

## **THE ROLES OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION ON RESUSCITATION OF WOMEN'S STATUS IN THE MODERN SOCIETY.**

By

**MUHAMMED HADI ISMAIL**

*School of Basic and Remedial Studies,  
Kwara State College of Education. Ilorin.*

### **Abstract**

*The low percentage of female gender representation in the sensitive sectors such as intellectual endeavours and socio-political spheres is an aberration, the Neo-jahiliyyah practices have continued to create illusion on female rights recognized by Islam. Divine revelation (The Holy Qur'an) brought the liberation of women from the shackle of ignorance into limelight. It came with a reforming system on the entire humanity. Gender discrimination on the basis of vanity and ephemeral superiority is vehemently condemned in Qur'an. Islamic education sufficiently explains the elevated status of women in light of Qur'an and prophetic traditions. This paper therefore examines the roles of Islamic education on resuscitation of woman's status in the modern society. The humiliated standard of women before Islam was viewed and the total reformation on different aspects: i.e spiritual, social, intellectual and economic aspects of women life were considered as well.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Islam; the universal religion, addresses its message to the entire human race and accepts all human being in its fold regardless of their race, colour or language. It maintains equality among its followers as they all enjoy equal rights and privileges and makes one ideological fraternity. Islam is a complete way of life which provides guidance for all fields of human existence, be it moral and spiritual or material and mundane, whether it relates to personal or social and political aspects of life, and whether it concerns with national or international areas of human endeavour.

*O mankind! We created you from a single  
(pair) of a male and a female, And made you  
into Nations and tribes, that Ye may know each  
other, Q 49 13*

The aforementioned verse stresses on the basis for human relationship which is understanding among themselves based on this reason, Almighty Allah has created human beings dependently on one another so much so that one cannot live in complete isolation of others. This indicates that one of them can not accomplish his need except with the company of others and vice versa, it is on this note, therefore that Allah made males and females to be in need of the company of the opposite sex for the peaceful co-existence of both the sexes.

The position of woman in any given society determines such society's level of civilization, based on this reason woman has always remained an object of intellectual controversy in the history of mankind. "Frailty is the name of women, trust neither a king, a horse, nor a woman, women is to man a sexual prey, man is to a woman an economic prey, man should bring home the bread and butter and women should only spread butter on the bread", are some of the ancient adages but what is important is that what position does Islam occupy over these statements and precisely how does Islam view woman in the society? These pertinent questions need to be answered in order to provide a fair examination / evaluation of what contribution has Islam towards the elevation of woman's status in the society.

In the pre- Islamic era, the absolute power of contracting marriage of a woman lies in the hand of either her father, brother, cousin or any other male guardian (be it old, young, widow, divorcee or virgin) to whosoever he chooses, this does not allow her or make her free in contracting marriage with whomever she wishes. There was even a practice of marrying women by force. Wives to be married by an individual was not restricted to any number, man was likewise free to release himself from any of his marital ties, without any reason for doing so and he was not even required to

observe any particular procedure, simply because he has the absolute power of doing that. Among the degrading status of women by then was that Arab father regarded the birth of a daughter as a shame calamity, female infanticide was widely rampant and many male parents usually buried their daughters alive as soon as born. When an Arab man died, his properties and possession will be shared on his male heirs capable of bearing arms while his wives, daughters, sisters and mother would not only be forbidden from inheritance but were rather inherited along side with the property.

However, Islam is the only religion that has restored the status of women in the society, as it introduced a system of zero discrimination between the two sexes, both would have rights and duties in an equal degree, woman is mentioned side by side with man in the Holy *Qur'an*. Generally, a complete chapter in the *Qur'an*;

*Suratul-An-Nisai* treats the rights of woman, similar to that are numerous traditions of the prophet relating woman's affairs of life. Therefore any misconception, whatsoever, regarding the status of women in Islam could be tantamount to wrong interpretation of the *Shariah*.

Some of the obnoxious notions against Islam, concerning the status of woman in the Islamic society such like: Islam frees not woman or libertises her not and thus confines her to a corner of her home with her eyes and ears closed. A woman is not more than a chattel without function except to satisfy carnal desires of man or to be exploited by him as he wishes. Woman is destined to a life of a miserable creature who has no role to play in the human society. She is considered as a 'prisoner' in the matrimonial home, these and others could be proved as wrong interpretation of the laws of Islam.

