



Woman

THE BUILDER OF HUMANITY



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan

WOMAN

THE BUILDER OF HUMANITY

MAULANA
WAHIDUDDIN KHAN

Translated and Edited by
Prof. Farida Khanam
Maulana Farhad Ahmad

Goodword Books

First published 2026

This book is copyright free

This book is an English translation of Maulana Wahiduddin Khan's Urdu book, *Aurat Memar-e-Insaniyat*.

Goodword Books

A-21, Sector 4, Noida-201301, Delhi NCR, India

Tel. +91 120 4131448, Mob. +91 8588822672

info@goodwordbooks.com

www.goodwordbooks.com

CPS International

Centre for Peace and Spirituality International

1, Nizamuddin West Market, New Delhi-110 013, India

Mob. +91-9999944119

info@cpsglobal.org

www.cpsglobal.org

Center for Peace and Spirituality USA

391 Totten Pond Road, Suite 402,

Waltham MA 02451, USA

Mob. +1-617-960-7156

email: info@cpsusa.net

CONTENTS

SYSTEM OF NATURE

The Law of Nature 8

The Principle of
Guardianship 8

The Principle of Role
Allocation 11

A Source of Peace, Not a
Source of Pleasure 13

The Principle of Pairs 15

The Same Applies to Man
and Woman 17

WOMAN

ACCORDING

TO THE QURAN

Woman in the Quran 24

The Creation of Adam
and Eve 25

The Choice of Marriage 27

The Proper Divorce
Procedure 28

Writing the Transaction
and Witnesses 30

Equality Between Man
and Woman 32

Members of One Family 33

Polygamy 34

Inheritance Rights of
Men and Women 35

Good in What Appears
Displeasing 35

The Principle of Marital
Relations 37

The Basis of Healthy
Relationships 39

The Principle of
Guardianship
(*Qawwamiyyat*) 40

The Principle of
Arbitration 41

Equal Reward 42

Adam and Eve 42

Believing Men and
Believing Women 44

CONTENTS

Preparing the New Generation	44	The Closest Enemy	66
The Godly Life	46	Ease After Hardship	67
No Spreading of Immorality	47	Religious Nurturing	68
The Quranic Principle of Modest Dress	48	Salvation Depends on Deeds	69
Leadership of the Righteous	49	The Scene of Resurrection	69
No Political Confrontation	50	O Soul at Peace	70
The Sphere of Woman's Work	52	A Life of Toil	71
The Rights of Parents	53	WOMEN IN THE HADITH	
The Responsibility of Women	55	The Prophetic View of Women	74
The Home as a Centre of Learning	56	Women: The Counterparts of Men	74
The Qualities of God-Fearing Women	56	The Standard of Character	75
Life is a Trust	58	The Sign of Nobility	76
The Role of the Mother	61	Good in Every Situation	77
Social Ethics	62	The Mark of Better Character	77
A Dignified Nation	63	The Best Woman	78
Companionship in Paradise	64	Woman, the Treasure of Life	79
Equal Reward for Both	65	A Precious Blessing	79
		A Supportive Life Partner	80

CONTENTS

A Companion You Can Rely On	81	Looking Towards the Future	104
The Greatest Blessing of Life	84	Reconciliation is Best	105
Respecting Natural Differences	85	A Woman's Greatest Weakness	106
The Call of Human Nature	86	Letting Go of Anger	108
The Greatest Gift in Life	87	A Woman's Untapped Intellectual Potential	110
Woman as a Mother	88	The Importance of a Guardian in Marriage	111
Upbringing of Daughters	89	The Testing Ground	115
Kind Treatment of Daughters	90	AISHA:	
Support to Helpless Daughters	90	AN EXTRAORDINARY WOMAN	
The Means of Salvation	91	Aisha Al-Siddiqah	120
Consulting Women	92	Education and Personal Development	122
PRINCIPLES OF MARRIED LIFE		The Formation of Her Personality	125
The Art of Married Life	96	Aisha's Derivation of Islamic Rulings	131
Nature's Universal Law	96	Clarifying Hadith Reports	142
The Need for Positive Thinking	97	The Question of Age at Marriage	151
Trust in God	99	The Wisdom Behind the Marriage	161
Parents as Natural Teachers	101		
Suspicion: The Root of Discord	102		

CONTENTS

A FEW HISTORICAL WOMEN		In the Light of the Sunnah	214
Notable Women in History	166	WOMAN:	
Hagar, Mother of Ishmael	166	THE BUILDER OF HUMANITY	
Asiya bint Muzahim	176	Woman: The Silent Builder of Society	230
Maryam, the Mother of Jesus	178	A FEW EXEMPLARY WOMEN	
Khadijah bint Khuwaylid	185	Remarkable Women in My Life	242
Umm Salama, Hind bint Abi Umayya	191	Zaibunnisa	242
THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ISLAM		Sabia Khatoon Alawi	247
The Contribution of Women in Islam	198	Farida Khanam	251
Umm al-Darda	200	WOMAN IN THE MODERN AGE	
Rabi'a al-Basri	202	Woman and the Modern World	262
Emperor Akbar's Mother	205	The Principle of Division of Labour	269
WOMAN AS AN INTELLECTUAL PARTNER		CONCLUSION	
Intellectual Partnership in Marriage	212	The Last Word	274

SYSTEM
OF
NATURE

THE LAW OF NATURE

Deviation from the system of nature leads to failure, while adjustment to it leads to success. This is the fundamental principle underlying the building of human life. Without understanding this principle, it is impossible to establish a successful life in the present world.

Human beings must realize that they did not create the world in which they live. It was created by God according to His own plan of creation. Therefore, human beings must live in accordance with that divine plan. If any individual or group wishes to live according to a self-designed system, they would first have to create another world, for within this world no such option exists.

The Principle of Guardianship

The Creator has designed the system of the world in such a way that everything functions in a coordinated and organized manner around a central point, or nucleus. This centre unites the different parts into a coherent whole.

The basic unit of matter is the atom, which contains positively and negatively charged particles. The force that

holds these moving particles together is centred in the nucleus, located at the heart of the atom. The same pattern is visible in the solar system, where numerous planets and asteroids continuously orbit the Sun, the central body that holds them all together.

This same order remains consistent throughout creation.

For instance, honeybees provide an excellent example of a living society. Their colony remains active around the clock, and its organization depends on the queen bee within the hive. If the queen were absent, the entire system would collapse.

This natural law applies equally to human life. It governs relationships among people as well as the relationship between men and women. The Quran, the book of the Creator of nature, declares:

“Is it they who apportion the mercy of your Lord? It is We who distribute among them their livelihood in the life of this world, and raise some of them above others in rank, so that they may take one another into service.” (Quran, 43:32)

The entire system of human life operates on the same principle of organization. There is a supervisor over workers, a director in a company, a chairman in a meeting, a boss in an office, and a president or prime minister in a government. All collective affairs function according to this principle. Without it, life would descend into chaos, and no system could operate properly.

According to divine law, the organization of family life—whether in relationships among men or between men and women—is also based on this principle. Therefore, the Quran states: “Men are protectors of women.” (Quran, 4:34)

The Arabic word ‘*qawwam*’ means guardian or manager. The statement “Men are protectors of women” does not imply that men are superior or women inferior. It simply means that, for the proper management of family affairs, the Creator has established a natural principle: within the household, the man bears the responsibility of organization, so that the family system may function as properly as the rest of the universe, by following the same principle of organization.

In modern times, proponents of women’s liberation introduced the idea of gender equality. This principle was completely unnatural. Adopting this unnatural principle led to the breakdown of the family system in modern society.

If the same principle of absolute equality were applied between workers and officers in an office, or between ministers and the prime minister in a government, the entire system would fall into disorder. It is clearly contradictory, both theoretically and practically, to organize all other systems of life on the principle of guardianship, while attempting to manage the domestic system without it. Such a contradiction is unnatural and therefore unworkable.

Appointing a man as *qawwam* over a woman is a matter of practical arrangement, similar to appointing a head

over workers in an office or a prime minister over ministers in a government. The term *qawwam* refers to administrative necessity, not moral superiority. The principle of guardianship should therefore be understood as a functional requirement. In terms of dignity and status, there is no difference between man and woman; both are equally deserving of honour and respect.

The Principle of Role Allocation

Similarly, according to the Quran, one principle of family structure is that the woman is primarily responsible for managing the internal affairs of the household, while the man is primarily responsible for providing for the family. This is stated in the Quran as follows:

“Men are protectors of women, because God has made some of them excel others and because they spend their wealth on them.” (Quran, 4:34)

In this verse, the word “excel” (*fazl*) does not imply superiority or distinction; rather, it refers to an additional quality. According to the design of creation, man has been made physically stronger and endowed with greater endurance to withstand hardship. This added capacity enables him to face challenges and earn a livelihood for himself and his family under all circumstances.

According to the creation plan, the woman’s role is primarily to manage the internal system of the home and nurture the next generation. For this purpose, certain additional

qualities have been placed in her nature, such as gentleness and submissiveness. If both man and woman understand this natural law and use their abilities within their respective domains, both the domestic and external systems of life will function successfully. But if this divine pattern is ignored, family life will inevitably fall into disorder.

This is the great tragedy of our time. Under the artificial notion of equality that prevails today, both men and women have hastily turned towards external work. The result has been the creation of an artificial unemployment problem. There were enough job opportunities for men, but when women also entered the job market, the natural balance was disturbed, and the issue now known as unemployment emerged.

At the same time, by leaving the home, women neglected the responsibilities that, according to the natural order, were to be fulfilled within the household. Breaking the natural division of responsibilities led to serious consequences. New and complex social problems began to emerge. Women's move into work outside the home did not necessarily result in any new constructive contribution, because there were already sufficient numbers of people available to perform many of those roles. The home, however, was different. Its responsibilities depended primarily on women, and when those responsibilities were neglected, the home itself began to suffer.

Today, human society faces countless problems. These problems are directly or indirectly linked to this bitter

reality: in one sphere of social life there is excessive activity, while in another, activity has almost ceased. It is therefore necessary to reconsider this matter and, through reassessment, understand once again what the true and natural system of life is.

A Source of Peace, Not a Source of Pleasure

According to the creation plan of God, woman has been created as a source of peace and tranquillity for man, not merely as a source of pleasure. This is stated in the Quran as follows:

“One of His signs is that He created for you from among yourselves spouses, so that you might find repose in them, and He created between you affection and kindness. Truly there are signs in this for people who reflect.” (Quran, 30:21)

According to this divine plan, woman has been created to bring peace, warmth, and balance to the journey of life. This aspect is equally important for both men and women. If both keep this reality in mind, they will be able to face life's challenges with balance and continue their journey successfully.

However, in the present age, this natural principle has been reversed. Men often regard women merely as sources of entertainment. As a result, the very purpose of life has been distorted. Woman is unable to fulfill the role assigned to her by nature; instead, she becomes

increasingly preoccupied with making herself attractive in ways that were never part of the original plan. This unnatural situation has disrupted every aspect of life.

Consequently, the modern woman's primary concern is no longer the fulfillment of her natural responsibilities, but the enhancement of her appearance. Beautification has become an obsession. Many women spend considerable time unnecessarily on artificial physical enhancement. This obsession has led them towards semi-nudity, one consequence of which is pornography.

Among the troubling expressions of this obsession is cosmetic surgery—that is, the artificial alteration of one's face through surgical procedures. In reality, this method of beautification is costly and has created new issues, causing unnecessary complications in the lives of many women.

If, in accordance with nature's plan, man and woman regard one another as a source of peace, their lives can resemble Paradise. But when they view each other merely as a means of pleasure, both fall into a state of restlessness. This has contributed to the widespread problem known in modern times as depression.

Deviation from the natural order has led human beings into these hardships. Only a return to nature can save them from such problems. There is no other solution to this crisis.

THE PRINCIPLE OF PAIRS

God Almighty created the world in pairs, meaning that everything has a corresponding counterpart. Each thing attains its natural purpose through union with its pair. This idea is expressed in the Quran in these words:

“We created pairs of all things so that you might reflect.” (Quran, 51:49)

Everything in this world has been created in pairs: in matter, positive and negative particles; in plants, male and female; in animals, male and female; and among human beings, man and woman. This principle of pairs operates throughout the universe and is also established in human life in the form of man and woman.

The outcome of this natural principle is that man and woman work together, fulfilling their respective roles within creation and complementing one another. Together, they complete one another; without each other, both remain incomplete.

Modern civilization has introduced the concept of gender equality between men and women, suggesting that both are entirely identical and interchangeable: that what applies to woman applies equally to man, and what applies

to man applies equally to woman. It claims that there is no distinction of any kind between them.

This concept of gender equality may appear attractive in theory, but it clearly contradicts the creation plan. Whatever stands in opposition to the natural order cannot be made workable in practice.

As the above Quranic reference shows, the Creator has made everything in this world in pairs. This pairing does not indicate uniformity, but complementarity. In other words, the relationship between man and woman is not one of identical roles, but of complementary roles. Man and woman are two halves of a single whole: one half is woman, and the other half is man.

In reality, the relationship between man and woman is similar to the pairing found in all other created things.

For example, the basic unit of matter is the atom. Each atom contains two distinct particles: one negative and one positive. Together, these two function as a pair, forming the structure of every material substance.

However, this does not mean that the two components are equal in every respect or identical in nature: that the negative particle is also positive, or that the positive particle is also negative. Rather, they complement one another. What is lacking in one is found in the other, and what is lacking in the second is found in the first.

The same principle applies to man and woman. They are not equal in the sense of being identical; rather, they are complementary partners. Through mutual cooperation, they fulfill the purpose of life, for man without woman is incomplete, and woman without man is incomplete as well.

According to the modern concept of equality, any human society founded on the notion of sameness between man and woman would inevitably be artificial. Owing to the incompatibility with the natural order, such a society can never truly succeed as a human society. Since the system of nature cannot be altered, no human strategy can compensate for the error of departing from it.

Undoubtedly, the entire material world is formed through the union of negative and positive particles. This harmony holds the physical universe together. However, if these two particles became identical in their properties—that is, if the characteristics of the negative particle became the same as those of the positive particle, and vice versa—the entire material universe would instantly disintegrate.

The Same Applies to Man and Woman

If the union of man and woman is based on mutual complementarity, as indicated in the Quran, human society becomes a unified and harmonious whole, free from internal contradictions. Conversely, if the relationship between man and woman is founded on the idea of absolute gender

equality, as proposed by modern civilization, human society will descend into disorder. This often results in the breakdown of family life, as is evident today in the Western world.

The Quran declares: “One of His signs is that He created for you from among yourselves spouses, so that you might find repose in them, and He created between you affection and kindness. Truly there are signs in this for people who reflect.” (Quran, 30:21)

This verse shows that it is a special mercy from God that He created mates of the same kind for human beings. Moreover, this pairing is not merely a physical connection like positive and negative particles in matter. Rather, in human life, God has placed love and mercy between men and women so that they may find peace and comfort in one another.

This applies equally to both men and women. Each is a spouse to the other, and each provides peace and affection to the other.

The contemporary world is filled with unrest, where human beings must face difficulties at every stage. In such a world, both men and women need a source of peace. It is the wise design of the Creator that each has been made a fountain of love and comfort for the other. Thus, while facing life's struggles, both can find peace and tranquillity through mutual companionship.

For everyone, the struggle of life is a difficult battle. During this struggle, a person often becomes subject to stress. In such moments, every man and woman needs a source of relief—something that eases mental pressure and restores emotional balance. Men and women are, for each other, precisely this source of relief. In this way, both continually draw strength from one another.

When the relationship between husband and wife is properly established, and both understand each other's importance and needs, every home becomes an institution after marriage. This institution becomes a foundation for both man and woman—a source of strength that prevents either from feeling alone on their journey through life. It enables them to continue this journey successfully, even through difficult times, until they reach their destination.

According to the Quranic view, there is a division of labour between men and women in social life. On this basis, their roles remain fundamentally distinct. In other words, they are like the two wheels of a vehicle: separate from each other, yet working together towards a common purpose.

Modern society has adopted a different pattern. Instead of the principle of division of labour, it promotes the idea of unified roles. Although, in practice, the division of labour still largely exists even in the Western world, the theoretical ideal is that both sexes should perform

identical functions. Since this principle is unnatural, such imagined uniformity is neither possible nor found in reality.

In Islam, the distinction recognized between man and woman exists only for practical reasons. In matters of honour and rights, there is complete equality between them. In terms of dignity and respect, no difference or preference is allowed.

As mentioned earlier, the principle of pairs exists throughout the world. The same principle applies to human beings in the form of man and woman. However, this principle indicates a difference between the two genders, not a difference in status. This difference exists so that, by supporting one another, men and women may fulfill the functions of life in the best possible manner. However, no rule is without exceptions.

Every rule has exceptions. This applies to both men and women. Some women may possess abilities generally associated with men, and some men may display traits commonly associated with women. Such exceptions occur in both genders. However, general rules cannot be based on exceptional cases. It is a well-established principle that laws are framed in view of common conditions; exceptional cases can never serve as the foundation for general laws.

In this world, human beings have been granted freedom of thought and action. Therefore, they are free to think and

act as they wish. However, this freedom applies only to personal action. When it comes to results, human beings have no control. The outcome will always follow the laws of nature. This means that both men and women may choose to violate the natural principle of pairs, but the result will inevitably be determined by the laws of nature, not by what they personally desire or expect.

WOMAN
ACCORDING
TO THE QURAN

WOMAN IN THE QURAN

The teachings of the Quran concerning human success apply equally to both men and women. Although many verses are expressed in the masculine form, seemingly addressing men, this is primarily a matter of linguistic convention and style. In essence, Quranic guidance is relevant to both genders, according to their respective circumstances. Even when a command is grammatically directed to men, it is generally understood, in a broader sense, to include both men and women.

For example, the Quran states: “Can he who was dead, to whom We gave life, and a light whereby he could walk among people be like him who is in utter darkness from which he can never emerge? Thus the deeds of those who deny the truth have been made fair-seeming to them.” (Quran, 6:122)

There are numerous verses in the Quran that clearly set forth essential beliefs and prescribed actions. Although many of these verses appear in the masculine form, they are equally applicable to women. However, in this chapter, we will specifically refer to those Quranic verses that are

expressed in the feminine form, where the grammatical address is directly to women.

The Quran mentions women repeatedly from different perspectives: sometimes as individuals, sometimes as members of the collective human society; sometimes in relation to their biological aspect, and sometimes in relation to their social role. Taken together, these verses present a clear and authentic picture of women as envisaged within the Islamic philosophy of life.

1. The Creation of Adam and Eve

The first reference to woman in the Quran appears in connection with Adam and his wife, Eve. The relevant passage reads:

“We said, ‘O Adam! live with your wife in Paradise and eat freely from it anywhere you may wish. Yet do not approach this tree lest you become wrongdoers.’ But Satan caused them both to slip through this and thus brought about the loss of their former state. We said, ‘Go down from here as enemies to each other; and on earth you shall have your abode and your livelihood for a while!’ Then Adam received some words [of prayer] from his Lord and He accepted his repentance. He is the Forgiving One, the Merciful. We said, ‘Go down, all of you, from

here: then when guidance comes to you from Me, anyone who follows My guidance will have no fear, nor will they grieve—those who deny and reject Our signs shall be the inhabitants of the Fire; therein shall they abide forever.”
(Quran, 2:35-39)

This account also appears elsewhere, for example, in Chapter al-A'raf (7:11-25). From these verses, it is clear that at the beginning of creation, God placed Adam and Eve in Paradise and allowed them to live there freely. However, by eating from the forbidden tree, they failed to prove themselves worthy of retaining Paradise as their birthright. As a result, human beings lost their automatic entitlement to Paradise.

After this, God decreed that Paradise would henceforth be granted to men and women only on a selective basis. Both were therefore sent down from Paradise to live on the present Earth. God said:

Live upon the earth and multiply your progeny. From time to time, messengers will come to you from Me, who will show you what is right and what is wrong according to divine standards. Those who pass this test will be admitted again to eternal Paradise, while those—men or women—who fail will be declared unworthy of it.

In this world, every man and woman faces the same divine test. This test will continue from generation to generation

until the Day of Judgement. After that, all human beings will be divided into two groups on the basis of their deeds: the successful will enter eternal Paradise, while the unsuccessful will be cast into Hell for all eternity.

2.The Choice of Marriage

One of the Quranic teachings concerning marriage between a man and a woman is expressed in the following verse:

“Do not marry women who associate partners with God until they believe. A believing bondwoman is better than a woman who associates partners with God, however pleasing she may appear to you. Nor give believing women in marriage to men who associate partners with God, till they have believed; a believing bondman is certainly better than a man who associates partners with God, even though he may please you. Such people call you to Hell-fire; but God calls you to Paradise and to forgiveness. He makes His messages clear to people, so that they might bear them in mind.”
(Quran, 2:221)

From this Quranic teaching, it becomes clear that marriage in Islam is not, as is often assumed, merely a

means of entertainment or leisure; rather, it is a serious responsibility. When a man and a woman enter into marriage, they commit themselves to mutual support and to sharing the responsibilities of life. If they do this, they will become healthy members of the caravan of humanity.

When the true purpose of marriage is kept in view, outward charm and physical beauty become secondary, while inner moral and spiritual qualities acquire greater importance. Experience shows that nature generally maintains this balance: those with greater external beauty may possess fewer inner virtues, whereas those with stronger moral qualities may be less outwardly attractive. In such cases, wisdom requires that temporary physical beauty be given less weight, and enduring moral and spiritual qualities should be regarded as more valuable.

3. The Proper Divorce Procedure

In Islamic law, marriage is regarded as the fundamental and preferred relationship between a man and a woman. Divorce is permitted only in cases of extreme and exceptional necessity, not as a common practice.

Therefore, there is a narration from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar stating that the Messenger of God (ﷺ) said:

“The most disliked of permissible things to God is divorce.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 2178)

The Quran teaches that if a husband and wife reach a situation in which they wish to separate through divorce,

it should not take place through an immediate and final separation. Instead, the Shariah prescribes a specific and gradual procedure. This method is described in the Quran as follows:

“Divorce may be pronounced twice, and then a woman must be retained honourably or released with kindness.” (Quran, 2:229)

The idea of divorce usually arises in a moment of anger. A husband may become upset by something his wife says, an argument may follow, intensify, and in a moment of rage, he may say, “I divorce you.” However, according to Shariah, divorce is finalized only after three separate pronouncements, each separated by a specific period of time: one pronouncement in each of two months, and in the third month, either a final pronouncement or reconciliation.

This system exists because anger is a passing impulse. With the passage of time, anger subsides, and the thought of divorce may also fade. In other words, the purpose of this procedure is to prevent divorce or discourage it rather than allow it to become immediate and irrevocable.

Some Muslims, however, pronounce three divorces in a single sitting. This is clearly a misuse of the law. During the caliphate of ‘Umar al-Faruq, when certain people acted in this manner, ‘Umar ordered that they be flogged. (*Sunan Sa’id ibn Mansur*, Hadith No. 1073)

4. Writing the Transaction and Witnesses

According to the Quran, when two parties enter into a credit-based financial transaction for a fixed period, the agreement should be documented and witnessed. The relevant passage states:

“Believers, when you contract a debt for a stated term, put it down in writing; have a scribe write it down with fairness between you. No scribe should refuse to write: let him write as God has taught him, let the debtor dictate, and let him fear God, his Lord, and not diminish [the debt] at all. If the debtor is weak in mind or body, or unable to dictate, then in fairness let his guardian dictate for him. Call in two of your men as witnesses. But if two men cannot be found, then call one man and two women out of those you approve of as witnesses, so that if one of the two women should forget the other can remind her. Let the witnesses not refuse when they are summoned. Do not be disinclined to write down your debts, be they small or large, together with the date of payment. This is more just in the sight of God; it is more reliable as testimony, and more likely to prevent doubts arising between you, unless it be ready merchandise which you give or take from hand to hand, then it will not be held against you

for not writing it down. Have witnesses present whenever you trade with one another, and let no harm be done to either scribe or witness, for if you did cause them harm, it would be a crime on your part. Be mindful of God; He teaches you: He has full knowledge of everything.” (Quran, 2:282)

In financial transactions, two parties are always involved. To preserve mutual trust, it is essential to document the transaction in writing, so that if a dispute arises, the written record can serve as the basis for settling the matter.

The Quranic verse requiring two female witnesses in place of one male witness does not imply that women are inferior to men. Rather, it reflects a practical consideration as mentioned in the Quran, “so that if one of the two women should forget, the other can remind her.”

God has given men and women distinct mental and emotional abilities. Certain capacities may be more pronounced in one gender than in the other. For instance, the structure and functioning of the male and female mind differ in certain respects: a man’s mind often tends to focus on one task at a time, whereas a woman’s mind may be more inclined to attend to several matters simultaneously. As a result, a woman’s mental attention is often broader, while a man’s focus is usually more concentrated. This difference can be observed in everyday

life. (For details, see Monthly *Al-Risala*, June 2021, p. 8, “*Aurat aur Mard ka Farq*”)

Because of this natural difference, the rule was established that two women may serve as witnesses in place of one man, so that if one woman, owing to her natural disposition, does not fully recall a particular detail of the transaction, the other may assist her memory.

5. Equality Between Man and Woman

At one place, the Quran records the supplication of the believers, in which they ask God for His mercy and salvation. God responds:

“Their Lord accepted their prayer, saying, ‘I will deny no man or woman among you the reward of their labours. You are members, one of another.’” (Quran, 3:195)

This verse clearly shows that, in Islam, men and women possess equal status. The phrase “you are members, one of another” indicates that their standing before God is the same. The verse further states that those who migrated, were driven from their homes, endured hardship for the sake of God, and struggled against opposing forces shall all receive His forgiveness and be granted entry into Paradise, without any distinction of gender.

Thus, Islam assigns equal moral responsibilities to both men and women. Accordingly, they share equally in

reward and punishment. In other words, men and women possess equal rights as well as equal obligations.

6. Members of One Family

The Quran states: “O mankind! Fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul. He created its mate from it and from the two of them spread countless men and women [throughout the earth]. Fear God, in whose name you appeal to one another, and be mindful of your obligations in respect of ties of kinship. God is always watching over you.” (Quran, 4:1)

This verse affirms that man and woman share the same origin. Both descend from the same first parents and are, in essence, like siblings to one another. This understanding forms the foundation of all social ethics. Those who internalize this principle will regard good conduct towards others as important as good conduct towards their own family members. It becomes a source of mutual harmony and a strong incentive for striving toward higher moral excellence.

The phrase *khalaqa minha zawjaha*—“He created from it its mate”—uses the word *minha*, which conveys the sense of “from the same kind.” In other words, Eve was created from the same human essence as Adam. Their shared origin points to a natural bond, compatibility, and harmony between man and woman.

The Bible states that God created Adam first and then fashioned Eve from one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2:22-23). On this basis, some commentators held that Eve was created from Adam's rib.

However, this is a biblical account, not a Quranic one. According to the Quran, Adam and Eve were both created from the same substance; it does not state that one was physically formed from the other.

The Hadith, "Women were created from a rib" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5186) refers to women in general, not specifically to the creation of Eve. Here, the rib functions as a metaphor, indicating women's emotional sensitivity; therefore, men are advised to treat them with gentleness and understanding.

7. Polygamy

The Quran permits more than one marriage only under specific conditions: "If you fear that you cannot deal fairly with orphan girls, you may marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if you fear that you might not be able to treat them with equal fairness, then only one." (Quran, 4:3)

This verse permits polygamy but only within a specific social context. In situations where war or other extraordinary circumstances reduce the number of men while increasing the number of women, polygamy serves

as a temporary measure to restore social balance. The expression “two, three, or four wives” emphasizes that marrying one woman is the standard practice, while more than one is exceptional, occurring only under unusual social conditions.

8. Inheritance Rights of Men and Women

The Quran states: “Men shall have a share in what parents and relatives leave behind, and women shall have a share in what parents and relatives leave behind, whether it be little or much. This is ordained [by God].” (Quran, 4:7)

This provision ensures that all heirs—sons, whether minors or adults, and daughters, whether minors or adults—receive their predetermined portions. These shares are fixed and obligatory, establishing clear and equitable rules for inheritance.

In ancient times, inheritance laws were often unjust. Heirs either received no shares or were allocated their portions unequally. The Quran addressed this inequity by establishing a fair and balanced system, ensuring that every heir—male or female—receives their rightful portion.

9. Good in What Appears Displeasing

The Quran teaches: “Believers, it is not lawful for you to inherit women against their will, nor should you detain them wrongfully, so that you may take away a part of what

you have given them, unless they are guilty of something clearly outrageous. Live with them in accordance with what is fair and kind; if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something which God might make a source of abundant good.” (Quran, 4:19)

This verse underscores a fundamental principle of family life: humans are naturally different from one another, and the key to a successful life lies in the capacity to accommodate these differences.

In married life, disagreements may arise between spouses, leading one or both to feel that they made a mistake. in choosing their partner. However, such perceptions do not indicate a mistake of choice but are a result of wrong thinking. Both spouses must recognize that no individual can be deemed a “perfect husband” or a “perfect wife.” The essence of a successful marriage lies in learning to live harmoniously with an imperfect partner, guided by patience, understanding, and mutual respect.

Such adjustment is not a weakness; rather, it reflects profound wisdom. The ability to adapt to unfavourable circumstances is one of the foundations of human progress. With such adjustment, healthy relations between man and woman are strengthened, noble human qualities are developed, and hidden potentials are awakened. This condition is not a human invention; it is an inherent part of the Creator’s design. In this matter, neither man nor woman has any choice but to accept it.

10. The Principle of Marital Relations

The Quran states: “You are forbidden to take as wives your mothers, daughters, sisters, paternal and maternal aunts, your brothers’ daughters and your sisters’ daughters, your foster mothers and foster sisters, your wives’ mothers and stepdaughters in your protection and the daughters of your wives with whom you have consummated your marriage; but if you have not consummated your marriage then you will not be blamed [if you marry their daughters]. You are also forbidden to marry the spouses of your sons or two sisters together, except what has already passed. Surely, God is ever-forgiving and merciful.” (Quran, 4:23)

Under Islamic law, marriage is permitted with some relatives and prohibited with others. Women with whom marriage is prohibited fall into several categories. Seven categories are prohibited on account of blood relationship: one’s mother, daughter, sister, paternal aunt, maternal aunt, brother’s daughter, and sister’s daughter. Marriage to any woman belonging to these categories is unlawful.

