](#)

Certainly prevalence of gnostic men is never due to their being more talented or able, but rather the social environment and inconvenience of circumstances and atmosphere for education of women were the real reason for this, not to refer to less attention being paid to recording of history of women. The historians who paid much attention to registration of biographies of men, have never cared much in regard of women. Therefore numerous books were written on exposition of Gnostic positions of men, like Hilyat Al-Awliya' and Tabaqaat Al-Awliya, Tabaqaat As-Sufiyyah and others. But when it comes to women, they have inscribed books on conditions of women singers, like the books authored by Abul-Faraj Al-Isfahani: Al-Aghani and Al-Ima Ash-Shawa'ir and others.

In fact, there is no any defect in moral behaviour of women. When a gnostic was asked: What is the number of abdal “substitutes”? He replied: Forty souls... “meaning the Abdal being forty individuals. When he was asked: Why haven't you said “forty men”? he said: First, all these persons of distinction were not men, as among them women are found. Second: Every individual that attained to rank of

substitute is man “human being”, and man has no specification for female or male at all. [12](#)

Imam al-Khomeini, one of eminent personalities, has played a great role in portraying and stabilising this dimension of character of women in the contemporary era.

In regard of status of Fatimah Az-Zahra (A) he said:

“... I suffice with quoting one narration which is reported with authentic Sanad “chain of transmitters” in the noble book Al-Kafi. This riwaayah reads thus: Al-Imam As-Sadiq (A) says: Fatimah (A) survived after her father (S) for seventy-five days, living in this world overcome with sorrow and hardships, with the Trustee Gabriel descending down upon her offering her consolation, and foretelling her of future events. The outward of the narration is thus: these seventy-five days were days of frequentation, i.e. plying to and fro of Gabriel was too excessive, and I don't believe that other than the first class of great prophets has ever entered in this way upon a person to whom Gabriel frequented to and fro within seventy-five days.” [13](#)

He also said: “The holy Qur'an builds man, and women too build man. The duty of women is building man. If man-building women are taken away from the nations, these nations will verily be transformed to failure and decadence, and they will be defeated and corrupted.” [14](#)

He further said:

“The woman is manifestation of coming true of wishes of mankind. The woman is educator and nurturer of honourable women and men. From the lap of woman the man ascends to heaven. The lap of woman is a place for education of great women and men.” [15](#)

Nevertheless, despite all this inattention on part of history in ignoring to record moral behaviour of exalted women, still the reality has never remained covered or hidden.

Abu Abd Ar-Rahmaan Sullami “325412H.” has written a book exposing in it conditions of ascetic and Sufi women, citing names of eighty-four professional gnostic women. [16](#)

In Nafahat Al-Uns, Abu Abd Ar-Rahmaan Jami' stated names of forty principled gnostic women. [17](#)

Another book had been authored in the past years containing accounts and biographies of devout and ascetic women, in which a reference was made to a large number of women. [18](#)

Some of the extant statements that history maintained in regard of these Gnostic women worth mentioning:

Rabi'ah Ash-Shamiyyah, wife of Ahmad Ibn Abi Al-Hawari, when preparing the table spread, said to her husband: “Eat it, as it could never be cooked but only through tasbih “praising God in hymns”.” This may either mean that she was reciting Tasbih during cooking the food, or this food being product of Tasbih. [19](#)

Rabi'ah Al-Adawiyah says:

“Our seeking forgiveness needs another seeking of forgiveness.” [20](#)

She also said:

“Conceal your good deeds as you hide your evils and indecencies.”[21](#)

Further, once she addressed people saying: “O my soul “self” how much do you sleep, and till when you sleep. You are about to go into a sleep of which you would never get up but only with the scream of the Day of Resurrection.”[22](#)

In another place she said: “O my God, I have worshipped You neither out of fear from Your Fire nor out of covetousness in Your paradise, but out of love for You and intention to meet You.”[23](#)

In conclusion of this discussion, it is necessary to refer to the fact that menstruation of women being something natural and intrinsic, and a requisite for procreation of offspring and survival of species of mankind, and can never constitute any impediment in this trend. Though the women are exempted, during these days “of menstruation” from certain worships “like prayer, fasting”, but this really being only a religious formality having nothing to do with spiritual and moral states of women, since they can indulge themselves in God's remembrance and reciting of Qur'an.

This fact is a facilitation on part of religion in regard of women, as the same is true regarding traveller, who can shorten his “four rak'ah” prayers and is ordered not to fast during travelling. A formal facilitation can never be considered as an indication to weakness of faith or moral states. And since in most of the cases a reference was made to this fact, so the traditions on lack of faith can be taken to have this meaning.

