

(لغة إنجليزية)



The Prophet (ﷺ) and Women

النبي ﷺ والمرأة



(Prepared by:

Educational Department in Madar Al-Watan

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Malaz Branch

(Ph: 4792042 - Fax: 4723941)

Swaidi Branch

(Ph: 4267177 - Fax: 4267377)

P.O. Box 3310

Email: pop@dar-alwatan.com

<http://www.madar-alwatan.com>

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النبي ﷺ و امرأته

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مَدَارُ الْوَطَنِ لِلنِّسَاءِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

All praise is due to Allah, and may Allah
praise Muhammad and render him safe
from all evil.

One of the common misconceptions in the West about Muhammad (ﷺ), the Prophet of Islam, is that he was oppressive and dominative towards women, and that he prohibited them their rights. They say that he used women for his own pleasure and treated them as if they were his servants. They say the Prophet (ﷺ) would not listen to them and would forbid them from participating in any general matter concerning the public. They say that he would not converse with them nor seek their opinion, and that he would merely order them, they would have no option but to follow his orders.

This is how the West portrays Muhammad (ﷺ) regarding the treatment of women. Religious figures, intellectuals, the media, and even politicians have painted this picture in the minds of the average Westerner in order to drive them away from Islam and its Prophet. There are, however, some highly regarded intellectuals, media figures and politicians who did not succumb to their forgery; rather, continued to portray him in his proper light. Unfortunately, the strength and control of the first group over various media outlets has drowned their voices, to the extent that they are totally disregarded.

If we truly seek to know how the Prophet (ﷺ) treated women, we must read his biography and study his sayings in this

regard. Then only will we be able to fairly judge the way he viewed women.

But first we must ask...did women actually have any rights before Islam which the Prophet is said to have abolished in his call to Islam?

The answer is quite the opposite. Women had no rights before Islam. Rather, the Arabs before Islam, in accordance with their nature, hated daughters. They considered them such a shame that some of them even buried their daughters alive. Allah says:

﴿And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark and he is filled with inward grief!﴾ [Surah an-Nahl (16):58-59]

Before the dawn of Islam, if a woman lost her husband, she would be inherited by her husband's sons or other male relatives. If they wished, they would wed her to one of them, or if they wished they would prevent her from marrying again, imprisoning her with them until she died. Islam came and abolished all of this, and the Prophet (ﷺ) affirmed their rights, as we will see in this discourse.

Other societies at that time were not any better than the Arabs in regards to their treatment of women. In the Greek Empire, women were regarded as scrap property; they were even bought and sold in the markets! Women had no civil or financial rights. Their husbands and fathers, had unrestricted authority over them, even over

their money! They were unable to do anything without their permission.

In India, if a woman lost her husband, she would lose all the incentives to carry on living, and her life would end with the death of her husband.

If we look at the condition of women in Europe in the Middle (Medieval) Ages when authority was in the hands of the Christian Church, we see that her state of affairs was even worse. Religious figures actually debated whether women were humans or devils!

This was the condition in which women were living before the advent of Islam. Now we must ask, what status and treatment did Islam grant women? What did the Prophet (ﷺ) do for women? The Prophet (ﷺ) never

said that he hated women, nor did he belittle them. Rather he said the opposite. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“Beloved to me of the things of this world are women and fragrances, and I seek comfort in prayer.” (An-Nasaa’i)

The Prophet (ﷺ) informed of the equality of women to men in their humanity in his saying:

“Women are only the twin halves of men.” (Ahmed, abu Dawood, at-Tirmidhi)

All men are children of women and other men, and all women are children of men and women. No one is superior to the other. The only valid criterion in superiority is faith and righteousness.

In the sixth century, a meeting was adjourned, called the Macon Assembly, in order to discuss whether women actually had souls. They came to the conclusion that women had no soul and therefore were excused from the punishment of Hellfire. The only exception was Mary, the mother of Jesus (ﷺ).

As for the Prophet (ﷺ), he affirmed the equality of men and women in regards to faith, righteousness and reward in the Hereafter. Allah, the Most High, says:

﴿Verily, the Muslims men and women, the believers men and women, the men and the women who are obedient to Allah, the men and women who are truthful, the men and the women who are patient, the men and the women who

are humble, the men and the women who give *Sadaqah* (Zakat and alms), the men and the women who observe fast, the men and the women who guard their chastity and the men and the women who remember Allah much with their hearts and tongues. Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.) [Surah Al-Ahzab (33):35]

Allah also says:

«Whosoever does an evil deed, will not be requited except the like thereof; and whosoever does a righteous deed, whether male or female and is a true believer, such will enter the Heavenly Gardens, where they will be provided therein without limit!» [Surah Ghafir (40):35]

Allah eradicated the hatred Arabs had for female children in the Qur'an:

﴿To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He wills. He bestows female (offspring) upon whom He wills, and bestows male (offspring) upon whom He wills.﴾
[Surah ash-Shoora (42):49-50]

The Prophet (ﷺ) abolished this abominable belief and encouraged people to give a proper upbringing to their daughters and treat them well. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“Whoever supports two daughters until they reach the age of puberty, he will come on the Day of Resurrection with me [like this], and he joined his fingers.” (Muslim)

In this statement, the Prophet (ﷺ) mentioned the high status of that person on the Day of Requital and his closeness to him. He would attain this rank because he took care of his daughters till they reached the age of puberty.