The term “mother” includes one’s grandmothers and all female ascendants, however remote. Similarly, the term “sister” includes all three types of sisters: a full sister, who shares both parents; a paternal half-sister, who shares the same father but has a different mother; and a maternal half-sister, who shares the same mother but has a different father.

The category of “paternal aunt” includes the full and half-sisters of one’s father, paternal grandfather, and all male ascendants. The category of “maternal aunt” includes the full and half-sisters of one’s mother, maternal grandmother, and all female ascendants.

The category of “brother’s daughter” includes the daughters and all female descendants of one’s full brother, paternal half-brother, and maternal half-brother. Likewise, the category of “sister’s daughter” includes the daughters and all female descendants of one’s full sister, paternal half-sister, and maternal half-sister. Marriage to any of these women is prohibited.

Certain relationships are also prohibited on account of fosterage through breastfeeding. The two principal relationships mentioned are those of foster mother and foster sister. However, all seven categories prohibited by blood relationship are likewise prohibited through fosterage. Thus, marriage is also prohibited with one’s foster daughter, foster paternal aunt, foster maternal aunt, foster brother’s daughter, and foster sister’s daughter.

Marriage may also be prohibited on account of affinity, that is, relationships created through marriage. This prohibition is of two kinds.

The first is permanent prohibition. A man may never marry his wife’s mother or the daughter of a wife with whom he has consummated the marriage. However, if he

divorces a woman before consummation, he may marry her daughter. He is also permanently prohibited from marrying the wives of his sons, including the wives of his grandsons and all male descendants.

The second is temporary prohibition. In such cases, marriage remains prohibited only for as long as the woman remains married to him. If the marriage ends through divorce or the wife's death, marriage with certain of her relatives becomes permissible. For example, a man may not marry his wife's sister while he is still married to his wife, but he may do so after the marriage has ended. The same rule applies to his wife's paternal aunt, maternal aunt, brother's daughter, and sister's daughter. (*Tafsir Usmani*)

11. The Basis of Healthy Relationships

The Quran teaches: "Do not covet the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on some of you than on others. Men shall be rewarded according to their deeds, and women shall be rewarded according to their deeds. You should rather ask God for His bounty. God has knowledge of all things." (Quran, 4:32)

Men and women differ in many important ways. Some possess greater physical or mental abilities, while others are born into favourable circumstances, and still others face challenges. Some enjoy abundant resources, while others have little.

When either a man or a woman observes someone more privileged, feelings of envy may arise, potentially leading to jealousy, rivalry, and social conflict. Measuring oneself or others based on such differences reflects a lack of understanding. These distinctions are worldly—granted in this life and ending with it. What truly matters for both men and women is success in the Hereafter, which is not influenced by worldly advantages. Success in the Hereafter depends on the actions that a man or woman performs according to their own choice and with full intention.

12. The Principle of Guardianship (*Qawwamiyyat*)

The Quran states: “Men are protectors (*qawwam*) of women, because God has made some of them excel others and because they spend their wealth on them. So virtuous women are obedient and guard in the husband’s absence what God would have them guard. As for those from whom you apprehend infidelity, admonish them, then refuse to share their beds, and finally hit them [lightly]. Then if they obey you, take no further action against them. For God is High, Great.” (Quran, 4:34)

Qawwamiyyat relates to guardianship. According to Islam, within the family, the man has been designated as *qawwam* (guardian) over the woman. This does not imply superiority or privilege in the conventional sense. Rather, it signifies that in matters concerning the family, the man carries the role of administrative responsibility.

Qawwamiyyat is about management, not about dominance or the authority of one person over another. For organizational purposes, every system—whether a company, a government, a meeting, or an institution—requires a central point of coordination: a manager, a prime minister, a chairman, or a director. This structure exists purely out of administrative necessity, not due to hierarchical discrimination.

In the verse, the word *وَاصْرِبُوهُنَّ* (*wa-dribuhunna*), often translated as “strike them,” does not imply physical beating. Its intended meaning here is warning or admonition, referring to a corrective measure that can best be described as a well-intentioned admonition.

13. The Principle of Arbitration

Disputes may sometimes arise within family life. The Quran provides a natural and fair principle for resolving such disputes, as mentioned in the following verse:

“If you fear any breach between a man and his wife, appoint one arbiter from his family and one arbiter from her family. If they both want to set things right, God will bring about a reconciliation between them: He is all knowing and all aware.” (Quran, 4:35)

This principle of *hakam* (arbitration) is highly effective for resolving conflicts. When two people disagree, their judgement is often influenced by emotions, which can

create bias and prevent them from viewing the situation objectively. In such cases, the most effective approach is for both parties to agree upon a neutral third-party arbitrator who is not personally involved in the issue. Free from emotional bias, this person can assess the situation clearly and make decisions that uphold truth and fairness.

14. Equal Reward

The Quran declares: “Anyone who performs good deeds, whether it be a man or woman, provided that he is a believer, shall enter Paradise. No one shall suffer the least injustice.” (Quran, 4:124)

This verse clearly demonstrates that, regarding the reward for righteous deeds, there is no distinction between men and women in the eyes of Allah. God’s law of recompense applies equally to both genders.

Whoever genuinely demonstrates true faith in God and performs good deeds with a sincere spirit of righteousness will equally earn a place in eternal Paradise, regardless of whether the individual is a man or a woman.

15. Adam and Eve

While mentioning the first human beings—Adam and Eve—the Quran states: “To Adam He said, ‘You and your wife, dwell in the Garden and eat and drink there

from wherever you wish, but do not approach this tree, lest you become wrongdoers.’ But Satan tempted them so that he might reveal to them their nakedness which had been hidden from them. He said, ‘Your Lord has forbidden you to approach this tree lest you should become angels or become of the immortals,’ and he swore to them, ‘Surely, I am your well-wisher.’ Thus he cunningly seduced them. When they tasted the tree’s fruit, their nakedness became exposed to them and they started covering themselves with the leaves of the garden. Their Lord called out to them, ‘Did I not forbid you to approach that tree, and did I not say to you that Satan was surely your open enemy?’ They replied, ‘Our Lord, we have wronged our souls: if You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall be among the lost.’ (Quran, 7:19-23)

In this account, the dual form (used for two persons) appears repeatedly throughout the Arabic text, and this is highly significant. This contrasts with the Biblical narrative, which suggests that Eve misled Adam, causing him to disobey God’s command regarding the forbidden tree. The Quran, however, refutes this notion. By consistently employing dual expressions, it clarifies that Satan, not Eve, was the deceiver. Satan tempted both simultaneously, and both succumbed to his deception.

The Quranic narrative clearly demonstrates that men and women possess equal moral responsibility: both committed the same error, repented together, and received God’s mercy.

16. Believing Men and Believing Women

The Quran states: “The believers, both men and women, are friends to each other; they enjoin what is good and forbid evil, they attend to their prayers and pay the alms and obey God and His Messenger. On these God will have mercy, for God is almighty and wise. God has promised the believers, both men and women, Gardens through which rivers flow, wherein they will abide, and fine dwelling places in Gardens of eternity. But the good pleasure of God is greater still. That is the supreme achievement.” (Quran, 9:71-72)

This passage shows that believing men and believing women are equal in moral and spiritual responsibility. At the individual level, Islam applies the same ethical standards to both. At the social level, they are expected to work together in promoting what is right and preventing what is wrong. This shared responsibility is expressed in the Quranic phrase *ba’dhum awliya’u ba’d* (9:71), meaning that they are allies, supporters, and partners of one another.

Furthermore, the Quran explicitly states that in the Hereafter, the status of men and women is equal. The actions that qualify a man for Paradise are the same ones that render a woman equally deserving.

17. Preparing the New Generation

The Quran documents a prayer of the Prophet Abraham, offered when he settled his wife Hagar and son Ishmael in

the Arabian desert:

“[Remember] when Abraham said, “My Lord, make this a city of peace and help me and my children to keep away from worshipping idols. My Lord, they have led so many men astray! Anyone who follows me is with me, but if anyone turns against me, You are surely forgiving and merciful. O Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivable valley near Your Sacred House, Lord, so that they might establish their prayers. So, make people’s hearts incline towards them and provide them with fruits so that they may be grateful.” (Quran, 14:35-37)

This passage recalls a significant chapter in history, shaped by the perseverance of a woman named Hagar. During Abraham’s time, idolatry was widespread, and human society was entirely dominated by a polytheistic culture. The mindset of every child born in that era was influenced by the prevailing cultural norms.

By divine command, Abraham took his wife and infant son out of those surroundings and settled them in a remote valley—a place of natural simplicity, free from cultural corruption and social conditioning.

In such a pure and untainted environment, a new generation was nurtured—one that developed from its original God-given nature. This lineage later became known as the Children of Ishmael, from whom the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was

born, and from whom emerged the noble companions who elevated the prophetic call of monotheism from a mere idea to a world-changing revolution.

The story of Hagar serves as a timeless example for all women. It illustrates that each woman carries the responsibility of nurturing her children through education and moral guidance, thereby helping them become better human beings.

In every era, her role is to shape the next generation—continually enriching humanity with virtuous and God-conscious individuals.

18. The Godly Life

The Quran declares:

“To whoever does good deeds, man or woman, and is a believer, We shall assuredly give a good life; and We will bestow upon them their reward according to the best of their works.” (Quran, 16:97)

This verse clearly demonstrates that, in God’s view, men and women are equal. The measure of a person’s worth lies in their righteousness and good deeds. For every individual, God’s mercy in this world and salvation in the Hereafter are governed by the same principle—the principle of righteous conduct, not gender. God’s justice and recompense are based solely on conduct and character, not on sex or social status.

19. No Spreading of Immorality

During the Madinan period, an incident occurred in which the Prophet's wife, Aisha bint Abi Bakr, was falsely accused of misconduct. There was no evidence to support this claim; yet when some people in Madinah spoke of it, rumours began to circulate.

People began repeating what they heard, spreading it in conversations without any investigation.

In response, the Quran revealed several commands, among them the following: "When you heard of it, why did not the believing men and believing women think well of their own people, and say, 'This is a manifest slander?' Why did they not produce four witnesses? If they could not produce any witnesses, they were indeed liars in the sight of God! Had it not been for the grace of God and His mercy on you in this world and the Hereafter, a terrible punishment would have afflicted you for your plunging headlong into slander. When you were spreading it with your tongues and saying with your mouths things of which you had no knowledge, you considered it to be a trivial matter, but, in God's sight, it was very serious." (Quran, 24:12-16)

This Quranic passage establishes an essential social principle: when an allegation of immorality is made against any man or woman, people must not accept or repeat it without clear proof. Repeating an unverified claim renders the speaker guilty in the sight of God. The

listener's responsibility is to reject such speech outright unless credible evidence is presented.

In matters of moral accusations, the Quran stipulates the requirement of testimony from four eyewitnesses who have directly observed the act. In the absence of such evidence, individuals who propagate or circulate the accusation are considered serious offenders and may be subject to legal consequences under Islamic law.

20. The Quranic Principle of Modest Dress

Regarding the principle of modesty for women, the Quran instructs: "Say to believing women that they should lower their gaze and remain chaste and not to reveal their adornments—save what is normally apparent thereof, and they should fold their shawls over their bosoms. They can only reveal their adornments to their husbands or their fathers or their husbands' fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons or their brothers or their brothers' sons or their sisters' sons or maidservants or those whom their right hands possess or their male attendants who have no sexual desire or children who still have no carnal knowledge of women. Nor should they swing their legs to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. Believers, turn to God, every one of you, so that you may prosper." (Quran, 24:31)

This verse establishes the rules of modesty (*satr*), specifying which parts of the body must be covered and which may be shown. Essentially, a woman's body should

be covered with loose and simple clothing. However, there exists one important exception indicated by the phrase “save what is normally apparent thereof.”

Commenting on this in his Tafsir ‘Uthmani (pp. 458-459), Maulana Shabbir Ahmad ‘Uthmani writes:

“Based on the hadith and early reports, it is established that the face and hands (*al-kaffayn*) are included in the phrase ‘except what appears thereof,’ because many religious and worldly needs require these parts to remain uncovered. If covering them were made strictly obligatory, women would face unnecessary hardship in daily life. Later jurists extended this ruling to the feet by analogy. Consequently, accessories such as rings, henna, kajal, and similar items are also understood to be included in this exemption. However, it should be clearly understood that ‘except what appears thereof’ grants permission only in cases of necessity.”

Thus, the Quran’s teaching on modesty combines dignity with practicality—prescribing decency without creating unnecessary difficulty, and enabling women to act responsibly within the limits of faith and propriety.

21. Leadership of the Righteous

The Quran describes certain qualities of the people of Paradise—that is, the qualities by virtue of which a person becomes worthy of entering Paradise. One of these

qualities is that they pray to God for their families in the following words:

“They say, ‘Lord, grant us joy in our wives and children and make us a model for the righteous.’”
(Quran, 25:74)

Rephrased, this supplication conveys the following meaning: “O God, the true joy of my heart lies in righteousness. Make my spouse and children righteous, so that by seeing them I may find peace. Let my family be one that lives in reverence of You.”

A mother and father who are sincere servants of God do not take pride merely in their children’s material success or worldly achievements. Their real joy comes from witnessing their children grow into God-conscious individuals who are obedient to divine guidance and live according to His will. Such a household is truly God-centred, and those blessed parents entrusted with leading a righteous family are indeed fortunate.

22. No Political Confrontation

The Quran recounts the story of the Queen of Sheba (*Bilqis*), who was a contemporary of Prophet Solomon (*Sulaiman*) and governed the coastal region of Yemen. The Quran explains that Solomon’s messenger—a hud-hud (*hoopoe bird*)—flew from Palestine to Yemen and returned with news about her and her people. Solomon then sent

a letter through the same bird. The Quran recounts the exchange as follows: (Solomon said): “‘Go with this letter of mine and lay it before them, then withdraw from them and see how they respond.’ The Queen of Sheba said, ‘O Counsellors, an honourable letter has been delivered to me. It is from Solomon. It reads, “In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful, do not exalt yourselves above me, but come to me in all submission.” Now advise me in this, Counsellors. I never decide any affair till I have conferred with you.’ They said, ‘We are strong and our prowess in battle is great, but the decision is in your hands, so consider what you will command.’ She said, ‘Surely, when mighty kings invade a country, they despoil it and humiliate its noblest inhabitants—these men will do the same.’” (Quran, 27:28-34)

Through these verses, the Quran conveys—through the words of a wise woman—the principle of sound political conduct. When a conflict arises between two political groups, one relatively weak and the other considerably more powerful, the wiser course is to avoid confrontation. Such a clash generally ends in the one-sided destruction of the weaker party. The consequences are not limited to the opposing armies killing one another. Innocent people also lose their lives, and people of dignity and social standing are humiliated.

According to the verse, the Queen of Sheba believed that even if Solomon and his forces entered her kingdom,

the same destruction and humiliation would follow. The Quran records her words: “these men will do the same.” (27:34) In such circumstances, the right policy is the one adopted by the Queen of Sheba in dealing with Solomon: to avoid confrontation and safeguard the interests of her people through reconciliation.

23. The Sphere of Woman’s Work

The Quran recounts the story of Prophet Moses in detail. One part of this story describes how, due to certain circumstances, he was forced to leave Egypt and head towards Midian. Along the way, he encountered the following scene:

“When he arrived at the well of Midian, he found around it a group of men watering their flocks, and he saw two women standing apart from them, who were holding back their flocks, so he asked, ‘What is the matter with you?’ They replied, ‘We cannot draw water until the shepherds take away their sheep. Our father is a very old man.’ So Moses watered their flocks for them; and returned into the shade and prayed, ‘Lord, I am truly in need of whatever blessing You may send down for me,’ and then one of the two women came walking shyly up to him and said, ‘My father is asking you to come so that he may reward you for watering our flocks for

us.’ When Moses came to their father and gave him an account of himself, he said: ‘Don’t be afraid! You have escaped from those wrongdoing people.’ One of the girls said, ‘Father, hire him! For the best man to hire is someone strong and trustworthy.’” (Quran, 28:23-26)

These two women were believers—daughters of a righteous elder from the Israelites—and at that time, they were unmarried. Their family’s livelihood depended on herding livestock. Every morning, they took their sheep out to graze, watered them in the evening, and brought them back home. They also managed other responsibilities of the family.

This incident demonstrates that in God’s religion, women are allowed to work outside the home. There are no restrictions on them in this regard, as long as they follow the moral boundaries set by divine law. Women should not engage in work with moral laxity or disregard for propriety, but within the necessary limits and restraints, they may perform their duties and contribute productively to society.

24. The Rights of Parents

The Quran commands: “We have enjoined man to show kindness to his parents—for his mother bears him, in hardship upon hardship, and his weaning takes two years.

[We said] Give thanks to Me and to your parents; all will return to Me. But if they press you to associate something with Me about which you have no knowledge, do not obey them. Yet be kind to them in this world and follow the path of those who turn to Me. You will all return to Me in the end, and I will tell you everything that you have done.” (Quran, 31:14-15)

In the teachings of the Quran, after the rights of God, the greatest right is that of one's parents. Among the teachings of the Quran, after what is due to God, the greatest obligations are those owed to one's parents. According to a hadith, a mother is entitled to even greater consideration than a father. This is because recognizing someone's rights is, in essence, an acknowledgment of the good they have done for us.

God's beneficence towards humanity is supreme, making His rights the highest of all. After that come the rights of one's parents who nurture and protect their children from the very beginning when they are completely helpless. Recognizing and honouring this beneficence constitutes one of the highest virtues, and such recognition must first be directed toward God and then towards one's parents.

It is essential to distinguish between serving one's parents and obeying them. Islamic teaching prescribes that serving parents is an absolute moral duty, without exception. Yet, obedience applies only to actions that are just and right. If parents command something contrary to divine guidance, they are not to be obeyed, although parents must still be treated with respect and kindness.

25. The Responsibility of Women

Concerning the responsibilities of the Prophet's wives, the Quran declares: "Wives of the Prophet, you are not like any other women. If you fear God, do not be too soft-spoken in case the ill-intentioned should feel tempted. Speak in an appropriate manner. Stay in your homes and do not flaunt your charms as in the former times of ignorance. Attend to your prayers, pay the zakat and obey God and His Messenger. Women of the [Prophet's] Household, God seeks only to remove all impurity from you, and to make you completely pure." (Quran, 33:32-33)

Although these verses are addressed directly to the Prophet's wives, in their broader sense, they apply to all women who, besides managing their personal and domestic duties, also take on social responsibilities and, through such work, may necessarily interact with men.

For women like these, the Quran defines proper conduct: they should perform their duties while maintaining their feminine dignity and moral restraint. The key principle is balance—fulfilling obligations and engaging with society without compromising propriety, virtue, or ethical responsibility.

Even while executing their public or leadership roles, they must still maintain modesty and moral integrity without compromise.

26. The Home as a Centre of Learning

Concerning the Prophet's wives, the Quran further instructs: "Bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of the revelations of God and of wisdom. God is all pervading and all aware." (33:34)

Though this command was directed specifically at the wives of the Prophet, it conveys a universal principle. The wives of the Prophet serve as role models for the Muslim community, their lives exemplifying an ideal pattern for others to follow. They were instructed not only to deeply internalize the teachings and wisdom they heard from the Prophet but also to share that knowledge with others.

This provides a strong insight into the spirit of Islam: every Muslim household should serve as a centre of learning, with the woman of the house as its moral and educational leader. The home is the fundamental unit of society. When each home fulfills this vital role, society as a whole evolves into a more enlightened and progressive community.

27. The Qualities of God-Fearing Women

In the Quran, the qualities of God-fearing men and women are described in the following verses:

"Surely, for men and women who have surrendered [to God]—believing men and believing women, obedient men and obedient women, truthful men and truthful women,

patient men and patient women, humble men and humble women, charitable men and charitable women, fasting men and fasting women, men and women who guard their chastity, men and women who are ever mindful of God—God is ready with forgiveness and an immense reward. It is not fitting for a believing man or woman to exercise any choice in his or her own affairs once God and His Messenger have reached a decision upon them. Anyone who disobeys God and His Messenger is in manifest error.” (Quran, 33:35-36)

These verses describe the ideal qualities of a believing man or woman—the kind of person God wishes them to become. The Quran highlights ten key attributes: *Islam* (submission), *Iman* (faith), *Qunut* (devotion), *Sidq* (truthfulness), *Sabr* (patience), *Khushu'* (humility), *Sadaqah* (charity), *Sawm* (self-control through fasting), *'Iffah* (chastity), and *Dhikr-Allah* (remembrance of God).

Within these ten attributes lies the true essence of Islamic belief and character.

Whoever hopes for God's forgiveness and reward must fully submit to His command, hold unwavering conviction, and dedicate their entire being to serving God. Such a person must live in harmony between words and actions, consistently upholding truth in every circumstance. A profound awareness of God's greatness should instill humility, while helping others is regarded as a personal

duty. Self-control through fasting, maintenance of purity and chastity, and continual remembrance of God should shape their daily life.

These virtues are expected equally of men and women. While expressions may vary, the core principles remain unchanged. Acceptance by God depends on possessing these ten attributes.

In a world of trials, the ultimate safeguard is absolute obedience to God and His Messenger. Whenever personal desire conflicts with divine command, one must, with sincere intention and a willing heart, prioritize the command of God and His Messenger, setting aside personal inclinations.

28. Life is a Trust

According to the Quran, life is a trust—for both men and women alike. The test of every human being in this world is whether they fulfill this divine trust faithfully. The outcome of this test determines the eternal destiny of every man and woman. The Quran states:

“We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, because they were afraid of it. But man bore it: he surely proved unjust and ignorant. God will punish the hypocrites, both men and women, and polytheists, both men and women, but God will turn in His mercy to believing men

and believing women; God is most forgiving and most merciful.” (33:72-73)

The “trust” (*amanah*) signifies free will—the ability to make choices. It is called a trust because it belongs to God, Who has temporarily given it to humanity as a test, so that people can, of their own free will, choose to obey Him.

In other words, this trust means exercising God-given authority over oneself by willingly obeying His commandments, unlike the stars, planets, and the rest of creation, which submit to God’s laws without any freedom of choice. Throughout the universe, only God is Sovereign, and everything else exists under His control.

Yet God chose to create a being who, without compulsion, would willingly submit to His commands.

This voluntary obedience constituted an extremely delicate test—one that even the heavens, the earth, and the mountains were unable to bear. Human beings, however, accepted this responsibility despite its immense risks. Thus, in this world, both men and women are trustees of God’s command, accountable for using their freedom in accordance with His will.

The present world, therefore, serves as a vast testing ground where human beings are evaluated to see whether they use their God-given freedom rightly.

This trust carries immense responsibility, for it forms the very basis of reward and punishment. Other creatures,

guided solely by instinct, are not held accountable. Human beings, however, endowed with free will, are answerable for their actions.

When God first announced the creation of man, He declared: “I am putting a successor on earth.” (Quran, 2:30)

Some commentators have understood it in the following sense:

Khalifatun yakhluḥuni fī tanfidhi ahkami fiha—
 “A vicegerent who acts on My behalf in
 implementing My commands on earth.” (*Tafsir*
al-Jalalayn, p. 8)

However, deeper reflection on this Quranic passage points to another, more profound meaning:

Khalifatun yakhluḥuni fī tanfidhi ahkami ala nafsīhi—“A person who, of his own free will,
 applies My commands to himself.”

This suggests that the true sphere of divine governance is not limited to the external world; it also extends to the human self, where every individual is required to uphold God’s commands within their own being. This divine plan applies equally to men and women. Thus, humanity will ultimately fall into three categories:

1. True believers—those who remain faithful to this trust and sincerely succeed in the test.
2. Open rejecters—those who clearly fail the test.

3. Hypocrites—those who profess faith in words but, in practice, act according to worldly motives rather than divine guidance.

Thus, the story of every human being—male or female—is the story of how they preserve or betray this sacred trust of freedom entrusted to them by God.

29. The Role of the Mother

The Quran states: “We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents: his mother bore him, in pain and in pain she gave birth to him, and his bearing and weaning takes thirty months. At length, when he reaches the age of full maturity and attains forty years, he says, ‘O my Lord! Help me to be grateful for Your favours which You have bestowed upon me, and upon both my parents, and to do good deeds that will please You. Grant me righteousness in my offspring. Truly, I have turned to You and, truly, I submit to You.’ We accept from such people the best of what they do, and We overlook their bad deeds. They will be among the people of Paradise—this is a true promise that has been given to them.” (46:15-16)

Throughout human history, the role of woman as a mother has been profoundly essential and foundational. The mother acts as the unifying force in the human journey—the thread that binds together the pages of the book of life. Without her, the very fabric of human existence would begin to unravel.

For this reason, Islam places great emphasis on honouring women in their role as mothers and safeguarding their rights. Respecting a mother's rights forms the basis of moral excellence within society. A community that protects the dignity and status of mothers becomes more refined, compassionate, and civilized. Conversely, a society that neglects or undermines this role gradually declines and can never truly attain the character of a humane and noble civilization.

In essence, it is the role of the mother that protects human society from descending into moral chaos.

30. Social Ethics

The Quran declares:

“Believers, let not some men among you ridicule others: it may be that the latter are better than the former: nor should some women laugh at others: it may be that the latter are better than the former: do not defame or be sarcastic to each other, or call each other by [offensive] nicknames. How bad it is to earn an evil reputation after accepting the faith! Those who do not repent are evil-doers.” (49:11)

Every man and woman possesses an innate desire for superiority—the urge to regard oneself as better than others. This tendency often leads people to focus on the faults of others, to ridicule, insult, or label them with disrespectful names in an attempt to elevate themselves.

However, the true standard of greatness is not determined by human claims. Good and evil are judged solely by God. The truly honourable person is the one who is righteous in the sight of God, while the truly disgraced person is the one condemned in His judgement.

Once this realization takes root in the human heart, the desire for arrogance and mockery begins to fade. Ridiculing others, humiliating them, exposing their faults, or calling them offensive names then appears entirely meaningless.

Such a person comes to realize that the final judgement of human worth and rank belongs to God alone. If I regard someone as insignificant, yet that very person is held in honour in the eternal world of the Hereafter, then how meaningless and misguided my judgement would be.

31. A Dignified Nation

The Quran declares:

“Mankind! We have created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes, so that you might come to know each other. The noblest of you in God’s sight is the one who fears God most. God is all knowing and all-aware.”
(49:13)

Among men and women, there are many differences—of colour, race, language, and geography. Some are fair, others dark; some belong to one lineage, others to another;

some come from one land, others from a different region. However, the Quran clearly states that these differences exist only for identification, not for discrimination.

Most social problems arise when people begin to treat these distinctions as grounds for superiority or inferiority. Such a mindset gives rise to division, prejudice, and arrogance—forces that have caused countless conflicts throughout human history.

In reality, all human beings share the same origin; they are all descendants of one father and one mother. The only valid basis for distinction is moral and spiritual—who among them truly fears God and who does not.

Even this is known only to God Himself. No human being has the right to judge others or claim moral superiority over them.

32. Companionship in Paradise

The Quran promises:

“To those who have attained to faith We shall unite their offspring who have also followed them in faith, and We shall not let any of their good deeds go unrewarded; every human being is a pledge for whatever he has earned.” (52:21)

This verse announces a special divine blessing for the people of Paradise: those whose faith and actions qualify them for entry into the Garden will also be reunited with

their believing families, even if some of their relatives are of a lower spiritual rank.

By God's mercy, the status of the lower group will be elevated so that families may live together in harmony and companionship.

This is one of the most beautiful manifestations of divine compassion. It demonstrates that God's justice is perfectly balanced with mercy—rewarding each person according to his or her deeds, while still allowing love and kinship to flourish eternally in the Hereafter.

This principle also brings profound comfort to the believing heart. For example, if a woman's husband passes away before her, she need not grieve in despair. Rather, she should devote the remainder of her life to righteous deeds so that her rank in Paradise may rise higher. Then, by His grace, God may elevate her husband's status to enable them to live together in Paradise.

33. Equal Reward for Both

The Quran states:

“Alms-givers, both men and women, who give a generous loan to God, shall have it multiplied and shall have an honourable reward.” (57:18)

Spending one's wealth in the path of God is described in the Quran as “lending to Allah.” This metaphor signifies that such giving is never lost; rather, it will be returned in the Hereafter with immense increase and everlasting honour.

This promise applies equally to men and women. Each is encouraged to give from what they possess—not for personal benefit, but solely for God’s pleasure and the advancement of His cause.

The phrase “a generous loan” (*qarz hasan*) describes the noblest form of charity—one given sincerely, without expecting anything in return except from God. It particularly includes financial support for the communication of God’s message, a task carried out purely for divine reasons, free from personal or worldly motives.

Therefore, the Quran elevates charity to the status of a sacred act between the creature and the Creator, promising both men and women a reward of dignity and abundance in the eternal life to come.

34. The Closest Enemy

The Quran declares: “Believers! [Even] among your wives and your children you have enemies: so beware of them. But if you overlook their offences and forgive and pardon them, then surely, God is most forgiving and merciful.” (64:14)

The issue of close family relationships is extremely sensitive. At times, a person may commit a wrong act simply because of family ties, finding it difficult to resist the wishes or emotional pressure of a loved one.

However, when such influence leads to wrongdoing, it effectively becomes a form of hostility.

Family bonds are meant to be a source of mutual support in goodness, not tools that lead one another into sin or moral compromise. Therefore, the believer must remain vigilant—not by cutting off affection, but by ensuring that love for family never surpasses loyalty to God and His moral law.

35. Ease After Hardship

Concerning the relationship between husband and wife, the Quran teaches: “Let the man of means spend in accordance with his means; and let him whose resources are restricted, spend in accordance with what God has given him. God does not burden any person with more than He has given him. God will soon bring about ease after hardship.” (65:7)

In family life, financial strain often becomes a cause of discord. Tensions arise, peace within the home is disturbed, and mutual understanding begins to fade.

The root of such conflict is that people tend to view their circumstances only in terms of the present, without considering future possibilities. This short-sighted outlook gives rise to despair and resentment.

The Quran encourages both men and women to adopt a broad and hopeful perspective—to rise above temporary hardships and place their trust in God’s promise of relief

and abundance. Such an outlook fosters patience, restores hope, and turns a crisis into an opportunity for deeper faith and shared strength.

36. Religious Nurturing

The Quran commands: “Believers, safeguard yourselves and your families from a Fire fuelled by people and stones, and watched over by angels, stern and strong: angels who never disobey God’s commands to them, but promptly do as they are commanded.” (66:6)

Human beings generally think in terms of material loss and gain. Their concerns revolve around worldly comfort and immediate needs. But the Quran warns that such a mindset is dangerously shallow. Both men and women have been entrusted with a far greater responsibility—to protect themselves and their families from the loss of the Hereafter. True success does not lie in worldly prosperity or temporary security, but in being saved from the Fire and attaining Paradise.

