

## **The Methodology of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) in educating the women: a study in light of Seerah**

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### **Abstract**

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge. It is termed as the durable and positive change in the personality of a person. Like men, Islam encourages women's education in all beneficial matters. The injunctions of the Holy Quran are for men and women alike. Like a male child, the parents and guardians are responsible to provide opportunity of education to female child as well. It is a fact that educating a female is educating a whole family. This is because her lap is the first institute for a baby that is why the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) emphasized on women's education. Likewise, the prestigious houses of the Prophet were the centers of education and training. Through his respectable wives (the mothers of Muslims) his teachings were transferred to Muslim women. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) acquired different types of techniques for this purpose, which confirmed the women's rights and solved their problems. The details of whom are found in the books of seerah. In this article, an attempt has been made to present the different techniques which the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) adopted in women's education.

**Key Words:** positive change, techniques, women's rights

### **Introduction**

It is a natural phenomenon that the human being cannot survive in isolation with the society. He is compelled to adopt social life so that to meet his requirements and ensure his interests. Family is regarded a basic unit of society. This unit starts from the bond of a legitimate marriage between a man and woman. Having extraordinary position, Islam takes the relation of spouses with special reference. It determines the rights and duties of both the husband and wife and present a sound guideline to tackle the domestic matters decently.

In the present era, the family system is becoming weaker day by day. The rate of divorce is increasing rapidly. Similar is the case with the domestic violence. The solution to these social problems is possible only to follow the guideline ordained by the Holy Prophet (S.A.W). Though the man and woman have equal contribution which ensures a sound family system; but here, the only one side that is related to woman, shall be discussed as the subject deals with her. In this study, the examples shall be included from the prestigious life of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) with respect to the education of women.

### **Education as right of women**

Islam regards the woman a part of the man entity. Both are interdependent and symbiotic. Every partner is incomplete unless he make him

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up from other. The Holy Quran indicates to this reality in a verse as mentioned below:

"هَرَّ لِبَاسٍ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٍ لَهُنَّ"<sup>1</sup>

"They are raiment for you and you are raiment for them"

This verse of the Holy Quran says that the spouses are like the dress for each other. The cloth is an essential part of human life and naturally, he depends on clothes to cover his body. Similarly, using clothes is a sign of dignity and hence the spouses are also a source of dignity and piety.

The prominent commentator of Quran, Syed Qutub Shaheed, while explaining this Quranic verse, has noted:

The dress covers as well as defends the body. Like this, the relation between the spouses is, where both hide the shortcomings of each other. Islam gave tremendously high esteem to woman in every regard. It acknowledged her status and familiarized her as a sacred creature.<sup>2</sup>

ومن آياته أن خلق لكم من أنفسكم أزواجاً لتسكنوا إليها وجعل بينكم مودةً ورحمةً<sup>3</sup>

"It is one of the signs of Allah that he created your couple from you so that you take contentment with her and he made affection and mercy within you."

In this verse of the Holy Quran, Allah has described the creation of man and woman as a sign of his omnipotence. This verse also conveys the message that the aim of marriage bond is not but only to ensure the happiness and kindness between the spouses.

The scholar of exegesis, Ibn Aashure describes under the referred verse of the Quran:

In this verse, a special advice has been given about the establishment of a system that starts from a gross root level which is known as family. This system, inscribed in his nature is, the basis of human productivity which he is bound to adopt.<sup>4</sup>

The women of prophetic era used to attend the sessions of the Prophet (S.A.W). They put the different problems of social and domestic nature before the Prophet (S.A.W) and he would prescribed the solutions. Like the male, they also learnt the injunctions of Quran and Hadith in the gatherings of the Prophet (S.A.W). Not only they received answers to their queries but also got moral lessons and ethics from the prophet (S.A.W).