Because religion means charging with duty and a precept, and weakness of religion in the days of menstruation indicates despising and belittling the precepts and tasks on part of woman throughout these days.

Allah the Most High has considered menstrual discharge as an illness “aza”,[24](#) a state during which the women take pains and suffer troubles. And since they are exempted from any imposition or tasking with additional duty, so they are permitted or rather demanded to have their own moral conditions, sitting on “prayer” rug and reciting hymns for remembering God.

Thus the result we get, being that the women have, in field of moral behaviour, an aptitude equal to that owned by men, and in perspective of religion, they have been called to moral maturity and behaviour, to the same extent of men. Further, so many samples of mature women have emerged on the scene in history of Islam.

There are some who even hold that ground for moral growth and capability of women for this motion is

more and greater than men. a state during which the women take pains and suffer troubles. And since they are exempted from any imposition or tasking with additional duty, so they are permitted or rather demanded to have their own moral conditions, sitting on “prayer” rug and reciting hymns for remembering God.

Thus the result we get, being that the women have, in field of moral behaviour, an aptitude equal to that owned by men, and in perspective of religion, they have been called to moral maturity and behaviour, to the same extent of men. Further, so many samples of mature women have emerged on the scene in history of Islam. There are some who even hold that ground for moral growth and capability of women for this motion is more and greater than men.

Seeking Knowledge

One of most valuable man's characteristics being one's power and aptitude to acquire cognition and knowledge... cognition of oneself, of the world in which one lives, and of secrets and mysteries concealed in the existence... etc.

Man can acquire all this cognition through reasoning, detection and witnesses, gaining perfection of existence for oneself within the range of this cognition. In the Islamic Law this perfection has not spared classification, rather all classes and species of mankind have been invited to knowledge-seeking. Allah, when praising the knowledgeable and learned and reproaching the illiterate in general, says:

“Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge, to high ranks.”
(Qur’an, 58: 11).

In another place He said:

“Say “unto them, O Muhammad”: what! can those who know be equal to those who know not?”
(Qur’an, 39:9).

Furthermore, the Almighty Allah regards teaching of people “rules of religion” to be one of goals of prophets, without limiting this to a certain class of them, as stated in the following verse:

“Even as We have sent among you a Prophet from amongst yourselves who recited unto you Our signs and purified you and teaches you the Book and the Wisdom; and teaches you that which ye did not know.” ***(Qur’an, 2: 151).***

More than this, the words and conduct of the Imams, contain so much encouragement and persuasion toward knowledge-seeking.

If we get over the following general traditions:

“Seeking knowledge is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim.”[25](#)

“May the whips be unsheathed over the heads of my Companions so that they learn and distinguish the halaal “lawful” and the haraam “unlawful”²⁶. we come to some other traditions inviting women to seek knowledge, reported from these great leaders “Imams”, like:

“Seeking knowledge is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim man and Muslim woman:²⁷

Also the Messenger of Allah (S) said: “Beat the women for learning good and benevolence.”²⁸

The Prophet (S) further said: “What excellent women the women of the Helpers “Ansar” are, their bashfulness could never curb them from learning rules of religion.”²⁹

If we pass over these traditions we can see so many evidences indicating prevalence of knowledge and sciences among the women, during the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah.

The Women Questioning the Prophet

The history of first era of Islam contains in within numerous examples of science acquiring and knowledgeseeing on part of women.

Zaynab Attarah, whose profession was purchasing and selling women's adornment equipment and tools, once upon a day came near the Prophet (S) questioning him about the way of creation of the world, when the Messenger of Allah (S) responded to her by explaining the creation from the beginning till present time.³⁰

Also when Asma' bint Ummays returned from migration to Abyssinia, she betook herself toward wives of the Messenger of Allah (S) asking them: Is there any Qur'anic verse revealed in regard of women? On hearing a negative reply, she had recourse to the Prophet saying to him: The women are sustaining loss and detriment! The Messenger (S) said: What for? She said: Because no one Qur'anic verse was revealed in their regard. At that time verse 35 of surat AlAhzab was revealed.³¹

The Women Questioning the Companions

One example from history of first era of Islam is a sufficient evidence for this case. Abdallah Ibn Mas'ud is reported to have said: Why don't I curse those whom Allah has damned in the Qur'an, i.e. skin tattooer “washimah” and women near whom people go for tattooing “mustawshimah”, hairdressers who join hair of some women to head of other women “wasilah”, and those to whom people resort for this purpose “mustawsilah”!