Thus, genuine family responsibility means building a home enriched with spiritual and moral nurturing, not merely material comfort. Husband and wife must work together to cultivate in their children an awareness of God, a love for truth, and a longing for eternal success—for the true home of the believer is not this temporary world, but the everlasting world to come.

37. Salvation Depends on Deeds

The Quran gives two contrasting examples: “As an example to those who are bent on denying the truth, God cited the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot, who were married to two of Our righteous servants, but who betrayed them. So they could not help them against God, and they were told, ‘Enter the Fire along with all the others.’ To the believers God has given the example of Pharaoh’s wife who said: ‘My Lord, build me a house in nearness to You in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his misdeeds. Save me from all evildoers.’” (66:10-11)

These verses clearly show that, before God, a person’s rank and destiny depend only on their own actions, not on lineage, marriage, or family ties.

Every man and woman relies on their own faith and actions. It is deeds—not blood or social bonds—that determine one’s true worth in the Hereafter.

38. The Scene of Resurrection

The Quran declares: “On that Day a man shall flee from his own brother, his mother, his father, his wife and his sons: on that Day every man among them will have enough concern of his own—on that Day some faces will be beaming, laughing, and rejoicing, but some faces will be covered with dust and overcast with gloom: those will be ones who denied the truth and were immersed in iniquity.” (80:34-42)

These verses reveal the overwhelming terror and intensity of the Day of Resurrection. On that Day, all worldly attachments and hostilities will disappear. Every man and woman will be wholly occupied with concern for their own fate.

Parents, children, and spouses will no longer be remembered as earthly bonds fade before the majesty of divine judgement. Every person will turn to God alone, seeking His mercy as the only hope of salvation.

The wise man or woman, therefore, is one who keeps this reality alive in their heart during worldly life. Whenever adversity arises, they should see it as a test from God and an opportunity to prove their sincerity and steadfastness. This awareness keeps a believer's heart balanced—neither proud in success nor despairing in hardship—and ensures that their thoughts and actions remain righteous and measured.

39. O Soul at Peace

The Quran describes the moment when God will address the dwellers of Paradise:

“O soul at peace, return to your Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing. Join My servants. Enter My Paradise.” (89:27-30)

The expression “tranquil soul” (*nafs al-mutma'innah*) refers to both men and women. It denotes a soul that has attained

inner peace and is free from psychological complexity, that is, a complex-free soul.

Those who deserve Paradise are men and women who maintain balance and composure in every circumstance. Prosperity does not make them arrogant, nor does hardship drive them to despair. In strength, they remain humble; in weakness, they remain patient. Whether honoured or insulted, victorious or defeated, they continue to walk the path of truth and justice.

Such individuals are the ones whom God calls “the tranquil soul.” They are the true servants of God, destined for His eternal Paradise.

40. A Life of Toil

The Quran affirms: “I swear by this city—and you are dwelling in this city—and by parent and offspring, that We have created man into a life of toil and trial.” (90:1-4)

This verse explains the divine plan for earthly life. The world we live in is not meant to be a place of comfort and rest, but a place of trial and struggle. Since human beings are under test, both men and women inevitably encounter difficulty, hardship, and pain in different forms.

Without challenges, there can be no testing. Hardship, therefore, is not a punishment, but part of the divine plan—meant to awaken human strength, patience, and faith.

WOMEN IN THE HADITH

THE PROPHETIC VIEW OF WOMEN

In the collections of Hadith, there is no single, dedicated chapter titled *Kitab al-Nisa'* (The Book Concerning Women). However, across numerous chapters and subjects, there are many narrations that explain Islam's teachings regarding women.

These traditions give us a clear understanding of the status of women in human society—as daughters, wives, mothers, and members of the Muslim community.

The sayings and actions of the Prophet preserved in these Hadith demonstrate the woman's role in society. The following section presents selected narrations that illustrate this truth and define the position of women within the framework of Islamic life.

1. Women: The Counterparts of Men

The wife of the Prophet, Aisha al-Siddiqah, was once asked a question. She replied that the same question had earlier been asked of the Prophet of Islam, who responded: “Indeed, women are the counterparts of men.” (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, Hadith No. 236; *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 113)

In Arabic, the words *shaqiq* (masculine) and *shaqiqah* (feminine) refer to one of two equal parts into which something is divided. The term *shaqiqah* is also used for migraine, derived from the same root, as it describes pain affecting one side of the head.

In this sense, the Prophet described woman as the counterpart of man. This is the truest expression of her status. According to Islam, man and woman are two equal parts of one whole. One half of that whole is woman, and the other half is man. Thus, it is entirely correct to say that woman represents half of humanity.

2. The Standard of Character

“Aisha Siddiqah reported that the Prophet of Islam said: ‘The best among you is the one who is best to his family, and I am the best among you to my family. And when your spouse dies, pray for them.’” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3895)

In family life, husbands and wives live in close and continuous companionship. Naturally, differences, complaints, and moments of resentment may arise between them.

In such situations, a person’s greatest moral test often lies within the home. A man who treats his family with kindness and good conduct has truly succeeded in this test. Likewise, a woman who maintains gentleness and good behaviour within her home has also achieved moral success.

Those who demonstrate moral excellence within their families will naturally carry the same character into their public lives.

When one spouse passes away, and the other remains, grief and mourning naturally follow. Islam teaches that, at such moments, sorrow should be transformed into prayer. What is lost in this world should be sought in the Hereafter.

3. The Sign of Nobility

According to a narration, the Prophet of Islam said: “Only a noble man honours women, and only a vile man insults them.” (*Tarikh Dimashq* by Ibn Asakir, Vol. 13, p. 313)

In terms of dignity and status, man and woman are equal. However, within the natural order of life, there exists a division of responsibilities. Man is generally assigned more physically demanding tasks, while woman is entrusted with gentler responsibilities.

Because of this, there is a difference in physical constitution: man is generally physically stronger, while woman is comparatively less so. This difference gives man the ability—but not the right—to misuse his strength. In God’s sight, this becomes a test for man.

Despite his physical advantage, a man must treat women with full respect. According to divine law, a noble person is one who behaves honourably towards those weaker than

himself. Conversely, anyone who exploits the weak for personal gain is deemed unworthy and ignoble.

4. Good in Every Situation

The Prophet of Islam said: “No believing man should hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her traits, he will be pleased with another.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1469)

The general law of nature is that no man or woman possesses every virtue in full. When one quality is strong in a person, another may be less prominent.

For example, if a woman is endowed with greater outward beauty, she may have less inner refinement. Conversely, if a woman is rich in character and inner virtue, she may have less outward charm. This is a universal principle of creation, with very few exceptions.

The Prophet’s saying highlights this important truth. If a man finds that his wife is not outwardly attractive, he should not become discouraged. Trusting the natural order, he should believe that she may possess greater inner goodness and moral strength—qualities far more valuable than physical beauty.

5. The Mark of Better Character

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet of Islam said: “The most complete of the believers in faith are those who are best in character, and the best among you are

those who are best to their wives.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 24204)

Although the wording addresses men, its moral lesson applies equally to both men and women.

When a husband and wife live together, differences and complaints naturally arise. Feelings of anger, hurt, and resentment may follow. Such moments serve as a test for both.

Those—men or women—who respond with patience, tolerance, and composure demonstrate the strength of their faith and character before God. By controlling anger and showing kindness, they elevate their moral standing and come closer to divine approval.

6. The Best Woman

Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet of Islam was asked, “What qualities make a woman an ideal wife?” He replied, “She is one whose presence brings joy to her husband, who cooperates with him in what is right, and who respects his legitimate wishes in personal matters and in matters concerning his property.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 7421)

In its broader sense, this teaching applies to both spouses. Man and woman are life partners, bound together by mutual trust and responsibility. Each is a confidant and helper to the other—two wheels of the same carriage.

Their shared humanity requires that both should be true companions to each other: bringing joy, showing mutual consideration, and remaining loyal even when apart.

Each person should treat the other as a sincere life partner—with love, respect, and steadfast goodwill.

7. Woman, the Treasure of Life

Abdullah bin ‘Amr narrated that the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said: “The world is but a temporary provision, and the best of its provisions is a righteous woman.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1467; *Sunan al-Nasa’i*, Hadith No. 3232)

Both man and woman are treasures and vital supports for one another. Human life in this world depends upon many needs and relationships. Yet the companionship gained through marriage is more precious than all other possessions.

When both spouses truly understand this reality, they develop deep affection and appreciation for one another. They realize that neglecting each other would leave life emotionally incomplete and spiritually impoverished. Each comes to see the other as an irreplaceable blessing—one whose place cannot be filled by anything else.

8. A Precious Blessing

Abdullah ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet of Islam said: “Shall I tell you about one of life’s greatest blessings? It is a righteous wife: when her husband looks at her, she

brings him joy; when he asks something of her that is right, she responds positively; and when he is away, she remains faithful to him and safeguards his trust. (*Mustadrak al-Hakim*, Hadith No. 1487)

The qualities of a woman described in this hadith are not merely ordinary traits. This teaching can only be properly understood when looked at not only on the surface, but also in connection with the deeper aspects of life.

For a man, a woman is not merely a domestic partner; she is his greatest treasure. Human beings are intellectual creatures, and one of their deepest needs is to have someone with whom they can share their thoughts and reflections. They need a genuine intellectual companion. A woman fulfills this need for a man. She is his trusted intellectual companion. A man's wife is the partner who remains with him morning and evening.

A man should help his life partner develop in this way. Through education and guidance, he should help her become, in the truest sense, his intellectual partner. Some of the benefits of this intellectual companionship are indicated symbolically in the hadith mentioned above.

9. A Supportive Life Partner

Thawban narrates that when the verse: "Those who hoard gold and silver..." (9:34), was revealed, we were travelling with the Prophet. Some of his Companions said, "Since this warning concerns gold and silver, we wish we knew what kind of wealth was truly worth acquiring."

The Prophet replied: “The most valuable things a person can have are a tongue that remembers God, a heart filled with gratitude, and a believing wife who supports him in his faith.” (*Sunan at-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3094; *Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 1856)

Material wealth offers only temporary comfort in this worldly life. True wealth, however, lies in remembrance, gratitude, and faith, for these provide lasting comfort in the eternal life of the Hereafter.

Remembrance means keeping one’s thoughts focused on Allah and constantly recalling His presence. Gratitude means having a sincere awareness of Allah’s blessings and appreciating them from the heart. Faith refers to the knowledge of Allah—a belief rooted in the heart and developed through conscious awareness of His presence and attributes.

In these respects, a wife can be a man’s greatest source of support. When husband and wife regularly share their thoughts and reflections, both benefit spiritually. Their conversations deepen their remembrance and awareness of God. By speaking about the blessings He has bestowed upon them, they strengthen feelings of gratitude in one another. By reflecting together on God and His attributes, they both deepen their realization of Him.

10. A Companion You Can Rely On

Abu Umamah narrated that the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) used to say: “After God-consciousness, the greatest blessing

a believer can receive is a righteous wife: when he asks her to do what is right, she responds positively; when he looks at her, she brings him joy; when he makes an earnest request of her, she honours it; and when he is away, she remains faithful to him and takes good care of herself and his property.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 1857)

This teaching applies equally to both men and women. They can become the best companions for one another only when they cultivate these qualities within themselves. Men and women complement each other; together, they complete each other's lives. A man's life is incomplete without a woman, and likewise, a woman's life is incomplete without a man.

For both men and women, this role is not fulfilled by marriage alone. They must also take on another important responsibility: raising their awareness and mentally preparing themselves for this task. The home should become a place of learning, where husband and wife are both teachers and students. Strengthening their relationship in this way is one of the keys to success in married life.

The words of the hadith are especially significant: she should handle her husband's wealth responsibly and with his best interests in mind. In other words, the best woman is one who manages household finances wisely and shares responsibility with her husband for managing the family's finances.

The Quran states that wealth is a means of sustenance in this worldly life (4:5). The best way to use wealth is to spend it on genuine needs. Wasteful spending is so harmful that, in the Quran, those who indulge in it are called the brothers and sisters of Satan. (Quran, 17:27)

Women often have considerable influence over household spending. The Quran refers to an inclination towards adornment and display in the context of women. (43:18) Consequently, unnecessary expenditure on celebrations, furniture, clothing, and similar items may sometimes be driven by a desire for display. Since women frequently play a central role in managing the household, they can greatly influence whether its financial resources are used wisely or spent wastefully.

From a positive perspective, this means that the success of a household depends on a culture of simplicity, and this culture is largely shaped by the woman. Although simplicity may seem like a small matter, it is in fact one of life's most important values. Where simplicity exists, many other matters naturally fall into place. A well-known saying expresses this truth: "Simple living, high thinking." Simplicity and high thinking are closely connected. Where there is simplicity, high thinking can develop; and where there is high thinking, simplicity will naturally follow. Simplicity means distinguishing between genuine needs and false needs. Confusing false needs with genuine ones—and spending money on them—is a harmful habit that hinders intellectual development.

Conversely, ignoring false needs and spending only on real needs allows a person to pursue intellectual development. Wastefulness and high thinking cannot coexist. High thinking requires a simple life.

Managing a household according to the principles of simplicity is primarily the woman's responsibility. If she fosters a culture of simplicity at home by managing household finances wisely, it becomes a remarkable achievement and makes her a true builder of humanity.

Just as simplicity reflects a principled way of life, money management reflects a well-planned life. Those who follow these principles understand the importance of priorities. They move away from a purposeless existence and choose a life of purpose. They rise above a primitive way of living and lead a truly human life. Such individuals receive Allah's rewards both in this world and in the Hereafter. As the Quran expresses it, they partake in the good of both this world and the Hereafter.

11. The Greatest Blessing of Life

Abdullah bin Abbas narrated that the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said: "There are four things which, if granted to a person, mean that he has been given the best of both this world and the Hereafter: a thankful heart, a tongue that remembers Allah, a body that remains patient in adversity, and a wife who does not betray him in her character or his wealth." (*Shu'ab al-Iman by al-Bayhaqi*, Hadith No. 4115)

This refers to a wife in whom her husband has complete confidence, both with regard to herself and his property. Such confidence, however, must always be mutual. When husband and wife come to regard each other as completely their own, all sense of distance between them disappears. They no longer think in terms of 'me' and 'you'; instead, their personalities seem to merge into one another, forming one living whole.

This mutual trust and connection between husband and wife are among the greatest blessings for both. When such a bond develops, neither of them feels alone in the world. Each feels as though the whole world is on their side and accompanying them on the journey of life. This realization gives them immense strength, making nothing seem impossible thereafter.

A woman becomes everything to a man when he feels that he, too, means everything to her. This trust is inherently reciprocal. According to the laws of nature, such a bond cannot exist in a one-sided way.

12. Respecting Natural Differences

Abu Huraira narrates that the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said: "Treat women with kindness, for they were created from a rib, and the most curved part of the rib is the upper section. If you attempt to straighten it, you may break it; but if left as it is, it will remain naturally curved. Therefore, treat women with understanding and compassion." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3331)

The point made in this hadith is not about the manner in which the first woman, Eve, was created. Rather, it refers to a general tendency in women's temperament. Just as a rib is naturally curved, this curvature is not a flaw but a design that allows it to fulfill its intended function. If the rib is forcibly straightened through surgery, it can no longer perform its proper role in the body.

In another narration, the phrase "the woman is like the rib" is used. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5184) Similarly, another narration states: "The woman's example is like the rib." (*Sahih Ibn Hibban*, Hadith No. 4180)

This metaphor illustrates one of the inherent qualities of women—their emotional nature. Compared with men, women have been given a somewhat more emotional temperament so that they can form deep emotional bonds with people and things, and thereby fulfil their specific responsibilities more effectively. One result of this temperament is the deep emotional bond a mother develops with her children. Without this bond, she would not be able to fulfil her responsibilities toward them with the same degree of care and devotion.

13. The Call of Human Nature

Anas ibn Malik reported that the Prophet said: "Of all the things in this world, women and perfume have been made dear to me, while prayer has been made my greatest source of joy." (*Sunan al-Nasa'i*, Hadith No. 3939)

Although this hadith is expressed in the first person, it points to a universal aspect of human nature. Human beings are naturally drawn towards a spouse and regard their partner as the complementary part of their existence. A person feels, with their whole being, that without this partner, their life remains incomplete. This inclination has been built into human nature and is common to all people.

The task that men and women undertake together in this world is extremely demanding and challenging. To make this difficult journey more bearable and fulfilling, love and affection have been placed in their hearts for one another. This bond of mutual affection is what gives stability to human society. In collective life, love acts like a binding force, holding people together. Without it, both the family and society would fall into disorder and fragmentation. The deepest form of closeness and complete communion is found only in the relationship between husband and wife.

14. The Greatest Gift in Life

The Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said: “Fear Allah regarding women.” (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 1905)

In another narration, he said: “Nothing in this world is more valuable than a righteous wife.” (*Sunan Ibn Majah*, Hadith No. 1855)

By the very nature of his creation, a man is an incomplete personality. His personality becomes complete through his companionship with a woman. The same is true of a woman. Without one another, both remain incomplete; together, they complement each other. This is a reality that every man and woman can understand through personal experience.

From this perspective, companionship between a man and a woman is an essential part of life. Yet no external force can compel them to preserve this relationship. This is why consciousness of God is necessary for maintaining their mutual bond. In other words, the success of this companionship depends on both partners remaining aware of its fundamental importance. God-consciousness awakens and sustains this awareness, enabling them to preserve their relationship even when circumstances are difficult or unfavourable.

15. Woman as a Mother

The Prophet of Islam said: “Paradise lies at the feet of mothers.” In her role as a mother, a woman is the greatest benefactor to her children, making her status the highest of all.

As a mother, a woman is the greatest benefactor of her children. In this respect, a mother holds the highest place in a person’s life. This hadith, in fact, emphasizes

the truth that acknowledging the good done to us by a benefactor is one of the greatest virtues. A person who possesses the spirit of this virtue will have two qualities at the same time: a deep appreciation of the kindness shown by other human beings, and a profound sense of gratitude to God for His blessings. This very quality is one of the greatest means of attaining Paradise.

16. Upbringing of Daughters

The Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said: “Whoever raises three daughters, teaches them good manners, arranges their marriages, and treats them well, for him is Paradise.” (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 5147)

A common attitude is that if a father has several daughters and no son, he begins to regard his daughters as less valuable. This hadith rejects such a mindset. Whether a father has a son or a daughter, his responsibility is the same: to give his children the best possible education and upbringing. He should prepare them in such a way that they are able to face life successfully.

A father often thinks that the best thing he can do for his children is to provide them with every comfort and leave them as much wealth as possible. But this is not the right approach. The best gift a father can give his children is not wealth, but education. Wealth earned by the father comes to the children as easy money, and such money often has a negative effect on a person.

The right approach is to educate one's children and enable them to build their own lives through their own effort and hard work.

17. Kind Treatment of Daughters

The Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said: "Whoever has a daughter and does not humiliate her, and does not favour his sons over her, Allah will admit him to Paradise." (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 5146)

Kindness is a virtue that both men and women should practice, but it is especially important when it comes to daughters. In poorer communities, daughters may sometimes be seen as a burden, and their guardians may neglect their responsibilities towards them. In wealthier communities, people often focus on their own desires and may give daughters too much freedom, which can lead to poor decisions at a young age.

In all these situations, daughters are a delicate responsibility entrusted to their guardians. Fulfilling this duty is a fundamental teaching of Islam. Without carrying out this responsibility, no one can be excused before Allah.

18. Support to Helpless Daughters

Suraqa bin Malik narrates that the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said: "Shall I not tell you what the best form of charity is? Your daughter who returns to you (because of widowhood or divorce) and has no one other than you to provide for her.." (*Sunan ibn Manas*, Hadith No. 3667)

Sometimes, a woman, due to divorce or widowhood, cannot stay with her in-laws and returns to her father's house. Often, such women become vulnerable in society. However, this vulnerability gives their parents an opportunity to provide moral support. If her parents accept her back, find new opportunities for her, help her regain her dignity, and support her in becoming a respected member of society again, this act will be highly valued by Allah. Through such actions, her parents will earn Allah's great reward in the Hereafter.

19. The Means of Salvation

A detailed narration from Aisha states that the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) said: "Whoever is tested with daughters and treats them well, they will serve as a shield for him from the fire." (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2629)

Sometimes, for various reasons, a daughter may be seen as a burden rather than an asset by her parents. However, according to Islamic teachings, a daughter can be a vital source of reward for her parents in the Hereafter.

This responsibility is not always easy. It is, in fact, a way of finding ease amid hardship. If parents provide their daughters with proper guidance and upbringing, preparing them to shoulder life's responsibilities, daughters can become a true blessing for their families. Through them, a positive mindset can develop within the family, creating

a constructive and harmonious atmosphere. The daughter can grow to be a healthy, productive member of the family, contributing meaningfully to its growth and success.

Although this effort is initially motivated by the desire for reward in the Hereafter, it also brings significant benefits in this world. It positively impacts the family in every way, both spiritually and practically.

20. Consulting Women

Hasan al-Basri, a well-known Tabii, narrated that he had seen more than seventy companions and heard from them. He mentioned that the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) often sought advice and even consulted women. Sometimes, the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) would accept their counsel. (*Uyun al-Akhbar* by Ibn Qutaybah, Vol. 1, Page 82)

The example of the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ) in this matter is not limited in scope. It is broad and applies to all aspects of life. Appointing someone as a counsellor is a sign of respect and honour for that person. In this context, appointing a woman as a counsellor indicates that her education, judgement, and experience are acknowledged and valued. Becoming capable of providing advice is an essential part of learning to receive counsel. From a social perspective, no one—whether a woman or a man—can be a true advisor by nature alone. Proper education and training are necessary to develop this ability.

Seen through this principle, the Prophet's (ﷺ) example presents a comprehensive vision of society. It portrays a community where women are given access to education and opportunities to become active, constructive members. They should be able to offer sound advice, contribute meaningfully to discussions, and play a vital role in decision-making.

Both men and women are invaluable gifts of nature to one another. Each partner is the best companion of the other, provided they understand each other's natures and treat one another accordingly. Men are naturally more egoistic, while women are naturally more emotional. These differences can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. However, if both partners recognize these differences and consciously prevent them from causing conflict, they can benefit greatly from one another.

It is impossible for either side to completely eliminate these natural differences. Both must learn to manage these differences and, in doing so, build a successful shared life.

PRINCIPLES OF MARRIED LIFE

THE ART OF MARRIED LIFE

The principles for a successful marriage are the same as those for a successful human life. The challenges that arise in human life are also present in marriage. The methods that lead to success in life can similarly be applied to married life. The law of nature is consistent, and it applies equally to both personal and marital challenges.

Nature's Universal Law

Several verses in the Quran may appear to address men specifically, but in their broader application, they relate to both men and women. For example, the Quran states that God created human beings into a life of toil and trial. (90:4) While the word “man” is used, it encompasses both genders. This indicates that both men and women are placed in a world where they must face challenges. The verse emphasizes Allah's creative plan and shows that the structure of the world is designed so that both men and women must endure certain levels of struggle. Life is, in essence, a continuous process of striving. Neither a woman nor a man can escape this reality.

In practice, life is filled with challenges, and problem-solving is a natural and unavoidable part of it. When a man

and a woman come together to start married life, they inevitably face challenges. A marriage without problems does not exist in this world. So, what is the solution to these challenges? The answer is simple: adjustment.

When someone tries to accommodate another person, it may seem that they are merely giving way to someone no different from themselves. This may lead them to think: “Why should I adjust to someone who is just like me? Why should I give in to another person?” Such thoughts can become barriers to developing harmony in the relationship.

This is a misunderstanding. When a person adjusts to another, he or she is not merely accommodating a man or a woman; in a deeper sense, the person is accepting the order established by the Creator. It is God Himself who has created a social system in which no collective endeavour can succeed without accommodation and cooperation. To adjust, therefore, is to accept the way God has designed human life. Seen in this light, adjustment becomes an act worthy of divine reward. It is not merely a moral practice or a one-sided concession; it is an act of worship and an acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty. Adjustment is, in this sense, a duty owed to God, and it should be practised with this awareness.

The Need for Positive Thinking

In family life, the main cause of problems is often negative thinking. The simplest way to overcome problems in family life, therefore, is for both husband and wife to develop a

positive outlook. Positive thinking elevates both men and women, helping them to rise above minor problems. Those who cultivate a higher mindset are less weighed down by bitterness and complaints. They reach a stage in life where they can overcome negativity and minor grievances with composure.

According to the natural order, no individual—man or woman—receives everything. One person may receive certain blessings while another receives different ones. Problems arise when someone perceives what they have as their inherent right and believes that if another person has something they lack, the other should not possess it either. Such thinking fosters envy and jealousy, damaging relationships.

The Quran teaches that everything in this world is a test. Understanding this principle helps eliminate negative thinking. Partners then recognize that what they have is their personal test, while what others have is theirs. Their main focus should be on fulfilling their own responsibilities and passing their personal test before God. If both partners adopt this perspective, many underlying issues in family life naturally diminish.

In essence, positive thinking is the root of all virtues, while negative thinking is the root of all vices. It is not merely an ethical guideline but a defining feature of a believer's faith. A believer is one who has truly realized God.

When this realization occurs, individuals naturally come to embody the divine character (*Takhalluq bi Akhlaq Allah*). Positive thinking becomes the foundation of their behaviour, while negative thinking is consciously rejected. They distance themselves from negativity in the same way that a person with refined taste avoids what is harmful or unpleasant.

Trust in God

The Quran offers several pieces of guidance related to divorce, particularly in Surah At-Talaq. The relevant verses advise:

“O Prophet, when you divorce women, do so at the start of their waiting period and count it accurately. Fear Allah, your Lord. Do not expel them from their homes, nor should they leave unless they commit clear immorality. These are the limits set by Allah, and whoever exceeds them wrongs only himself. Allah may then bring about a different situation afterward. When they reach their appointed term, either retain them honourably or release them respectfully, and call upon two trustworthy witnesses to establish the testimony for Allah’s sake. This applies to those who believe in Allah and the Last Day. Whoever fears Allah, He will make a way for him and provide from unexpected sources. Whoever

relies on Allah, He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose, having already decreed a measure for everything.”
(Quran, 65:1-3)

Divorce represents a moment of crisis between a husband and wife. Such challenges, whether major or minor, are an inherent aspect of family life. The guidance provided in the Quran emphasizes placing complete trust in Allah and leaving the situation entirely in His hands as a key principle for navigating these crises.

A true crisis arises when a person feels helpless in a given situation. If the problem can be resolved through one's own efforts, it does not constitute a crisis. A crisis occurs only when a person recognizes that their resources are insufficient to address the challenge. In other words, a crisis is the awareness of one's limitations.

In such situations, focusing exclusively on one's limitations only increases anxiety. The most effective approach is to take all reasonable measures within one's ability and then entrust the outcome to Allah. One should strive diligently while ultimately relying on His wisdom and control.

This approach offers immediate psychological benefits by shifting attention from negative thinking to a constructive, positive mindset. It enables individuals to use their abilities more effectively to resolve problems and ensures that the natural system functions as it was intended. Just as the human body has mechanisms that work to restore balance when disrupted, life follows a similar pattern. When a

crisis arises, the natural system moves to restore balance and rectify the situation.

Trusting in Allah during a crisis means trusting the natural order to work. It is mainly about placing the situation in Allah's hands and allowing His wisdom to resolve it. This method of crisis resolution is clearly effective and applies in all situations. The key is that whenever a man or woman is confronted with a problem, the first step should be to think carefully about the situation. Rather than reacting immediately, they should think carefully about the situation before deciding what constructive action to take. Such a thoughtful approach is the most effective way to handle a crisis.

Parents as Natural Teachers

Parents are the natural teachers of their children. The Quran and Hadith emphasize the importance of honouring one's parents. The Quran instructs: "If either or both of them attain old age with you, say no word of contempt to them and do not rebuke them, but always speak gently to them, and treat them with humility and tenderness and say, 'Lord, be merciful to them both, as they raised me up when I was little.'" (17:23-24)

This is a serious matter. Parents are the best supporters of their children, and no one can provide guidance as consistently and lovingly as they do. Therefore, Islam encourages creating an environment where children respect and value the advice of their parents.

Respect and honour for parents ensure that their advice is received with sincerity and understanding. Every child is inexperienced in their early years, whereas parents are seasoned guardians. This is why parents serve as the best teachers and mentors for their children, and their love further strengthens this bond.

The most natural and effective solution to challenges in married life is for young men and women to seek guidance from their parents regarding marriage. The parents have already experienced marriage and can guide the young couple regarding marriage. In this way, parents act as the best advisors—they are genuinely concerned for their children's well-being and possess firsthand knowledge about the matters on which they are advising. However, parents can fulfill this role effectively only if their guidance is based not just on affection but on realistic, experience-based insights.

Suspicion: The Root of Discord

The Quran instructs us to avoid *zann* (suspicion) and states that some types of *zann* are sinful. (49:12) The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) also warned: “Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the most deceitful form of falsehood.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6064) The primary source of discord in human relationships is negative thinking. Whether in family life or social settings, the root cause is often unfounded suspicion. This holds true whether

the issue arises between spouses, among other people, or within broader society.

Negative thoughts can arise both between a husband and wife and among people in a larger social context. In community life, it often happens that when information is passed from one person to another, it becomes altered or distorted. Listeners frequently accept this information as it is, without verifying it. This is where negative thoughts begin, and relationships start to break down.

The proper approach in such situations is as follows: If you hear something positive about someone, it is generally fine to believe it without checking. However, if negative information is shared about someone, it should not be accepted without proper investigation. One should either dismiss the negative thought entirely or accept it only after thorough inquiry and confirmation.

Another cause of negative thoughts occurs when a wife notices something her husband does, or a husband notices something his wife does, and forms an opinion without further investigation. Experience shows that such observations are often incomplete as they do not take into consideration the entire situation. In such cases, forming an opinion based on a single observation can lead to serious misunderstandings.

The solution to this problem is to carefully observe and verify any negative thought before accepting it as true.

You should not form a one-sided opinion based on a single observation. Instead, it is important for the observer to

seek clarification, ask for the full context, and allow the other person to explain without taking offence. When both sides adopt this approach, the real cause of the issue can be understood early, preventing deeper conflicts and serious misunderstandings.