The life of the female companions of the Prophet (S.A.W) uncovers the fact that their attitudes and manners were furnished on durable grounds. They took the training of forbearing, tolerance, sincerity, devotion and sense of responsibility which turned them to behave the other fellow being with patience and politeness. That was indeed a reflection of the Prophet's teachings. In the following lines, the various aspects of women's education have been elucidated in light of Seerat un Nabi (S.A.W). The wives of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) known as Ummahatul Momineen or the mother of Muslims, have a commendable contribution in disseminating the teachings of Islam.

Every wife of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) was an institute within herself and had got specialty in the fields of Islamic sciences.

In Chapter No.33 Verse No.34 of The holy Quran, the wives of the Prophet (S.A.W) advised by Allah Almighty to learn what is being recited in their homes from the holy Quran and the wisdom of the Propheht (S.A.W) as given below:

"وَادْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَىٰ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا"<sup>5</sup>

"And bear in mind that which is recited in your houses of the revelations of God and wisdom. Lo! God is Subtle, Aware."

Following this injunction, the wives did learnt a lot of Quranic sciences and the lessons of understanding. They closely observed the conduct of the Holy Prophet ( S.A.W) and listened his sayings attentively. In the company of the Holy Prophet ( S.A.W) whatever they gained about the beliefs and worships of Islam, forwarded to other Muslim women. Through this procedure, they imparted a great amount of knowledge and prepared a group of women teachers. Syeda Ai'sha, Hifsa, Umme Salma, Umme Waraqa (May Allah be pleased with them) had learnt the Holy Quran by heart. More than two thousand ahadith have reported on the authority of Syeda Ai'sha (r.a). She was well- versed in exegesis, Jurisprudence, History, Medicine, poetry and the women related matters. The companions of the Holy Prophe( S.A.W) used to seek solution to their problems through consultation with Syeda Aisha (r.a).Urwa bin Zubair(r.a) who was the maternal nephew of Syeda Aisha and who is considered an authority in the field of Seerah, got all the knowledge about the seerah from her.<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Hind d/o Asad,Umme Hashim d/o Haritha had memorized some chapter of the Holy Quran. Umme Asad used to give lectures on the Holy Quran to women.

The verses mentioned in the Holy Quran related to knowledge and wisdom are for both men and women. Regardless of gender discrimination, acquisition of knowledge regarded a religious duty of every Muslim whether he is man or a woman. In a hadith of the Prophet (S.A.W) this obligation has been mentioned as below:

"طلب العلم فريضة على كل مسلم"<sup>7</sup>

"Seeking of knowledge is the duty of every Muslim."

In this Hadith the word Muslim refers to man and woman both. Similarly, the word فريضة is utilized for a task that is obligatory to do. This tradition identifies the importance as well as the compulsion of acquiring knowledge.

From the life history of the Prophet (S.A.W) it reveals that women were given equal opportunities of acquiring education. The following detail, consists on ahadith and the events of the Prophetic era, will clear the concept that how seriously did the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) take the matter of women education and their character building?

Besides the efforts made through the wives of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) as indicted above, the messenger of Allah made proper arrangement for women education as detailed below:

### **Setting a special day for women feedback**

It is reported that the woman asked the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) to specify a special day for them to receive the solution to their problems in isolation. The Prophet (S.A.W) accepted the request. The meaning of Hadith is mentioned as follows:

On the authority of Abu Saeed(r.a) it has been mentioned that woman told the Holy Prophet( S.A.W) that men have exceled them, because the men find the opportunity to take advantage of your company, so specify a day of your own for us also. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) promised them and appointed a day for the purpose. On that day he used to address them.<sup>8</sup>

### **Appointment of teachers**

Imam Bukhari (256 A.D) has reported on the authority of Malik Bin Hawarith that a specific number of young men came to the Prophet(S.A.W) and stayed with him for twenty days. They received knowledge about Islam and its injunctions. At times of their return homes, The Prophet (s.aw) advised them so:

You go to your families and teach them what you have learnt here.<sup>9</sup>

It is narrated that once a woman appeared and gave her attorney of marriage to Prophet( S.A.W). A companion wished to take her in marriage but due to sever destitute he was unable to pay up the dower and the other liabilities. The prophet ( S.A.W) advised him to search something though a ring made of iron so that we may pay for her dower. The person searched to his end but could not find anything. The Prophet ( S.A.W) asked whether he had a memorized portion of the Holy Book of Allah?. “Yes” the person replied. The Prophet ( S.A.W) then solemnized his marriage with a specific form of dower that was teaching of the verses of Quran to his wife. The Prophet (S.A.W) said:

We have given to you her hand in marriage at the cast of the Quranic Verses which you will teach her.<sup>10</sup>

The time when Hazrat Umar ( r.a) embraced Islam, Hazrat Khabab(r.a) was deputed to teach the Quran to the family of Hazrat Fatima, the sister of Hazrat Umar. It shows that in early days of Islam, different skillful person were assigned the task of teaching the Holy Quran to newly converted Muslims. The firm determination of sister overwhelmed Umar that he uttered the Kalima of Islam.<sup>11</sup> Hazrat Umar himself was appointed by the Holy Prophet ( S.A.W) as teacher and was sent to Madina especially with the task of educating the women.

### **Promising rewards on Girls Education**

The Seerah exposes the fact the Prophet ( S.A.W) has narrated great reward for those who look after his daughters. At times of ignorance, the people disliked to have daughter in home. They imagined her a sign of

misfortune and annihilation. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) promised rewards for those who support this innocent creature. He said:

Whoever looked after three girls, taught them good manners and treats them well till he manages their marriage, for such person Allah has prepared the paradise.<sup>12</sup>

### **Provision Opportunity of self-expression**

Like the men, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) gave opportunity to women to share their point of view openly. This relaxation gave a sense of courage to them. On many occasions, the women have come to Him and have put different questions. The prophet (S.A.W) has listened to them attentively and has focused on their grievances. A few examples are given here.

A woman namely Asma bint Yazid ( r.a) came to the Prophet (S.A.W) and told that she had come as representative of the other women. She said: Certainly, you are a messenger of Allah for both men and women. We remain confined at homes fulfilling the duties of obeying the husbands and bearing the kids. But beside all this, we cannot compete them. They attend the prayers in congregation and offer the prayer of Friday. They look after the sick and perform the funeral prayer. Moreover, they have opportunity to go for Holy War and for Pilgrim. In their absence, we take care of their assets and bring up their children. In such conditions, do we have share in their compensation?The Holy Prophet ( S.A.W) admired her point of view in front of Sahabah( r.a) who were astonished at putting such a comprehensive question. The Prophet after wards told her. Listen attentively and convey this message to women on behalf of whom you represent that every women who seeks the happiness and satisfaction of her spouse and discharges her domestic duties to her end, is liable to get the reward as like the man.<sup>13</sup>

It is narrated by Ibn ‘Abbas (r.a) that a woman from the clan of Khath’am questioned the Prophet (S.A.W) on the occasion of the Last pilgrim:

O’ prophet of Allah! Performing Hajj is obligatory on believers. My father is aged and is so weak that he is unable to ride on. It will be permissible if I perform the Hajj on behalf of him? The Prophet (S.A.W) replied: yes.<sup>14</sup>

Another hadith in the same conception is narrated with the addition as mentioned below:

Tell me if your father is indebted and you pay out it on his behalf; just like is the matter of performing Hajj.<sup>15</sup>

In this narration, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) has indicated the principle of analogy and has made the problem understandable in a quite comprehensive way. Moreover, it also permits a woman to be the substitute of her father in pilgrimage.

