

Rights and Duties of the Wife in Islam

Social Sciences

Dr. Syed Bacha Agha¹ & Dr. Muhammad Usman Tobawal²

Abstract

The study is based on the difference between the practice of Islam in general and Islamic teaching of Qur'an and Sunna with Special reference to the treatment of women (wives) in Islam. We have a mixture of Western culture parallelly in our society along with Islamic one. Unfortunately the European or Westerners have misperception about Muslims that we treat wives with cruelty, they only view the conditions from Western perspectives, in the west family system is weak and women is portrayed negatively and in reward given her so-called liberty. Unfortunately, in our Pashtoon and Baloch Society the role of women is also changing due to globalization. On the other hand Islam and Prophet (PBUH) has given great family honor, marital status, respect, obedience to the women. Their relations are based on mutual obedience such as the Holy Prophet (PBUH) himself completed the daily chores of his house. In short I have highlighted those actual Qur'anic and Sunnah based principles, which have clearly distinguished the Muslim women (wives) in respect, chastity and mutual love and obedience from the men- Muslim side.

Key words: Islam, Wife, Rights.

Introduction

One should clearly distinguish between the Islamic teachings and the general practice of the Muslims. Unfortunately we are living in an age where the majority of the Muslims are not aware of the noble teachings of Islam nor do they practice these teachings in their day-to-day affairs of life. Instead they are mostly influenced by different cultures in which they have been living. Therefore everything the Muslims practice on the ground cannot be attributed to Islam and while evaluating the merits of Islam, one should not refer to the practice of the Muslims today, rather he should turn to Islamic principles laid down in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. Obviously, if the Muslims have

¹ Assistant Professor, Govt: Degree College Quetta, Pakistan.

² Director Pakistan Study Center, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan.

abandoned the guidance of Shariah, it cannot be taken in any way as a defect in the Shariah itself, rather, it is the fault of those who have deprived themselves of this guidance. Keeping this basic point in view:

It is evident from a plain study of the relevant material found in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah that Islam treats the relationship of marriage as a bilateral contract between husband and wife, each one of them having some rights and obligations. The Holy Qur'an is very much clear on this point when it says:

ولهن مثل الذى عليهن بالمعروف

"And the women have rights similar to their obligations". (Al Baqarah 2:228)

It is clear from this verse of the Holy Qur'an that the obligations of a wife towards her husband are not less than the rights she enjoys. The Holy Qur'an has summarized the obligation of a husband towards his wife in a short phrase where the Holy Qur'an has made it mandatory for a husband:

فامساک بمعروف

"To keep her with fairness". (Al Baqarah 2:229)

At another place, the Holy Qur'an instructs the husbands in the following words:

وعاشروهن بالمعروف

"And live with them (wives) in fairness". (Al Nisa'a 4:19)

Therefore, it is not correct that Islam has laid more emphasis on the obligations of a wife than on the obligations of a husband. Conversely, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has emphasized on the rights of women in a large number of his sayings which are probably more than the sayings emphasizing the rights of a husband. Some examples are being quoted here:

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said:

خياركم خياركم لنساء هم

"The best people from among you are those who are best to their wives". (Abo Esa,349)

لايفرك مؤمن مؤمنة ان كره منها خلقا رضى منها اخر

"No Muslim should hate his Muslim wife. If he dislikes some of her qualities, he may find some other qualities agreeable". (al-khateeb,3099)

واستوصوا بالنساء خيرا

"Keep to my advice about women that you should treat them fairly". (Abo Esa,350)

يظل احدكم يضرب امراته ضرب الامة ثم يظل يعانقها ولايستحي

"Curse on thee, ye beat thy wives like slaves, then ye show romance physically to them, don't thee feel shame on thy conduct" and,

لايجلد احدكم امراته جلد العبد ثم يجامعها فى آخر اليوم

"Do not beat your wives like Slaves, then you meet (romance) them at the end of the day". (AlbuKhari, 784).

In the above Holy Saying the Holy Prophet (PBUH) says that you treat your wives harshly. First you beat them like Slaves then you go to them, the above explanation gives this message that wives are life-partners but not Slaves. But unfortunately we treat over wives in Pashtoon and Baloch Society as a Slaves. We mae them work hard, cooking meals or to do other household works and use them to bear us children, but do not take her care as the Quraan and Holy Prophet (PBUH) says.

These examples are sufficient to disclose the great concern the Holy Prophet (PBUH) has shown for the rights of women, so much so that he dedicated a substantial portion of his last Sermon at the time of Hajjatul Wida to explain, elaborate and emphasie on the obligations of a man towards his wife.