Good thoughts and bad thoughts are not merely matters of personal ethics in Islam—they carry profound spiritual significance. According to Islamic teachings, harbouring negative thoughts is a sin that can deprive a person of Allah’s mercy. Conversely, maintaining good thoughts is a noble virtue that makes a man or woman worthy of Allah’s mercy and ultimately leads them to eternal Paradise. If good thoughts are the path to Paradise, then bad thoughts are the path to Hell.

Looking Towards the Future

While discussing some marital issues, the Quran offers guidance in this verse: “God does not burden any person with more than He has given him. God will soon bring about ease after hardship.” (65:7)

This verse offers important wisdom for married life. During moments of disagreement, one should not judge or react solely based on the present but consider the matter in terms of the future. Experience shows that when issues arise in marriage, people often focus only on what is happening now, failing to recognize that circumstances may change tomorrow.

Focusing exclusively on the present limits one's perspective. It leads to despair and frustration, suppressing higher thinking. Such individuals lack patience, perceiving enduring hardship as merely accepting deprivation.

In contrast, thinking with the future in mind cultivates noble qualities in both men and women. These individuals never lose hope because they believe that what they are deprived of today may be granted tomorrow through Allah's wisdom and mercy. Future-oriented people develop high-mindedness, keeping their attention on greater goals. As a result, small setbacks or losses do not disturb their peace or weaken their resolve.

Reconciliation is Best

The Quran addresses conflicts between a husband and wife, stating: "If a woman fears ill-treatment or indifference on the part of her husband, it shall be no offence for her to seek a reconciliation, for reconciliation is best." (4:128)

Reconciliation means restoring peace, which stands in contrast to confrontation. The Quranic guidance during disputes is to favour reconciliation over conflict.

Why do conflicts arise between a man and a woman? This often happens because, for different reasons, each person has a different opinion. One may want one thing, while the other wants something else. This can lead to stubbornness, with both sides trying to assert their views.

In such cases, the wisest action is to pause, reflect, and think calmly. As someone wisely said, “Think, there must be a better way.”

To think truly means to step outside the framework of one’s own mind and try to understand another person’s point of view. It means considering an issue in terms of its consequences. Instead of judging only what is right or wrong in principle, one should ask what is practically possible and what is not.

One should try to identify the lesser evil and the greater evil, accept the lesser evil, and avoid any step that may lead to a greater evil.

The fact is that every problem begins at the level of thought, and it can be resolved only at that same level. Thinking is undoubtedly the greatest strength of any human being, whether man or woman. Losing at the level of thinking is true defeat, while winning at the level of thinking is true victory.

A Woman’s Greatest Weakness

A woman’s greatest weakness is her excessive attachment to her children.

In literature, woman is often presented as a symbol of love. But this is true only in a limited sense. In practical life, she is more often a symbol of motherly love than of love for humanity as a whole. God has placed a deep capacity for

love in a woman's heart. This love should ideally expand to embrace all humanity. In practice, however, it often remains confined to her own children.

This weakness is referred to in a well-known hadith, commonly known as the Hadith of Gabriel. According to this narration, the Angel Gabriel came to the Prophet Muhammad in human form. His purpose was to teach people the religion. He did this by asking questions, while the Prophet answered them according to the knowledge given to him by God.

One of Gabriel's questions was about the signs of the Last Hour. In reply, the Prophet mentioned several signs. One of them was:

“When a woman will give birth to her master.”

(*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 50)

The phrase “a woman will give birth to her master” means that a mother will become so overcome by love for her son that she will begin to obey him as though he were her master and she his servant. This tendency has always existed, but near the Last Hour it will become much stronger.

This nearness to the Last Hour may perhaps refer to the age that began after the Industrial Revolution. After the Industrial Revolution, new conditions arose in which children gained an unusually central place in family life. Parents, and especially mothers, became more attached to

their children than ever before. They became willing to spend all their wealth and resources on them alone.

This situation, especially in the modern age, has taken away from woman her greatest distinction. Because of her special qualities, woman is capable of rendering a great service to wider humanity. She can become a teacher and builder of humanity. But excessive love for children—or more accurately, misplaced love—has prevented her from playing this universal role. In practice, her life begins with affection for her son and, in many cases, ends there. As a result, she remains unable to make the higher contribution to humanity of which she is capable.

The woman who was described as a symbol of love has thus become only a symbol of love for her son, not a symbol of love for humanity in the broader sense.

Letting Go of Anger

The Quran describes the believers as those “who forgive when they are angry.” (42:37)

According to a narration, a man came to the Prophet Muhammad and said, “O Messenger of God, teach me a few guiding words to live by, but keep them brief so that I may not forget them.” The Prophet replied, “Do not become angry.” (*Muwatta Imam Malik*, Hadith No. 1627)

In effect, the questioner was asking: What is the master advice for conducting the affairs of life properly? In reply,

the Prophet gave the master formula: do not become angry. In other words, the secret of a successful life lies in what may be called the art of anger management.

Anger is a natural emotion. Every man and woman becomes angry at one time or another. When anger arises, it is as though a fire suddenly flares up in the mind. For a short while, a person loses self-control and feels like doing whatever is within his power. Yet anger is only a temporary emotion. If a person tries to defuse the tension of anger, it can cool down within a minute or two, and he can return to his normal state.

To answer anger with anger is to respond to negativity in a negative way. This is not the proper human response. The right way is to respond positively, even when negativity comes from another person.

Responding positively to negativity is not done for someone else; it is done first of all for oneself. When you become angry, or when a negative feeling flares up within you, you enter a state of intense mental disturbance. Your thinking process comes to a halt. This becomes your own problem. In such a situation, not answering anger with anger, and not becoming provoked despite provocation, is a course of conduct that benefits you before anyone else.

Not answering anger with anger means saving yourself. Its result is that no obstacle arises in the process of your intellectual development, and your spiritual journey continues without interruption.

A Woman's Untapped Intellectual Potential

It is a tragedy of history that most men have made the same mistake: they have underutilized women. Every woman has the potential to be the finest intellectual partner for her husband, and such a partner is undoubtedly one of a man's greatest assets. Yet most men fail to make use of this asset in its higher form. They continue to use it only at a lower level, until both leave this world.

By temperament, woman likes to adorn herself. (Quran, 43:18) It is the man's responsibility to give this tendency a healthy direction. He should redirect the tendency towards physical adornment into a tendency towards intellectual development, so that woman may be able to play the role of an intellectual partner in his life.

But man often fails to do this. Instead, he turns this tendency into a means of his own pleasure. He himself desires to see woman in an attractive form. He treats her merely as a source of enjoyment. As a result, woman may spend her whole life mainly concerned with physical beauty. She does not develop her intellectual potential to the point where she can become a high-level intellectual partner for her spouse.

Guidance on this matter is found in a hadith. The Prophet Muhammad said: "Whoever loves his worldly life will harm his Hereafter, and whoever loves his Hereafter will

harm his worldly life. So prefer what will remain over what will perish.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 19697)

This hadith points to a law of nature: in this world, one often has to give up one thing in order to gain another. The same principle applies to married life. If a man wants his wife to become his intellectual partner, he must be willing to make a sacrifice: he must give up excessive concern for her physical attractiveness and become genuinely interested in her intellectual development.

Only through this sacrifice can a woman become, in the higher sense, an intellectual partner for her husband. This sacrifice is not merely a loss. It means giving up a smaller benefit in order to gain a greater one.

The Importance of a Guardian in Marriage

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said: “There is no marriage without a *wali*, guardian.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 19518; *Sunan at-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 1101)

The mention of a *wali* (guardian) in this hadith addresses a practical need rather than a matter of belief. The presence or approval of a *wali* does not determine the legality of a marriage, but it is a crucial factor for the marriage’s success. A *wali*, typically a family elder, brings experience to the relationship, which is vital for a successful marriage, particularly when the couple is young and inexperienced.

In modern times, mistakes have been made on both sides, with the result that this guidance has largely lost its practical effectiveness. On the one hand, guardians and family elders began to misuse their authority. They arranged marriages without considering the wishes of the young man and woman, and in some cases even forced them to marry against their will. This is clearly prohibited in the Hadith. When exercising their responsibility, guardians must take the consent of both parties into account. They should never arrange a marriage while disregarding the wishes of the man and woman concerned.

Guardians, particularly in traditional societies, have made another serious mistake by treating dowry as an essential part of marriage. The groom's father may demand an expensive dowry from the bride's family. This attitude has become so widespread that marriage has virtually been reduced to a commercial transaction. Such a practice is undoubtedly contrary to Islamic teachings. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the modern dowry system has become a destructive social evil.

The proper approach is to keep marriage entirely simple. Heavy dowries, excessively high *mahr*, and elaborate customs and ceremonies should be completely abandoned. In reality, these practices are later innovations, and no good can be expected from such innovations.

On the other hand, a rebellious attitude has developed among some young men and women today. They disregard their guardians and family elders, establish direct relationships independently, and then marry without the guardian's consent. This type of marriage is commonly described as a "love marriage."

However, experience shows that love marriages can frequently result in conflict or divorce. Surveys indicate that over 50% of love marriages in modern societies end in separation or divorce, and even when divorce does not occur, the relationship may face challenges so severe that a peaceful life becomes difficult. From this, it can be concluded that what is often called a "love marriage" may, in reality, be more accurately described as a "marriage driven by desire," given its misleadingly romantic label.

In contrast, the proper and natural form of marriage in Islam is the arranged marriage, in which families play a central role in facilitating the union. Islamic teachings emphasize that both the man and the woman must give their free and full consent to the marriage.

It is also preferred in Islam that both parties meet and discuss matters before marriage to better understand one another.

If families follow this principle when arranging a marriage, they can achieve many of the benefits that

love marriages are expected to provide, such as mutual affection and emotional connection. The Islamic marriage system is thus balanced and natural, combining familial involvement with the bond of love between the couple.

THE TESTING GROUND

Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was an Umayyad caliph, born in 61 AH in Madinah and passing away in 101 AH in Homs. He was appointed caliph by the will of Sulaiman ibn Abd al-Malik. Due to his pious life and strong sense of justice, he is regarded in Islamic history as the fifth rightly guided caliph.

Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz belonged to the royal Umayyad family. Before becoming caliph, he led a luxurious life, but upon taking on the role of caliph, he gave up these comforts and chose a simple lifestyle. His wife, Fatimah bint Abd al-Malik, also came from a royal family and received valuable jewellery and gifts from her family upon their marriage.

After becoming caliph, Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz asked his wife to donate all her jewellery to the *Bayt al-Mal* (public treasury). He told her that if she refused, he would divorce her.

The caliph was unable to bear the thought of sharing a house with her and her jewellery; Fatimah accepted her husband Caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz's decision willingly. She sent all her jewellery, including the precious pearls given to her by Abdul Malik, to the *Bayt al-Mal* for public use.

This incident, involving Fatimah bint Abd al-Malik, is far from trivial; it is, without doubt, extraordinary. What prompted her to accept her husband's exceptional decision so readily? The answer lies in the worldview that Islam cultivates in every man and woman.

Islam teaches that this worldly life is temporary and a test for humans. True life begins after death in the Hereafter, where the results of one's actions are revealed. This world is a journey, while the Hereafter is the ultimate destination.

Such a perspective places worldly matters in their proper context, emphasizing the Hereafter over transient concerns. It enables individuals to accept losses in this life with patience, understanding that these are temporary, and to strive instead for enduring rewards in the life to come.

This worldview applies not only to general aspects of life but also to marriage. In married life, it is common to encounter unpleasant situations, including disappointment, unmet expectations, or hurt caused by one's spouse. Those who view this world as their ultimate goal often become distressed when facing such challenges. They may remain trapped in sorrow or allow their relationships to break down, both of which can be equally harmful for men and women.

However, according to the Islamic worldview, life in this world serves as a test. Both happiness and sorrow, comfort and hardship, are integral parts of this test. Every aspect of life functions as an examination. For every man and woman, the life they lead is essentially their test paper.

Each individual is equally tested in the grand examination of life, and the various situations they face are simply different forms of this test.

Whether married or not, individuals will encounter situations in which negative emotions arise. They may feel upset with someone, suffer a loss caused by someone, become angry, or experience jealousy. In such moments, there is a temptation to retaliate, plan unfair actions, or claim what is not rightfully theirs. In these circumstances, both men and women may exceed their limits. Overcome by emotions, they may act impulsively, and the loss of something can seem unbearable.

In these moments, the Islamic perspective on life serves as the greatest aid for both men and women. It shifts their focus from material gains and losses in this world to the importance of earning rewards in the Hereafter. This understanding helps maintain an emotional balance, viewing losses as temporary setbacks.

The Islamic worldview strengthens both men and women against loss by teaching that true value does not lie in material possessions but in the eternal rewards of the Hereafter. This belief enables individuals to face hardship with patience and remain grounded, knowing that far greater rewards await them in the life to come.

Both successful and seemingly unsuccessful marriages are part of this greater test of life. What truly matters in such situations is that husband and wife protect themselves

against negative reactions, respond with patience and positivity, and keep their focus on their ultimate goal—the Hereafter. They should view unpleasant moments as temporary and allow them to pass, continually striving to achieve success in eternal life. There is no other principle applicable in this present world.

As the Quran states in Chapter Al-Fajr: “As for man, when his Lord tests him, through honour and blessings, he says, ‘My Lord has honoured me,’ but when He tests him by straitening his means of livelihood, he says, ‘My Lord has disgraced me.’” (89:15-16)

This verse explains the divine creation plan: the purpose of human life is to serve as a test. When a man or woman receives material blessings, it becomes a test of gratitude. Likewise, when faced with material deprivation, it becomes a test of patience. Ignorant individuals often develop a sense of superiority when blessed with wealth or feel inferior when faced with scarcity. Both attitudes are contrary to the divine scheme.

True individuals are those who remain content in both good and bad times. Material abundance should not lead to arrogance, nor should scarcity result in complaints or despair. In both circumstances, they remain committed to a positive mindset. These are the contented souls who maintain moderation in this world and are the ones who, in the Hereafter, will have the gates of Paradise opened for them.

AISHA:
AN EXTRAORDINARY
WOMAN

AISHA AL-SIDDIQAH

Aisha bint Abi Bakr holds a unique and distinguished place in Islamic history as one of its foremost women. She was the daughter of the first Caliph, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, and later became the esteemed wife of the Prophet of Islam. She was one of the leading scholars of the Quran, and in the field of Hadith she attained the status of a *mujtahidah*, a woman qualified for independent juristic reasoning.

Her father was Abu Bakr ibn Abi Quhafah, and her mother was Umm Ruman bint Amir. She was born in Makkah in the fifth year of Prophethood. After examining various reports, Mawlana Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi concluded that her probable date of birth was Shawwal 9 BH, corresponding to July 614 CE. (*Sirat Aisha*, Shibli Academy, Azamgarh, p. 19)

Aisha had an extraordinary memory. She remembered many events even from her early childhood. She had memorized a large body of Arabic poetry and would often quote verses suited to different occasions. In the thirteenth year of Prophethood, when the Prophet of Islam migrated from Makkah to Madinah with Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, Aisha

also migrated with her family. Along with her remarkable memory, she was exceptionally intelligent and perceptive. Though she was only eight years old at the time of the *Hijrah*, she remembered its events in great detail. No other Companion preserved such a continuous and detailed account of the *Hijrah* as she did.

The Prophet of Islam's first marriage was to Khadijah bint Khuwaylid in Makkah, when he was twenty-five years old. Khadijah passed away three years before the *Hijrah*. After her death, he married Aisha bint Abi Bakr. The proposal was conveyed through Khawlah bint Hakim. Hadith sources show that the marriage contract took place in Makkah when Aisha was six years old. Her formal departure to the Prophet's household took place in Madinah after the *Hijrah*, when she was nine years old. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 24867)

The marriage contract was conducted by her father, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq. (*Al-Mustadrak al-Hakim*, Hadith No. 2704) According to the narrations, her *mahr*, a mandatory marriage gift, was five hundred dirhams. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 1426)

In ancient Arabia, literacy was not common, and only a few people knew how to read and write. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq was among this small educated group. Because of this family tradition, Aisha also had the opportunity to learn reading and writing. She would read the Quran from the written

text, and according to some reports, she could also write. Thus, she was able to reply to letters in writing.

Education and Personal Development

In accounts of Aisha al-Siddiqah's life, it is stated that she held a distinguished position among the Companions in terms of knowledge. She is described as the greatest jurist among Muslim women and the most learned among them in religion and literature: "the most juristically knowledgeable of Muslim women and the most learned among them in religion and literature." (*Al-A'lam, al-Zirikli*, Vol. 3, p. 240)

Another narration uses these words: "Aisha was the most juristically knowledgeable of people, the most learned of people, and the one with the soundest judgement in public affairs." (*Al-Mustadrak al-Hakim*, Hadith No. 6748)

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari said: "Whenever we, the Companions of the Messenger of God, faced difficulty in understanding any hadith and asked Aisha about it, we found that she possessed knowledge concerning it." (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 3883)

Such statements about Aisha al-Siddiqah's knowledge are found in the books of Hadith and Seerah. They point to an important issue: the importance of women's education in Islam. Aisha did not possess this knowledge by birth, nor could she have done so. She undoubtedly acquired it within the Islamic society of her time.

Her father, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, was counted among the small number of people in ancient Arabia who knew how to read and write. Thus, Aisha's first educational institution was her own home. From her father, she listened to and memorized poetry rich in wisdom and the speeches of renowned Arab orators. She also learned genealogy from him, which was, in effect, a form of knowledge of Arab history.

After her marriage, when she came into the household of the Prophet of Islam, she had the opportunity to learn from a teacher such as the Prophet himself. This process continued every day in one form or another. Many examples of this process of learning are found in the books of Hadith.

In addition, Aisha's residence, which consisted of a single room (*Hujrah*) adjoined the Prophet's Mosque as it stood at the time. From her *Hujrah*, she could listen to the Prophet's daily teaching sessions held in the mosque.

There was no fixed time for learning religious knowledge. Aisha had the companionship of the Prophet day and night. His teaching circles were held regularly in the Prophet's Mosque, and her *Hujrah* was adjacent to it. Thus, even when he taught people outside the home, she was able to benefit from those lessons. If, due to distance, she did not understand something clearly, she would ask the Prophet about it when he returned to her *Hujrah*. At times, she would rise and move closer to the mosque. In addition, at

the request of women, the Prophet appointed a special day each week for their education and instruction.

These references, which appear in the books of Hadith and Seerah in connection with Aisha al-Siddiqah, do not merely describe the life of the foremost woman in Islamic history. They also reveal a distinctive feature of Islamic society itself. Islamic society serves as a broad institution of learning not only for men but also for women. In such a society, women's education is encouraged, and women are given opportunities to fulfill their intellectual aspirations. It is even possible for a woman, through her own effort, to surpass men in knowledge, as happened in the case of Aisha al-Siddiqah.

In the field of education and personal development, Aisha al-Siddiqah was not merely an exceptional individual; she stands as a role model. Her outstanding achievements in Islamic learning remain a guiding example for Muslim women.

Perhaps no other man or woman was granted as great an opportunity to receive direct religious instruction from the Prophet of Islam as Aisha al-Siddiqah. Moreover, she was still very young at the time. As a result, she was largely free from what psychologists call conditioning. She was at an age when she could listen with an open and unprejudiced mind, readily absorbing what she heard and making it part of her intellectual makeup.

Aisha was also exceptionally intelligent and possessed a remarkable ability to grasp and retain knowledge. This enabled her to grasp the full depth of the Prophet's teachings. Although the Prophet often spoke in the style of *jawami' al-kalim*—using the fewest words to convey the deepest and most comprehensive meanings. Aisha, through her remarkable power of understanding and inference, comprehended their wider implications and preserved them in her memory.

It was this unique opportunity to learn directly from the Prophet of Islam that made Aisha al-Siddiqah so distinguished in religious understanding and insight. After the Prophet's death, even the most eminent Companions would consult her and benefit from her deep understanding of the wisdom embodied in his teachings.

The Formation of Her Personality

Aisha al-Siddiqah holds an exceptional place in Islamic history. The details of how her personality was formed are found in the books of Hadith and Seerah. She remained constantly engaged in the study of the Quran, and this became the central concern of her life. Moreover, her greatest source of knowledge was learning directly from the Prophet of Islam. This learning continued regularly in different forms, not only during the day but also during the quiet moments of the night.

One example of this is found in a narration in which Aisha al-Siddiqah herself says that the Messenger of God would offer the two rak‘ahs before Fajr. If she was awake at that time, he would speak with her; otherwise, he would lie down: “When the Prophet had prayed the two *rak‘ahs* of Fajr, if I was awake, he would talk to me; otherwise, he would lie down.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 743)

In this narration, Aisha al-Siddiqah uses the word *haddathani*. This does not mean that the Prophet of Islam would narrate Hadith to her in a formal sense. Rather, it means that he would converse with her. Such conversations were undoubtedly concerned with religious and intellectual matters, and Aisha herself also took part in them. In other words, this was a form of intellectual exchange.

In this way, Aisha al-Siddiqah’s intellectual development continued steadily, until she acquired the elevated qualities that enabled her to play the historic role she did for nearly half a century after the death of the Prophet of Islam.

The Prophet of Islam used these precious moments of solitude at night for Aisha al-Siddiqah’s intellectual and spiritual training. This was, in effect, the very process that the Quran describes as purification and the teaching of wisdom.

For further clarification, some additional references from the books of Hadith and Seerah are presented below. They

show how Aisha al-Siddiqah's personality was formed during the Prophetic period.

One example of the intellectual exchange that took place between Aisha al-Siddiqah and the Prophet of Islam is as follows. On one occasion, the Prophet said: "Whoever is brought to account will be punished." Aisha asked: "O Messenger of God, does God not say in the Quran: 'he shall have an easy reckoning?'" (84:8) In other words, you are stating in absolute terms that no one can escape punishment after being reckoned with, whereas the Quran indicates that a person may still be saved after being called to account. The Prophet replied that the Quranic verse refers to the mere presentation of deeds; but the one whose deeds are subjected to scrutiny and questioning will face destruction. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 103) This example shows that Aisha's learning from the Prophet was not merely that of a listener; rather, it was a genuine intellectual exchange.

On another occasion, Aisha al-Siddiqah asked the Prophet of Islam whether those who associated partners with God would receive any reward for the good deeds they had performed. In this connection, she mentioned the example of Abdullah ibn Jud'an. He was a polytheist and died in that state, but he was a man of noble character and used to help people. Aisha asked whether such moral conduct would benefit Abdullah ibn Jud'an in the Hereafter. The Prophet replied that it would not, because he had never said: "My

Lord, forgive me my sin on the Day of Judgement.” (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 214)

Another incident in this connection is that the Prophet of Islam once decided to remain apart from his wives for one month. This is known in history as the incident of *ila'*. After making this announcement, he went to the upper room of a nearby house. This period of *ila'* began on the first day of the lunar month. After twenty-nine days had passed, the Prophet came down. When he entered Aisha al-Siddiqah's chamber, she said: “O Messenger of God, you had said that you would remain apart for one month, but one day still remains before thirty days are complete.” The Prophet replied: “A month may also be twenty-nine days, and Gabriel has informed me that the new moon has been sighted today.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 378)

This exchange between Aisha al-Siddiqah and the Prophet also points to another religious issue, relating to the sighting of the new moon. It may be inferred from this incident that if the new moon has not been personally sighted, but reliable information is received on the twenty-ninth day that it has been sighted, this report will be accepted, and acts of worship may be arranged on its basis. This shows that, in Islamic law, a reliable indirect report of the sighting carries the same weight as personal observation.

Once, a man sought permission to meet the Messenger of God. The Prophet said: “Allow him to enter; he is an unpleasant member of his family.” When the man entered

and sat down, the Prophet spoke to him gently. Aisha al-Siddiqah was surprised. After the man had left, she asked: “O Messenger of God, you did not think well of him, yet when he came in, you spoke to him gently.” The Messenger of God replied: “Aisha, the worst person is the one whom people avoid because of his bad manners.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6032)

On one occasion, the Prophet said, “Follow a balanced course, keep people close to you, and give them hope. No one will enter Paradise solely because of their deeds.” Aisha Siddiqah found the last statement surprising. She thought that those who were free from sin might be an exception. She asked: “O Messenger of God, not even you?” He replied: “Not even me, unless God covers me with His forgiveness and mercy.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6467)

Once, some Jews came to the Messenger of God. Instead of saying al-salamu ‘alayk—“peace be upon you”—they twisted the words and said al-samu ‘alayk—“may death come upon you.” Aisha heard this and could not restrain herself. She replied: ‘*Alaykum al-sam wa al-la‘nah*—“Upon you be death and curse.” The Prophet of Islam said: “You should be gentle. God loves gentleness in all matters.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6395)

According to another narration, Aisha al-Siddiqah says that Safiyyah, the wife of the Prophet, was mentioned

in a gathering. Safiyyah was somewhat short in stature. Aisha gestured with her hand and said, “Safiyyah is only this much,” meaning that she was short. The Messenger of God said: “You have uttered such a word that, if it were mixed with the sea, it would pollute its water.” (*Sunan Abi Dawud*, Hadith No. 4875)

A similar narration is reported from Aisha al-Siddiqah, in which the Prophet of Islam addressed her and said: “Beware of the sins that may seem insignificant.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 25177)

These two narrations reveal an extremely important lesson: one must take great care to avoid even those sins that people usually consider minor and into which they repeatedly fall. Such habits make a person insensitive to sin. And when a man or woman loses sensitivity towards small sins, he or she may easily fall into major sins as well.

On one occasion, the Prophet prayed: “O God, keep me alive in a state of poverty, cause me to die in a state of poverty, and raise me on the Day of Resurrection among the poor.” Aisha al-Siddiqah asked: “Why so, O Messenger of God?” He replied: “The poor will enter Paradise forty years before the wealthy. O Aisha, do not turn away anyone empty-handed, even if you have only a piece of date to give. Love the poor and keep them close to you.” (*Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, Hadith No. 2352)

The above narrations show that the companionship between the Prophet of Islam and Aisha al-Siddiqah

was not merely that of speaker and listener. Rather, it was a relationship marked by two-way conversation and intellectual exchange. It was, in effect, a form of dialogue. Through this dialogue, matters were clarified, and through questions and answers, different aspects of an issue became clear.

The Quran mentions four functions of the Messenger, one of which is *tazkiyah*, or purification. (Quran, 3:164) Tazkiyah is not a mysterious concept; it is something clear and understandable. It refers to what may be called intellectual development. Spiritual development is one outcome of intellectual development. Aisha al-Siddiqah received all these intellectual and spiritual benefits through her continuous learning from the Prophet of Islam.

Aisha's Derivation of Islamic Rulings

The total number of narrations reported from Aisha al-Siddiqah in various books of Hadith is 2,210. In terms of the number of narrations, some other Companions narrated more than she did. For example, Abu Hurayrah narrated 5,364 hadiths, Abdullah ibn Umar narrated 2,630, and Anas ibn Malik narrated 2,286. However, in one respect, Aisha al-Siddiqah holds a superior position in explaining Hadith and deriving rulings from them.

Aisha al-Siddiqah attained this distinction because, owing to her close companionship with the Prophet of Islam,

she had a deeper understanding of his temperament and method. A few examples are given below.

1. In Sahih al-Bukhari, there is a detailed narration from Aisha al-Siddiqah. Its translation is as follows:

“The first chapters of the Quran to be revealed were among the shorter chapters, known as the Mufasssal, and they spoke about Paradise and Hell. Then, when people became inclined towards Islam, the injunctions concerning lawful and unlawful matters were revealed. If the command ‘Do not drink wine’ had been revealed at the beginning, people would have said, ‘We will never give up wine.’ And if the command ‘Do not commit adultery’ had been revealed at the beginning, people would have said, ‘We will never give up adultery.’ While I was still a young girl playing in Makkah, this Quranic verse was revealed: ‘Indeed, the Hour of Doom is their appointed time, and the Last Hour will be the most severe, and the most bitter.’ (54:46) Chapter al-Baqarah and chapter al-Nisa were revealed when I was with him.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4993)

What Aisha al-Siddiqah stated in this narration is not found in the Quran and Hadith in these exact words. However, through her continuous companionship with the

Prophet of Islam, she came to understand that the Quranic injunctions were revealed according to the principle of gradualness.

In other words, the process of building a Quran-based society cannot begin with the enforcement of legal penalties and laws. Its proper beginning is to change human thinking and create within people a readiness to accept divine commands. Only after such an intellectual transformation can practical injunctions be implemented in society.

Aisha al-Siddiqah undoubtedly came to know this important truth through prolonged discussion and reflection with the Prophet of Islam.

2. Another narration from Aisha al-Siddiqah is as follows:

“The Battle of Bu‘ath was an event that God had prepared in advance for His Messenger. When the Messenger of God came to Madinah, the unity of its people had already been broken, and their chiefs had been killed in mutual fighting. God had prepared this event in advance for His Messenger, so that the people of Madinah might enter Islam.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3777)

The people of Makkah strongly opposed the mission of the Messenger of God. In Madinah, however, situated about three hundred miles away, his message spread without

resistance. What explains this difference? The answer is found in the above narration of Aisha al-Siddiqah.

This difference between Makkah and Madinah is not explicitly mentioned in the Quran or in the Prophet's sayings. How, then, did Aisha al-Siddiqah come to understand this important reality? Its source was her close companionship with the Messenger of God. From what he said in his conversations on this subject, Aisha inferred this truth and then conveyed it to the Muslim community.

According to this narration, the real reason was that, unlike Makkah, Madinah no longer had the powerful tribal chiefs who usually become the main source of such resistance. Shortly before the Prophet's arrival, a civil war had taken place there, in which most of Madinah's leading chiefs had been killed. History shows that resistance to a mission is usually led by leaders. When the leaders of Madinah were no longer present, the root of resistance was removed. As a result, the common people accepted Islam as the voice of their own nature.

3. In Sahih Muslim, it is narrated that after the death of the Messenger of God, during the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, Ibn Abi Mulaykah, a student of Aisha al-Siddiqah, asked her: "If the Messenger of God had appointed someone as Caliph, whom would he have appointed?" She replied: "Abu Bakr." He asked:

“Who after him?” She replied: “Umar.” He asked: “Who after him?” She said: “Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah.” When he asked who would come after him, Aisha al-Siddiqah remained silent. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 2385)

This narration shows that one of the important lessons Aisha al-Siddiqah learned through her close association with the Prophet of Islam was the great importance of the individual in collective affairs. Collective life is not built merely through systems or structures. It always requires capable individuals—people endowed with exceptional qualities.