The wife of Ibn Masu’d (r.a) appeared before the Prophet (S.A.W) and asked him:

O prophet of Allah! You have directed us today to give charity. I have some jewelry and I want to give it as charity. My husband Ibne Mas’ud thought

that he and his kids are deserving for this. Will it be right? He replied Ibne Mas'ud is right, your husband and kids are more deserving among those whom you want the charm to do.<sup>16</sup>

This narration shows the courage of the women who could easily ask the Prophet of Allah without restrictions.

### **Permission to gain the writing skill**

Besides the other pursuits, the women were given the permission to learn the writing skill. Though there exist some controversial opinions that do not favor this point of view<sup>17</sup>. But actually, the narrations are almost unreliable or otherwise concerned with specific circumstances. The women of the Prophet family had learnt writing as clarifies from the correspondence of Hazrat Aisha (r.a).

Hafiz Zahabi said that the narration mentioned in Mustadrak is fabricated.<sup>18</sup>

### **Character Building**

In the life of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) we can find numerous examples pertaining to mental, spiritual, moral and behavioral wellbeing of women. A few examples are added here with specific headings.

#### **Tolerance**

The Holy Prophet ( S.A.W) gave a lesson of tolerance and patience to women. They were suffered in sever hardships by the non-believers but could not remove them from the chosen mission. Hazrat Sumayya ( r.a) and Hazrat Zainab d/o the Prophet( S.A.W) got martyred in the path of Allah.<sup>19</sup>

It is reported that a woman meet the Prophet ( S.A.W) and complained of a mental disease. The woman requested him to pray for her. The Prophet (S.A.W) told that he would pray for her and she would be fine but, if she had patience on that problem then she would get paradise. The woman preferred to bear patience on her trouble.<sup>20</sup>

The son of Umme Sulaim died and she did not inform her husband. She briefed her husband in such a way that all his grief decreased. Her described words are as follow:

If a person lend an object to somebody would it be right for him if he deny to return it back. The husband supported her point of view. In this way, she consoled her husband.<sup>21</sup>

#### **Harmony in marital life**

The part of a woman in a family is very important. The concept of a sound family system cannot be imagined without the cooperation of woman. She can play a good role as a mother, sister, daughter or wife. She is a skilled organizer, a good partner and a sincere advisor to husband. Therefore, it is termed as her legal duty to take care of household and the children of her husband.

This has been explained in a Hadith as:

Woman is responsible for her husband's house and his children.<sup>22</sup>

In Sahih Bukhari it is mentioned that the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) addressed the women on the occasion of Eid. The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) advised them to be helpful in building a pleasant domestic environment. He emphasized that they should be polite in conversation and avoid sending curse. The Hadith is mentioned as below:

O group of women give charity as I have seen majority of you in Hell. The women asked him for the reason. The Prophet(S.A.W) replied, this is because you often use the words of curse and do not thank your husbands.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Generosity**

In the era of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W),the generosity was a common quality of men and women . They willingly preferred the others in spite of their own poverty and hunger. In the Holy Quran this virtue of the companions of the Prophet (S.A.W) has been mentioned as follow:

"وَيُؤْتُونَ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ وَلَوْ كَانَ بِحِمِّ خَصَاصَةً"<sup>24</sup>

"And they prefer them before themselves though poverty may afflict them."

In this verse, the Holy Quran describes a profound quality of the Helpers ( Ansaars) of Madina. They assisted the emigrants generously. Like the men the women took active part in this act of kindness and set examples of openheartedness.

In a Hidath it is mentioned that once a person came to the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) and complained of his hunger. The Prophet (S.A.W) sent a messenger his homes to bring for that guest. The messenger returned empty handed as there had nothing in the homes of the Prophet (S.A.W) to serve a single guest.The Prophet (S.A.W) then asked his companions to feed the guest. A companion told that he would take him. He brought the guest his home. But the food available therein was too little to enough for two persons. The wife told his husband that when you sit on the table she would switch off the lamp and that time. In the meantime you will show only that you are eating. In this way they fed the guest and the whole family passed the night empty stomach. This type of hospitality was admired by Allah Almighty on heaven.