The woman who heard this speech, reviewed all the Qur'an but couldn't find these words uttered by Ibn Mas'ud. The next day she went near him saying: I have read the whole Qur'an but never found that which you uttered in it.

Ibn Mas'ud said: Hasn't Allah said in His holy Book:

“And whatsoever the Messenger giveth you, take it. And whatsoever he forbiddeth, abstain “from it”.” (Qur’an, 59:7).

And also the Messenger of Allah (S) expressed: “Allah has verily cursed the skin tattooers women and women near whom people go for tattooing “mustawshimah”.[32](#)

The Companions Questioning the Women

Too many questions were put forth by the Companions “*sahabah*” before Fatimah, daughter of the Prophet and 'A'ishah. One day Ibn Mas'ud betook himself to Fatimah (A) saying: Has the Prophet left anything of “his” knowledge with you? Fatimah (A) said to her maiden: Bring me the pieces of papers left by my father.[33](#)

Likewise, the Companions used to put questions before 'A'ishah, and also she used to criticise the Sahabah in many occasions.

In his book *Al-Ijabah Li Irad Ma Istadrakathu 'A'ishah 'Ala As-Sahaabah*, Az-Zarkashi cited ninety narrations in which 'A'ishah found fault with the reporting of the Sahabah, rectifying all their narrations.

These were only two examples of so many instances.

Women Questioning the Women

Women used to, during the lifetime of the Prophet, lay so many questions before the Messenger's wives and daughter. Once upon a day a woman came near Fatimah, Prophet's daughter, saying: I have a crippled mother, and some of rules related to prayers “*salaat*” are dubious for her. She sent me near you to seek answers and clarifications for her questions and dubieties. Then Fatimah (A) gave her the satisfactory answers. Again she put to her other questions and was given the replies. After repeating this several times, she felt shy and returned.[34](#)

Another woman came near her “Fatimah” and said: My husband told me to come to you to inquire about whether I be among Shi'ah “followers” or not? She (A) answered her saying: If you commit yourselves to our biddings and prohibitions, you will be verily among our followers, otherwise you won't be.[35](#)

This scientific movement has created among women a change in culture of Arab Peninsula and Islamic States, in a society in which men were deprived of talent of knowledge and writing, causing to development of learned women and men.

With blessing of this movement, the ground was paved for women to play the role required in fields of time knowledge. As a consequence of this, so many scientific works were brought out by women. Also

women have played a special role in field of reporting and narration of hadith. This fact was unveiled by books like: Musnad Fatimah Musnad 'A'ishah, Mawsu'at Ummahaat AIMu'mineen and Jami' Masaanid An-Nisa'.

Dr. Salih Yousif Ma'tuq has demonstrated the efforts and endeavours exerted by women in relation of hadith during the eighth hijrah century, in a separate book.³⁶ As an example we can refer to the book of Dr. Najiyah Abdallah Ibraaheem, under the title: Al-Juhood Al-'Ilmiyyah Lil Mar'ah Khilal Al-Qarnayn Al-Khamis Was-Sadis Al-Hijriyyayn, in which she exhibited the scientific efforts exerted by Muslim women in Baghdad during the fifth and sixth centuries.³⁷

Likewise, Al-Ostaz Ahmad Muhammad Isa has revealed the scientific status of Muslim women during the medieval ages of Islamic history, in one short article.³⁸ It is stated that in Iran alone about 3847 books have been translated and compiled by women during the period from the year 1921 till 1995.³⁹ Furthermore, many great women have undertaken task of teaching, and so many people became disciples in their school.

For instance Zaynab, the daughter of Muhammad Ibn Othmaan Ad-Dimashqi used to hold a class meeting, which was attended by fifty persons among whom was Ibn Hajar.⁴⁰

Ibn 'Asaakir "499571 H." is known to have acquired hadith from more than eighty women.⁴¹ Further Sakhawi, the author of the book Az-Zaw Al-Laami', learnt under fifty women.⁴² This practice was something so common in the Shi'ah religious schools "Hawzaat".

Also in the contemporary time the lady Ameena Isfahani was one of knowledgeable women who used to have a class for teaching, from whom scholars like Al-'Allamah Al-Amini author of Al-Ghadeer and Ayatullah Marashi Najafi got license for narration "riwaayah".⁴³

With all these traditional and historical evidences and indications, there will be no room for any limitation or restriction on reservation of knowledge on part of women. And if supposedly any interdiction was there on hadith and Riwaayah it would be specific to exceptional cases and can't be generalised or considered extensive in meaning, since all Muslim Olamaa', Shi'ah and Sunnah have never applied or adopted such traditions. This fact indicates that they either were doubting their "ahaadeeth" veracity or had got a certain meaning from them.

