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Position of Woman in Islam

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“My Lord! I ask You for beneficial knowledge, and I seek refuge with You from non-beneficial knowledge.”

What should the position of women be in Muslim society? I have got a complaint, that letter is in my pocket and I have been requested very fervently and very vehemently asked to speak on this. I don't know about [Recording interrupted:

Transcribers Note: probably he said: I don't know about many of the customs I see today.]

They are the heritage of the older cultures from which Islam got 95% of those converts who are now in this world. I mean 5% these are the descendants of the children of the companions of the prophet ﷺ, who might be called the original Muslims, so to say. Then the conversion went on and consequently the present day population of the Muslims which is seven hundred million and out of these I am sure that 95% are those who have not seen the prophet; just like that they import these things! They brought their notions from their cultures. When you read the ancient cultures or the pre-Islamic cultures you find, that in almost every culture women was exploited as a chattel. Meaning those great scholars and philosophers, the likes of Aristotle, even he said about women that when nature ceased to produce a man, a woman was the result. Meaning that woman is the defective result, not actually wanted by nature, but a result of nature's failure. Such derogatory notions were to be found in the pre-Islamic cultures and if there are Muslims (depicting this in their attitude) today it is their heritage and not anything that Islam has taught. According to the Holy Qur'aan, men and women have been created from the same essence. Islam does not believe in the theory which says that Eve was created from the rib of Adam. According to the Holy Qur'aan, men and women have been created from the same essence, and consequently both are equally honorable and their spiritual status, moral status, legal status as human beings is different. Then, according to Islam, in accordance with the conditions that might be there, the conditioned status, as you might call it; in this connection there is a sort of a relation. In connection with the conditioned status, the mother, according to Islamic

theology, is three times more honorable than man as the father. The Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said, 'Paradise lies by the feet of the mother'¹. He has not said this about the father. So, woman as mother is three times superior to man as father². Woman as a daughter is twice more honorable than man as son. Woman as sister is twice more honorable than man as brother. Woman as wife is the equal of her husband. The Holy Qur'aan has clearly laid down [The 2nd Sura, al-Baqara [The Heifer], verse 228]

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them, according to what is equitable...

The mutual obligations between the husband and wife, as far as the legal status is concerned, they are exactly the same, they are on par. It is not that women is inferior in a manner, it is not so. Then the Holy Qur'aan says something which is absolutely natural and rational and that thing is that physically, man is stronger than women. Consequently man is capable of shouldering more obligations in connection with the obligations towards the family. All these obligations have been placed on the shoulders of man and not on the shoulders of women. Although the woman has been given the economic freedom to earn for herself³, but the economic unit of the family is really man who has also been made the head of the family. If he likes the head that wears the crown, he has been crowned, but crowned with the crown of thorns. The Holy Qur'aan and the Hadith are very clear on this. He has been made the protector of the honor, property and life of all those other interests which might be there. He is the guardian of his wife. The obligations have been placed upon his shoulders in connection with the affairs of

¹ Mishkaat al-Masaabih, page 421

² Ryaad al-Saliheen page 163

³ Holy Qur'aan, 4th Sura, Nisaa [The Women], Verse 32

the family. As you know there cannot be any institution unless there is a unity policy that there can be only one head in a state, in a family, in an educational institution or industrial organization. That is the natural law just as there is only one head for the entire universe i.e. God. So this division has been given to man, when the husband and wife are both alive. But as I said, (regarding man being the head of the family) it's a crown of thorns. If the husband finally finds in connection with the policies of the family, that he has to use his power of veto, then he cannot use this power of veto as a dictator, according to the Holy Qur'aan. The law has been laid down about Muslim society that all Muslims have got to behave in terms of mutual consultation, in a spirit of harmony and magnanimity. The verse of the Holy Qur'aan is [the 42nd Sura, *Shura* (consultation). Verse 38]

وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَىٰ بَيْنَهُمْ

(Believers are those) who conduct their affairs by mutual Consultation (and not arbitrarily);

All their affairs of the followers of Islam are to be conducted on the basis of mutual consultation. This naturally means that two parties who are consulting, one another are considered under the law as equal to one another. Consultation cannot be done with a slave. Consultation is always with a free person.

It is a fact, that woman is more delicate in her personality, biologically and psychologically: and it is easier to damage a woman, than to damage a man. Men are polygamous by nature whilst women are monogamous by nature. She feels very hurt when her husband wants to play any trick on her. So in this connection, Islam has taken great care, to appeal to the Muslim men, to be very careful about the rights of women. To an extent that in connection with the husband and the wife, the Holy Prophet Muhammad □

has made it the standard of the dignity and honor of a *mumin* as to how nicely and excellently he behaves towards his wife. He may be doing some other things in his life, which might be good, but the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ says that if he is not good to his wife, then he cannot be regarded as a good man in any sense of the word. The proclamation is,

khairukum, khairukum li ahlihi wa anna khairukum li ahli
The best of you is he who is best to his wife