According to Aisha al-Siddiqah, even in the first period of Islamic transformation, there were only three men who could successfully shoulder collective responsibility. From this, it may be inferred that in the matter of social reform, the real task is not to demolish one structure and build another. Rather, the real need is to prepare capable individuals for collective responsibility. This political wisdom, which became known to the Muslim community through Aisha al-Siddiqah, was perhaps not conveyed through anyone else in the same way.

4. Another narration from Aisha al-Siddiqah states that a grave sinner is the poet who satirizes an entire tribe. In other words, to condemn a whole tribe because of the fault of one or two

individuals is a serious moral wrong. (*Al-Adab al-Mufrad* by al-Bukhari, Hadith No. 874)

This narration shows that generalization in criticism is deeply harmful. It often happens that when a fault is found in one member of a nation or tribe, people begin to condemn the entire group on that basis. From a moral point of view, this is irresponsible, and from an Islamic point of view, it is impermissible. This profound principle of life was perhaps expressed with such clarity only through Aisha al-Siddiqah.

5. Abu Salamah, a Tabii, says that there was a dispute between him and some people over a piece of land. He mentioned the matter to Aisha al-Siddiqah. She said: "O Abu Salamah, keep away from land disputes, for the Prophet said: 'Whoever wrongfully takes even a handspan of land will have it placed around his neck from the seven layers of the earth.'" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2453)

This narration points to an important social principle. It means that when a material dispute arises between two individuals or two groups, and the matter cannot be resolved through mutual settlement, the better party is the one who, entrusting the matter to God, ends the dispute unilaterally. This is undoubtedly one of the most important principles for establishing social peace.

6. Ibn Abi al-Sa'ib, a Tabii, was a preacher in Madinah. He used to compose and recite prayers in rhymed prose and was always ready to deliver sermons. Aisha al-Siddiqah said to him, "Promise me three things; otherwise, I will take you to task."

He asked, "O Mother of the Believers, what are they?"

Aisha al-Siddiqah replied, "Do not compose your prayers in rhymed prose, because the Prophet's Companions did not do so. Preach only once a week. If that is not enough for you, then preach twice, or at most three times. Do not make people grow weary of the Book of God. Also, do not approach people while they are sitting together, interrupt their conversation, and begin preaching to them. Speak only when they wish to listen and ask you to do so." (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 25820)

This account of Aisha al-Siddiqah reveals the true spirit of religion. According to this spirit, prayer is a sincere expression of the feelings of the heart, whereas a prayer deliberately composed in rhymed prose may involve affectation and insincerity. Similarly, preaching is a word of counsel, and sincere counsel always takes into account the condition and receptivity of the listener. Likewise, the

temperament of a believer is to listen carefully to others and, when speaking, to take people's disposition into consideration.

7. A man once asked Aisha al-Siddiqah: "O Mother of the Believers, some people recite the whole Quran two or three times in a single night." Aisha replied: "They have recited, yet they have not truly recited." The Messenger of God would stand in prayer throughout the night, yet he would not go beyond Chapters al-Baqarah, al-'Imran, and al-Nisa. Whenever he came to a verse containing glad tidings, he would pray to God; and whenever he came to a verse containing warning, he would seek God's protection. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 24609)

This narration reveals the spirit of religion in two matters: how the Quran should be recited, and what the true form of voluntary prayer is. The Messenger of God generally performed both these acts in his room. Therefore, the wider world could learn these important details only through his wife. Aisha al-Siddiqah fulfilled this role for the Muslim community. This narration shows that what is primarily required in the recitation of the Quran is reflection, not merely what is commonly called completing the Quran.

8. When a new covering is placed on the Kaaba and the old covering is removed, the question arises

as to what should be done with the old covering. In earlier times, out of reverence and respect, the old covering would be buried in the ground. Shaybah ibn Uthman, who was the keeper of the key of the Kaaba at that time, told Aisha al-Siddiqah: "We gather the entire covering, dig a deep well, and bury it there, so that people do not wear it while in a state of impurity." Aisha al-Siddiqah said to Shaybah: "This is not right. You are doing wrong. Once the covering has been removed from the Kaaba, it becomes ordinary cloth. If a person in a state of major ritual impurity or a menstruating woman wears it, there is no harm. You should sell it and give the proceeds to the poor and to travellers." (*Al-Sunan al-Kubra* by al-Bayhaqi, Hadith No. 9731)

Through her insight, Aisha al-Siddiqah understood that such reverence was not sanctioned by the Shariah and had not been commanded by God or His Messenger. Aisha al-Siddiqah's view was fully in accordance with the true spirit of religion. Yet this was such a delicate matter that an ordinary Muslim would hardly have had the courage to say it. Through her continuous and close association with the Prophet of Islam, Aisha al-Siddiqah gained a sound understanding of religion. This gave her the confidence to state such matters with certainty.

Many other similar narrations from Aisha al-Siddiqah are found in the books of Hadith. Such narrations show how important it was, from a religious point of view, that Aisha al-Siddiqah form a close companionship with the Prophet from an early age. Had this not happened, many profound aspects of religious wisdom would not have become known to later generations, for they could only be learned through such close association with the Prophet.

Aisha al-Siddiqah narrated an important report. In *Sahih al-Bukhari*, this narration has been cited under several chapters because of its different aspects. The wording of the narration is: *Ma khuyyira Rasul Allah sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam bayna amrayn illa akhadha aysarahuma*—"Whenever the Messenger of God was given a choice between two matters, he would choose the easier of the two." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3560)

In this narration, Aisha al-Siddiqah describes the general policy of the Prophet of Islam. In practical life, his consistent method was that whenever he had to choose between two possible courses, he would leave the harder option and adopt the easier one. This point about the Prophet's general policy is so profound that it could be understood only through long companionship, and only by someone possessing exceptional intelligence.

No saying of the Prophet of Islam has been reported in exactly these words as a formal principle from his own

lips. Yet there is no doubt that this principle is reflected throughout his life. It is therefore of great importance in understanding the life and character of the Prophet.

For example, when the Prophet began his mission of Tawheed, or monotheism, in Makkah, one possible course was to destroy the 360 idols placed in the Kaaba, the centre of Islam. Instead, he set aside the issue of the idols and began by peacefully conveying the message of monotheism. This was clearly an instance of choosing the easier option rather than the harder one.

Similarly, towards the end of the Makkan period, he faced a choice between two courses: either to fight the polytheists of Makkah or to migrate from Makkah to Madinah. He chose the second course, which was undoubtedly a case of adopting the easier option rather than the harder one.

Likewise, after the Hijrah, at Hudaibiyah, he again faced a choice between two courses: either to break through the opposition of the polytheists and attempt to enter Makkah for the performance of Umrah, or to return from Hudaibiyah to Madinah. The first course was the way of war, while the second was the way of peace. In this case, he chose the way of peace, which again meant choosing the easier option over the harder one.

The entire life of the Prophet of Islam is an example of this wise method. Through intellectual exchange with the Prophet and deep observation of his practical life, Aisha

al-Siddiqah discovered this key principle and conveyed it to the Muslim community. This important key to understanding the Prophet's Seerah was perhaps not made known to the world through any other man or woman in the same way.

Clarifying Hadith Reports

One of Aisha al-Siddiqah's unique contributions was that she corrected many narrations which did not accurately convey the intended meaning of the Prophet of Islam's words. Most hadiths reported from the Prophet relate to conversations that took place in gatherings. It sometimes happened that a Companion entered a gathering midway, heard part of the Prophet's speech, and missed another part. Similarly, a Companion might hear a statement of the Prophet without knowing the particular context in which it was said.

For such reasons, ambiguity sometimes entered the narrations of certain Companions, and their reports did not fully represent the Prophet's intended meaning. Aisha al-Siddiqah undertook the task of clarifying such reports by placing them in their proper context. As the Prophet's wife, she was in his company every day. As his life companion, she was able to understand matters in greater detail and depth. On the basis of this distinctive position, she corrected those narrations of the Companions in which the Prophet's words had not been conveyed in their proper context.

In the terminology of hadith scholars, this kind of correction is called *istidrak*. Several leading scholars of Hadith collected these *istidrakat*. One such treatise was prepared by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, entitled *‘Ayn al-Isabah fi Istidrak ‘Aishah ‘ala al-Sahabah* (Cairo, 1988). To understand this matter, a few examples are given below.

1. According to a narration in Sahih al-Bukhari, Abdullah ibn Umar reported the following statement concerning bathing: “I heard the Messenger of God say: Whoever among you comes for the Friday prayer should take a bath.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 894)

Abdullah ibn Umar narrated this hadith in a simple form. Outwardly, it may give the impression that bathing on Friday is an absolute command. However, when Aisha al-Siddiqah narrated the same hadith, she also explained its reason—a reason she certainly came to know through her close companionship with the Prophet of Islam. She narrated it as follows:

“People used to come for the Friday prayer from their homes and from the settlements outside Madinah. They would arrive covered with dust and perspiration. On one occasion, one of them came to the Prophet while he was with me. The Messenger of God said: ‘It would have been better if you had purified yourselves for this day.’” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 902)

In Abdullah ibn Umar's narration, the Prophet's statement is reported in an absolute form, which may create the misunderstanding that bathing is, as it were, a part of the Friday prayer itself. But Aisha al-Siddiqah narrated the statement in its proper background. This makes it clear that the bath was required because of a physical need; it was not a ritual component of the prayer.

2. Abdullah ibn Abbas, Abdullah ibn Umar, and some other Companions narrated that the Prophet said: *Inna al-mayyita la-yu'adhdhabu bi-buka'i ahlihi 'alayh*—"The deceased is punished because of his family's weeping over him." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1286)

When this narration was mentioned before Aisha al-Siddiqah, she said that the Messenger of God had not said it in that sense. The actual incident was that one day the Prophet passed by the funeral of a non-Muslim, while her relatives were weeping over her. He said: "They are weeping over her, while she is being punished." (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 932)

Aisha al-Siddiqah's point was that weeping is not the cause of punishment. Rather, the two matters are separate. The mourners were weeping over her death, while the deceased was suffering the consequences of her past deeds. Weeping is the act of others, and they themselves will bear responsibility for it. The deceased cannot be held accountable for it. Every person is answerable only for his or her own deeds.

This explanation by Aisha al-Siddiqah concerning the Prophet's statement shows that in such matters, regular discussion took place between the Prophet and Aisha. Through these discussions, matters became clear to Aisha that generally remained unknown to others.

3. At the Battle of Badr, when some of the polytheists were killed, the Messenger of God stood at their place of burial and said: "Have you found that what your Lord promised you is true?" (Quran, 7:44)

The Companions asked: "O Messenger of God, are you addressing the dead?" Ibn Umar, probably narrating from Umar, and Anas ibn Malik, narrating from Abu Talhah, reported that the Prophet replied: "You do not hear better than they do, but they cannot reply." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1370)

When this narration was mentioned to Aisha al-Siddiqah, she said that the Messenger of God did not say it in that form. Rather, he said: "They now know that what I used to say to them was true." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1371)

What Aisha al-Siddiqah said was based on deep religious understanding. Where did she acquire such exceptional depth of religious insight? There can be only one answer: she acquired it through her close and continuous learning from the Prophet of Islam.

4. Some people came to Aisha al-Siddiqah and said that Abu Hurayrah narrated from the Messenger of God: “Bad omen is found in three things: a woman, a horse, and a house.” Aisha replied that this was not correct. Abu Hurayrah had heard one part of the statement and missed the other. What the Messenger of God had actually said was: “The Jews say that bad omen is found in three things: a woman, a horse, and a house.” (*Musnad Abu Dawud al-Tayalisi*, Hadith No. 1641; *Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 25168)

Aisha’s clarification mentioned above is extremely important. Had she not provided this explanation, Abu Huraira’s narration would have left a permanent ambiguity on this matter—one that no one else could have resolved.

5. Abdullah ibn Abbas reported that the Prophet of Islam saw God twice: once on the occasion of the Mi‘raj, and again on the occasion referred to in the chapter al-Najm. With reference to this, Masruq, a Tabii, asked Aisha al-Siddiqah: “O Mother of the Believers, did the Prophet see God?” Aisha replied: “You have said something that has made the hair on my body stand on end. Whoever tells you that Muhammad saw his Lord has lied.” She then recited the verse: “No vision can grasp Him, but He grasps all vision; and He is the Subtle, the All-Aware.” (Quran, 6:103) After this, Aisha recited another verse of the

Quran (42:51): “It is not granted to any human being that God should speak to him other than by revelation or from behind a veil.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4855)

The clarification that Aisha al-Siddiqah made in this matter required extraordinary religious courage. Such courage could be found only in someone who had spent a long period in the company of the Prophet of Islam and, through intellectual exchange with him on such matters, had acquired deep insight into religion.

6. When Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri was near death, he asked for new clothes and put them on. He explained that the Messenger of God had said: “A Muslim will be raised in the same clothing in which he dies.” When Aisha al-Siddiqah came to know of this, she said: “May God have mercy on Abu Sa‘id. By clothing, the Messenger of God meant a person’s deeds. Otherwise, the Prophet clearly stated that people will be raised on the Day of Resurrection barefoot, unclothed, and uncircumcised.” (*Ayn al-Isabah* by al-Suyuti, p. 49)

This clarification by Aisha al-Siddiqah reveals an important principle: to understand a hadith correctly, it is sometimes necessary not to take a statement literally, but to understand it symbolically.

7. On one occasion, the Prophet instructed that the meat of sacrifice should not be kept for more than

three days. On the basis of the apparent wording, some Companions understood this command to be permanent. Aisha al-Siddiqah explained the wisdom behind the instruction and clarified that it was a temporary ruling. A man asked her: “Did the Messenger of God prohibit eating the meat of sacrifice after three days?” Aisha replied: “No. At that time, only a few people were able to offer sacrifice. Therefore, the Prophet gave this instruction so that those who had offered sacrifice would feed those who had not.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 24707)

This correction by Aisha al-Siddiqah further shows that it is permissible to preserve sacrificial meat for a long period by modern methods. In relation to the present age, this clarification is extremely important. Had Aisha al-Siddiqah’s explanation not been available, the wisdom behind the hadith would have remained unclear, and people might have considered the preservation and later use of sacrificial meat to be contrary to Islamic teaching.

8. Two men from the Banu Amir tribe came to Aisha Siddiqah and said, “Abu Huraira reports that the Prophet ﷺ said that bad omens are found in three things: a house, a woman and a horse.” Aisha Siddiqah became extremely angry and said, “By the One who revealed the Quran to Muhammad, the Prophet ﷺ never said this. What he said was that the people of the

pre-Islamic period used to regard these three things as bad omens.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 26034)

The narrator probably did not fully understand the Prophet’s words. The Prophet had been referring to a belief held by the people of the pre-Islamic period, but the narrator mistakenly understood the statement as the Prophet’s own view. Aisha Siddiqah, however, through her exceptional intelligence and her close and continuous association with the Prophet, had developed a deep understanding of the spirit of the religion. She therefore immediately recognized the true meaning of the statement. On hearing the narrator’s version, she rejected the misunderstanding at once and clarified what the Prophet had actually said.

These few examples show the greatness of Aisha al-Siddiqah’s contribution to Islam. In fact, studying her narrations is extremely important for understanding the true spirit of Islam.

Perhaps the most important legacy later generations received through Aisha was her deep religious insight. Through her extraordinary intelligence and her complete dedication to Islam, she attained a depth of understanding in which perhaps no one was her equal. On the basis of this deep insight, she guided the Muslim community directly for nearly half a century. As for her indirect guidance, it continues to this day and will undoubtedly continue until the Day of Judgement.

The reality is that religion has two levels: the outward form of religion and the inner reality of religion. A man or woman who receives religion only at the outward level is like someone who has received a fruit only at the level of its peel. But a man or woman who receives religion at the level of its deeper meaning is like someone who has reached the kernel of the fruit. It is this second kind of person who truly possesses the fruit.

Aisha al-Siddiqah understood God's religion in its true spirit. In this way, she not only shaped herself into an elevated, God-oriented personality, but through her life she also established a great historical example of how any man or woman can attain such a high level of realization in religion.

In the early period of the Prophet of Islam's life, he married Khadijah, who was fifteen years older than him. In the later period of his life, he married Aisha, who was much younger than him. Both marriages were extremely significant. In the early period of the Prophet's life, he needed an experienced woman; in the later period, a young woman like Aisha was needed, as will become clear in the next chapter.

THE QUESTION OF AGE AT MARRIAGE

One question concerning Aisha al-Siddiqah relates to her age at the time of marriage. Authentic narrations in the books of Hadith state that her marriage to the Prophet of Islam took place in Makkah, when she was six years old. Later, her formal departure to the Prophet's household took place in Madinah, when she was nine years old. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5133)

In modern times, much has been written on this subject. Orientalists have raised questions about the noble character of the Prophet of Islam on this basis. It is argued that marriage to a young girl is contrary to refined moral conduct, and that such an act casts doubt on a person's claim to prophethood.

This question existed in earlier times as well, though not with the same intensity as today. In the past, it was generally raised on juristic grounds rather than moral grounds: Is it permissible for an older man to marry a young minor girl? Classical scholars tried to answer this in the traditional manner. For example, Ibn Hazm records Ibn Shubrumah's view in these words: "He claimed that

the Prophet's marriage to Aisha when she was six years old was among his special privileges." (*Fath al-Bari*, Vol. 9, p. 190)

This explanation is not logical, because the special privileges of a prophet belong to him in his capacity as a prophet of God, not in any other capacity. Moreover, no such marriage is established from the life of any other prophet.

In modern times, scholars have tried to defend this matter in different ways. For example, Mawlana Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi, while discussing this subject in his book, writes: "When Aisha was married, she was six years old. The real purpose of this early marriage was to strengthen the relationship between Prophethood and Caliphate. First, the warm climate of Arabia naturally gave women an unusual capacity for physical development. Second, it is generally observed that just as distinguished individuals possess an extraordinary capacity for mental and intellectual development, they may also possess a special capacity for physical growth. In English, this is called precociousness." (*Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi, Sirat Aisha, Dar al-Musannifin*, Azamgarh, p. 24)

In Sayyid Sulayman Nadvi's book, the word is written as "pre-conscious." The English spelling, however, is not given. In my view, the English word probably intended by the author was not "pre-conscious" but "precocious." In

English, precocious means premature or unusually early development:

Precocious: "Ripe before the proper or natural time; premature; developed or matured earlier than usual." (*Webster*)

"Of a child: having developed particular abilities and ways of behaving at a much younger age than usual; sexually precocious." (*Oxford*)

However, neither Hadith nor history establishes that Aisha al-Siddiqah's case was one of precocious development. The entire explanation, therefore, rests on assumption. In any case, this answer is irrelevant to the real issue. The real issue is that authentic narrations state, with numerical specificity, that the marriage contract took place at the age of six and the formal departure to the Prophet's household at the age of nine, while the Messenger of God was then over fifty years old. The real question concerns this established difference in age, not physical maturity.

Similarly, some people argue that among the Arabs, before marriage, it was customary to settle the matter of a relationship in advance. This was similar to what is called fixing a match or engagement in our society. The Quran mentions only nikah, not engagement or betrothal. Therefore, when the narrations say that Aisha's nikah took place at the age of six and her formal departure at the age of nine, the word nikah, according to the custom of Arab

society, means the settlement of the marriage proposal, or engagement, while the formal departure refers to the actual marriage. (Ghulam Ahmad Parwez, Letters to Tahirah, “*The Age of Aisha*” pp. 1-2)

This explanation, too, is not correct. When the word *nikah* appears in Hadith, it must be understood in its recognized meaning of marriage contract. To take the word *nikah* in any other sense, evidence must be found within the text of the Hadith itself, and no such evidence exists. Moreover, this explanation does not remove the real objection. Whether the age of marriage is taken as six or nine, in either case it remains a marriage at a young age. What, then, is gained by this explanation?

Similarly, some people put forward another argument. They say that Aisha al-Siddiqah criticized certain narrations of the Companions and said: “I do not say that these people lie, but ears sometimes make mistakes in hearing.” Several such criticisms are found in Bukhari and Muslim. This shows that a narrator may sometimes be highly reliable, yet the narration he reports may contain an error.

Sometimes this happens because the narrator has heard only part of a statement. Sometimes he misunderstands the meaning, and sometimes he forgets. Following the Mother of the Believers, they say that the narrator made a mistake in hearing: the phrase spoken was *tis’a ‘ashar*—nineteen—but the narrator heard only *tis’a*—nine. In this

way, the story arose that Aisha was nine years old, for ears sometimes make mistakes in hearing. (Habib al-Rahman Siddiqui Kandhlawi, '*Umar Aisha*' Karachi, October 1994, pp. 8-9)

This analogy, too, is not correct. Aisha al-Siddiqah's principle can apply only where both the narrator and the person correcting the narration were present as listeners. One listener may say of another listener that he made a mistake in hearing, and that, according to what I heard, the actual statement was different. But a person who was not present and did not hear the statement himself has no right to reject a narration on the basis of such an analogy. This kind of reasoning is wholly unsound. If such an extended analogy is accepted as a valid principle, people may produce all kinds of conjectures that could distort the entire form of religion.

The proper starting point of discussion in this matter is not why a young girl was married to a much older man. Rather, the proper starting point is to understand why Aisha al-Siddiqah became such an exceptional figure in history. The question of her marriage must be understood in the light of her exceptional historical role, not the other way around.

It is an established fact that, in the whole of Muslim history, Aisha al-Siddiqah holds a unique and distinguished position in terms of her role. She understood the spirit of

Islam with a depth perhaps unmatched by any other man or woman. She explained the delicate aspects of religion with a confidence that no one else displayed in the same way. Nor do we find anyone, either in the age of the Companions or in later generations, who explained the underlying principles and deeper insights of religion with the same clarity and insight. The answer to the central issue lies in the answer to this very question.

The fact is that the highest attainment in Islam is *maarifah*, or realization of God. The Prophet received this realization in its complete form from God. The Prophet receives it directly from God through Gabriel. The question, then, is how this highest level of realization could be transmitted after the Prophet. It was for this purpose that Aisha al-Siddiqah was chosen.

Practically speaking, there was only one way for this to happen: Aisha had to be given the opportunity to be in the Prophet's company from an early age. Such a high level of realization required close companionship. And the opportunity for such sustained association with a person could be available only to his wife, and to no one else.

The study of psychology shows that a child in the early years is highly inquisitive and eager to learn about the world around him or her. Moreover, in early childhood, the mind is very sharp and quickly grasps new things. Studies also show that memory is especially strong in the early years. What a person learns in early life is rarely

forgotten. The idea of beginning a child's schooling at an early age is based on this very principle.

Aisha al-Siddiqah was an exceptionally intelligent woman with a highly receptive mind. Therefore, it was God's will that she should be placed in the Prophet's continuous company from an early age. The only practical form of such close and continuous companionship was for her to become his wife and life companion. It was under this special divine plan that Aisha al-Siddiqah entered the marital household of the Prophet of Islam at a young age.

Outwardly, this marriage was unusual and contrary to common practice. For this reason, it was quite possible that the Prophet of Islam might not have accepted it, or might not even have considered the proposal. Perhaps because of this sensitivity, an angel came to him and gave him prior indication of this extraordinary relationship, so that he would have no hesitation in the matter.

In some respects, this was similar to what had happened earlier in the case of Mary. Mary could naturally have felt great hesitation at the prospect of giving birth to a child without a father. Therefore, God sent an angel to her in advance. The angel appeared before her in human form and informed her of the matter. This is mentioned clearly in the Quran. (Maryam, 19:17)

The angel's prior indication concerning this marriage is established through authentic narrations. Aisha relates

that the Messenger of God said to her: “You were shown to me in a dream. An angel brought you to me wrapped in a piece of silk and said: ‘This is your wife.’ I uncovered your face and saw that it was you. I said: ‘If this is from God, He will bring it to pass.’” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5125)

Aisha al-Siddiqah lived with the Prophet of Islam for eleven years. Since she was much younger than him, she lived for nearly fifty years after his death. During this half-century, she continued to serve as a means of disseminating prophetic knowledge. The accounts of her life show that Aisha al-Siddiqah brought to light profound aspects of the wisdom underlying religious teachings that do not appear to have reached the Muslim community through any other Companion.

Moreover, through her close association with the Prophet, she gained extraordinary certainty regarding the soundness of her understanding of religion. This is why she spoke on delicate religious matters with a decisiveness and confidence that no one else, before or after her, could display in the same manner.

It often happens that, out of reverence and devotion, people form opinions that do not correspond to the actual facts. Once such views become widespread, ordinary people usually do not have the courage to challenge them. At such times, extraordinary insight is required. Only a person endowed with exceptional insight can dare to speak with certainty. Aisha al-Siddiqah acquired this insight

through her continuous companionship with the Prophet of Islam, and it enabled her to speak and act with complete confidence.

For example, after the death of the Prophet, it began to be said during the period of the Tabi'un that the Prophet of Islam had seen God with his own eyes. When Aisha al-Siddiqah heard this, she became deeply disturbed and said: *Man haddathaka anna Muhammadan sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam ra'a rabbahu faqad kadhab*—"Whoever tells you that Muhammad saw his Lord has made a false statement." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4855)

Similarly, after the Prophet's death, the practice of repeatedly completing the Quran became widespread. Instead of emphasizing reflection upon the Quran, people began to attach importance to completing it again and again through verbal recitation. Great rewards were associated with such completions. When this was mentioned to Aisha al-Siddiqah, and she was told that certain people completed the Quran several times in a single day, she did not approve of it. Rather, she said: *Ula'ika qara'u wa lam yaqra'u*—"They have recited, yet they have not truly recited." (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 24609)

Because she was the wife of the Messenger of God, people could trust her judgement in such delicate matters. Had someone else made similar statements, people might have found it difficult to accept them.

There is a narration in which Yusuf ibn Mahak says:

“I was with Aisha, the Mother of the Believers, when an Iraqi man came to her and asked: ‘Which type of shroud is best?’ Aisha replied: ‘Woe to you! What harm does it do you?’ He then said: ‘O Mother of the Believers, show me your copy of the Quran.’ She asked: ‘Why?’ He replied: ‘So that I may compile a Quran according to it, for people are reciting it in different arrangements.’ Aisha said: ‘What harm does it do you which part you read first? Read it as you have been reading it.’” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4993)

The confidence and clarity with which Aisha al-Siddiqah represented the spirit of Islam in this conversation are highly significant. She was able to speak with such certainty only because, through her close companionship with the Prophet of Islam, she had fully grasped the spirit of Islam. She knew, without the slightest doubt, what Islam required in such matters.

Further examples of Aisha al-Siddiqah’s insight and understanding will be found in other chapters of this book. These examples show that the question of her age at marriage is only a secondary issue. The decisive point is that the educational and formative purpose served by this marriage could not have been achieved through any alternative arrangement.

The Wisdom Behind the Marriage

As is known, Aisha al-Siddiqah was under ten years old when her marriage to the Prophet of Islam took place. After the marriage, she lived with him throughout the entire Madinan period. This ten-year period was the most eventful period in the early history of Islam. Throughout these years, she remained continuously in the company of the Prophet of Islam, even accompanying him on journeys. Thus, for Aisha al-Siddiqah, this ten-year period was like an association with a living school.

This was the real purpose behind Aisha al-Siddiqah's marriage to the Prophet of Islam at a young age. At that time, she was in the stage of life known as the formative period. The study of psychology shows that by about the age of ten, the mind of a person is largely formed. Its conditioning has already become so strong that breaking it at a later stage becomes extremely difficult.

It appears that Aisha al-Siddiqah's father, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, understood this secret. According to a carefully considered plan, he arranged the marriage of his intelligent daughter to the Prophet of Islam at a young age. This took place with the full consent of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the first Caliph. It involved both deep sincerity and great wisdom.

The result of this marriage—or, in other words, this educational planning—was something that perhaps has no parallel in human history. As a result of this planning,

a capable personality like Aisha al-Siddiqah was formed. During the most receptive stage of her life, she had, perhaps more than anyone else, the opportunity to learn directly from the final Prophet and develop under his guidance. In this way, she became a complete inheritor of prophetic knowledge. After the death of the Prophet of Islam, she continued for nearly fifty years to disseminate this knowledge among people. In an age before the printing press and the tape recorder, she became, as it were, a living recorder of the Prophet of Islam.

This transmission of prophetic knowledge through Aisha al-Siddiqah continued for a long period after the death of the Prophet of Islam. This became possible only because she had entered the Prophet's household at a young age. Had Aisha al-Siddiqah been approximately the same age as the Prophet of Islam, both would have passed away around the same time, with only a slight difference. When the Prophet's voice fell silent, Aisha al-Siddiqah's voice too would have fallen silent, and the transmission of prophetic knowledge would have come to an abrupt end.

It should also be added that this kind of acquisition of knowledge from the Prophet could not have taken place through a man. For this purpose, a woman was required—one who could live with him continuously as his wife. Only a woman, as his wife, could remain in such constant companionship with him; a man could not. Seen

in the light of these considerations, Aisha al-Siddiqah's marriage was a far-reaching arrangement whose benefit has reached all humanity and will continue to do so until the Day of Judgement. If the various aspects of this matter are considered objectively, it is not difficult to understand that what happened was the only possible arrangement. There was, in fact, no alternative that could have fulfilled this need.

The original sources of Islam are the Quran and Hadith. The Quran and Hadith may be called the text of Islam. This text is, as it were, the literal statement of Islam. Anyone who wishes to know what Islam is can learn it by studying the Quran and Hadith.

However, there is another element that holds great importance in religion, and that is companionship. Companionship does not mean merely sitting silently in a gathering. It necessarily includes intellectual exchange. In the true sense, a person benefits from companionship when he or she participates in a gathering in such a way as to receive direct benefit from the one whose company is being shared: increasing knowledge through questions and answers, clarifying unclear matters through further discussion, and at the same time receiving personal benefit from the person's experience, spirituality, and God-realization.

The Companions were practical examples of this companionship with the Prophet. In Aisha, however, an

exceptional example was established. Her close relationship with the Prophet became a particularly complete model of what could be gained from such association. Moreover, this model continued, long after the death of the Prophet of Islam, to make people aware of the importance of companionship.

Aisha al-Siddiqah is, as it were, a living embodiment of the principle of companionship. In her life, the principle of companionship took the form of an institution. This institution must now be kept alive permanently within the Muslim community. Senior members of every generation should continue to pass on this benefit of companionship to the men and women of the next generation, so that Islam may remain preserved not only in the form of text, but also through the intellectual and spiritual benefit provided by the institution of companionship.

