

Achieving Virtues and Perfections of the Human Potential of Women in the Quran

Zohreh. Sadat Moosavi , Dr Wan Zailan Kamaruddin Wan Ali

Department of Aqidah and Islamic Thought,
Academy of Islamic Studies, University of Malaya. UM

ABSTRACT

Religious schools and communities have different opinions about the real perfection of women. Obviously, identifying the women's ultimate perfection has essential role to determine their fate and the fate of the human society. Among these schools, comprehensive Islamic law, which is originated from Divine revelation, has bestowed enormous status for women by paying great attention to women traits. According to the holy Quran, women are equal to men in terms of humanity. Certainly, there are a lot of wise genesis differences between men and women, but Divine revelations stresses that human truth and gender has no role in awarding guidance. The third-longest Sura in the holy Quran is called "Al- Nnesa" that means women. Ten other Suras have also pointed to some women's affairs. Virtues of exemplar women are introduced by Quran as follows: the wife of Pharaoh, faith exemplar; mother of Moses (AS), exemplar of surrender to God, the wife of Moses (AS), modesty exemplar; mother of Mary (SA), exemplar of honesty and sincerity, Mary (SA) exemplar of chastity and modesty ; wife of Zechariah (AS) exemplar of righteousness and obedience (SA) the wife of Job, a patient exemplar and the Queen of Saba, exemplar of surrender to God orders. In some Ahadith of the Prophet (SAW), mistresses of women in the paradise (and in other Ahadith, world) are four: Mary (mother of Jesus), Asia (wife of Pharaoh), Khadijah and Fatima. And the most perfect one is Fatima. These examples in the teaching of Islam themselves indicate possibility of growth and excellence in female personalities to the top of humanitarian virtues. The spiritual virtues of women in the Quran are divided into two groups: 1- individual virtues (piety and moral virtues) 2- social virtues. Women are able to achieve the best degree of sincerity, faith and piety as men. They are equal in religion (Islam), faithfulness, obedience ability, truthfulness, tolerance, fear of God and giving of alms, fasting, self-preservation, remembering God and finally in the extract of all virtues which is piety, (Al- AHZab 35). Moreover, Quran assigns social responsibilities to both men and women. In ignorant and superstitious communities in which women would only be considered as objects, Quran takes over a heavy responsibility such as promoting friendship and supervision, invitation to goodness and denial of badness, performing prayer and giving alms. The Prophet has got votes from women. This study is a library one and in deductive method. The main source is the holy Quran. Thus, men and women are equal in enjoyment of business and undertaking their duties and responsibilities and rewards. Physiological differences between men and women are essential to the survival of human life that gives rise to differences in some duties and rights. The purpose of this study is to describe women virtues in the Quran, which lead us to the conclusion that obtaining human virtues for men and women as a ratio is important because from the Quranic perspective both are equal in terms of humanity and the superiority of any being is determined by its virtuousness.

Keywords: Islam, Women, Virtues, Perfection, Position

Introduction

Human social history often indicated that women have been deprived of their humanistic status which they deserve in humanistic societies and were always treated as if they don't deserve having humanistic identity. Different religious and social schools have had various ideas and opinions about actual perfections of women. Among these schools, comprehensive Islamic school in which commands are originated or reveals considers all specifications of women which have regarded great and valuable positions for them.

Gustave Le Bon, a French thinker states in his book "The Arab Civilization":

"Islamic virtuous deeds are not limited to honoring and respecting women, but rather, we can add that Islam is the first religion to honor and respect women. We can easily prove this by illustrating that all religions and nations, prior to the advent of Islam, caused much harm and insult to women." ¹

According to Islam's regulations obtaining all human virtues are possible with regard to their duties and natural and actual capabilities.

Sir Hamilton (1788-1856) an English thinker and philosopher mentioned in his book on Islam and Arab Civilization:

"The rules, regulations and verdicts concerning women in Islam are clear, frank and open. Islam capitalizes on the complete care that should be given to the protection of a woman against anything that may harm her personally, or cause ill-fame to her reputation or character."²

Today, some Muslim women are trapped under two ignorance bands. First is the traditional ignorance which considers women in lower levels in comparison to men and leaves women back of much perfection and humanistic sights in excuse of protecting her security and modesty. Second is contemporary ignorance which illustrates women superficially and keeps them away of their actual identities and levels in excuse social participation of women and defend of their rights. It also does not let them obtain many moral virtues.

Islam's perspective of women indicates that women are human, but they are not men. Fields of life are divided to two different parts, humanistic and gender. Humanistic part has nothing to do with their genders, in this stage both are active and seeking perfections. But in this stage, women should remain women and do their activities and be stand with them.