### **Emotional and Physical improvement through entertainment**

It is obvious from the sacred life of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) that he gave opportunity of entertainment to his wives in order to develop their emotional and physical skills. In a hadith it is mentioned that the Holy Prophet ( S.A.W) permitted Aisha to play with dolls.

The prominent scholar of Hadith Ibne Hajr ( r.a) is of the opinion that for training purpose in the house affaires, it is suitable to let a female child prepare different items while playing.

Similarly, in a journey, the Holy Prophet ( S.A.W) made a race with his beloved wife Aisha( r.a). Aisha ( r.a) reported that on that occasion I became winner for my thin body structure. But after sometimes, when we again made a race competition, I became loser. The Prophet (S.A.W) told in smiley mood, this ended the competition in draw.

In Sahih Bukhari, it is reported that once some Ethiopians were playing nearby the house of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W). The Holy Prophet (S.A.W) let Aisha( r.a) to entertain the event while standing in a corner behind the Holy Prophet( S.A.W)<sup>25</sup>.

The experts of Hadith sciences like Allama Nawavi (r.a) has mentioned that this narration to some extent provides relaxation of women entertainment but with specific conditions.

Allama Nawavi says:

"وفي هذا الحديث بيان ما كان عليه رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من الرأفة والرحمة وحسن الخلق والمعاشرة بالمعروف مع الأهل والأزواج وغيرهم"<sup>26</sup>

In the above Hadith the love, mercifulness, politeness and kind dealing of the Holy Prophet ( S.A.W) with his wives can be found out.

On the occasion of happiness, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) permitted women to entertain themselves with beating the Duff which was a simple tool of amusement often used by the Arab women in festivals<sup>27</sup>.

### **Devotion**

A fair domestic life requires a good marital interaction between wife and husband. The function of a woman is more important in the house affairs. From the life of the Prophet (S.A.W) it clarifies that he instructed the women to maintain a happy dealing with their husbands. He explained a profound reward for such women. The meaning of Hadith is as under:

The women whose husband is agree with her she will enter the heaven<sup>28</sup>.

### **Right to self determination**

Islam has provided the woman a right to self-determination. She is authorized in maintenance of her marriage affairs. Even the Prophet ( S.A.W) did not interfere in this regard. In the collection of hadith there are many example which explore the fact that the woman have been granted the power of attorney to determine themselves: The detail is as follows:

It is mentioned in Sahih Bukhari on the authority of Ibn Abbas ( r.a) that when Barira( r.a) got free from slavery she was empowered with an authority whether to keep continue her marital bonds with her husband Mugheith ( r.a) or otherwise disconnect it. The Prophet ( S.A.W) told Barira that why she did not return to her husband? She replied "O Allah's messenger! Do you order me for doing so? He said: No, I recommend his case only. Then she told: I have no need of him"<sup>29</sup>.

If a man does not provide for his family, then wife can take of his wealth what is sufficient for her needs and the needs of her children and the amount should be just and reasonable.

Answering a question asked by the wife of Abu Sufiyan (R.A) the Prophet said: spend a sufficient amount out of your husband's property which meet yours and your child's needs.<sup>30</sup>

On the authority of Ibn Abbas (R.A), it is mentioned that a young virgin girl came to Prophet and mentioned that her father married her to someone while she disapproved, so the Prophet allowed her to choose.<sup>31</sup>

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion it is clear that the Prophet of Islam gave due importance to women's education. He encouraged them to acquire knowledge for the betterment of domestic and social life. He pointed out their duties and rights. In the result of his prestigious services, the women got rid of the traditional inhuman customs. All forms of discrimination with regard to women were eliminated. Moreover, they were provided opportunity of self-expression and they had full access to their rights. The Prophet's teachings can be an effective source to solve the today's women problems.

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