A FEW
HISTORICAL
WOMEN

NOTABLE WOMEN IN HISTORY

In the history of the Prophets, there are several women who serve as exemplary figures for all humanity. Although the full details of the lives of all the Prophets and their families are not known to us, the information preserved in the Quran and Hadith highlights certain women who stand out because of their distinctive roles.

These women, in different respects, serve as role models for the entire human race. A brief mention of some of them is given here.

Hagar, Mother of Ishmael

One of the most prominent women in Islamic tradition was Hagar (Hajar), the wife of the Prophet Abraham. She gave birth to a son named Ishmael. As part of a divine plan, Abraham took Hagar and her infant son to Makkah in Arabia and settled them there. At that time, Makkah was completely uninhabited. It was from this point that the history of Makkah as the centre of Islam began. The Quran briefly refers to this event:

“[Remember] when Abraham said, “My Lord, make this a city of peace and help me and my

children to keep away from worshipping idols. My Lord, they have led so many men astray! Anyone who follows me is with me, but if anyone turns against me, You are surely forgiving and merciful. O Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivable valley near Your Sacred House, Lord, so that they might establish their prayers. So, make people's hearts incline towards them and provide them with fruits so that they may be grateful.” (Quran, 14:35-37)

The Quran makes only a brief reference to Hagar.. However, Sahih al-Bukhari, the well-known collection of Hadith, contains a detailed account of her story. The narration is given below.

Abdullah ibn Abbas relates that Hagar was the first woman to wear a waist belt, which she used to conceal her tracks from Sarah. Abraham then brought Hagar and her infant son Ishmael to Makkah. At that time, Hagar was still nursing Ishmael.

Abraham left them beneath a large tree near the site of *Zamzam*, in the upper part of the area where the Sacred Mosque now stands. At that time, there was not a single person in Makkah, nor was there any water. Abraham left a bag of dates and a waterskin with them and then began his journey back.

Hagar followed him and said, “O Abraham, where are you going, leaving us in this valley where there is neither a

human being nor anything else?” She repeated the question several times, but Abraham did not turn towards her.

Finally, she asked, “Has God commanded you to do this?” He replied, “Yes.”

Hagar then said, “In that case, God will not abandon us,” and she returned to her child.

Abraham continued on his way until he reached al-Thaniyyah, which lay in the upper part of Makkah in the Prophet’s time. When he was no longer visible to them, he turned towards the place where the Kaaba now stands, raised his hands, and prayed:

“O Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivable valley...” He continued reciting the verse until the words, “so that they may be grateful.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3364)

Hagar continued to nurse Ishmael and drink water from the waterskin. Eventually, the water ran out, and both she and her child became thirsty. She looked at her son and saw him in agony from thirst. Unable to bear the sight, she moved away from him.

Safa was the nearest hill, so she climbed to the top and looked across the valley, hoping to see someone. But there was no one in sight. She descended from Safa and, when she reached the valley, lifted the hem of her garment and ran across it like a person in great distress. She then climbed

the hill of *Marwah* and looked around, but again she saw no one. In this way, she went back and forth between Safa and Marwah seven times.

Abdullah ibn Abbas relates that the Prophet Muhammad said, “This is why people perform the *sa’i* between these two hills.”

When Hagar reached Marwah, she heard a voice. She said to herself, “Be quiet,” and listened carefully. She heard the voice again and called out, “You have made your voice heard. Can you offer us any help?”

She then saw an angel at the site of Zamzam. The angel struck the ground with his heel—or with his wing—and water began to flow. Hagar quickly began collecting the water into a small basin, building up the earth around it with her hands. She scooped up the water and filled her waterskin. The more water she collected, the more the spring continued to flow.

Ibn Abbas relates that the Prophet said, “May Allah have mercy on Hagar. Had she allowed Zamzam to flow freely—or, as he said, had she not scooped up its water with her hands—it would have become a continuous spring.” Hagar drank from it and gave some to her son. The angel said to her, “Do not fear that you will be abandoned. This is the site of the House of God. This child and his father will build the House, and God does not abandon the people of His House.”

At that time, the site of the Kaaba stood above the surrounding ground like a mound. Whenever floodwater came, it passed around it on either side.

Hagar continued to live there in this way for some time. Then a group from the tribe of Jurhum—or a family belonging to that tribe—came by way of Kada, which was located in the upper part of Makkah in the Prophet's time. They stopped in the lower part of Makkah and noticed a bird circling overhead. They said, "This bird must be circling over water. We have passed through this valley before, and there was no water here."

They sent one or two men to investigate. The men found water and returned to inform the others. The whole group then came to the place. The Prophet Muhammad said that Hagar was sitting beside the water.

They asked her, "Will you allow us to settle here?"

She replied, "Yes, but you will have no right over the water."

They agreed.

Ibn Abbas relates that the Prophet Muhammad said that Hagar was pleased by their arrival, for she wished to have people living nearby. The people of Jurhum settled there and sent for their families, who also came and made their homes there.

In time, several households were established in Makkah. Ishmael grew into a young man and learned Arabic from

the people of Jurhum. They became very fond of him and, when he reached adulthood, married him to one of their women. Hagar later passed away. After Ishmael had married, Abraham came to visit his family. He did not find Ishmael at home, so he asked his wife where he was. She replied, "He has gone out in search of provisions for us."

Abraham then asked about their living conditions. She said, "We are living in hardship and great difficulty," and complained about their circumstances.

Abraham said, "When your husband returns, convey my greetings to him and tell him to change the threshold of his door."

When Ishmael returned, he sensed that someone had visited. He asked his wife, "Did anyone come here?"

She replied, "Yes, an old man of such and such an appearance came. He asked me about you, and I told him where you were. He also asked about our living conditions, and I told him that we were living in great hardship and difficulty."

Ishmael asked, "Did he leave any message for me?"

She replied, "Yes. He conveyed his greetings to you and told you to change the threshold of your door."

Ishmael said, "That was my father. He has instructed me to part with you. Return to your family."

Ishmael divorced her and later married another woman from the tribe of Jurhum.

Abraham remained in his homeland for as long as God willed. He then came to visit Ishmael again, but once more he did not find him at home. He asked Ishmael's wife where he was.

She replied, "He has gone out in search of provisions for us."

Abraham asked, "How are you living?"

She replied, "We are well and living in comfort," and praised God.

Abraham asked, "What do you eat?"

She replied, "Meat."

He asked, "What do you drink?"

She replied, "Water."

Abraham prayed, "O God, bless their meat and water."

The Prophet of Islam said that there was no grain in Makkah at that time. Had grain been available there, Abraham would have prayed for blessings in it as well. He further said that if people anywhere other than Makkah were to live on meat and water alone, such a diet would not agree with them.

Abraham then said to her, "When your husband returns, convey my greetings to him and tell him to keep the threshold of his door."

When Ishmael returned, he asked, "Did anyone visit you?"

She replied, "Yes, a dignified and pleasant-looking elderly

man came to us.” She spoke highly of him and added, “He asked me about you, and I told him where you were. He also asked about our living conditions, and I told him that we were well.”

Ishmael asked, “Did he leave any message for me?”

She replied, “Yes. He conveyed his greetings to you and told you to keep the threshold of your door.”

Ishmael said, “That was my father, and you are the threshold. He has instructed me to keep you as my wife.”

Abraham then remained in his homeland for as long as God willed. When he returned again, he found Ishmael sitting beneath a tree near Zamzam, sharpening his arrows. When Ishmael saw his father, he rose to greet him, and they welcomed each other with the affection of a father and son.

Abraham said, “O Ishmael, God has given me a command.”

Ishmael replied, “Then do what your Lord has commanded you.”

Abraham asked, “Will you help me?”

Ishmael replied, “I will.”

Abraham said, “God has commanded me to build a House here,” and pointed towards a mound that stood above the surrounding ground.

They then began raising the foundations of the House. Ishmael brought the stones, while Abraham carried out

the construction. When the walls became too high, Ishmael brought a stone and placed it beside him. Abraham stood on the stone—the Maqam Ibrahim—and continued building, while Ishmael handed the stones up to him.

As they worked, they prayed:

“Our Lord, accept this from us. You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.”

They continued building the House, moving around it as the work progressed, and repeatedly prayed: “Our Lord, accept this from us. You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3364)

Hajar’s husband, the Prophet Abraham, son of Azar, was born in Iraq approximately four and a half thousand years ago. He lived to the age of 175. He called the people of his time to the worship of the one God. However, polytheism and idol worship had gained such a strong hold over their minds that they were unable to accept the message of monotheism.

Abraham continued to convey the message of monotheism there for more than a generation. By that time, however, polytheism had developed into a complete civilization and had become so deeply embedded in people’s lives that they could not think beyond it. From birth, every individual was taught the beliefs and practices of polytheism. Under the influence of this environment, the human mind became completely conditioned by it.

At that point, under God's direction, Abraham adopted a new plan. The plan was to raise a new generation in an uninhabited desert, far from the centres of established civilization. It was for this purpose that Abraham brought his wife Hagar and their infant son Ishmael to the place where Makkah now stands and settled them there.

The place was entirely free from the influence of polytheistic civilization. It was a world of pure nature, where nothing existed except the signs of God's creation. In this simple natural environment, a new people gradually emerged through successive generations. This process continued for more than two thousand years. Then the time came when the Final Prophet appeared among them.

These people came to be known in history as the Children of Ishmael. They may be described as potentially Muslims.

Thus, for the first time in the long history of the prophets, the Final Prophet found, within a remarkably short period, a strong and dedicated group of companions. Through their courageous efforts and sacrifices, this group—known as the Companions of the Prophet—raised monotheism from the level of an ideological movement to that of a practical revolution.

Such a revolution required a vibrant and committed team to bring it into being, and this team was undoubtedly prepared through the sacrifice of Hagar.

As the above-mentioned account in Sahih al-Bukhari makes clear, Hagar played a fundamental role in this monotheistic

revolution. It was through her unparalleled sacrifice that the great historical development known as Islamic history was able to unfold. It would be no exaggeration to say that, among all women, the following well-known English saying applies most fittingly to Hagar:

“There is a woman at the beginning of all great things.”

Every year, pilgrims who travel to Makkah to perform Hajj walk seven times between Safa and Marwah. This ritual, known as sa'i, is a reenactment of Hagar's search for water. God so greatly approved of her effort that He ordained that Muslims from all over the world who come to Makkah for Hajj should follow in her footsteps.

Asiya bint Muzahim

The second example is that of Asiya bint Muzahim. She lived in the time of Prophet Moses. She most likely belonged to a noble family in Egypt. The Pharaoh of Egypt married her and placed her in his royal palace. She believed in the Prophet of her time, Moses, and sincerely adopted a life of devotion to God. The Quran refers to Asiya bint Muzahim in these words:

To the believers God has given the example of Pharaoh's wife who said: “My Lord, build me a house in nearness to You in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his misdeeds. Save me from all evil-doers.” (66:11)

Asiya bint Muzahim was the queen of Egypt, living in a royal palace and enjoying every form of luxury and comfort. Yet this worldly success did not make her heedless or rebellious. When the message of Prophet Moses reached her, she accepted it immediately due to her open-hearted and truth-seeking nature, and she began to live a life of obedience to God and His Messenger.

Pharaoh adhered to polytheism, which helped him consolidate his political authority in the idolatrous society of ancient Egypt. When Prophet Moses raised the call of monotheism, Pharaoh became his enemy and sought to suppress and extinguish the message of monotheism.

Pharaoh gave Asiya bint Muzahim a choice: either abandon the faith of Moses or face death on the charge of rebellion. To abandon the faith of Moses meant, in spiritual terms, to abandon Paradise itself, whereas rejecting Pharaoh's command meant only temporary deprivation of the royal palace. Asiya bint Muzahim, as a sincere seeker of truth, chose to forgo the palace but not to lose the eternal Paradise of God.

As a result, Asiya bint Muzahim was killed by Pharaoh's order. Her final supplication was so profound that the Quran has preserved it as part of divine revelation in these words: "My Lord, build me a house in nearness to You in Paradise." (66:11)

The inclusion of this prayer in the Quran is, in an indirect sense, an affirmation of its acceptance by God.

This episode in the life of Asiya bint Muzahim serves as a timeless message for all women and men alike: if, in choosing a life of devotion to God, one has to give up the temporary paradise of this world, it should not be a matter of regret. For any woman or man who gives up the temporary paradise of this world purely for the sake of God, God will grant the eternal and ideal world of Paradise in the Hereafter. There can undoubtedly be no greater success than this.

Maryam, the Mother of Jesus

Another outstanding woman worthy of mention is Mary, the mother of Jesus. Her name occurs thirty-four times in the Quran, and an entire chapter—Chapter 19—is named after her. No other woman is mentioned by name even once. This highlights the unique importance accorded to Mary. The following is a translation of what the Quran says about her:

Remember when the wife of ‘Imran said, “My Lord, I have dedicated what is in my womb entirely to Your service. So accept this from me. You are the One who hears and knows all.” When she gave birth, she said, “My Lord, I have given birth to a girl,” God knew very well what she had given birth to: a male is not like a female, “I have named her Mary and placed her and her children in Your protection from the rejected

Satan.” Her Lord graciously accepted her and made her grow in goodness and entrusted her to the care of Zachariah. Every time Zachariah visited her in her chamber he found some provision with her. He asked, “Mary, where did this provision come from?” She replied, “This is from God. God provides for whoever He wills without measure.” (3:35-37)

What was this provision? It was the provision of wisdom and the realization of God. When Mary devoted her life to God, He opened before her the doors to the treasures of wisdom and the realization of God. The Quran goes on to say:

The angels said, ‘Mary, God has selected you and purified you. He has selected you over all the women of the world. O Mary! Remain truly devout to your Sustainer, and prostrate yourself in worship, and bow down with those who bow down [before Him].’ This is an account of the unseen, which We reveal to you. You were not with them when they drew lots as to which of them should be Mary’s guardian and you were not with them when they disputed with one another. When the angels said, ‘O Mary, your Lord gives you good news of a Word from Him. His name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, honoured in this world and in the next and one

of those who are granted nearness to God. And he shall speak to men in his cradle, and as a grown man, and shall be one of the righteous.’ ‘Lord,’ she said, ‘how can I have a child when no man has touched me?’ [The angel] replied, ‘Thus it is: God creates what He wills: when He wills a thing He need only say, “Be,” and it is. (3:42-47)

People of the Book! Do not go to extremes in your religion. Say nothing but the truth about God. The Christ Jesus, son of Mary, was only a messenger of God and His word, conveyed to Mary, a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not say: “There are three [gods].” Desist, it will be better for you. Indeed, God is the one and only God. His Holiness is far above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And God is sufficient as a guardian. (4:171)

At another place the Quran states:

Recount in the Book how Mary withdrew from her people to an eastern place and kept herself in seclusion from them. We sent her Our angel, who presented himself to her as a full-grown human being. When she saw him, she said, ‘I seek refuge in the compassionate God from you; [do not come near] if you fear the Lord.’ ‘I am only the messenger of your Lord,’ he replied. ‘I shall bestow upon you the gift of a son endowed with

purity.’ She said, ‘How can I have a son when no man has touched me; and neither have I been unchaste?’ [The angel] replied, ‘So shall it be; your Lord says, “This is easy for Me; and We shall make him a sign to people and a blessing, from Us. This has been decreed.”’ So she conceived him and withdrew with him to a distant place. The pains of labour drove her to the trunk of a date-palm. She said, ‘Oh, if only I had died before this and passed into oblivion!’ But a voice called out to her from below, ‘Do not despair. Your Lord has provided a brook that runs at your feet, and if you shake the trunk of this palm-tree, it will drop fresh ripe dates on you. Eat and drink and rejoice. And if you see any human being say, “I have vowed a fast [of silence] to the Gracious God, and will not speak with any human being today.”’ Carrying her child, she brought him to her people. They said, ‘O Mary, you have indeed done something terrible! Sister of Aaron, your father was not an evil man, nor was your mother an unchaste woman!’ She pointed to the child. They said, ‘How shall we talk to someone who is a child in the cradle?’ [But] he said, ‘I am God’s servant. He has given me the Book and made me a prophet; He has made me blessed wherever I may be, and has enjoined upon me prayer and

almsgiving throughout my life. He has made me dutiful towards my mother, and He has not made me arrogant or wicked. Blessed was I on the day I was born, and blessed I shall be on the day I die and on the day I am raised to life again.' Such was Jesus, the son of Mary. That is the whole truth, about which they still dispute: it does not befit the majesty of God that He should beget a son. Glory be to Him! He is far above that: when He decrees something, He says only, 'Be!' and it is. (19:16-35)

The Quran also states: We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign and gave them shelter on a peaceful hillside watered by a fresh spring. (23:50)

It further says: [God gave another example in the story of] Mary, 'Imran's daughter, who preserved her chastity and We breathed Our spirit into her; she testified to the words of her Lord and His Scriptures, and was truly devout. (Quran, 66:12)

Maryam is a Syriac name meaning "exalted." Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born into a Jewish family. God's special care was evident in many remarkable events throughout her life. She was born in answer to the special prayer of a righteous woman, and her entire upbringing and education took place in the Temple. From early childhood, she was dedicated to the service of the Temple.

While living there, her devotional life and her words reflecting her realization of God led everyone to regard her as a woman of exceptional spiritual stature. Her purity was so firmly established that no one could reasonably doubt her chastity.

It was this woman whom God chose to become the mother of Jesus—a woman who had no husband and whose child would have no human father. She conceived by the direct command of God and, when the appointed time came, gave birth to a perfectly healthy child. For a chaste woman like Mary, becoming the mother of a child without a human father was an extremely delicate and distressing ordeal. Therefore, God sent His angel to reassure her and protect her from becoming overwhelmed at that critical moment. God also miraculously provided her with food and water outside the town.

This extraordinary arrangement was probably connected with the special role that Jesus was destined to play among the Jews. Jesus was the last prophet sent to the Children of Israel. Until that time, God's prophets had continued to arise from among the Israelites. However, by the time of Jesus, their moral decline had reached its final stage. God intended to send the last Israelite prophet in the person of the Messiah and thereby signify that the Israelites had been removed from their position as bearers of the divine message to humankind.

The Messiah's birth without a father was probably intended to show the Jews that their degeneration had become so widespread that there was no longer a single man among them worthy of becoming the father of one who was to be a prophet. It was probably to express this reality that the Messiah was born to his mother without a father. The Jews knew very well that Mary had spent her entire life in the Temple, in full view of the people, and that she was, beyond all doubt, a woman of impeccable character. Yet their moral decline had reached such a point that when Jesus was born to Mary without a human father, they accused her, saying, "you have indeed done something terrible." (Quran, 19:27)

God also arranged matters in such a way that the Jews could have no doubt that Jesus had been born through the Word of God and that he was a prophet. While Jesus was still an infant in Mary's arms, he spoke clearly to the people that he had been born directly through the word of God. He declared that he was a servant of God, that he had been appointed as a prophet, and that he had a divinely ordained mission to fulfill among them.

Jesus was also granted extraordinary miracles. The Quran describes these miracles, or signs, in the following words:

"He will make him a messenger to the Children of Israel. He will say: 'I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I will make the shape of

a bird out of clay for you and then breathe into it and, by God's leave, it will become a living bird. And by God's leave I will heal the blind and the leper and bring the dead to life. I will tell you what you eat and what you store up in your homes. Surely in this there is a sign for you, if you are believers.'" (Quran, 3:49)

The Quran says of Mary that because she chose a life of purity, God strengthened her with His Spirit. This historical example shows that when a woman or a man lives a life of complete purity, that person becomes worthy of God's special favour. Mary received this favour in a unique form, while others may receive it in ways suited to their own circumstances.

Khadijah bint Khuwaylid

Khadijah bint Khuwaylid was the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). She belonged to a noble family of the Quraysh tribe in Makkah and was fifteen years older than the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Her first marriage was to Abu Halah ibn Zurarah, a successful merchant of Makkah. He passed away shortly after their marriage, leaving Khadijah with his wealth. Her second marriage was to Atiq ibn 'A'idh al-Makhzumi, another wealthy merchant, who also passed away after some time, and his wealth came into Khadijah's possession. Through these marriages, Khadijah became one of the wealthiest women in Arabia.

Khadijah was a highly capable and enterprising woman. After becoming a widow, she established her own trading business. Her method was to send trade goods by camel caravans to the region of Syria, where some goods were sold and others were brought back to be sold in the markets of Makkah. For this purpose, she employed her servants and appointed trusted agents to manage her commercial affairs, including an experienced person to accompany the camel caravans. Upon their return, she would reward the person in charge with one camel for his service.

At that time, Muhammad ibn Abdullah, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), was already known in Makkah as an honest and trustworthy man. According to one narration, at the request of his uncle, Abu Talib, Khadijah entrusted the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) with the responsibility of managing her trade caravan to Syria. When he returned, Khadijah was informed that the caravan had earned more profit than ever before. Pleased with this success, she doubled his reward and gave him two camels.

During these trading journeys, Khadijah's servant, Maysarah, accompanied the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Maysarah later spoke to Khadijah about the Prophet's noble character and excellent management. Khadijah herself also had a positive impression of him. As a result, she began to consider him as a potential life partner. According to some narrations, Khadijah sent a marriage proposal to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) through an elderly woman

in Makkah. After consulting his uncle, he accepted the proposal, and the marriage took place in the presence of both families. At the time of their marriage, Khadijah was forty years old, while the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was twenty-five.

The marriage of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and Khadijah took place approximately fifteen years before his prophethood. During these fifteen years, Khadijah had the opportunity to observe and study the Prophet's character closely. She became convinced that Muhammad ibn Abdullah was a perfect human being in every respect. During this period, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was a seeker of truth, as mentioned in the Quran: "Did He not find you wandering, and give you guidance?" (Quran, 93:7) At that time, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) would often retreat to the Cave of Hira, near Makkah, for contemplation and reflection. One day, after returning from the cave, the Prophet appeared visibly shaken. He entered his home and said to his wife Khadijah, "Cover me, cover me!" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3) This is also referred to in an early chapter of the Quran: "O you who are wrapped up in your mantle, stand up to pray for much of the night." (Quran, 73:1-2)

Seeing the Prophet's condition, Khadijah asked him about the reason. He replied that he had experienced something extraordinary in the Cave of Hira that day. He then

described the experience of the arrival of the angel Jibril (Gabriel), who brought the first revelation: “Read in the name of your Lord who created.” (Quran, 96:1) At this point, Khadijah reassured him with the well-known words recorded in the books of Seerah:

“No, by Allah, He will never disgrace you. You maintain family ties, help the weak, assist the poor, honour your guests, and support those who suffer from injustice.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3)

Khadijah’s Support During the Prophethood

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) received prophethood in 610 CE, at a time when religious tolerance was virtually absent. When he declared his mission, he faced severe opposition from the polytheists of Makkah. During this challenging period, Khadijah stood by him as a true companion. She immediately believed in his prophethood and became an unwavering supporter of his mission.

One significant incident occurred after the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) received the first revelation. Feeling anxious and frightened by this extraordinary experience, he was comforted by Khadijah, who played a crucial role in reassuring him. At that time, there was a scholar in Makkah named Waraqah bin Nawfal, a relative of

Khadijah, who had studied the Bible and had embraced Christianity during the pre-Islamic period.

Khadijah took the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) to Waraqah. After hearing about the incident and the arrival of Gabriel, Waraqah said:

“By Him in whose hand is my soul, if what you have mentioned is true, then Muhammad has received the same great angel who came to Musa, and Muhammad is indeed the Prophet of this Ummah.” (*Sirah Ibn Hisham*, Vol. 1, p. 239)

After receiving prophethood, the entire focus of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) shifted towards the mission of monotheism. His involvement in trade decreased, and Khadijah assumed full responsibility for supporting him and meeting all expenses related to his mission. She dedicated all her wealth to the Prophet and his mission. This is referred to in the Quranic verse:

“Did He not find you in want, and make you free from want?” (Quran, 93:8)

At that time, idol worship was widespread in Makkah, and its people were deeply attached to polytheism. The Prophet’s call to monotheism was met with intense hostility, and people began to persecute him in various ways. They obstructed his path and even created noise

outside his house. Throughout these trials, Khadijah stood by him with great patience and cheerfulness.

One day, the angel Gabriel came to the Prophet and said:

“O Messenger of God, Khadijah is coming to you carrying a vessel containing a savoury dish, some food, or a drink. When she reaches you, convey to her greetings from her Lord and from me, and give her the glad tidings of a house in Paradise made of hollowed pearl, in which there will be neither noise nor hardship.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 3820)

In the later part of the Makkan period, the leaders of the Quraysh took a serious decision against the Prophet. They unanimously drafted a document and posted it inside the Kaaba. The document prohibited the people of Makkah from engaging in trade with the Prophet and his family, or from maintaining marital or familial relations with them. This was, in effect, a social and economic boycott. As a result, the Prophet and his followers were compelled to take refuge in a narrow valley near Makkah known as Sha'ib Abi Talib.

Life in Sha'ib Abi Talib was extremely difficult. There was no comfort or adequate provision, and at times they had to survive on the roots and leaves of trees. Some compassionate people from Makkah would secretly bring food at night, but it was never sufficient.

During this period, Khadijah became severely ill. Her condition worsened, and her complexion changed. Despite this, she patiently endured these hardships. She continued to bear these difficulties until three years before the Hijrah, when she passed away in Makkah.

Umm Salama, Hind bint Abi Umayya

Umm Salama was born into a noble family in Makkah. Her first husband was Abu Salama, and both of them embraced Islam during the early Makkan period. As persecution intensified, they migrated to Abyssinia and later made the second migration to Madinah.

Abu Salama, her first husband, participated in the Battles of Badr and Uhud. He was wounded during one of these battles. Although his wound initially healed after treatment, it later reopened, and he passed away in 4 AH.

Umm Salama narrates that one day her husband, Abu Salama, came home and said, “Today I heard a hadith from the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ), which is more beloved to me than the world and everything in it.” The hadith was: “When a person is afflicted by a calamity and recites, ‘Indeed, to Allah we belong and to Him we return,’ and then prays, ‘O Allah, I seek Your reward for this loss. Reward me for it and replace it with something better,’ Allah will surely reward him and replace it with something better.” (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, Hadith No. 3119)

Ahmad bin Ishaq relates that Umm Salama had a very close bond with her husband, Abu Salama. Once, Umm Salama said to Abu Salama, "I have heard that if a woman's husband is among the people of Paradise and she does not remarry after his death, Allah grants her a place in Paradise with him. The same applies to men." She then suggested, "Let us make an agreement... neither of us will remarry after the other's death." Abu Salama replied, "Will you obey me?" Umm Salama responded, "What would make me happier than obeying you?" Abu Salama then said, "If I pass away, you may marry after me." He then made a supplication: "O Allah, after my death, grant Umm Salama a companion better than me."

Umm Salama says, "When Abu Salama passed away, I thought to myself, 'Who could be better than Abu Salama?' A few days later, she was married to the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ)." (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 26697)

When the Prophet (ﷺ) married Umm Salama, he gave her two hand mills, two water skins, and a leather cushion filled with date fibres. This was the same kind of gift he gave to his other wives as well.

Umm Salama was the daughter of a leader from the Quraysh tribe. After embracing Islam, her life became one of simplicity and contentment. She narrated 378 hadiths and had a strong desire to listen to the words of the

Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). On one occasion, while she was combing her hair in her chamber, she heard the Prophet's voice as he was delivering a sermon in the mosque. She immediately stopped what she was doing, quickly tied her hair, and went to listen to the entire sermon.

Umm Salama used to recite the Quran in the manner of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). When she was asked how the Prophet recited the Quran, she explained that he would recite each verse distinctly, and then she demonstrated the same style of recitation.

Umm Salama was an intelligent woman who could quickly get to the heart of a matter. One such instance occurred at the time of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. The Prophet (ﷺ) had intended to go to Makkah for Umrah, but due to the refusal of the Quraysh, he decided to return to Madinah from Hudaibiyyah. The Prophet and his companions had brought sacrificial animals with them, and it was decided that these animals would be sacrificed at Hudaibiyyah.

An event recorded in Sahih Bukhari demonstrates Umm Salama's remarkable insight:

When the writing of the treaty of Hudaibiyyah was concluded, the Prophet said to his companions, "Stand up, slaughter your sacrificial animals, and shave your heads." The narrators mention that, by

God, not one of them stood up. The Prophet (ﷺ) repeated the instruction three times, but still no one moved. He then went to Umm Salama, who was in her tent, and informed her of the situation. Umm Salama replied, “O Prophet of Islam, if you wish, you may go ahead and do it without speaking to anyone. Sacrifice your animal and call your barber to shave your head.” The Prophet (ﷺ) then went out, spoke to no one, and acted exactly as she had advised. He sacrificed his animal and called the barber to shave his head. When the people saw this, they also stood up, slaughtered their animals, and began shaving one another’s heads. In their deep sadness and frustration, it seemed as though they might harm one another while shaving. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2732)

This incident shows that Umm Salama was a wise woman with deep religious understanding. She had proved herself worthy of being a true companion of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Such incidents do not occur suddenly in a person’s life; they happen only when a person has fully devoted herself to the mission of Islam.

Throughout history, there have been many remarkable women who may be regarded as exemplary. A brief account of a few of them has been given above. Each of

these women lived in different circumstances, and their lives offer diverse examples of how to live with truth and purpose. Each remained committed to truth according to her circumstances and may be regarded as a model woman.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

According to the Quran, one of the commandments given to the Children of Israel through Prophet Musa (Moses) was as follows:

“We revealed [Our will] to Moses and his brother, saying, ‘Set aside for your people some houses in the city and turn them into places of worship, and be constant in prayer! And give [O Moses] the good news to the believers.’” (Quran, 10:87)

The term “*Qibla*” in Arabic means a reference point or centre of attention. In this context, making homes a *Qibla* means that certain homes, or specific parts of these homes, should serve as centres for religious activities, discussion, and education. These spaces would function as gathering points for meetings, consultation, quiet planning for religious work, and religious training. In essence, homes were meant to function as institutions where religious duties could be carried out.

This concept of turning the home into an institution directly defines the role of women. A home, by its very

nature, cannot exist without a woman. Therefore, when the home is designated as a centre for religious activities, women naturally occupy a central position within its structure. This concept reveals the prophetic perspective on the broader role of women in society.

This idea is also reflected in the Quran concerning the wives of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). Allah commands them:

“Bear in mind all that is recited in your homes of the revelations of God and of wisdom. God is all pervading and all aware.” (Quran, 33:34)

This verse highlights the responsibility of the Prophet’s wives to share with others the teachings they received directly from the Prophet. In other words, the homes of the Prophet’s wives were meant to function as educational and religious centres.