Quran has considered an possibility of obtaining moral virtues for men and women. They are equal to obtaining individual virtues like, Muslim being, faithful being, obedience, truthfulness, tolerance and finally origin of all of the virtues, i.e. piety. Although these virtues have been used

¹ Le Bon, Gustave (1974), *The World of Islamic Civilization*. New York: Tudor Pub. Co. p.488

² Sir Hamilton (1788-1856), *Islam and Arab Civilization*, published by the Royal Asiatic Society, Princeton U. Press, 1989, 166

generally for whole people including men and women, they are particularly used for women and some women have considered as successful examples in having such perfections.

At this article, we deal with different kinds of virtues which are mentioned by Holy Quran about some women.

Enjoying Equal Possibility of Having God Gifts

Holy Quran has given the best creation to human regardless to gender.

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي أَحْسَنِ تَقْوِيمٍ³

In the perspective of the Quran, the creation of men and women was the same and they have equal identity.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ فِئَاتٍ لِّتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ.⁴

Thus, according to Quran, there is no difference between men and women in terms of obtaining spiritual stages and piety.

وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مِنْ فَئِدَةٍ حَيَّةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ⁵

In case of equality of men and women, will be rewarded both the same, Quran states:

فَأَسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ إِنَّي لَا أَضِيعُ عَمَلًا عَامِلٍ مِنْكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ⁶

Therefore, God SWT created human and divided them to two different genders in order to subsistence and perpetuate their generation and in what is requirement of human kind (human species) are equal and some traits and characteristics of each gender are different. However, these differences cannot cause damage to their humanity.⁷

The human Reality is neither male nor female. In fact the Reality human is made up of his soul not his body. His soul identifies his human species no his body and no the total of body and soul.⁸

³ التين/4

⁴ حجرات/13

⁵ النحل 97\

⁶ آل عمران/195

⁷ مهریزی، مهدی، شخصیت و حقوق زن در اسلام، شرکت انتشارات علمی و فرهنگی، تهران، 1382، 78،

⁸ جوادی آملی، عبدالله، زن در آئینه جلال و جمال، مرکز نشر فرهنگی رجا، تهران، 1369 ق. 76

Based on Quran approach, males and females have been originated of the same origin and have got the same identity. Tabatabayee believes that there is unity of identity between men and women by philosophic reasons.⁹

Therefore it can be said that every species perfection which a gender can obtain, another gender can obtain it as well including the perfection which will be gained by believing God and complying of his commands. The best and most complete meaning indicates this is the verse which says:

إِنِّي لَأَلْضَعُ لَكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَى بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ¹⁰

Virtues of women in the Quran

The Following verses states the moral values that men and women are partner:

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا¹¹

Quran expects from women alongside with men to be socially responsible, having social virtues and proper behaviors and propose heavy responsibilities and virtues such as friendship and supervision, Enjoin what is good (Amr-Bil-Ma'roof) and Forbid what is wrong (Nahi-Anil-Munkar), prayers and giving charity for women in primitive and superstitious society of that time.

المؤمنون و المؤمنات بعضهم اولياء بعض يأمرون بالمعروف و ينهون عن المنكر و يقيمون الصلوة و يوتون الزكوة و يطيعون الله ورسوله اولئك سيرحم الله ان الله عزيز حكيم¹²

ان المصدقين و المصدقات و اقرضوا الله قرضاً حسناً يضاعف لهم و لهم اجر كريم¹³

Therefore men and women have the ability to work in these areas and to achieve perfection and excellence.

Considering virtues of mentioned women in Quran

The long third chapter in the Quran is called " Al- Nnesaa" i.e. women and a chapter is named to a perfect lady, Miriam (SA), and has talked about other ladies in ten different chapters. There have been fifteen different names of faithful ladies mentioned in the Quran, in which virtues of nine of them is much more emphasized than others.

1- Eve, Adam's wife, was of repentants

⁹ طباطبائی، سیدمحمدحسین، المیزان، دفتر انتشارات اسلامی، تهران 1366 ج4، (152-153)

¹⁰ آل عمران/ 195

¹¹ احزاب/ 35

¹² توبة 71

¹³ حدید 18

Eve, mother of human, had been positioned in the paradise with Adam by God:

فَلَمَّا يَأْتِ آدَمُ اسْكُنْ أَنْتَ وَزَوْجُكَ الْجَنَّةَ وَكُلَا مِنْهَا رَغَدًا حَيْثُ شِئْتُمَا وَلَا تَقْرَبَا هَذِهِ الشَّجَرَةَ فَتَكُونَا مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ¹⁴

One of the popular characters of God is repentance i.e. returning towards the God out of any sin and Adam and Eve after having the Forbidden Fruit said:

قَالَا رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنْفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ¹⁵

And God accepted their repentance, and repentance is the first step of the guidance of human.