That is the standard. The Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ was so careful about it and viewed it so seriously that when he gave the Charter of Human Rights, at the time of the Farewell Pilgrimage, he mentioned the women, especially the wives as something sacred. He said to the Muslims, 'O Muslims! Remember that your wives are a trust of God in your hands. Be careful, you will be called to account on the Day of Judgment by God Almighty'. As regarding the word 'trust', remember that a 'trust' is always something sacred. If a human being places something in trust with another human being, that trust is something regarded in every moral code as inviolable. It is considered as sacred. Remember, that if there is something which is a trust from God, who is All Holy, The Greatest, The Really Real and The Creator. How important must this trust be? So if there are men in Muslim society who cannot honor the women and can be so irrational and unnatural in their outlook, that although the first human being, whom they come to know in their consciousness is a woman, their mother, they can be so irrational and unnatural as to misbehave towards women with all that has been said in the Holy Qur'aan and by the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. May I tell them that according to Islam the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ has said, 'If you love God, love His creatures'. If you have the attitude of veneration for God, revere the human beings, your fellow beings, because the Holy Qur'aan has laid down the law, about which I spoke on another occasion

that every human being, by virtue of being a human being is honorable.

The Holy Qur'aan says, in the 17th Sura, *Bani Israeel* [The Children of Israel], Verse 70:

﴿وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِيَّ

We have honored the children of Adam

Every human being is born honorable, free and equal. So if a woman becomes a wife of a man, it is not manly but unchivalrous on the path of that man to behave in any manner except in the honorable way towards his wife since it is the law of Islam that every woman is honorable because her function is to be the mother of mankind and 'the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world'. She is in a way more important than man because it is her who has given birth to all the great teachers of mankind. It is in her lap that every civilization begins, and may I tell you it also dies in the lap of a woman. So be careful about your womenfolk, if you don't want all your Islamic culture and your values to die out one day. If you don't take care of them, give them the proper education that they need, give them that status which Islam has given to them then remember your culture is going to ultimately die out and all that you stand for will not remain. The peace of the society cannot be there. So if anyone is torturing the women or being unjust to them, one should be very careful for one is committing a major sin that God Almighty will not forgive.

Lastly, a third problem is that in the pre-Islamic cultures, if you read the books about it, e.g. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, you will find those notions about women whereby she was exploited as chattels. In this modern civilization, this modern western culture which all of us have adopted, here again very unfortunately women are being exploited. This culture proclaims that it stands for the emancipation of women but the Devil has played a

very big trick here. The emancipation is not for the emancipation of women but only for the emancipation of evil. Not **from** evil but the emancipation **of** evil. They say that man and women are equal under the modern western culture but what do they mean? They don't mean what Islam means. The modern culture wants to exploit women, using diplomacy which is the mark of the present day world and of modern civilization. It wants to exploit women as a toy. The pre-Islamic cultures wanted to exploit women as a serf and as chattels whilst this modern western culture wants to exploit women as a toy, so that the poor women may not be able to understand what is happening to her. This anesthesia which was not known before has been found out in this modern age. They induce anesthetic and then operate, our surgeons. This society and culture does the same thing to womanhood. What do they mean when they say that man and women are equal?

Firstly, according to Islam it is the duty of man to earn for the family, to undertake and undergo all the hardships, for the Holy Prophet Muhammad ﷺ said:

Women is the queen of her home

She is the ruler of the home to the extent that when the husband comes home, he should ask her permission to enter. Don't think that the Muslim woman has not been given any duties. Islam feels that what she does inside the home is the most important job. She brings up those who are born in that family teaches them all the values and culture. She lays the foundation of that social order in which she lives and the children are born in. She looks after the home and provides that for which a man earns peace and comfort in the home. Her role is very important. What does this (modern) philosophy say? It says because man and woman are equal and since man goes to the office to earn the daily bread, the woman should not sit like a queen, but she should also go out to earn since men

and women are equal. This culture says, 'Why are you sitting at home and why are you comfortable! You also undergo all these hardships, Go to a factory or office and earn'. What a beautiful notion of equality.

Secondly, if a person can allow his young son to go out in the darkness of the night and to come back at midnight or thereafter and he cannot be questioned since he is a male, so the girls also should be accorded this privilege since men and women are equal. How does this culture behave towards the women? Even our womenfolk in the West, for whenever I go to Europe and America I talk to them, they are absolutely unconscious about what is happening. This is the effect of the anesthetic. Try to analyze the situation. As the civilization is advancing, man retains all his clothing i.e. his felt hat, jacket, coat, pants etc. The poor woman has been asked to become more and more naked everyday. Why? Trace the history (as to the cause of this). When this modern peculiar, atheistic, materialistic, sensualistic culture was being born and it was yet in its infancy i.e. it had not yet grown. Try to know what the dress of a woman was a hundred years ago. Women of United States, Canada, Holland, Germany, France and all these countries where this culture was born would wear an apron and a long shirt covering right to the feet. Then this new philosophy came and addressed them. It said, 'My good girl, you are young in years but you look like a grandma'. The poor confused girl asked that philosophy, since for a young girl to look like a grandma is not a compliment. 'What should I do?' She was told, 'Take a pair of scissors and cut your frills. Be modern! Don't be conservative and outdated'. So the poor girl took the pair of scissors and cut the frills a little below the knee. This was the maxi skirt. She cut half of her sleeves so that a portion of her body may be exposed. She then asked that wise exponent of that philosophy, 'Do I look pretty now?' She was told, 'Not yet!' So the poor girl took the pair

