

IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND WOMEN IN ISLAM

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Abstract: Today the women issues have acquired great importance throughout the world and among all the communities. Education is the fundamental source of development and peaceful existence of any society or civilization. The issue of women's education in general and that of Muslim women in particular was a debatable issue. There is a wide gulf between the Islamic ideals/or teachings and the existing social realities. Education is the birth right of every Muslim man and woman. Islam from the beginning emphasis on its followers to acquired knowledge. The present paper looks and argues that, if Muslim women are to be empowered, then there is a need to educate Muslim women. This paper examines the view point of Islam regarding status and education of women to achieve the goal of life. It aims to or at highlighting the importance given in Islam for education of women. The paper focuses on the problems and issues related to the education of Muslim women in India as well as the prospects of their education. In this paper I try to create awareness about education among women in general and Muslim women particular and counter allegations and misconceptions about Islam. Unfortunately, it is truth that Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular, are educationally backward for which there are several factors responsible. However, the question put up especially by those who are not well aware about Islam that Islam appreciates and encouraged for acquiring education as much as to Muslims in general and Muslim women in particular. There is misconception created that Islam does not give value to education and Muslims are not interested to given education to their women. If we look closely we may find that it is wrong and far from the truth. Educational backwardness of Muslims and especially of their women can never be attributed to the religious ideology that created by some people of society and discourages Muslim women from taking education. It seems necessary here to present the Islamic view on education in the light of Qur'anic teachings of Islam.

Introduction:

Education and Islam: Islam attaches immense importance to the acquisition and extension of knowledge/ education. It may be noted that the verses in the Holy Qur'an promoting the pursuit of knowledge for all Muslims irrespective of any discrimination. Knowledge or *Ilm* is an important aspect of Islamic teachings. According to the Qur'anic command, seeking knowledge is an obligatory to every Muslim male and female. In fact, the first revelation of the Holy Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) indicates the importance of education in Islam. The verse started with the word "*Iqra*", it is a Arabic word which means 'read' that implies the concepts of learning, exploring and seeking enlightenment. As stated in Holy Qur'an in *Surah Al-Alaq*, Allah says:

"Read in the name your Lord and Cherisher, Who created-created man from a clot. Read your Lord is the most Bountiful, Who has taught the use of pen, taught the man, that which he knew not."(96:1-5).

The word *Iqra* does not refer only to the literal meanings: read, recite, rehearse or proclaim aloud. It also refers to understanding and researching. The importance of education has been emphasized repeatedly in the Qur'an, which is the ultimate source of guidance for Muslims. In many other places in Qur'an Allah said:

God will exalt those of you who believe and those who are given knowledge to high degrees.(58:11)

And say, O my Lord! increase me in knowledge.(20:114)

And whoever is given knowledge is given indeed abundant wealth. (2:269)

Islam not only accords due respect to women but also gives great attention towards their education and propagates that men and women have equal educational rights. The Qur'anic teachings exhort Muslim women to adorn themselves with wealth of knowledge and try their best to prepare an educated well-cultured generation. The educational system presented by Islam covers the different aspects of human life such as social, political, economic, spiritual as well as moral. The modern systems of education focus on the material aspect of life while Islam gives importance to both material as well as spiritual aspects of life and that is why the Islamic education prepares human beings both for physical and material welfare as well as for the purification of the soul. According to the Islamic Scholars, the word *ilm* meaning knowledge has occurred in the Holy *Qur'an* about 700 times and it is an evidence of the importance of education in Islam. The word '*Ilm*' has been used as a synonym of 'knowledge'. It is an Arabic word which means 'to know' to know an unknown thing and be familiar with it. Education is the systematic process of gaining knowledge. If a community is educationally backward, it also becomes economically backward and the economic backwardness leads to social and moral degradation of society.

Investment in education is the best investment one can make, because it eventually leads to intellectual property. Intellectual property is the intangible property, which no one can destroy and .With the application of knowledge and use of pen one can rule over the hearts of people. The most common factors which become hurdle in achieve higher education and for high incidence of non-enrolment among Muslim girls are poverty, lack of women teachers, absence of separate schools for girls, observance of *pardah* ,opposition to secular education for girls, early marriage, conservative attitudes and also less awareness about importance of education. We find a long list of women scholars, including the Prophet's wife Hazrat Aisha who played an active role in the society during the early period of Islamic history. Hazrat Aisha was famous for her intellect and outstanding memory, as one of the most important scholars of her time. Hazrat Aisha was an authority on Islamic Jurisprudence. The famous mystic, Rabia al-Basria was also a woman with great wisdom and knowledge. The first stage of teaching is the upbringing of children started from the womb of a mother. Those who try to present Islam as a anti feminist religion forget that Islam is the religion whose follower was a women, Hazrat Khadijah, the

first wife of Prophet Islam. She was a very successful business -women of that time.

Conclusion: Education of women is the most powerful tool of change of position in society. Education also brings a reduction in inequalities and functions as a means of improving their status within the family as well as in the society. To encourage the education of women and providing light of knowledge, it is necessary to established more schools and colleges exclusively for women, bring more girls from marginalized families, providing a package of concessions from government on books, different types of scholarships and so on. Education has empowered women to be a spiritual person, to take a lead in the political field and to be a social reformer bringing social change. It has given them strength and the courage to fight against injustice, violence and exploitation. In-fact education is a physical, mental and moral training, which produces in cultured and faithful men and women capable of discharging duties well and serve the Almighty. As far as the question of women education is concerned, there is not a single verse prohibiting or restricting women from gaining knowledge. Islam recognizes educational right as one of the most important basics and first among the rights, which is granted to humankind by the Almighty Allah.

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