However, the so called 'progressive Muslim thinkers' is another set of people who feel that Islam grants woman a series of rights and freedom so much so that they can intervene in all social spheres of life with man, working shoulder to shoulder with him, be with him in the battle field, could be made to maintain the seat of a deputy or a minister, hold the command of an army or sign a treaty of peace.

### **Status of Women before Islam**

Before the advent of Islam, the condition of woman was seriously humiliated, she was just a mere chattel of man little above the domesticated animals. Woman was seen as an abomination, a source of burning shame and humiliation to the family, infact she was considered an integral part of the estate of her husband or her father to be inherited, the widow of the deseased one goes to his brother as any other portion of his patrimony. She was made to dance naked in the midst of the then Arabs while the poets sitting surrounding her will be chatting poems on different parts of her body. Woman was treated as object of lust that could be had at pleasure and discarded capriciously. She has neither right in whatever sense to anything nor personal independence, her status in the society by then was nothing more than the value of household goods, she can be bought and sold, has no choice in the matter of marriage. She was regarded merely as property and possession of man. Women were not regarded as human beings even in the so-called modern Europeans countries.

Women in religious matters were not given the same status as that of men, a testimony of two women equals to a man's own and like wise the issue of inheritance. Among the then Arabs, it was a legal permission for men to bury their daughters alive. Also it was generally accepted that if a lady was murdered then her murderer would be set free unpunished, neither would he to be killed in retaliation nor was to pay blood money. Other religions maintained that with the death of an husband, his wife too is to burn herself to death.

The Britannica Encycopaedia gives a concise summary of the position of women in the Roman civilization '----- a woman was even in historic times completely dependent. If married she and her property passed into the power of her husband. The wife was the purchased property of her husband and like a slave acquired only for his benefit. A woman could not exercise any civil or public office, she could not be a witness, surety, tutor or curator, she could not adopt or be adopted, or make will or contact.

A man can marry as many wives as possible and woman could be divorced at the whim and pleasure of their husbands. Among the recognized social institutions of the day were concubine and slavery. But for the first time in history, among the religions of the world, Islam vindicated the rights of women and gave them a high status in the society, it granted them all the fundamental rights; right of inheritance of the property of their father, mother, husband and brother. Islam liberated women as regards marriage and divorce. Various domestic and conjugal hardship of the women had been removed by Islam.

### **Status of Women after Islam**

The accorded liberty of Islam given to women could be viewed from various angles, as it varies from spiritual / ethical, intellectual, economic and social aspects respectively, these could be seen as follow:

#### **The spiritual and the ethical aspect:**

*Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you  
be he male or female: you are members, one of another.*  
Q3:195 *For Muslim men and women: for believing men  
and women for devout men and women, for true men and  
women for men and women who are patient and  
constant; for men and women who humble themselves,  
for men and women who give in charity, for men and  
women who fast for men and women who guard their  
chastity; and for men and women who engaged much in  
Allah's praise, for them has Allah prepared forgiveness  
and great reward ( Q 33:35).*

From these and more of the Qur'anic verses, there found the spiritual equality, responsibility and accountability for both men and women, this is a well developed

theme in Islam. The spiritual equality of women in Islam is to understand that the equality between the two sexes in the sight of Allah is not limited to purely spiritual or religious issues, but is the basis for equality in all temporal aspects of human life.

As regard the five pillars of Islam-belief, prayers, fasting, poor due and pilgrimage both man and woman are alike, without distinction. In some cases for instance, woman is indeed exempted or given some concessions from certain ritual worships such like the five daily prayers and fasting during her menstrual periods and for forty days after childbirth also during pregnancy and when nursing a baby as well, if that could be a threat to the body.

The equality status accorded by the *Qur'an* to both the sexes can be seen and understood further in Qur'anic verses in respect of Musa's mother and virgin Maryam respectively, when Divine message was sent to each of them and this portrayed that both men and women indeed received the Divine revelation, The *Qur'an* reads thus:

*So We sent the inspiration to the mother of Moses, suckle  
(thy child), but when thou has fear about him, cast him  
into the river, but fear nor grieve; for We shall restore him  
to there, and we shall make him one of Our apostle  
(Q28:6)*

And to Maryam Allahs says;

*Beholds, the angel said: O Marryam: God has chosen  
thee above the women of all Nations (Q3: 42).*

### **The intellectual aspect**

Islam, been an enlightened religion, ordains both male and female to acquire knowledge, skill and benefits of this life and that of here'after. Qur'an addresses itself to the believers (women too are included) to acquire meaningful knowledge as it says:

Read in the Name of our Lord

The holy prophet Muhammad (SAW) made the acquisition of knowledge compulsory on both men and women of his community. He was reported to have said:

*Search for knowledge is compulsory upon every Muslim  
male and female' (Ibn Majah)*

Women are seriously encouraged and urged to study and acquire meaningful learning. All women and men are alike. Both should acquire education "from the cradle to the grave" Obviously. Islam has elevated the status of women and has prepared them as equal partners of men, the following *Qur'anic* verse testifies to this: 'O people: be careful of (your duty to ) your Lord, Who created its mate of the same (kind)" Q4 : 1.

In this regard, there is no other religion in the world that favours woman so much as Islam. The wrath of God is invoked on those parents who neglect their duties especially the education of their wards (male and female), and on the contrary, God's mercy and blessing will be bestowed on those parents who stand as watch-dog of their children, goodness, well-being and sound education (both male and female). An attempt to educate a child (especially female) serves as an expiation of sins before Allah. The emphasis laid by Islam on the acquisition of knowledge as bound upon every Muslim is very paramount so much so that both believing men and women are to search for knowledge as much as they can, the education of female child has in fact, special cognizance because of their later role as wives and mothers.

Another area of controversy in Islam in respect women is the issue of *purdah* (seclusion) of female Muslims or their confinement to the four walls of their matrimonial home, which is mostly common in many Islamic societies. The advocates of such idea based their argument on the following Quranic verses:

*And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and  
guard their private parts and not to display their  
beauty except which is apparent, to raw veils over their*

*bosoms and not to display their feminines beauty except to their husbands or fathers (Q 24:31).*

*O Prophet: Tell thy wives and daughters and the believing women, that they should cast their outer garments over their persons; that is most convenient that they should be known (as such) and not molested (Q33:59).*

With these verses however, it could be seen that it is an established rule in Islam that woman should cover the whole parts of her body except the face and the two palms purposely because of the *fitnat* (crisis) that may cause if left uncovered, yet she may go about in this form and pursue knowledge / education. Though *purdah* is not made compulsory by Islam but it guards against indecency and obnoxious character in the society. The holy prophet was reported to have said:

*O women: you have been allowed by Allah to go out for your needs. No woman shall put on a veil during the pilgrimage (Butkhari).*

Another report of the holy prophet says:

*if the wife of any of you asks permission to go to the mosque, you should not forbid her (Bukhari)*

### **Economic Aspect**

Islam permits woman to have total control over her property as she has been endowed the right of inheritance and proportional share as prescribed in the Holy *Qur'an*, woman's share cannot be claimed by any body else including her father and her husband. The *Qur'an* say:



*from what is left by parents. And those nearest related there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large, a determinate share (Q4:7)*

The above verse indicates that both male and female child has his or her legal rights out of the inheritance left by their deceased parent, though woman's share in most cases is, of course, one half of that of the man's own, but the fact that she receives half of his, is tantamount to no discrimination of sex in Islam. Only that is based on the vast difference in the economic responsibilities of the man and woman.

More over, in the foremost caliphate of Islam, it was on the ethnic and religious backgrounds that the labour force were employed, both men and women were involved in diverse occupations and economic activities. Women were employed in a wide range of commercial activities and diverse occupations, in the primary sector (as farmers, for example), secondary sector (as construction workers, dyers, spinners, etc) and tertiary sector (as investors, doctors, nurses, presidents of guilds, brokers, peddlers, lenders, scholars, etc). Muslim women also held a monopoly over certain branches of the textile industry, the largest, most specialized and market-oriented industry at the time, in occupations such as spinning, dyeing and embroidery.

Beside, Islam discharges that certain amount of dower should be paid by the husband to the (wife) before a marriage could be consumed, and once this is done, it remains a personal property of the woman. Failure to pay this money during the course of marriage consummation is regarded as fornication and such marriage should be dissolved. *Qur'an* says:

*And give the women (on marriage) their dower as an obligation. (Q4:4)*

Islam allows woman to work subject to certain conditions, such as if a woman is in financial need and her employment does not cause her to neglect her role as a

mother and wife. It has been claimed that it is the responsibility of the Muslim community to organize work for a woman, so that she can do it in a Muslim cultural atmosphere, where her rights (as set out in the *Qur'an*) are respected. Islamic law (*shariah*) however, permits women to work in Islamic conditions

- The work should not be a detestable one under Islamic law (e.g. serving alcohol) and it has to be mindful of the woman's safety.
- If the work requires the woman to leave her home, she must maintain her modesty just as with men.