He (ﷺ) also said:

“Whoever has three daughters or sisters, or two daughters or sisters, and treats them well, and keeps to Allah’s orders in their regard will enter *Jannah* (Heavenly Gardens).” (At-Tirmidhi, graded as Saheeh by al-Albani)

With this the Prophet (ﷺ) put an end to this deep-rooted dislike which Arabs had before the dawn of Islam for female children.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also encouraged the education of women. He said:

“Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.” (Ibn Majah)

This includes both males and females. Once a woman approached the Prophet (ﷺ) and said,

“O Messenger of Allah, the men are benefiting from your knowledge, so specify a day in which we can come and learn what Allah has taught you. The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, ‘Gather on such and such day,’ so they gathered. The Prophet (ﷺ) came and taught them what Allah taught him.” (Muslim)

Moreover, when the Prophet (ﷺ) gave a sermon or admonition, he would address

both men and women. He would then approach the womenfolk and address them specifically. So in fact, it was women who benefited more from his sermons.

The Prophet (ﷺ) did not imprison women in their homes, as some erroneously presume; rather, he allowed them to leave their homes, tend to their affairs, visit relatives and friends, visit the sick, and for various other reasons. The Prophet (ﷺ) allowed them to pray in the Mosques. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“Do not prevent your womenfolk from [praying in] the Mosques.” (Ahmed, Abu Dawood)

The Prophet (ﷺ) would take his wife along if he was invited and he would refuse the

offer if the host did not accommodate her. Anas (رضي الله عنه) narrated:

“A particular Persian neighbor of the Prophet (ﷺ) cooked tasty food. Once he cooked some food for the Prophet (ﷺ) and invited him. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, ‘And [are you inviting] this one (his wife Aa’ishah رضي الله عنها)?’ to which he responded, ‘No,’ and invited him again. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) repeated, ‘And [are you inviting] this one (his wife Aa’ishah رضي الله عنها)?’ to which he responded, ‘No,’ and insisted in his invitation. The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) again asked, ‘And [are you inviting] this one (his wife Aa’ishah رضي الله عنها)?’ to which he finally responded on the third request, ‘Yes,’ so they both went to his house.” (Muslim)

Notice how the Prophet (ﷺ) refused the invitation because he did not want to eat without his wife. Indeed in this is an example of model marital relations, respecting the rights of wives, and paying importance to their feelings.

The Prophet (ﷺ) was also well-aware of the nature of women and their emotional and physical makeup. For this reason, the Prophet (ﷺ) advised men to be compassionate and patient with them. He (ﷺ) said:

"I advise you to be good to your womenfolk, for indeed they were created from a rib, and the most bent part of a rib is its upper part; if you try to straighten it, it will break. If you are

affable you will be able to live with her.” (ibn Hibbaan)

This narration presents the best method to reform women and improve them: through kindness, compassion, persuasion and affability. Reformation with harshness and strictness would only produce negative results.

The Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged men to provide for their wives as much as they are able. Islam has made it an obligation upon the husband to provide for his wife, but despite this the Prophet (ﷺ) informed us that husbands are rewarded each time they spend on their wives. The Prophet (ﷺ) said to Sa’d ibn Abi Waqqaas (رضي الله عنه):

“You do not spend any amount of money for the sake of Allah except that

you will be rewarded for it, even that which you put in the mouth of your wife (i.e. food and drink).”(Bukhari & Muslim)

He (ﷺ) also said:

“The best money spent is that on one’s family.”(Muslim)

He (ﷺ) also said:

“If a man gives his wife something to drink, he will be rewarded for it.”
(Ahmed, al-Albani graded it as Hasan)

When Irbad ibn Saariyah, a companion of the Prophet (ﷺ), heard this narration, he went to his wife and gave her something to drink, and then he related what he heard from the Prophet (ﷺ).

The Prophet (ﷺ) informed us that a man will be held responsible for his wife and children's actions on the Day of Resurrection. He (ﷺ) said:

“Surely Allah will ask every responsible person about those under his responsibility. [He will be asked] whether he took care of them or neglected them, until a man will be asked about his household.” (ibn Hibbaan)

The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade hitting women. He (ﷺ) said:

“Do not hit the female slaves of Allah.”