of scissors again and cut the entire sleeve, the high neck and another portion of the frill (of her skirt). Again she asked 'Do I look pretty?' The answer was, 'Not yet!' This argument went on until the mini, mini skirt was born and there was talk in the world of fashion that nobody can be modern in this modern western civilization until she knows what is bottomless and what is topless. In the meantime They said that, 'We honor the women; have great respect for them so if we have to increase our sales it is only the women who can be the salesgirl and not man'. What was the idea behind it? Erotic! The erotic tendency in man was being exploited, so that if a girl was standing at the counter, there would be more sales and the businessman will earn more money. The poor girl did not understand as to what was happening. Then they went a step further. They said, 'We honor women and we are going to place the woman on every advertisement and signboard by making her naked or semi-naked'. Am I wrong? I am not! I have been round the world five times, I have been to so many countries and I have seen so many of these adverts right on the roads. Women have been tainted appearing more than half naked. Why? Eroticism! Man wants to exploit the women. He wants to see her naked too satisfy the meanest and the basest erotic instinct. The poor woman is playing into the hands of men. I have heard in my young days that Paris is the home of fashion, so when I had the first opportunity to go to France, I made it a point to go to the houses of fashion to find out who is inventing these fashions for these ladies. Believe me there was not a single women in those houses of fashion, it was men who were inventing those fashions. Finally the permissive society came into existence. This was as far back as 1921 and much water has since flowed down the Mississippi. In 1921 Judge Ben Lindsey, the president of the Juvenile Courts of the USA wrote his book, 'Revolt of the Modern Youth'. He gave statistical figures and in 1921, he wrote that, 'to my knowledge it would probably be impossible in

the USA to come across a boy or girl immediately above the age of 8 or 9 years who did not have a sexual experience'. The commission appointed in England to look after the affairs of and to check morals in the educational institutions of Britain recorded that 99% of girls of the high school going age carried contraceptives along with their books. Things have continued. I don't know whether you read them here or not, but they are relayed through the international press, through Time, Life, Spectator and so many others. Now laws are being passed in these very advanced, civilized countries, the first being the USA, the great leader of the world, the thinker of civilization for all mankind, which carries its sixth fleet in the Mediterranean and seventh fleet in the Pacific as it is the Super Power of the world. They passed a law, and I want Muslim ladies to take note of this, the law of The Validity Of Companionate Marriage. What is Companionate Marriage? It is a law that a man and a woman can live as husband and wife just for the sake of experimenting. Be it for one, two, three or five years. Just to experiment whether, when they marry, how happy their life would be. To see whether they are fit for one another as husband and wife, this permission is granted under the law of the USA that a man and woman can live like this for years. Read the statistics. When these Companionate Marriages, as they are called end in failure then what happens? Sixty to seventy percent of these marriages when they are consummated end in divorce the very same year. What must be happening to the womenfolk? Are women meant for this, that she may have no honorable place in society? She must go about in the darkness of the night searching for someone. Go to London, New York, Denmark, Scandinavia, Germany and France and see as I have seen, naked men and women, in the bright sunshine, on the roads. Laws are being passed in Denmark and Scandinavia that this may not be regarded as immorality. I ask the Muslim women to view the progress of the permissive society. It started with the

comment, 'You look like a Grandma'. Where has it carried womanhood and human society? I have read in the health report of the USA that 80% of Americans suffer from the virus of syphilis. This great country with enormous resources, medicine and money is all the time manufacturing antibiotics so that this virus may not become active. (Inaudible sector) Where is this nation going? May I ask you where are you going? I ask all those who are adopting this civilization, this poison thinking they will be considered as progressive if they do it? Are you ready for death? If you are not, then regard every aspect of this permissive society as pure poison. To the Muslim women I say, stick to your Islamic Culture. Don't try to compromise with this. Don't try to be modern. All that glitters is not gold. All that is modern is not good. Take from this modern civilization what is really healthy and good, but don't be blind. What is happening in this world today? All the communities that live in South Africa whether, Muslim, Christian or Hindu must build up a united front against the intrusion of this permissive society; building walls of steel around them. If they don't then very naturally and logically, the same will happen to them that have happened to others. God forbid! May God protect you. May God guide us on the right path. May God enable us to live our lives as His servants. May He endow us with the spirit of love for Him and may He bestow upon us the blessing of living for the highest values which have been taught by the highest teachers of mankind. God bless you all.

Transcribed by Irshad Soofi