The holy *Qur'an* indicates the attitude of women in the workplace and this can be seen in the verse regarding working women. These are the examples of two female shepherds (daughters of prophet Shuaib)

The *Qur'an* says:

*And when he arrived at the watering (place) in Madyan,  
He found there a group of men watering (their flocks)  
and beside them he found two women who were keeping  
back (their flocks). He said what is the matter with you?  
They said: "we cannot water (our flocks): and our father  
is a very old man (Q28:23)*

Also Khadijah (Prophet Muhammad's wife) who was eminent business woman, Khadijah is called upon as a role model for female in the *Qur'an*.

### **The Social Aspect:**

The natural life of every woman in this world has to pass across through three different stages vis-a-vis serve childhood / adolescent stage, the stage of been a wife and lastly that of been a mother. In each of the three stages, her sterling status in the society is highly commemorative and impressive. Islam brought a social reform to woman in each of these stages and these can be seen as follow:

The Holy *Qur'an* as well as the *sunnah* of the prophet bitterly condemned the pre-Islamic practice of female infanticide. The *Qur'an* says:

*When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens and he is filled with inward grief. With shame does he hide Himself from his people, because of the bad news he has heard! Shall he retain it on (sufferance and) contempt, or bury it in the dust? Ah! What an evil (choice) they decide on? (Q16:58-59).*

This was the situation of the Arabs and almost every where in the world before Islam with attitude of preferring male child over the female, indeed, the *Qur'an* posed a challenge on them with the following words:

*When the female (infant) buried alive, will question for what crime she was killed (Q81:8-9).*

Here found the good gesture of the prophet towards the female children in the following traditions;

- i. Whosoever has a daughter, and bury her not alive, nor insult her, and favour not his male child over her, certainly God will admit him to paradise. (Ibn Hambal and Abu Daud)
- ii. Whosoever sponsors two daughters till they mature, he and I will come on the day of Judgment as this: the prophet joined his two fingers. (Muslim).

The above quoted *ahdiath* are indication, on the expiation and liberty of a woman in the society, it is in no means that a Muslim should not discriminate against a female child or treat her differently from male child, it is an un-Islamic attitude for a Muslim to feel sad whenever he is blessed with female child, a good believer should understand that both male and female children are created equals but not identical, with this distinction in mind, there is no room to imagine that female child is inferior to male child. There is no ground to assume that she is less important than he, just because her rights as daughter, wife or mother are not identically the same as his. The

fact that Islam gives her equal rights but not identical shows that it takes her into due considerations, acknowledges her, and recognizes her independent personality. The prophet was reported to have said:

*Daughters are shield against Hell fire and means for entry into the Heaven*

The following Qur'anic verses explain the position of women as wives in any Islamic society:

*And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility in them and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts) (Q30:21)*

*.... They (women) are your garments, and you are their garments .... (Q2:187).*

*.... And live with them (women) on a footing of kindness and equity .... (Q4:19)*

Beside, the holy prophet was reported to have said, in respect to the women status as wives in the following *ahadith*:

*The best one among you is that who is good towards his wife (Ibn Hambal)*

*The world and all that it contains are precious, but the most precious thing in life is a virtuous wife (Muslim)*

*The more polite and kind a Muslim is to his wife the more perfect his faith becomes (Tirmidhi)*

Moreso, farewell sermon delivered by the prophet (SAW) was said to have portrayed the generous respect and right to be given to any Muslim wife as it reads as follows:

*O people, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah's trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with anyone of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste*

Polygamy and divorce in Islam are two basic institutions that have clear divine messages that clarify and guide their operations, only that *Shariah* in this regard has being misrepresented especially by the people of the west and the non-Muslim at large. Eminent Muslim theologians, through their writings, have established rules and conditions guiding the two (i.e polygamy and divorce), and never shall only Muslim man be injusted in respect of any of his wives or woman to be divorced.