I would like to mention the correct Islamic point of view with regard to the obligations of a woman as regards to household work.

First of all, it is not a legal obligation of a wife, according to Islamic teachings, to cook the meals or serve the house, and if a woman elects to refuse to undertake these works, a husband cannot compel her to do so. However, apart from the legal injuctions, Islam has laid down some moral instructions for both husband and wife according to which they are treated as life-companions who should not restrict themselves to the legal requirements alone, but should join hands to make mutual life as comfortable and peaceful as possible. They are invited to cooperate with each other in solving their day-to-day problems. For this purpose it is advisable that, as cooperating friends, they should divide the necessary works between them according to their mutual convenience. The woman should take the management of the house while the man should be responsible for outdoor economic activities. This division of work was the practice of the Muslims in the very days of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

Even Sayyidah Fatimah رضى الله عنه the beloved daughter of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to perform all the household functions with her own hands, while Sayyidina Ali رضى الله عنه her noble husband, carried out the economic activities. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) never objected to it, rather, he encouraged her daughter to perform all these functions.

It is true that from a pure legal point of view, a wife may refuse to cook meals or to do other household works, but on the other hand, the husband may refuse to give her permission to meet her relatives. And if both of them are restricted to such a crude legal relationship, an atmosphere of mutual understanding and bilateral cooperation cannot develop between them.

Therefore, a wife should not take the household work as a disgrace to her. In fact, her active contribution to her own house work is the basic source of strength for the family system of the society. It is great service, not only to her own family but also to the nation as a whole, because the betterment of the whole nation depends on a smooth family system. It is strange that when an air hostess serves meals to hundreds of strangers in an aero plane, it has been taken today as a symbol of liberalism, progress and emancipation, but when a housewife renders much lighter services to her own family, it is deemed to be a disgrace or sign of backwardness.

The western countries are facing today a terrible situation of family-break-down. Their leaders are concerned on this drawback, which is caused by the lack of mutual cooperation between husband and wife and their failure to determine the functions of the spouses according to their natural, biological and religious requirements. (Usmani, 2001)

In short, a wife is not legally bound to render the household services, however, it is advisable that she performs these functions as a measure of cooperation with her family and an honorary service to the society as a whole, for which she deserves great reward in the hereafter.

But at the same time, the husband should always remember that the household work undertaken by the wife is not a legal duty obligated on her, rather, it is a voluntary service she is rendering for the benefit of the family. Therefore, a husband must always appreciate this goodwill of his wife and should not treat it as a legal claim against her. Moreover, he should not leave all the household works on her exclusively. The husband should provide her with servants wherever possible, and should himself assist her in performing these functions. It is reported in a number of authentic hadith that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) despite his great outdoor responsibilities, used to render many domestic services with his own hands. We do not find anywhere in his Sunnah that he ordered any of his wives to do such works. However, his sacred wives used to render these services voluntarily without any specific command from the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

In the Company of Moses (Mosa عليه السلام) when he had his wife, she felt the momentary pain of delivery, he said to her that:

قال لاهله امكثوا انى آنت ناراً

He said to his family: wait, I have seen a fire. (Al Qisas 28:29)

So, if we analyse the great Prophet of Allah was in the service of his wife for fetching the ambers a fire to warm her. So how great meditation (worship) is this when the prophet of Allah is busy himself. Therefore, if the household work is done by men in obligation, they must not decline it. If the Man wants his wife obedient, he has to fulfill her wholly requirement. This

equity can be balanced when men and women both accomplish their responsibilities respectively.

It is not correct that the books written on this subject stress upon the obligations of a wife only. In fact all the books of Islamic jurisprudence discuss the rights and obligations of both the spouses simultaneously.

Conclusion

The husband is required not only to provide maintenance of house, but he is also required to treat his wife "fairly" as the Holy Qur'an has put it in express terms, so much so that the Muslims jurists have observed that a husband cannot travel for more than four months at one time without the permission of his wife. But unfortunately many Muslims are not aware of the teachings of their religion and due to this ignorance, they commit errors in their behavior towards their wives.

At the last I want to say that, House is built by hands but home is built by hearts. To run a peaceful home one should have a big heart.

معیت گر نہ ہو تیری تو گھبراؤں گلستان میں
رہے تو ساتھ تو صحرا میں گلشن کا مزہ پاؤں

(Naqshbandi, 2012)

"If you not be with me in the bustle of life, i am hesitant, but you be with me even happy will be I in desert".

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