2 - Asieh wife of Pharaoh, was a faithful and enthusiastic person to God

Asiah, daughter of Mozahem and Pharaoh's wife, is a person who has been appreciated by God for three things as below:

1-Has been kind to prophets

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّةُ عَيْنٍ لِي وَلَكَ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ¹⁶

2- Has had requested a house in the paradise

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا امْرَأَتَ فِرْعَوْنَ إِذْ قَالَتْ رَبِّ ابْنِ لِي عِنْدَكَ بَيْتًا فِي الْجَنَّةِ¹⁷

3- Has had requested to save her out of pharaoh's sins and cruel people.

وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَعَمَلِهِ وَنَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ¹⁸

Therefore, Asieh's actions are appreciable for supporting prophet of God and persevering her faith and passion to Allah SWT.

3 - Moses's mother was of relying people to God

Yukabed mother of Moses (AS) who has been mentioned by God in the holy Quran where she was given two orders, two forbiddances and two enunciations

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْبِسِيهِ فِي ثِيَابِ خِثْيِ لَيْلَىٰ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ¹⁹

¹⁴ بقرة 35/

¹⁵ اعراف/ 23

¹⁶ القصص/9

¹⁷ تحريم/ 11

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ القصص/7

4- Shoaib's daughter, wife of Moses, an exemplar of modesty

God has attributed the shame (and modesty) virtue to daughter of Shoaib, Safora (wife of Moses):

فَجَائِئُهُ إِدْ دِيهُمَا عَلِي اسْتِدْيَاءِ قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ ...²⁰

5- Queen of Sheba, who is reached to the felicity by her wise choice.

Belgheis thought properly in the Solomon's letter and said:

قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَ جَاعَلُوهَا أَعْرَظَةً أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةٌ وَ كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ²¹

She saved herself and her country and her name remained due to her intelligence and wisdom.

قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَ اسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ²²

She saved herself and her country and her name remained due to her intelligence and wisdom.

6- Zechariah's wife was of overtaking of the alms and prayers.

Elizabeth or Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias, John's mother is of women who have been admired in Quran. God gave John to her abnormally.

اسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ وَ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ يَحْيَى وَ اصْلَحْنَا لَهُ زَوْجَهُ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَ يَدْعُونَنَا رَغْبًا وَ رَهْبًا وَ كَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ²³

7- Wife of Imran was of honests and loyal women:

إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي²⁴

Hanna, Imran's wife, mother of Mary (AS) vowed sincerely and reached to peak of honesty by her loyalty to the vow.

فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ²⁵

8-The emanation of perfections in Mary (SA)

²⁰ القصص/25

²¹ نمل/ 34

²² نمل/ 44

²³ انبياء/ 90

²⁴ ال عمران/ 35

²⁵ ال عمران/ 37

Mary(SA), the daughter of Imran is mother of Jesus and god has named a chapter of Quran in her name.

She reached to position in terms of spiritual statues which God introduces her as a perfect exemplar:

«و ضرب الله مثلا للذين آمنوا مريم ابنت عمران²⁶

God has explicitly mentioned her name for 34 times in Quran as well as her excellent traits either directly or indirectly;

Such as, good growth (وانبتها نباتا حسنا²⁷), the owner of apse (كلما دخل عليها الزكريا المحراب²⁸) being honest (وامه صديقة²⁹) believe in the divine scriptures (من القانتين³⁰) and modesty (مريم ابنة عمران التي احصنت فرجها³¹) ...

These phrases about Mary in Quran are high. Some how states in expression of Mary's position:

و إذ قالت الملائكة يا مريم ان الله اصطفىك و طهرتك و اصطفىك على نساء العالمين* يا مريم ائقنتي لربك و اسجدي و ارکعی مع الراكعين³²

She became the most perfect woman in the world due to her modesty, chastity, perfection.

9- Fatima(SA), perfect exemplar of virtues

One of the admired women in the last holy book, Quran, is Fatima, daughter of Mohammad (SAW), God's prophet, that have got many different virtues including:

1 – In Al- Ata chapter:

يُوفُونَ بِالنَّذْرِ وَ يَذَافُونَ يَوْمًا كَانَ شَرُّهُ مُسْتَطِيعًا وَ لَمُورِقًا لِيَطْعَمَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَ يَتِيمًا وَ أَسِيرًا . إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ³³

These verses of this chapter of Quran are about a vow which is done by Fatimah and Ali (AS) (her husband) for treating their children (Hassan and Hossein) and after the recovery they lived up to their pledge which was being fasting for three days and gave their own meals to poverty and orphans and just drunk water instead after breaking their fast.

²⁶ تحريم/ 12

²⁷ آل عمران/ 37

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ مائده/ 75

³⁰ تحريم/ 12

³¹ Ibid

³² آل عمران/ 42 - 43

³³ دهر/ 24 - 27

This story is quoted in many different sources³⁴.

2- The another best witness of greatness of Fatima is Mobahala verse.