(Abu Dawood)

He ordered that men have patience with their wives and not dislike them. He (ﷺ) said:

“A believing male should not dislike a believing woman. If he dislikes something of her character, he might be pleased with another.” (Muslim)

Hence, the Prophet (ﷺ) encouraged men to look for the praiseworthy characteristics of women, so that they do not always look at their inferior qualities, for that will create hatred and enmity between a man and his wife.

The Prophet (ﷺ) allowed women to complain to the court if she is not treated well by her husband. Some women went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and complained about the

bad manners of their husbands. The Prophet (ﷺ) said (addressing the Muslims):

“Many women complained to the family of the Prophet (ﷺ) and about their husbands, [those men] are not the best of you.” (Abu Dawood, an-Nasaa’i)

The Prophet (ﷺ) also knew the physical weakness of women in relation to men, and that most of the time she is not able to defend herself. For this reason, he warned those who oppress the weak, among them women, in his saying:

“O Allah put in a strait those who wrong the two weak; orphans and women.” (an-Nasaa’i)

This prophetic tradition implies that oppression of these two types of people will

not be overlooked; rather, it may be a cause for punishment in this life and the Hereafter.

The Prophet (ﷺ) ordered men to conceal the private affairs of women. He said:

“Indeed the worst of people on the Day of Resurrection is a man who has sexual intercourse with his wife and then tells others of their private affairs.” (Muslim)

In this Prophetic Tradition, the Prophet (ﷺ) prohibits men to discuss sexual acts which take place between them and their wives, in addition to other private affairs wives entrust to their husbands.

Islam, out of deference to women, encourages husbands to fulfill the sexual rights of their wives so that they will not

desire to look elsewhere. The Prophet (ﷺ) said:

“You will [even] be rewarded for having sexual intercourse.”

The Companions exclaimed, “O Messenger of Allah! Are we rewarded for fulfilling our desires?”

He replied:

“Wouldn’t he be punished if he fulfills (this desire) in an impermissible way? Similarly, if he fulfills it in a permissible way, he will be rewarded.”
(Muslim)

Another example which shows how the Prophet (ﷺ) honored women and how he forbade men from harboring evil thoughts

about their wives and from seeking their faults. Jabir (ﷺ) said:

“The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade men from approaching their wives at night, seeking to find them treacherous or seeking some other faults in them.”
(Bukhari & Muslim)

What act can honor women more than the fact that men who have been away (on a journey) have been forbidden to enter their houses at night without informing their wives, if they intended to spy on them or doubted their honor? Indeed it is Muhammad (ﷺ) who truly freed women.

As for the manners of the Prophet (ﷺ) with his family, he was most affectionate and kind. He would help his wives in household chores. Aswad said:

"I asked Aa'isha (ﷺ) how the Prophet (ﷺ) was with his wives. She replied, 'He would help his wives with household chores, and when the time for prayer came, he would stand and leave.'
(Bukhari)

Let us look at another example of an exchange of beautiful words between a husband, Muhammad (ﷺ), and his wife, Aa'ishah (ﷺ), which will show the extent of love and affection the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) would receive from him. He said to Aa'ishah:

"Indeed I know when you are angry and when you are pleased."

She responded, **"How do you know that O Messenger of Allah?"**

He said, "When you are pleased, you say, '... by the Lord of Muhammad,' and when you are angry, you say, '...by the Lord of Ibraheem.' "

She said: "Yes, by Allah O Messenger of Allah! I only leave the mention of your name." (Bukhari & Muslim)

...meaning that the love in her heart for Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) did not decrease.

Let's take a look at another example of fun and amusement enjoyed by a married couple. Aa'ishah (رضي الله عنها) said:

I accompanied the Prophet (ﷺ) in some of his journeys while I was young and lean. He said to those around him, "Proceed forth ahead of us," to which they did so. He then said to me, "Come here so I can race with

you," so he raced me and I won, and he did not say anything. But when I became older and put on weight, I accompanied him in some of his journeys, he said to those around him, **"Proceed forth ahead of us,"** to which they did. He then said to me, **"Come here so I can race with you,"** so he raced me and he won, and he said, **"This one for that!"** (Ahmed, Abu Dawood)

The Prophet's loyalty to Khadeejah (ﷺ) (his first wife) continued even after her death. Anas (ﷺ) said:

"If the Prophet was presented with a gift, he would say, 'Take it to so and so, for indeed she was a friend of Khadeejah.' " (Tabaraani)

He was once asked about the most beloved of people to him, to which he responded, "Aa'ishah," while she was his wife.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also did not forget the rights of the mother, who many legislations of the international women's rights movement pretend to ignore, for they do not respect motherhood nor pay any importance to raising children. As for the Prophet (ﷺ) when he was asked by a man,

"Who is most deserving of my good company?"

He responded, "Your mother."

He said, "and then who?" to which he responded, "Your mother."

The man repeated "And then who?"

He said, "Your mother."

The man said, "And then who?"

He said, "Your father." (Bukhari & Muslim)

This was the Prophet's (ﷺ) attitude towards women.