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Lesson 3

11-19-09 The Open School Class: Explanation of Forty *Ahadith* Text: Jalali, Sayyid Muhammad Husayn. Sharh al-Arba'in al-Nabawwiyah. Arabic edition 1987, pages 423-425.

Summary

Women are considered extremely important and valuable in Islam. Actually, women were rescued and given their rights by Islam. In the time of ignorance, women were treated like property, and they did not have a voice. Islam gave women a voice and much more. In Islam, women are equal to men in value. For example, Islam does not allow one to force a woman into marriage. She must consent on her own free will. Other rights were granted as well.

For example, women were able to own property, and they also were given rights to *baiyyah* (pledging allegiance). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) would visit women or women would visit him, and they were given the right to pay allegiance to him. Allah (the Most High) says via the **Qur'an (60:12)**:

O Prophet! If faithful women come to you, to take the oath of allegiance to you, [pledging] that they shall not ascribe any partners to Allah, that they shall not steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill their children, nor utter any slander that they may have intentionally fabricated, nor disobey you in what is right, then accept their allegiance, and plead for them to Allah for forgiveness. Indeed Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful.

(See Jalali, page 424). Women in the U.S. were not even given the right to vote until the early twentieth century. However, some people argue that Islam oppresses women. Firstly, to truly understand the Islamic philosophy towards women and what Islam did for women, one must compare the freedoms Islam brought with other societies at the time of the advent of Islam.

If you compare how Islam viewed women to how the Roman society or the Persian society viewed women at the time, one would be amazed at the beauty of Islam and understand that Islam came to abolish oppression of women.

Secondly, some of the “freedoms” touted by certain groups nowadays regarding women are against the nature of women. In my opinion, the way current societies treat and view women is actually stepping away from freedom. For example, societies are treating women more and more as property or pieces of meat. Women are judged based on their beauty and how they dress rather than what they think and believe. Islam is above such superficial concentration.

Women are not property or pieces of meat, they are equal partners to men. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) demonstrated how one should honor and view women. Once a king gave a woman, Mariah, to the Prophet as a gift, a piece of property. The Prophet accepted Mariah but not as a piece of property, but as a human being. He married her, and that act of marriage symbolized the elevation of women that Islam brought. Allah (the Most High) says via the **Qur’an (4:1)**:

O mankind! Be wary of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and created its mate from it, and, from the two of them, scattered numerous men and women. Be wary of Allah, in whose Name you adjure one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is watchful over you.

(See Jalali, page 424).

Surely, women are created as men are created, and women, generally, are equal to men in application (*e.g.,* both men and women are obliged to pray). However, some look at Islamic practices and declare that Islam is not fair to women. Yet, these critics do not consider the totality of the circumstances. For example, the inheritance rulings of Islam give double portions of wealth to a son compared to a daughter. From a superficial look, one can say that Islam favors men because they get two parts and women only get one part.

However, Islam is a just religion, and it takes into consideration the concept of compensation. In Islam, a man is financially responsible for his wife and family. He is obliged to provide for the family while women are not obliged. Accordingly, from a fixed amount of inheritance, a woman takes less and a man takes more because he is legally obligated to provide for his family. When one looks beyond the surface, the beauty of Islam is truly exposed. There are some issues that are considered controversial, such as *hijab* (a state of modesty, entailing rules for both sexes, that includes more clothing or covering requirements for women than men in certain circumstances).

However, if one believes in Islam, the philosophy of *hijab*, and its practical benefits, then there is no controversy. There will always be critics. Yes, Islam places restrictions on women (as well as men). However, these restrictions are placed for natural, practical, and spiritual reasons, not because Islam views women as evil or bad. Islam has never and will never have a negative attitude towards women. Women are to be respected with great care as Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) respected women.

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