قُلْ تَعَالَوْا نَدْعُ آبَاءَنَا وَ آبَاءَكُمْ وَ نِسَاءَنَا وَ نِسَاءَكُمْ وَ انفسنا و انفسكم ثم نبتهل...³⁵

All interpreters have written and certified that there have been no woman with Moahammad (SAW) except Fatima.³⁶

Prophetical Hadith indicates the only four women have reached perfection:

كَمَل مِنَ الرِّجَالِ كَثِيرٌ وَ لَمْ يَكْمَلْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ إِلَّا مَرْيَمُ بِنْتُ عِمْرَانَ وَ آسِيَةُ بِنْتُ مِرْحَمٍ (امْرَأَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ) وَ خَدِيجَةُ بِنْتُ خُوَيْلِدٍ وَ فَاطِمَةُ بِنْتُ مُحَمَّدٍ (ص)³⁷

So many of men reached to perfection and women didn't reach it except Mary, daughter of Imran, Asiah (daughter of Mozahem and Pharaoh's wife), Khadijah (daughter of khowaylad) and Fatimah.

أَفْضَلُ نِسَاءِ الْجَنَّةِ أَرْبَعٌ: خَدِيجَةُ بِنْتُ خُوَيْلِدٍ وَمَخْطُومَةُ بِنْتُ عِمْرَانَ وَ آسِيَةُ بِنْتُ مِرْحَمٍ، إِمْرَأَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ» (سيوطي، جلال الدين؛ الدر المنثور في تفسير المأثور، ص 246)

Ayesha has quoted that the Prophet said something to her daughter (Fatima(AS)) before his death, she started crying first but after that laughed. Then, Fatima expressed this that her father said in second:

«... الا ترضين ان تكوني سيده نساء العالمين او نساء هذه الامة؟³⁸»

³⁴ محمد بن عيسى أبو عيسى الترمذي السلمي نواذر الاصول. الناشر دار إحياء التراث العربي 2010 صفحہ ۶۴.

ابن عديريه الاندلسي (متوفى 328هـ)، العقد الفريد ناشر إحياء التراث العربي - بيروت، جلد ۳، صفحہ ۴۲

شرح نهج البلاغه ابن ابى الحديد، ناشر: دار احيا الكتب العربيہ. جلد اول، صفحہ ۷

آل عمران/ 61³⁵

³⁶ مسلم القشيري النيسابوري (875 هـ)، أبو الحسين حافظ، بن الحجاج. XCVIII، قاهره، مجمع الزوائد كتاب فضائل الصحابة

طبري، (224- 310 هـ) جامع البيان في تفسير القرآن، ترجمه صادق نشأت تهران، بنگاه ترجمه و نشر كتاب، ۱۳۵۱، ج 10، ص 3

السمرقندي، تفسير السمرقندي، ج 1، ص 274-275، دار الكتب العلمية، بيروت، چاپ 31

لسيوطي الدر المنثور في التفسير بالمأثور موافق للمطبوع: الناشر 39/2 دار الفكر - بيروت، 1993

حنبل، احمد بن محمد أبو عبدالله الشيباني المسند، بيروت: دار صادر ج 1 ص 185

³⁷ حنبل، احمد بن محمد أبو عبدالله الشيباني المسند، بيروت: دار صادر ج 4، 326

³⁸ ابن ماجه قزويني، محمد بن يزيد أبو عبدالله (متوفى 275) سنن ابن ماجه بيروت، دار الكتب العلمية (1986)، (هـ ج 1 ص 518

مسلم القشيري النيسابوري (875 هـ)، أبو الحسين حافظ، بن الحجاج. XCVIII، قاهره، مجمع الزوائد ج 2 ص 5- 6

Therefore, despite of all virtues those are mentioned by holy Quran for women, perfections of Mary(AS) and above her Fatima are really considerable.

Anyway, according to the perfections are mentioned in the holy verses for women, it can be understood that the virtues are for humans and have nothing to do with gender differences.

Review of Literature

The main resource is the holy Quran and also a set of the main narrative books in Islam are used.

Methods of Study

This study is a library one, which has used interviews of the religious authorities in the area of women studies, field researches.

Conclusion:

Thus, the Quran's holy verses are addressed to actuality of humans. So, women are addressed in all of the Quranical verses. Giving the virtues is based on the actuality of humans and men and women have equal rights of obtaining the prizes, virtues and punishments. Certainly, there are some actual differences between females and males which are effective in determining their duties and obligations. But, their legal differences have nothing to do with the gender differences and the mentioned virtues of women in the holy Quran let us know the ability of having them for females as well.

Quran believes that women are able to reach to peak of faithfulness and wisdom the same as men and have equal right in being Muslims, faithful, obedience, truthfulness, tolerance, god- scared, paying alms, fasting, stopping their ambitions, remembering God and finally the origination of all of these virtues i.e. piety.

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