

Preamble

The Muslim woman today is restrained between two ignorances “jaahiliyyah”, one being the ignorance of the 20th century, which shows a degraded portrait of the woman, and the other being the preislamic era that looks at the woman as a being more junior and of less status than the man.

The new jaahiliyyah, with the pretext of the social activity of the woman and defending her rights, calls the woman toward unknown labyrinth. And the other ignorance, under the guise of chastity and purity, keeps the woman far from so many human perfections and virtues.

Many are of the opinion that the Muslim woman has only two alternatives before her, and she has no choice but to select one of them: either to surrender to the western debauchery or to stay secluded in her house deprived of all human perfections and sublimities.

Perusing attentively the main sources of religion “the Qur'an and Prophetic Sunnah” will lay before us an intermediate way, neither that seduction nor this petrifaction “tahajjur”, neither that libertinism nor this seclusion.

Islam, according to genuine texts, presents a portrayal of the woman, proving her to be a human being, but not a man, as the man being also a human being but not a woman. It also divides arenas of life into two parts: human and genus. The human arena makes no difference between the woman and man, as it never recognises genus or sex, giving no consideration to femininity or masculinity, as both – male and female – are actively endeavouring in search for perfection.

But in the field of sexuality in life, the woman should be a woman, doing only womanly acts and abiding by her special necessities and vestiges, whereas the man has to behave in this arena like a man, practising only manly acts. Identifying and discerning these two arenas, and deducing rules and laws controlling every behaviour, being in fact not an easy job, but so complicated, squandering or excessive.

One this basis, there are some who imagine the humane arena as if representing all life arenas of the man and woman, denying presence of any diversity, considering the quantitative equality to be governing all domains of life. And if it be in their hands they would even desire to dispute the nature so

as to eradicate whatever indicating a bit divergence. The fancy they hold in mind may even include distributing fosterage and pregnancy “between man and woman”!

Another group considers sexuality field to be all domains of human life, though denying this in terms of words. Hence, they give limits to the sphere of perfections, in a way that the two sexes would be affected and affect each other so passively, to the extent that one glance and one word produced by each sex would cause decline and decay of the other. The manifestation of these two interpretations can be clearly found in so many cultures, laws and norms.

No one can deny the necessity of diligent endeavour, far from time fusses, for recognising these two God's creatures “man and woman”, so as to be able to criticise these cultures, rules, etiquette, formalities and views. In this course, the confirmed and mutawaatir religious texts, i.e. the Qur'an and Prophetic Sunnah, with intuitive inferences and experiments and man's thinking should be duly exploited and fully used.

In other words: giving heed to experienced researches and recognised indisputable knowledge deductions, verily plays a good role in better apprehending the religious texts. Further, I should refer to some principles that constitute a criterion and foundation for religious studies on women, with using the scientific achievements in this regard, in the following way:

- 1.** When making religious studies, the pivotal role of the Qur'an should never be neglected, as it being the first and original source for recognising the religion, with hadith and narration being studied and examined with its reflection. Also, all Qur'anic stories, verses on rulings “ahkaam”, knowledge branches and preaching sermons and others should be taken into consideration and included in these studies.
- 2.** For making religious studies, the sermons, sayings and practical sirah “conduct” of the Messenger of Allah “may God's peace and benediction be upon him and his Progeny” and Infallible Imams should be collected and compiled, so as to infer and deduce rules and verdicts from them. This while analysing the falsified narrations and verses and disregarding the practical Sunnah of the Prophet (S) and Imams (A) being a big blunder, and we should never neglect this principle when doing any investigations about woman in general.
- 3.** The fabrication and tahreef “alteration, perversion” of traditions, with the influence of irreligious cultures should never be neglected, and must be considered attentively. As through investigations and scrutiny, it can be recognised that some beliefs are there which we consider to be of the religion but they be not in truth, and they have, throughout centuries, been foisted and leaked into our religion from other alien cultures and traditions.
- 4.** As regards making use of the accomplishments of human thoughts and experimental sciences, their intuition and definite existence should be realised. As there are so many viewpoints and theories, especially in the field of anthropology, which have no scientific foundation or background at all, so they can never be relied upon by investigators and researchers.

5. In studying affairs and issues of women we should concentrate particularly on external realisms, and past biographies of various nations and peoples.

In this research, I will endeavour to commit myself sincerely to taking these principles as a basis for analysing and studying the subjects set for speculation. The themes of this book have been divided into six sections, the first of which, that is the most essential one and as is explicitly realised from its outward seeming, is dedicated for manifesting the character of the woman. In my conception, the root of so many of the wrong judgements lies in the unrealistic view held in regard of the woman, so the fountainhead should be purified. On this basis, this chapter has a leading role in relation to other chapters.

Thereafter, presence and activity of the woman in three main arenas of life: individual, family and society, will be discussed and elaborated in the next chapters – two up to four – under the titles: “The Human Perfections,” “Woman and Family,” and “Woman's Participation in Social Life.”

The subject of “Veil and Chastity” constitutes the fifth chapter of this book. The fact that led me to broaching this topic being that it is viewed by some people to be incongruous with the social presence of the woman, while some others consider it as a sign of individual perfection for the woman and consolidation of the family system. Analysing the dimensions of veil “hijaab” and chastity and their effect on the life of women, as well as giving replies to some questions would be the objective of the discussion in this chapter.

The last chapter of this book will contain selection of Descriptive Book Identification of Collections, in which general identification of a number of collections and compilations is recorded. All my hope is that this work can give, though so briefly, a manifest Idaho of the Islamic perspective of the woman.

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