The same principle applies not only to the Prophet’s wives but also to every Muslim household. The homes of the Prophet’s wives serve as a model, for they had the responsibility of teaching the wider Muslim community the lessons they had learned from the Prophet. This legacy continued among the companions of the Prophet as well. One such example is given below:

Anas bin Malik narrated that three men visited the homes of the Prophet’s wives to inquire about the Prophet’s worship. When they

were informed about it, they considered it insufficient. They said, “How can we compare ourselves with the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ), when Allah has forgiven his past and future sins?” One of them said, “As for me, I will pray throughout the night.” Another said, “I will fast every day and never break my fast.” The third said, “I will keep away from women and never marry.”

When the Prophet (ﷺ) heard of this, he said, “Are you the ones who said such things? Listen! By Allah, I fear Allah more than you do, and I am more conscious of Him than you are. Yet I fast and I break my fast, I pray and I sleep, and I also marry women. Whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not from me.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5063)

This narration shows how the homes of the Prophet’s wives became Islamic centres of education and learning. People would come there to learn the teachings of Islam. This process of teaching and learning Islam was established during the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) and continued even after his passing. The example set by the Prophet’s wives in the early days has remained an ideal for Muslims in every age, encouraging them to establish similar centres of learning and religious guidance in their homes.

Umm al-Darda

Abu Darda was a well-known companion of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). After his death, Awn ibn Abdullah

ibn Utbah visited his wife, Umm al-Darda, and asked her, "What was Abu al-Darda's most virtuous practice?" According to another report, he asked, "What did Abu al-Darda do most often?" Umm al-Darda replied, "Constant reflection and drawing lessons from the events of life."

One example of his practice of drawing lessons is the following incident.

Once, a bullock cart passed by Abu Darda. It was being drawn by two oxen—one of them sat down in the middle of the way, while the other remained standing. The cart driver, in anger, struck the animal to make them move.

On seeing this, Abu Darda remarked that there was indeed a lesson (*nasihat*) in this scene. It was a reminder that even ordinary events of daily life can carry deep meaning if one reflects upon them.

From this incident, he drew a moral lesson for the Hereafter: those who fail to perform their duty are punished in this world, and similarly, those who disobey the commandments of God will face punishment in the Hereafter from God.

Similarly, throughout the entire history of Islam, the believer's home remained the primary centre of religious training, and women naturally played a fundamental role in these centres. After the Prophet of Islam, the continuity of Islamic life and tradition was largely sustained through these two institutions: internally, the home, and externally, the mosque.

Rabi'a al-Basri

Rabi'a al-Basri was a well-known Muslim woman about whom many unusual and remarkable accounts have been narrated. However, there does not appear to be any comprehensive scholarly work devoted exclusively to her life. Accounts of her are found in the following works:

Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani—*Hilyat al-Awliya wa Tabaqat al-Asfiya*

Ibn al-Jawzi—*Sifat al-Safwa*

Shihab al-Din al-Suhrawardi—*'Awarif al-Ma'arif*

Ibn Kathir—*Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya*

Khair al-Din al-Zirikli—*Al-A'lam*

Abu Dawud al-Sijistani (202-275 AH / 817-889 CE), the renowned Hadith scholar, accused Rabi'a al-Basri of heresy (*zandaqa*), though this appears to be an extreme view. Rabi'a al-Basri was, undoubtedly, a devout and pious woman.

According to Sufi tradition, she would fast during the day and spend her nights in prayer. Because of her ascetic lifestyle, she never married, although several proposals were made to her. It is said that Hasan al-Basri was among those who proposed to her.

Her full name was Rabi'a bint Isma'il al-'Adawiyya, Umm al-Khayr. There is some disagreement regarding the dates of her birth and death. According to the widely accepted

account, she was born in Basra in 718 CE and died there in 801 CE. Another narration states that she passed away in Jerusalem.

Many accounts of her life contain mystical and miraculous elements, which are considered historically doubtful. In general, Rabi'a al-Basri is regarded as one of the early Sufis. She withdrew from worldly life and devoted herself entirely to worship. She was born into a poor family in Basra.

Rabi'a al-Basri lost her parents in early childhood, and later her three sisters also passed away. She lived much of her life in extreme poverty. Eventually, she came to reside alone in a small room in Basra.

It is said that once the renowned Sufi Sufyan al-Thawri came to visit her. He raised his hands and prayed for the welfare of the world. Hearing this, Rabi'a began to weep. When asked the reason, she replied, "True happiness and goodness lie in turning away from the world, yet you seek goodness within this very world."

She bore physical suffering with patience and gratitude. No hardship ever distracted her from the remembrance of God. She said, "I do not worship God for the sake of any reward, nor out of fear of Hell or a desire for Paradise." On another occasion, when asked whether she hated Satan, Rabi'a replied, "No. The love of God has filled my heart so completely that there is no room left in it for hatred, not even for Satan."

Rabi'a al-Basri was also a poet. Many of her Arabic verses have been recorded in books. Her sayings reflect a deeply spiritual and mystical temperament. One of her well-known sayings is: "Conceal your good deeds just as you conceal your bad ones." (*Al-A'lam* by al-Zirikli, Vol. 3, p. 10)

Many people visited Rabi'a al-Basri for religious and spiritual guidance, and she imparted such teachings to them. Within her community, she served as a teacher and moral guide, inspiring many through her words and actions.

Rabi'a al-Basri lived during the period of the Tabiun, the generation that followed the Prophet's Companions. However, I have not come across any report in the books stating that she saw any particular Companion. Nevertheless, considering the period in which she lived, she may be regarded as a Tabi'i.

Rabi'a al-Basri and the renowned Tabii Hasan al-Basri (642-728 CE) were contemporaries. It may rightly be said that both sought to revive the spirit of Islam in their time. It is a historical fact that in later generations, Muslims experienced a decline in the spiritual vitality of Islam. The outward forms of religion remained abundant, but its inner spirit had greatly weakened. Among those who rose to rekindle this spirit was Rabi'a al-Basri.

In terms of scholarly standing, Hasan al-Basri ranked higher than Rabi'a al-Basri; however, in essence, both belonged to the same spiritual category. During his time, 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz became caliph. He wrote to Hasan al-Basri,

stating that he had been entrusted with the responsibility of leadership and asking him to recommend individuals who could assist him in this task. Hasan al-Basri replied:

“As for the people of the world, you will not desire them; and as for the people of the Hereafter, they will not desire you. Therefore, seek help from God.” (*Al-A‘lam* by al-Zirikli, Vol. 2, p. 226)

According to the writer, Hasan al-Basri’s response reflected an extreme attitude. ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Aziz was a rightly guided caliph, and Hasan al-Basri ought to have cooperated with him. The same was true of Rabi‘a al-Basri. Many prominent figures of her time turned to her, but she, displaying detachment, chose to maintain her distance.

Rabi‘a al-Basri, along with other Sufis of that period, displayed a certain excess in their approach. Yet they achieved something significant: they discouraged superficiality and materialism and sought to revive the spirit of Islam at a time when it had generally declined.

Emperor Akbar’s Mother

Mulla Abdul Nabi (d. 991 AH) was among the leading scholars during the reign of Emperor Akbar. A mosque built by him still stands on Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg in New Delhi and is known as Masjid Abdul Nabi. He had been Akbar’s teacher and, as a result, enjoyed free access to the royal court. Akbar appointed Mulla Abdul Nabi to

the post of Sadr al-Sudur, the chief official responsible for religious affairs, charitable grants and related judicial appointments in the imperial administration. Owing to his close relationship with Akbar, Mulla Abdul Nabi enjoyed a position of exceptional honour at the time. Mulla Abdul Qadir Badauni states that in no other kingdom had the post of Sadr ever acquired the importance and authority that it attained during Mulla Abdul Nabi's tenure. In the words of Badauni:

*Dar zaman-e hech badshahi in chunin sadre ba-istiqlal
nagashtha...*

“Under no other sovereign had a Sadr ever enjoyed such independent authority...”

Akbar held him in such high regard that he would straighten his teacher's shoes and personally visit his house to listen to the traditions of the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ). Under Mulla 'Abd al-Nabi's influence, Akbar's religious devotion increased to such an extent that he would recite the *adhan*, the call to prayer, himself and, at times, even sweep the mosque in pursuit of spiritual merit.

On one occasion, during his birthday celebration, Akbar wore a saffron-coloured garment, an act consistent with his broader policy of promoting harmony. When Mulla 'Abd al-Nabi saw this, he became displeased, interpreting the colour as a Hindu symbol. In the full court, he struck Akbar with his staff.

Although deeply upset, Akbar remained silent and withdrew to his palace. There, he informed his mother, Maryam Makani, of what had occurred: "Today, in full court, Mulla 'Abd al-Nabi struck me. Had he advised me privately, I would have accepted it, but this public act has caused me distress."

Maryam Makani, a woman known for her intelligence and learning, listened carefully and replied:

"My son, do not allow resentment to take root in your heart. This will be a means of salvation for you in the Hereafter. Until the Day of Judgement, people will remember that a powerless scholar struck a king, and the noble king endured it with patience." (*Ma'athir al-Umara*, Vol. 2, p. 560)

Maryam Makani's response was far more than a passing remark. It reflected spiritual insight and sound judgement, revealing a depth of intellect that marked her not as an ordinary woman, but as a truly accomplished Muslim lady. It is likely that such moments occurred repeatedly throughout her life and that Akbar's notable qualities were shaped, in part, by her guidance and upbringing.

Her response also sheds light on another dimension: Akbar's wearing of saffron garments formed part of his policy of promoting Hindu-Muslim unity. At times, he adopted certain outward customs to foster harmony and strengthen relations between Hindus and Muslims.

These actions were intended to build goodwill. Literal-minded scholars were displeased by them; however, Maryam Makani, owing to her perceptive understanding, recognized that Akbar's actions were not mere imitation but a deliberate diplomatic strategy. Consequently, she did not share Mulla 'Abd al-Nabi's anger. This incident illustrates her intellectual clarity and spiritual maturity.

Among modern scholars, Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani was, to the best of the author's knowledge, the only one who fully understood Akbar's approach and acknowledged its wisdom. He wrote that Akbar's adoption of saffron clothing and similar gestures was not an attempt to embrace Hindu culture, but rather an act of *ta'lif al-qulub*—the winning of hearts. Akbar's objective was to promote closeness between Hindus and Muslims.

Although Maryam Makani lived within the royal palace, she exercised a profound influence on Emperor Akbar as his mother. She shaped him into a humble and religiously inclined ruler. She was also sufficiently wise and farsighted to perceive the deeper purpose behind Akbar's policies—something that, from that time to the present, many Muslim scholars have failed to recognize. To the author's knowledge, the only exception to this general trend was Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani.

From a broader perspective, women play a vital role in shaping human character. To fulfill this role effectively,

a woman must prepare herself in advance. Many of life's difficulties arise because people face its challenges without adequate preparation. People know that securing suitable employment without proper educational qualifications is not possible; therefore, they first obtain the necessary credentials before seeking work. However, when it comes to the art of living, both men and women often enter life without first learning its principles. As a result, many fail to attain the success that nature has intended for them.

Many men and women lack what psychology describes as a balanced personality. For example, some have too much rigidity but not enough gentleness; others become angry easily and lack patience. It is each person's responsibility, regardless of gender, to recognize these flaws and actively work to improve them, thereby developing a more balanced personality.

Just as a carpenter shapes and smooths wood to serve a particular purpose, every man and woman must likewise shape their own character. Through continuous self-examination and awareness, individuals should identify their weaknesses and shape themselves into balanced personalities. This inner effort is essential for everyone, and the success of both men and women depends upon it.

WOMAN AS AN
INTELLECTUAL
PARTNER

INTELLECTUAL PARTNERSHIP IN MARRIAGE

When a man and a woman enter into marriage, their relationship is not confined merely to the roles of husband and wife. Rather, it is as broad and complex as life itself. In reality, the Creator designed men and women to be, in every sense, friends and partners in life's journey—true helpers and supporters of one another. The Quran states:

“You are members, one of another.” (3:195)

That is, whether male or female, each is part of the other. In another verse, the Quran says:

“The believing men and the believing women are supports to one another; they enjoin what is good and forbid evil.” (9:71)

These verses indicate that the relationship between man and woman is founded on mutual support and cooperation in all aspects of life. A study of human nature shows that one of the greatest gifts bestowed by the Creator upon both men and women is speech (*nutq*). The highest level of human expression is through speech. From this, it follows that, since men and women are meant to be helpers and partners in life, the most meaningful way to express this partnership is through communication.

If a man and a woman marry and live together as spouses, but fail to develop a deep intellectual and conversational bond, their partnership remains confined to a lower, material level, rather than rising to the higher level of intellectual development.

The true measure of a fulfilling married life is that husband and wife become partners in both intellect and expression. They should study, share ideas, and engage in meaningful conversations about the issues of life. Their relationship should not be limited to praise and affection alone; rather, they should also offer one another constructive criticism, so that both individuals may grow intellectually, develop a deeper understanding, and move together being intellectual partners of one another.

This, at least in part, is what the previously mentioned Quranic verses suggest about the relationship between believing men and women. This is a natural requirement of the relationship between husband and wife. If two people who were unable to speak were married, they would obviously be unable to communicate with each other through words. But when both husband and wife can speak, communication naturally becomes a living part of their relationship. And such communication cannot remain confined to a narrow sphere; it inevitably develops into an exchange of thoughts and ideas. In this sense, husband and wife are also intellectual partners to one another.

From this understanding emerges an important practical implication: both men and women, whether before or after

marriage, must prepare themselves for such a partnership. Through study, reflection, and the pursuit of knowledge, they should cultivate the ability to engage in meaningful intellectual companionship.

Indeed, intellectual partnership is an art. It is not an exaggeration to say that, for women, mastering this skill is even more significant than domestic science or professional training. Among the various aspects of life envisioned by Islam, this too is a vital one. To create a truly harmonious and fulfilling life, the cultivation of intellectual partnership between man and woman is of crucial importance.

In the Light of the Sunnah

In both Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, a narration is reported from Abu Salamah on the authority of Hazrat Aisha. She said:

The Prophet (ﷺ) used to wake up at night. After performing the two rak'ahs of the Sunnah prayer before Fajr, if I was awake, he would speak with me; otherwise, he would lie down until the call to prayer was made. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1167)

A similar account is also recorded in Sahih Muslim:

When the Prophet (ﷺ) performed the two rak'ahs of the Sunnah prayer before Fajr, if I was awake, he would speak with me; otherwise, he would lie down. (*Sahih Muslim*, Hadith No. 743)

Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani, in his *Fath al-Bari Sharh al-Bukhari* (Vol. 3, p. 44), cites this hadith along with other versions:

“He would pray during the night, and when he finished his prayer, he would lie down. If I was awake, he would speak with me (*haddathani*); and if I was asleep, he would rest until the *mu’adhdhin* came to call him.” (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 24072)

This narration shows that the Prophet (ﷺ) would speak with his wife, Aisha, in the latter part of the night before Fajr. This was not an isolated occurrence, but part of his regular practice. It suggests that he often engaged in meaningful conversations with Aisha, particularly on matters of religion. The word *haddathani*, which literally means “he spoke to me,” “he told me,” or “he related something to me,” does not imply here that he was formally narrating a hadith to her. Rather, it suggests that they were conversing and exchanging thoughts.

From this and similar reports, we learn an important aspect of the Prophet’s Sunnah: a woman should be treated as an intellectual partner. He discussed matters of faith with her, engaging her in thoughtful dialogue so that she could become his true companion in understanding and reflection.

Although we do not have a complete record of those conversations, their outcome is indirectly preserved in the

large number of narrations reported from Aisha—2,210 hadiths in total. However, many of these are not merely reports of the Prophet's words or actions. An important part of them consists of what scholars call *istinbat*: Aisha's own reasoned inferences and insights.

To understand this, consider one example from Sahih al-Bukhari:

Aisha said: “Whenever the Prophet (ﷺ) was faced with two options, he would choose the easier of the two.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 6786)

This statement reflects the Prophet's general approach: he preferred the easier option over the more difficult one. For example, in situations of conflict, he chose peaceful methods rather than violent ones. This meaningful observation serves as the essence of wise leadership.

The failure of many modern militant Islamic movements can be traced to their neglect of this principle. They did not choose a peaceful approach, even though it was entirely possible. Aisha's statement does not quote the Prophet directly; rather, it is her own *istinbat*—a conclusion drawn from deep reflection on his conduct.

How did she develop such a profound understanding? It likely arose from regular and meaningful conversations with the Prophet (ﷺ), which may be described as intellectual exchange.

Observation alone could not have produced this insight. Many other Companions witnessed the Prophet's actions repeatedly, yet none articulated this principle in the same way. It was Aisha's continuous dialogue with him that led to this depth of understanding.

The foundation of Aisha's *istinbat* was rooted in her continuous interaction with the Prophet (ﷺ), during travel and at home, by day and by night. She possessed exceptional intelligence and insight, along with a keen and receptive mind. Through her close relationship with the Prophet, she internalized the essence of the Shariah and the fundamental principles of Islam.

What later appeared in hadith literature as Aisha's *istinbat* was, in reality, the outcome of her spiritual and intellectual partnership with the Prophet (ﷺ).

Such depth of understanding does not develop suddenly; it requires sustained dialogue, inquiry, and reciprocal exchange. Through this ongoing intellectual engagement, ideas gradually take clear form in the mind, becoming ready for accurate and thoughtful expression.

Many of Aisha's statements are not direct quotations from the Quran or the sayings of the Prophet (ﷺ). Rather, they are original insights that align with the spirit of revelation. They are not merely *istinbat*, or

deductions, but *istifadat*—understandings she acquired through sustained spiritual and intellectual communion with the Prophet (ﷺ). Nowhere else, among men or women, do we find a comparable example of this level of religious insight.

In this narration, Hazrat Aisha described the Prophet's general approach: in controversial matters and situations of conflict, he would leave the harder option and choose the easier one.

These words are a treasure of wisdom and insight. They express the same principle of practical politics that modern thinkers have described as “politics is the art of the possible.”

This principle represents a profound expression of wisdom. A clear example from the life of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) is the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. The importance of this principle is such that, even after Aisha's statement, few Muslim leaders in later centuries appear to have fully understood or applied it. Unfortunately, this lack of understanding has continued into the twenty-first century. The numerous unnecessary, futile armed conflicts led by Muslim leaders today illustrate this continued unawareness.

In reality, the modern era has created wide opportunities for peaceful struggle that clearly represent the “easier option.” Despite this, many Muslim leaders continue to engage unnecessarily in violent conflicts, which are evidently the “harder option.” This example demonstrates

how difficult—indeed impossible—it is to attain genuine insight through the study of the Quran and Hadith alone, without companionship serving as a guiding principle.

A narration of Aisha al-Siddiqah recorded in *Sahih al-Bukhari* states that the earliest revelations of the Quran consisted of the shorter chapters, collectively known as the *Mufassal*, which spoke of Paradise and Hell. Only after people had become receptive to Islam were the commandments concerning what was lawful and unlawful revealed. She explained that if the prohibitions against drinking wine and committing adultery had been revealed at the very beginning, people would have refused to give up these practices. (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4993)

It is known that Aisha was born in 614 CE, nine years before the Hijrah. The revelation of the Quran began in 610 CE. This means that when the Quran first began to be revealed in Makkah, Aisha had not yet been born. By the time of the migration to Madinah, she was only nine years old, still a child.

This raises an important question: how did Aisha come to understand the wisdom behind the revelation of the Makkan verses, when she was either not yet born or too young to have observed those events? The only possible explanation is that, after the Hijrah, when she lived closely with the Prophet (ﷺ), these matters were discussed with her.

Through discussion and exchange, she came to understand the underlying wisdom of the revelation. Therefore, her knowledge of these events did not come from personal observation, but from an ongoing, in-depth dialogue with the Messenger of God, the one who received the revelation.

What Aisha learned under the Prophet's guidance, as reflected in this narration, is of great significance. It illustrates the true method of social reform in Islam: the Islamic approach to bringing about social change through a process by which positive and lasting progress can be achieved in human society. In essence, this method consists of first reshaping the thinking of individuals through sustained education based on Islamic teachings, and only then bringing the moral and spiritual teachings of Islam into the life of society.

It is noteworthy that Aisha grasped this truth through a decade of living directly under the Prophet's guidance and then conveyed it to the Muslim community. Yet many contemporary Muslim leaders and thinkers, despite their study of the Quran and Hadith, remain unaware of this important principle. Time and again, they acquire political power in Muslim countries and then attempt to futilely impose Islamic law abruptly. In each case, the outcome is the same: the people respond in Aisha's words by saying: "We will never give up wine; we will never give up adultery." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 4993)

This repeated failure arose from a fundamental mistake: attempting to enforce divine law without first transforming the collective consciousness of the people.

God granted Aisha the honour of being the Prophet's wife so that she could acquire this profound understanding and share it with the world. Yet, despite such divine wisdom, people often remain entangled in emotional and reactionary politics and fail to recognize this enduring truth.

Aisha bint Abi Bakr al-Siddiq was born in Makkah nine years before the Hijrah and passed away in Madinah in 58 AH at the age of sixty-seven. During the final ten years of the Prophet's life, she remained closely associated with him as his wife. This gave her a unique opportunity to learn directly from the Prophet and gain a deep understanding of his teachings.

Because of her close association with the Prophet (ﷺ), she came to be regarded, in an intellectual sense, as one of the sources of Islam. It is reported that she was the most distinguished among Muslim women in knowledge and understanding—*Afqahu nisa'il-Muslimina wa a'lamuhunna bid-dini wal-adab*. It is also said that the senior Companions would consult her on matters of inheritance law, and she would answer each of them—*Wa kana akabirus-Sahabati yas'alunaha 'anil-fara'idi fa-tujibuhum*. She was regarded as an authority in narration and Hadith—*Wa kanat marji'an fir-riwayati wal-hadith*. (*Al-A'lam* by al-Zarkali, Vol. 3, p. 240)

Such a level of distinction in Aisha could not have arisen independently; it was undoubtedly the result of her sustained intellectual engagement with the Prophet (ﷺ).

One of the important objectives of Islam is what is described as an increase or growth in faith. This refers to intellectual development—that is, a person should continue to grow in religious understanding and God-consciousness, and the development of a personality shaped by faith should remain an ongoing process.

This growth in faith, or intellectual development, occurs through various means, such as reflecting on the Quran, remembering God, contemplating His attributes, observing God's creation, and reflecting on its wisdom. Along with this, a person also needs to engage in intellectual discussion about what he has learned in matters of religion. Through such discussions, ideas become clearer, new levels of understanding emerge, and one's conviction deepens. This exchange of ideas is essential for intellectual growth.

Such exchanges can take place with many people. It is reported that Umar ibn al-Khattab used to speak with everyone and learn something from each person—*Kana yata'allamu min kulli ahadin*. However, in reality, it is not possible for a person to maintain constant intellectual companionship for this purpose. In this regard, an individual's only constant companion may be one—and that is his wife. It is therefore both an intellectual and a religious responsibility for a man to encourage his

wife's intellectual development and help her develop her abilities, so that she may become, in the true sense, his intellectual partner.

The Quran teaches that the Prophet (ﷺ) serves as a comprehensive role model for Muslims in all aspects of life. Accordingly, he set an exemplary standard in his relationship with his wives. This model is not confined to his relationship with Aisha alone; rather, it reflects a broader principle applicable to all women. In this context, the following incident involving his wife Umm Salamah effectively illustrates this principle.

During the Madinan period, when the Prophet (ﷺ) concluded a treaty with the Quraysh of Makkah—known as the *Treaty of Hudaibiyyah*—widespread unease emerged among the Companions. This reaction arose from the fact that, on the surface, the treaty caused great unease among the Companions because it appeared to have been concluded from a position of weakness, and its terms were clearly in favour of the opposing side. Consequently, the Companions were filled with grief and anger. Upon the completion of the treaty, the Prophet (ﷺ) informed the people that they would not proceed to Makkah that year, but would instead return to Madinah from Hudaibiyyah. He therefore instructed them to slaughter their sacrificial animals there and shave their heads. However, not a single person rose to comply. He repeated the command three times, yet the people remained silent, and no one responded.

Deeply saddened, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) returned to his tent, where his wife Umm Salamah was present. Observing his distress, she asked him what had happened. The Prophet said, “Today something has happened that has never happened before. I instructed the Muslims to act, yet none of them rose to carry out my command.”

Umm Salamah said, “O Messenger of God, in my opinion, you should go out to the camp and, without speaking to anyone, slaughter your sacrificial animal and have your head shaved. In this way, the people will see that the matter has been settled and that nothing more can be done.”

The Prophet then left his tent and, without speaking to anyone, slaughtered his sacrificial animal and instructed the barber to shave his head. Upon seeing this, everyone rose and began slaughtering their own sacrificial animals and shaving their heads. Their grief, however, was so intense that the narrator says, “It seemed as though, when they began shaving each other’s heads, they might kill one another out of sorrow and frustration.” (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 2732)

This incident is not a simple episode; rather, it exemplifies intellectual consultation between a man and a woman. It is reasonable to infer that a deliberate and thoughtful discussion took place between the Prophet (ﷺ) and his wife on this occasion. The subsequent actions, as documented in the works of Hadith and Seerah, were

the outcome of that consultation. Such outcomes indicate decision-making grounded in mutual consultation and the exchange of ideas; they do not occur in isolation.

What Umm Salamah proposed was marked by sound judgement. She was wise enough to foresee that when the Prophet himself slaughtered his camel and had his head shaved, the people, upon witnessing this act, would understand that the matter had been resolved—that the journey to Makkah for Umrah would not take place, and that they were to return to Madinah from Hudaibiyyah. Once this was made evident through action, they would have no option but to follow his example and do the same. And that is exactly what happened: when the Prophet (ﷺ) performed his sacrifice, the others also slaughtered their animals and shaved their heads.

How did such discernment develop in Umm Salamah? It is evident that it emerged through continuous conversation and intellectual engagement with the Prophet (ﷺ). In this sense, Umm Salama was not only the Prophet's wife; she was also someone who learned directly under his guidance. It was through this close association and learning that she acquired the wisdom reflected in the incident mentioned above.

According to Islam, this dynamic is also part of the natural order of life. In the meaningful life that Islam envisions for both men and women, they are not merely domestic partners but genuine partners in life. They are companions in action as well as in thought.

Men and women serve as intellectual advisers to one another. Between them, a level of discussion and understanding can develop that is difficult to achieve with anyone else. This incident illustrates how much men and women need one another—indeed, each is essential to the other.

When a woman and a man enter into a close relationship through marriage, each naturally finds in the other a true companion—someone who understands them and becomes their intellectual partner.

This also implies that married life should be preserved under all circumstances. It should not be allowed to reach the point of divorce on the basis of every difficulty or excuse. Once married life begins, a man and a woman begin a shared history of their own. Divorce or separation, therefore, amounts to a break in that history. If people understood this reality, they would make every effort to avoid the harmful consequences of such a break, just as a government employee carefully avoids any action that might result in a break in service.

To establish this important relationship between man and woman, both need to be fully aware of its nature. Psychology shows that the main obstacle to building such a relationship is, on the man's side, excessive ego, and on the woman's side, heightened emotional sensitivity. Both need to recognize their respective weaknesses. The man

must keep his ego under control, while the woman must learn to manage her emotions. For both, this is a matter of psychological self-management. By adopting this approach, they can make their personal lives more meaningful and play a more constructive role in society.

WOMAN:
THE BUILDER
OF HUMANITY

WOMAN: THE SILENT BUILDER OF SOCIETY

In the Quran, under the description of the pilgrimage (*Hajj*), it is stated: “*Safa* and *Marwah* are among the symbols set up by God; there is nothing wrong if anyone goes on a pilgrimage to the House, or performs a minor pilgrimage, in walking to and fro between them.” (2:158)

The verse uses the word *sha‘irah* (plural: *sha‘a’ir*). The literal meaning of *sha‘irah* is a reminder or a sign (symbol). According to this verse, *Safa* and *Marwah* are two signs of God. They recall a divine event. To preserve and renew the memory of that event, it was prescribed that every man or woman who goes to Makkah for Hajj or Umrah should perform *sa‘i*, an essential ritual involving seven journeys between the hills of *Safa* and *Marwah*.

Safa and *Marwah* are two small hills in Makkah, located approximately seven furlongs apart. Around four thousand years ago, Prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) visited this region. Born in Iraq, he travelled through various regions until he finally reached Makkah. At that time, the location was a barren desert surrounded by rocky hills, with no sign of human settlement.

By divine command, Abraham left his wife Hagar (Hajar) and their infant son Ishmael (Isma'il) near Makkah and departed. They had only a small skin of water with them. When this supply was exhausted after a few days, Hagar set out in search of water. In her desperate search, she ran seven times between *Safa* and *Marwah*. After completing the seventh round, she returned to her child and discovered that a spring had gushed forth beside him.

Hagar's seven rounds between *Safa* and *Marwah* served a meaningful purpose. Its significance was such that God prescribed the same act for all men and women performing Hajj or Umrah, requiring them to carry out *sa'i*—the brisk walking between the two hills—just as Hagar had done. To this day, this practice remains an essential component of both Hajj and Umrah and is obligatory for every individual, regardless of age or gender.

The question then arises: why was Hagar's action so significant that people across the world were instructed to follow her example? Its importance lies in the exceptional responsibility entrusted to her by Abraham—to remain in that isolated place and devote herself to nurturing a new generation.

The uninhabited area of Makkah was deliberately chosen as a desert environment for training and development. The purpose of this divine choice was to raise a new generation in surroundings untouched by civilization—a generation nurtured and shaped directly by nature itself.

Such an environment fostered simplicity, realism, and moral integrity. Those who are brought up in accordance with their innate, God-given nature preserve the noble qualities with which they are endowed by birth. It is such people who become worthy bearers of God's religion. The descendants of Ishmael belonged to such a generation. Among them were born the Prophet of Islam and those precious individuals who came to be known as the Companions of the Prophet.

Through this Abrahamic plan, the true role of women in human history was demonstrated: the role of nurturing future generations. With each generation, women prepare the next by renewing and sustaining human life, ensuring continuity rather than stagnation—much like a flowing river rather than still water.

It is well known that every human being begins life as a child and, within a hundred years, grows old and passes away. This applies to all men and women. According to this divine plan, all human beings spend their early years under their mothers' care. This initial stage of life serves as a preparatory period—a time of mental and moral conditioning. The way a person is shaped during these formative years influences who they become for the rest of their life.