Of course, no one can deny the fact that in some of the Islamic societies there being some restrictions on knowledge-seeking by women, but this should never be ascribed to the Islamic culture comprises the Qur'anic verses and Prophet's traditions and conduct which I cited before. And that one should be called a gleaned "multaqaat" culture of Muslims, to that meaning that under the influence of foreign cultures upon the Islamic culture, a new culture under the name of culture of Muslims was produced. This culture is so weak and untenable that Muslims should do their best to refine it.

In the same manner, any failure and negligence on part of women in acquiring knowledge should never

be reckoned on account of religion and Shari'ah. The conclusion obtained is that the Islamic Shari'ah has invited both women and men to seek knowledge, never putting any impediment on the way toward their perfection seeking.

1. [Taraajum A'laam An-Nisa'](#), vol. I, p. 207.
2. [Al-Hayaat](#), vol. II, p. 217.
3. ['Alaam An-Nisa' Al-Mu'minaat](#), p. 381.
4. [Al-Kaafi](#), vol. I, p. 477, hadith 2." [Kitaab Al-Hujjaj](#)."
5. [ibid.](#), hadith I.
6. [Awaalim Al-Oloom](#), vol. XI, p. 278 & 280.
7. [Tahreer Al-Mar'ah Fi 'Asr Ar-Risaalah](#), vol. II, p. 423.
8. [ibid.](#), vol. I, p. 118.
9. ['Alaam Al-'Abidaat Az-Zahidaat](#), p. II.
10. ['Alaam Al-'Abidaat Az-Zahidaat](#), p. II.
11. [Zan Dar Ainah Jalaal Wa Jamaal](#), p. 193.
12. [Sharh Qaysari Baar Khusus](#), p. 425.
13. [Rooh Al-Bayaan](#), vol. II, p 34.
14. [Tibyaan](#), vol. VIII, " Woman's Position in Imam Khumayni's thought, " p. 20.
15. [ibid.](#), p. 58.
16. [ibid.](#), p. 57.
17. [Dhikr An-Niswah Al-Muta'abbidaat As-Sufiyyat](#), by Abu Abd Ar-Rahmaan As-Salami.
18. [Nafahat al-Uns](#), p. 615-635.
19. ['Alaam Al-'Abidaat Az-Zahidaat](#), Muhammad Ahmed Darniqah.
20. [Zan Dar Ainah jalaal Wa Jamaal](#), pp. 236-238.
21. [ibid.](#), p. 239.
22. [ibid.](#), p. 240.
23. [ibid.](#), p. 241.
24. [ibid.](#), p. 243.
25. [Surat Al-Baqarah](#), verse 222: "they question thee (o Muhammad) concerning mensttuation. say: it is an illness".
26. [Al-Kaafi](#). vol. I, p. 30. hadith I.
27. [Bihaar Al-Anwaar](#), vol. I, p. 213, hadith 12.
28. [ibid.](#), vol. I, p. 177, hadith 54.
29. [ibid.](#), p. 249, hadith, 39.
30. [Al-Mar'ah Fi Al-Qur'an Was-Sunnah](#), p. 39.
31. [At-Tawheed](#), p. 276.
32. [Mizan Al-Hikmah](#), vol. IX, pp. 94-95.
33. [Majma' Al-Bayan](#), vol. II, p. 298.
34. [Da'irat Al-Ma'arif Al-Islamiyyah As-Shi'yyah](#), vol. I, p. 10.
35. [Mustadrak Al-Wasa'il](#), p. 17. hadith 22, (al. Al-Bayt).
36. [Tafseer Al-Imam Al-Askari](#), p. 308.
37. [Johood Al-Mar'ah Fi Riwayat Al-hadith](#), by Dr, Salih Yousif Mu'tuq.
38. [Journal of Ainah Pizhohish](#), issue, no. 45, pp. 45-46.
39. [Journal of Risaalat Al-Islam](#), issue no I, pp. 78-83.
40. [Goftogo Magazine \(dialogue\)](#), issue no 9, p. 134; [Kitabnamah Zan](#), 1979- 1995, Az-Zahra university.
41. [Risaalat Al-Islam](#), issue no. I p. 81.
42. [Risaalat Al-Islam](#), issue no. I p. 82.
43. [Risaalat Al-Islam](#), issue no. I p. 83.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/woman-mahdi-mahrizi/chapter-2-human-perfections#comment-0>