Moreover the gravity of respect and honour asserted to women as mother is so enormous in Islam, failure to discharge this respect to them renders one's worship, supplication to Allah unaccepted and even his sustenance and provision become reduced if not total cut-off. Muslims are ordain by Allah (SWA) to be kind to both parents, but much emphasis was made especially on mother, for nothing in this life that can compensate her effort and labour over her child, even after their demise, a good child should be prayerful for them and be full of just charity to the poor so much so that the rewards go to them. Qur'an says:

*your Lord had decreed that you worship none but Him,  
and that you be kind to parents----- Q17:23-24*

In another verse Allah says:  
*And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents:  
in travail upon travail did his mother bear him-----  
Q31:14.*

The holy prophet remarks concerning mothers that the goodness/ paradise of this life and hereafter of any human being lies underneath their feet, the tradition goes thus: *paradise lies at the feet of mothers* (Ibn Majah And Ibn Hambal)

A report by Abu Hurayra says that a man posed a question to the messenger of Allah saying:

O messenger of Allah, who is the right person on me due for my good company? The prophet replied: *your mother*, the man asked again: who next? The prophet replied: *your mother*, the man asked again, who next? And the prophet said *your mother*, for the fourth time the man asked; who next? Then the prophet said: *your father*. (Bukhari and Muslim)

### Conclusion

This paper is an attempt to give Islamic point of view regarding women's right. The status of women before Islam was examined, which reflects that women in all those periods were no more than chattels of men, little above the domesticated animals. They were seen as an abomination sources of burning shame and humiliation to the family and the society. They were treated as objects of lust to be used by men and then be discarded capriciously. Among the Arabs, women were considered as a source of misery and thus resulted to infanticide, which was later condemned by Islam and then took all necessary measures to emancipate women.

The emergence of Islam as a religion brought a dramatic change to the status of women in the society. It was made categorical that the mark of distinction between human beings is piety, and has nothing to do with sex, race or colour. *Qur'an* has made it clear that the essence of creating mankind into two sexes is for them to have understanding among themselves, rather than to see themselves as being superior or inferior to one another on account of their sex, colour or race. Therefore, men and women are equal before Allah and they complement each other in their earthly life. This explains why Allah has assigned roles to each of the sexes for a peaceful living.

Right to social, spiritual, economics, educational and political fulfilment were given to women by Islam: the first religion or civilization to do so after centuries of women's deprivation. However, it is the dispensation of nature that right from the inception of human beings, men have always had control over women, who naturally realized that and accepted it, but this does not in any way indicates the inferiority of women.

### **Recommendation**

The following recommendations are found vital;

- The Islamic world undoubtedly has adjusted to dynamic trends in view of increasing spiritual, ethical, intellectual, economic and social status of woman in the society, this is in perfect concordance with the teachings of the *Qur'an* and the tradition of the prophet (SAW) thus, brings a complete tranquility to the entire human race, therefore it is recommended that Islamic law (*shariah*) should be put in place and strictly adhere to by the entire Muslim worlds in order to have an harmonious life.

- The Muslim women should be cautious of their legal rights towards their male counterparts and should not however, over-use this opportunity by becoming ingrate to their husbands and that is because, the holy prophet (SAW) was reported to have said:

**THE ROLES OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION ON RESUSCITATION  
OF WOMEN'S STATUS IN THE MODERN SOCIETY**

*If I were to command someone to prostrate for other  
(than Allah), I would have commanded women to  
prostrate for their husbands. (Bukhari).*



### REFERENCES

- Abdur-Rahim, (1911). *The principle of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*: OUP London.
- Ahmad , K. (1977). *Islam: its Meaning and Messages*, Islamic Publication Bureau, Lagos.
- Allen, E.A., (1911). *History of Civilization*, Vol. 3 Ohio: General Cambridge University Press.
- Ali, A. (1979). *Muhammad Law*: Muhammad Ashraf, Lahore,
- Ali, A. (1986). *The Holy Qur'an Text, Translation and Commentary*: Dar Al- Arbia, Beirut.
- Ali M (1971). *The Religion of Islam*, Rippon Press, Lahore.
- Al-Turabi, H. (1991). *Women in Islam and Muslim Society*, London Milestones Publishers, p.37.
- Bukhari, M.I (1981). *Kitabul-Fitan*, vol. 8, Beirut: Dar al-Fik..
- Doi, A.R.I. (1983). *Women in Shariah*, Gaskiyah Corporation., Zaria,.
- Ibn Majah, M. Y, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Vol. 1, Al-Muqaddimah, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- Muslim B.H (1972). *Sahhi Muslim* Vol. 16, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr.
- The Encyclopaedia Britannica, (1911). (11<sup>th</sup> ed) Vol. 28, England: Cambridge University Press.