Within the natural order, this initial stage of life is entrusted to women through motherhood. As mothers

and guardians, women serve as the primary custodians of humanity during its earliest phase. They bear the essential responsibility of cultivating in children the disposition, character, and morals that will enable each of them to become a righteous member of society.

The wife of Prophet Abraham, Hagar (Hajar), provides a significant historical example of this divinely assigned role of women. Through her extraordinary sacrifice, she helped lay the foundation for the emergence of a generation that would eventually become the dependable companions of the final Prophet. With their unwavering support, the Prophet was able to bring about a transformation that is widely acknowledged as one of the greatest revolutions in human history.

For this reason, in the universal practice of Hajj and Umrah, the continuous act of walking between *Safa* and *Marwah*—reenacting Hagar's steps—was established. Its purpose is to remind successive generations that this responsibility must be continuously renewed. Throughout Islamic history, this tradition has remained intact.

The practical outcome of this process was that every household, in accordance with the Quran, was turned into a *qibla* (prayer direction) that is, a place of worship: "Turn your houses into places of worship." (Quran, 10:87) Following this guidance, each household became an

educational and training centre. Every child, under the care and supervision of their mother, received continuous care and guidance. During this formative period, children were shaped, both consciously and unconsciously, into individuals capable of sustaining a healthy society.

This system of moral training continued for nearly a thousand years. As a result, for approximately a millennium after the emergence of Islam, society did not witness the degree of moral decline observed in later periods. During this long period, domestic upbringing ensured that moral values became deeply rooted in social customs and traditions.

Men and women alike, whether consciously or unconsciously, remained committed to certain shared human principles. The influence of family structure and social norms was strong enough that few individuals openly challenged these values.

However, this situation changed with the advent of the modern Industrial Revolution, which fundamentally transformed patterns of life and social organization. Consequently, the household—once the primary institution responsible for moral development and the consistent preparation of disciplined and ethically grounded individuals—gradually lost this role.

For nearly a thousand years after the rise of Islam, the world largely remained within an agrarian order, based on a land-

centred economy. In that system, every family was closely connected to its land, and therefore the kind of family breakdown witnessed today was almost non-existent.

The Industrial Revolution shifted the economic base away from agriculture and landownership and diversified it across many different sectors. As a result, the importance of traditional education declined. The needs of modern industry led to the growing spread of scientific and technical education, which completely changed the old concept of learning. Economic progress now depended on acquiring formal education in schools and colleges, and people had to prove that they were educated on the basis of the certificates and degrees they possessed.

This transformation marked the end of the traditional role of the household. Previously, every home—largely supervised by women—functioned as a centre of education. Each household served as a formative space for human development. However, the new era reduced the importance of this domestic educational system. Parents gradually began to enroll their children in nursery or school at a very young age.

This shift significantly altered the structure of human society. A new generation emerged, perceived as lacking moral values and driven primarily by desire, without firm principles or standards. Today, society as a whole resembles a moral wilderness.

Yet there is no need to despair over this situation. What is needed is an understanding of the new conditions, followed by a thoughtful plan to rebuild the broken system of moral training in a new form.

During the time of Hagar (Hajar), the model for human development took the form of a desert-based school. Following the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), this mission shifted to a home-based model of education. Now, it is necessary to revive this method of education within the school-based setting.

The cultivation of human character was initially carried out in the desert environment, a practice that continued for more than two thousand years. Later, this responsibility was fulfilled within the home and remained there for nearly a thousand years. Today, the time has come to restore this essential function within the school system.

With the change of time, what has happened in the modern age is mainly that woman's sphere of work has changed. The training and upbringing of the human race is woman's natural responsibility. In this respect, her sphere of work today has become, in a special sense, the school.

The Creator's plan for women is that they provide essential early training for children, and for this responsibility they have been naturally endowed with qualities such as gentleness, compassion, patience, and emotional warmth, all of which enable them to excel in their nurturing role.

However, under the conditions of the modern age, these qualities alone are no longer adequate.

Now, it is essential for women to receive formal, degree-based education. They must become familiar with modern sciences and receive professional training. Women should meet recognized academic standards in order to demonstrate their ability to teach and train school children. By doing so, they can fulfill their divinely assigned role as effectively as they did during the agrarian era.

This is the most effective way to protect the modern generation from moral disorder. Women need to understand that their present workplace is neither the desert nor the home; it is now the school. Therefore, they must equip themselves according to the demands of this new era by pursuing modern education, becoming trained teachers, and proving their competence through both academic learning and practical experience.

In this way, women can once again become the builders of humanity, as they were in early civilizations, and continue to fulfill this role in the new age.

On April 24, 2004, a television programme in Delhi featured a Muslim professor. During an informal conversation over tea, he said, “My mother played the greatest role in shaping my life.”

He continued, “In 1967, I completed my matriculation. Our family was not financially well-off. I wanted to

continue my studies, but my father said that he could no longer afford my education and that I should give up further studies and seek employment instead.”

“However,” he added, “I could not bring myself to give up my studies. The difficulty was that I did not even have enough money to pay the admission fee for the next level. Seeing my eagerness to continue, my mother said, ‘All my jewellery has already been sold. I have only one earring left. I give it to you; sell it and pay your admission fee.’”

“I did as she instructed. I took the gold earring to the market and sold it for eighty rupees. With that money, I paid my admission fee and continued my studies. I faced many ups and downs during that period, but my mother consistently encouraged me at every stage until I completed my education. Today, I am a professor at a reputed university.”

This is not merely the story of one individual. Ask any successful person, and he will acknowledge that his mother played the greatest role in shaping his life. If anyone deserves credit for his success, it is his mother.

The truth is that a woman, in her role as a mother, is the greatest helper of every human being. She plays the most powerful and influential role in the progress of humanity. As a mother, her role is so universal that everyone recognizes it through personal experience. It is

an undeniable fact that every mother, in every place and every age, has continued to fulfill this noble role.

Islam builds upon this natural reality by nurturing a sense of universal responsibility in women. Its aim is to move them beyond the role of caregivers only to their own children and to enable them to become contributors to humanity as a whole. Women should not confine their God-given nurturing abilities solely to their sons and daughters; rather, they should extend these qualities for the benefit of society at large. God created women with the capacity to shape humanity, and limiting their role to childrearing alone would mean failing to make full use of their potential.

In the modern age, degree-based education has become increasingly important. Across different fields, employment requires formal qualifications. As a result, the importance of schooling has increased significantly, since better schooling leads to better opportunities for higher education.

This change has created, especially for women, a vast new field of employment: teaching. Today, women are working as teachers on a large scale, and it is widely recognized that they often prove to be better school teachers than men.

Thus, in practice, women have entered the workplace traditionally considered most suitable for them. However,

many women now regard this work primarily as a profession. What is required is that they approach it as a mission—that they become committed teachers rather than merely professionals. When this happens, the task of nurturing and educating the younger generation, which remains one of the most significant needs of our time, can once again develop effectively.

A FEW EXEMPLARY WOMEN

REMARKABLE WOMEN IN MY LIFE

The purpose of this book is to highlight the constructive role of women. To achieve this objective, both theoretical frameworks and historical examples have been included. In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate that the perspective I have shared about women is also based on personal experience. Among the women I have known personally, I will mention a few here.

Zaibunnisa

The first person I think of is my mother, Zaibunnisa. She was born in the village of Sanjarpur in the Azamgarh district of Uttar Pradesh towards the end of the nineteenth century and passed away in Delhi on October 8, 1985, at nearly one hundred years of age.

Although her formal education was limited, she was an exceptionally intelligent and courageous woman. Like the noble women of earlier times, she fully embodied traditional virtues.

My mother possessed all the moral qualities commonly associated with women of the past. However, she also displayed a trait not always found among mothers: she did

not indulge her children. She never resorted to physical punishment, but neither did she spoil us through excessive affection. She often said, “I have always kept my children under firm discipline.”

This balance between affection and firmness proved invaluable to me, as it enabled her to shape my character to a great degree. Although she was unfamiliar with the modern term “character-building” because of her limited formal education, she practised it instinctively. She closely monitored my moral conduct and made a conscious effort to cultivate the best human qualities in me. For example, to instil in me the values of hard work and humility, she bought two goats and made me responsible for taking them out to graze. Because of my mother’s approach, I too had the humble experience of tending goats as a child.

My mother never told a lie in her life. She never engaged in hypocrisy or double standards. When it came to principles, her conduct was consistently firm. She worked hard and disliked asking others for help. Her honesty was so genuine that no one could prevent her from speaking openly and truthfully. Although she was unfamiliar with the phrase “noble character,” she embodied it throughout her life.

By nature, she showed little concern for our material future. As far as I can recall, she never once encouraged me to pursue wealth. However, when it came to moral conduct, she was extremely vigilant. Day and night, she kept a

strict moral watch over me and could not tolerate even the slightest trace of improper behaviour in her children.

My father, Fariduddin Khan, passed away during my childhood, on December 30, 1929.

From my birth in 1925 until I was about fifteen years old, I lived with my mother in the village. Consequently, my entire early childhood was spent under her care. As a result, those human qualities became deeply rooted in my character—qualities that the ancient Arabs called *al-muru'ah*, or nobility of character.

This upbringing shaped the principles by which I came to live. Lying seemed beneath human dignity, while honesty became second nature to me. Realism became an integral part of my character. I learned to value the honest acknowledgment of facts and found it difficult to tolerate any denial of truth. It would therefore not be an overstatement to say that, in my childhood, I acquired from my mother those natural qualities of character which the Hadith recognizes as marks of human excellence even before the advent of Islam. (*Musnad Ahmad*, Hadith No. 10295) In other words, my mother instilled these qualities in me before I came to understand religion for myself.

The moral virtues she displayed were, in earlier times, common among women; in that sense, she was not exceptional. However, in one respect she certainly was exceptional: she never pampered her children. She loved us as every mother does, but she also understood that excessive indulgence spoils children.

Therefore, her approach towards us was that of a practical and realistic mother. She often said, “I have always kept my children under firm discipline.” This distinctive quality enabled her to become a mother who shaped my character.

To pursue a divinely inspired mission, one must possess a personality of unwavering integrity—free from opportunism, firmly grounded in truthfulness, deeply sensitive to principles, entirely devoid of any spirit of exploitation, and filled with compassion and goodwill towards humanity.

As an expression of gratitude, I can say that my mother’s upbringing instilled these very qualities in me. As mentioned earlier, she was a woman with little formal education who spent her entire life in a village setting. Therefore, she did not consciously understand the broader significance of these moral virtues; she simply acted according to her natural instincts. Still, the truth remains that if she had not shaped my character in this manner, I would never have been able to carry out the mission of conveying God’s message and undertake the constructive work to which I later dedicated my life.

A mission like Al-Risala can only be built upon a foundation of strong moral character. There are two types of character: sincere and hypocritical. A person relying on hypocritical character may succeed in running a political venture, but a true religious mission must be rooted in sincerity. Without

noble character, there can be no genuine mission; where character is absent, the mission itself ceases to exist.

In my experience, every mother potentially possesses the same qualities that I have described in relation to my own mother. However, one common weakness prevents mothers from playing the constructive role in their children's lives that my mother played in mine. That weakness is excessive pampering. Every mother has immense love for her child. My mother's distinguishing quality was that she kept her love under the guidance of reason. She was therefore able to avoid the destructive mistake of excessive pampering.

I believe that, merely by overcoming this one weakness, mothers can raise an entirely new generation within their own lifetime—a generation consisting of the kind of individuals needed to build a righteous society.

It is a well-known fact that, during the formative period of their lives, all human beings are brought up under the care and guidance of their mothers. Mothers can shape their children in whichever direction they choose. In the human system, nature has, as it were, entrusted mothers with the responsibility of shaping human beings and has also endowed them with the abilities necessary for this task.

I have personally experienced this truth in my own life. In my view, every mother naturally possesses the qualities required to fulfill this role. Only one thing prevents mothers from performing this constructive responsibility: the unnecessary pampering of their children.

Sabia Khatoon Alawi

The second notable person in this context is my wife, Sabia Khatoon. We were married in 1942, and the marriage was arranged by my cousin, Iqbal Ahmad Suhail (d. 1955). Coincidentally, the year of my marriage also marked the beginning of a turbulent phase in my life.

This phase was defined by an intense search for truth. I became increasingly restless in this pursuit, moving forward without a clear direction or definite purpose. This period of searching continued for nearly five years until, in 1948, I rediscovered Islam as the complete truth. However, this discovery did not bring comfort to my wife. Once again, I became deeply absorbed in intense activity—this time, in the effort to communicate the truth I had discovered to everyone and to make every person aware of God's message.

Earlier, my search for truth had made me restless; now, my desire to spread that truth made me even more so. My concern expanded beyond my family and came to embrace humanity as a whole.

Once again, a turning point occurred. When I became actively involved in this work, I soon realized that traditional madrasa education had prepared me only to engage with the masses. Reaching the elite, however, was an unconventional task for which I was, at that time, unprepared.

Engaging with the elite required considerable intellectual capacity, fluency in English and a deep understanding of modern thought. This realization led me to undertake an even more demanding task: I devoted myself wholeheartedly to learning the English language and studying its intellectual disciplines.

During that period, I would walk through the streets with an English book in my hand, reading without paying attention to my surroundings. My habit of reading while walking became so intense that my mother and elder brother would say, “One day, he will be hit by a vehicle while walking in the street, and that will be his end.”

As a result, soon after our marriage, my condition was such that I could do very little for my wife. Even after our children were born, I had not yet attained financial stability. I remember returning home one day and finding my wife staying in a room at my elder brother’s house in Azamgarh. My wife had a friend named Razia Begum. When I entered the room, my wife told me that Razia had asked how long we would continue living in this condition and what the economic future of our children would be.

Without giving the matter much thought, I replied, “Tell Razia that this boat, along with all its passengers, is in God’s hands.”

The lifestyle I had chosen affected my wife the most. Married life never became the centre of my concerns, as I remained absorbed in other matters. My intellectual focus

was entirely elsewhere. Because of this preoccupation, I was able to commit myself to this *ijtihad*-based mission, although I had no existing model to follow.

The background may be stated as follows: from the period of European colonialism to America's New World Order, the unfavourable circumstances faced by Muslims led many scholars and reformers to adopt largely negative perspectives. Under these conditions, I felt compelled to rediscover Islam's positive outlook—an outlook that had remained obscured for nearly three centuries beneath layers of negative rhetoric and polemical writings.

From Shah Waliullah Dehlawi to Dr. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, many scholars interpreted *jihad* primarily in terms of fighting. In this context, I faced the difficult task of understanding *jihad fi-sabilillah* as a peaceful effort to communicate the divine message. Three centuries of adverse circumstances had led many scholars and leaders to develop feelings of hostility towards non-Muslims. I had to enter that sea of resentment in order to recover the pearls of human compassion that had been lost.

Modern science had produced a powerful body of theological and rational arguments. However, because of the hostility that many of our scholars felt towards the West, this intellectual resource had remained unknown to them. Having understood this situation, what I had to do was uncover this hitherto unexplored treasure and put it to use. I had to introduce God's message—Islam—to the

people of the world in its pure and unadulterated form, using the intellectual arguments of the modern age.

This work was so sensitive that even the slightest deviation could expose the communicator of God's message to the risk of double punishment. (Quran, 17:74)

To carry forward this long and difficult project, it was necessary for someone to bear its cost. My wife was the one who paid the price of bearing the unbearable. In such circumstances, I had neither the time to think about my wife and children nor the opportunity to do anything for them. She showed immense patience and remained steadfast in this principle throughout her life, never uttering a single word of complaint. Circumstances were such that, for almost my entire life, I did nothing for her. Readers may find it difficult to believe that from 1942 until now, I have never had even a single dress made for my wife. I never bought her a pair of shoes or slippers. I remained completely indifferent to her material needs. For a person devoted to a mission, such one-sided cooperation is invaluable—and such cooperation can come only from a woman.

Through her extraordinary patience, my wife became what I would call a “no-problem” partner. Had she not been so, my entire mission would almost certainly have remained unfinished. Like so many others, I might then have lived a merely biological life, without fulfilling any higher purpose, and eventually passed into a world from which no one can ever return.

Farida Khanam

The third name closely associated with my mission is that of my daughter, Farida Khanam. She was born on May 2, 1952, in Azamgarh. Although she suffered from poor health from childhood, she pursued higher education with sustained determination. She completed her High School and Pre-University examinations privately from Aligarh Muslim University. She then earned her B.A. (English Honours) from Delhi College, New Delhi, followed by an M.A. in English Literature from Delhi University and another M.A. in Islamic Studies from Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. Later, she obtained her doctorate from the same university. She retired as a professor in the Department of Islamic Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi.

Farida Khanam's contribution to our mission has been so significant that it is difficult to express it adequately in words. In 1976, when I launched the monthly Al-Risala, she assumed responsibility for much of its work, in addition to translating articles from Urdu into English.

From that time onward, she devoted herself wholeheartedly to our mission. While my son, Saniyasnain Khan, effectively managed the administrative affairs and global expansion of the Al-Risala mission, Farida Khanam consistently supported its literary work. I shall mention only a few examples to illustrate the scope of her contributions, which were often made at considerable personal sacrifice.

Selfless cooperation in a mission is perhaps possible only for a woman. My book '*Mazhab aur Jadid Challenge*' was first published in 1964 in Lucknow under the title '*Ilm-e-Jadeed ka Challenge*.' It gained wide popularity and was translated into several languages. In Arabic, it was published as '*Al-Islam Yatahadda*.'

There was a repeated demand for an English translation. Several individuals attempted to translate it independently, but they were unable to complete the task. The main difficulty was that the book contained numerous quotations from English works, which had been rendered into Urdu. This posed no difficulty for translations into other languages, since the translators only had to render the Urdu text into their respective languages.

However, for the English translation, it was necessary to locate the original English quotations, as retranslating passages that had already been translated from English into Urdu back into English would have compromised accuracy.

Many English-educated individuals who wished to translate the book asked for the original English sources of the quotations. The difficulty, however, was that I no longer had access to the original books. I had written '*Mazhab Aur Jadeed Challenge*' over a long period, during which I travelled extensively and consulted books in numerous libraries as well as in the private collections of scholars. By then, I could no longer recall which book had been consulted from which source. The situation seemed so difficult that I personally concluded that the book could never be translated into English.

Without any request from me, Farida Khanam took the initiative herself. She searched tirelessly, day and night, in various libraries, including Aligarh's Azad Library, the Delhi Public Library, Delhi University Library, and others. She continued this effort for a long time until she successfully located most of the books and obtained all the original quotations with complete references.

Her initial involvement in this matter appears to have begun when Mr. Ikramuddin Ahmad (IAS) sent me a lengthy list. After studying my book '*Religion and the Modern Challenge*,' he sent me a detailed multi-page list of all the referenced works, requesting that I provide those books. I was unable to supply them, but his list inspired Farida Khanam. Using that list, she began searching through various libraries. Ultimately, she succeeded in locating the English quotations and, by incorporating them, translated the book into English. This translation passed through several stages before it was finally published for the first time in Delhi in 1985 under the title '*God Arises*.' The book comprises 288 pages. It is clearly a remarkable example of selfless cooperation.

The second incident I wish to mention occurred during a visit to Switzerland in July 2002. With the support of several Western countries, an international organization called the 'Nuclear Disarmament Forum' had been established. Under its leadership, a world conference was held in the historic Swiss city of Zug, attended by professors and highly educated individuals from various countries. I also participated in the conference at their invitation.

On the first day of the conference, its president, Andrey Bykov, announced that a document on international peace was needed. He explained that it would be published in several languages and distributed throughout the world.

To prepare this explanatory document, he divided the conference participants into three groups: one consisting of Russian scholars, another of scholars from Western countries, and a third of scholars from Asian countries. He asked each group to meet separately and prepare its own version. One of the three documents would then be selected and presented at the final session in Zug the following morning. Each group worked together to prepare its document and then submitted it to Andrey Bykov. However, he was not satisfied with any of the three versions.

At about ten o'clock on the night of July 29, I was alone in my room. I had finished the night prayer and was preparing to go to bed when Andrey Bykov came to my room unexpectedly. He looked deeply troubled. He said, 'Each of the three groups has submitted its document to me, but I am not satisfied with any of them. I am deeply worried about what I will present before the participants in tomorrow morning's session.'

He continued, "In my distress, I went to the church here and prayed. Finally, it came to my heart that only you could do this work. You can prepare the document I need." He added, "I will meet you again in the morning. I am sure

that by then you will have completed it.” I was astonished and could not even respond. He left me in that state and went out of my room.

My daughter, Farida Khanam, was also with me on that trip. She was staying in another room of the same hotel. I called her and asked her to come. When she arrived, I narrated to her the entire incident involving Andrey Bykov. I said, “When great international professors and English experts could not accomplish this task, how can I possibly do it? I feel utterly helpless in this matter.”

Farida Khanam’s response, however, was entirely different. She said, “We have the whole night before us. We will pray to God and remain awake throughout the night to prepare it.” After nearly an hour of her insistence, I finally agreed.

We then sat down together. First, we discussed the contents of the document, and gradually a clear outline began to emerge. Farida Khanam then began writing. I shared my thoughts, partly in English and partly in Urdu, while she continued to express them in English. This process took several hours, and by the time the dawn prayer began, a short essay of a few pages had been completed.

After that, we both offered the dawn (Fajr) prayer. Following morning tea, Farida Khanam went to the conference office and typed the three-page document on the computer. She then printed a few copies and immediately handed one to Andrey Bykov.

After reading the document, Andrey Bykov returned to my room. Unlike the previous day, he appeared very pleased. Holding a copy of the document, he said, “This is exactly the kind of document I wanted. I will now present it in today’s session, seek its approval, and then circulate it throughout the world. On the subject of peace, I have never come across a clearer document than this.”

This document later became part of my 136-page book ‘*Ideology of Peace*,’ published in 2003. It was this document that initially helped my ideas and efforts for world peace gain international recognition. Further developments followed, and on October 12, 2002, I received the International Award of Peace (Demiurgus Peace International Award) in Switzerland. The award was presented by former Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev. A detailed account of this occasion may be found in my travelogue, *Safarnama Switzerland*, published in the August 2003 issue of Al-Risala, my Urdu-language magazine. [An English translation, entitled *My Journey to Switzerland*, was later published as an 82-page book in 2022]. Farida Khanam’s selfless contribution in this regard illustrates the unique divine blessing with which a woman’s personality is endowed.

Farida Khanam’s role in my life also has a daily dimension: our discussions on intellectual and religious themes. These exchanges are not merely conversations; they have been an essential part of my intellectual growth. By God’s grace, I have never experienced mental stagnation; my intellectual

development has continued steadily. One important factor in this ongoing progress has undoubtedly been my daily intellectual conversations with Farida Khanam. In this sense, I regard her as my intellectual assistant.

An example of this may also be found in the present book, *'Woman: The Builder of Humanity.'* After completing the book, I wrote a short note at the end titled "Dedication." In that note, I mentioned that Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, made a great sacrifice in ancient times, which led to a new era in human history. I added that there is now a need for another woman to arise and play the role of Hagar once again.

As was my practice, I showed this note to Farida Khanam. After reading it, she observed that it would not be appropriate to mention only one woman as the bearer of the great task of ushering in a new era. "It would be better," she said, "to present it in general terms, so that every woman may consider herself addressed and feel that she, too, must play this role." Accordingly, I revised the text in accordance with Farida Khanam's suggestion.

Based on my experience, women are particularly well suited to meaningful intellectual discussion. Owing to their natural qualities, they can perform this role with remarkable effectiveness. The manner in which Farida Khanam remained connected with the Al-Risala mission over such a long period was no ordinary achievement. During this time, she faced exceptional challenges and extremely difficult circumstances; yet her dedication to the mission never wavered.

Through Farida Khanam's example, I learned one of the most important qualities of a woman: unbreakable loyalty. If a person's association with a cause is based only on logic, it will not last long. The truth is that, along with intellectual conviction, a deep emotional attachment to the cause is also necessary. It is this heartfelt bond that keeps a person's commitment strong despite hardships or grievances.

Women are, by nature, more emotionally inclined, a trait generally less common among men. As a result, unless there is a strong opposing factor, women tend to form emotional attachments to causes and missions more readily. Such attachments enable them to remain consistently dedicated to the goal. This kind of selfless devotion is the strongest guarantee of a mission's success.

Based on my understanding, every woman has the potential to develop the qualities I have seen in Farida Khanam. Every woman is inherently capable of such growth. However, it is also true that not every woman is able to realize this potential, and the responsibility for this rests largely with men. Men often see women merely as managers of the household and fail to recognize their innate capabilities. And what is not recognized cannot be properly developed or utilized.

For every man, a woman represents a valuable asset, but this value initially exists only in potential form. It is the

man's responsibility to recognize this potential and help women to transform a natural possibility into a lived reality.

In January 2001, I launched a special programme in Delhi called the Spiritual Class. Held weekly, the class aims to promote a positive understanding of spirituality and Islam. Most of its participants are highly educated young people. Before joining our class, they had developed a negative attitude towards Islam, shaped largely by their surroundings. To them, it seemed impossible that Islam could provide the answers they had been seeking for so long. However, after regularly attending our weekly class for several years, their thinking changed.

According to a Hadith, "Every child is born upon the nature; then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian." (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, Hadith No. 1385)

This highlights the role of religious conditioning, which is the greatest obstacle to the spread of truth. Removing such conditioning through deconditioning is therefore the first step toward success in this effort. The present secular educational system, in effect, performs this process of deconditioning. Therefore, contrary to the common belief that modern education has distanced young people from religion, it has, in fact, brought them closer to true religion. This has created a new opportunity through modern education.

Availing of this opportunity is the first principle in planning the effort to call people towards God.

The Quran presents the concept of *fitrah*, or the natural order, by emphasizing that even in difficult circumstances there may be a hidden opportunity. It states:

“You may dislike something although it is good for you.” (Quran, 2:216)

This aspect of the modern educational system is an example of that very law of nature.

The women who attend our weekly Spiritual Class have now begun engaging in the work of introducing the peaceful, spiritual message of Islam within their own social circles. Whenever an opportunity arises, they share this message with others. Each of them carries pamphlets published by us in their bag. After a brief introduction, they offer these booklets to people to read.

Based on my experience, I can say that, compared to the average man, an educated woman may be more capable of carrying out this work.

In the early period of Islam, men made greater contributions than women. However, in view of present-day circumstances, I believe that in Islam's second phase, women may make even greater contributions than men. It may well be that women are destined to play a central role in carrying the message of Islam forward and making it a powerful force for change. The course of history appears to point in this direction.

WOMAN IN THE MODERN AGE

WOMAN AND THE MODERN WORLD

Behind most great events, there is usually a woman, either directly or indirectly. This is why it is often said: “There is a woman at the beginning of all great things.”

Perhaps one of the most significant historical examples of this is Hagar, the wife of Abraham. Through her remarkable sacrifice, she marked the beginning of a new chapter in human history. It was a transformation whose influence was felt across the world.

Four thousand years ago, the world was very different from what it is today. At that time, belief in multiple deities was widespread across the globe. Over time, it developed into a full-fledged civilization—a culture shaped by belief in multiple deities. Everyone born into that world was influenced by this reality.

As a result of the widespread dominance of this culture, humanity became deeply immersed in superstition and ritual practices. People were deprived of the benefits that could have come under the influence of monotheism. At that time, by God’s command, Abraham devised a far-reaching plan. He settled his wife Hagar and their infant son Ishmael in the desert near Makkah.

Abraham was a prophet of God. It is estimated that he was born around 2160 BCE and passed away in 1985 BCE. Hagar was his wife. Settling her and their young son Ishmael in a barren desert, without water or vegetation, was an extraordinary act of sacrifice. Its purpose was to raise a new generation in a natural desert environment, free from the dominating influence of the polytheistic civilization.

Over successive generations, this lineage continued. Nearly twenty-five centuries passed before the descendants of Ishmael reached the intended number. Then, in 570 CE, the final Prophet, Muhammad ibn Abdullah (ﷺ), was born among them.

The descendants of Ishmael were a strong and dynamic people, endowed with many noble human qualities. Muhammad (ﷺ) received prophethood in Makkah in 610 CE and passed away in Madinah in 632 CE. During this period, guided by the Quran, he carried out a profound mission of calling people to the truth. As a result, hundreds of thousands of men and women accepted his message and joined his mission. This led to the emergence of a strong community of followers who went on to bring about the greatest revolution in history.

These were the people who first challenged the deeply entrenched system of monarchy. Then, under their

influence, the long era of polytheism and superstition, which had continued for ages under royal patronage, came to an end.

Polytheism is the worship of natural phenomena such as the sun, the moon, rivers, and mountains. In a polytheistic system, these forces of nature were treated as objects of worship. With the decline of polytheism, however, the same forces became subjects of study and investigation. Thus, for the first time in history, the age of superstition gave way to the age of science.

The decline of superstition and monarchy gradually opened the way for an era marked by greater freedom, democracy, and social equality among different groups. As a result, a new world eventually emerged—the world we now call industrial civilization.

This is a story spanning nearly four thousand years. For nearly a thousand years after the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ), humanity continued to benefit from the sacrifices made by Hagar and by the women of later generations descended from her. For the past two centuries, however, humanity has struggled with the excessive dominance of materialism. In earlier times, the world struggled with idolatry; in the modern age, it has faced the challenge of materialism. This modern evil is no less serious than the evil of idolatry in earlier times. In the past, idolatry prevented the world from achieving material progress.

In the modern age, however, material progress itself has become a new challenge, as it has distanced human beings from spiritual progress.

This decline has caused great harm, as it has deprived human beings of spiritual growth. The most troubling aspect of this decline is the complete breakdown of the value system. In contemporary society, personal desire has become the primary guide. The intense pursuit of material success continues in its most aggressive form. Personal pleasure has become the central aim, even when it is achieved at the cost of others' well-being.

This situation calls once again for women like Hagar, whose sacrifices can help redirect the course of history and guide humanity away from the age of materialism to the age of monotheism.

The root cause of today's destructive condition lies in the collapse of the family institution. For centuries, the family served as the primary centre of value-based education. Within the natural order, human beings were nurtured by mothers before entering the wider world. A child's guardians, especially the mother, were the first source of moral guidance and value-oriented upbringing.

This is precisely why, in earlier times, the kind of moral crisis we now witness on a global scale did not occur.

In the modern age, under the influence of the women's liberation movement and an extreme interpretation of gender equality, it came to be regarded as more respectable for women to leave their homes and work alongside men in every field. Such women promoted the slogan: "Don't make coffee, make policy."

As a result of this outlook, women increasingly entered the workplace, leaving the domestic sphere largely unattended. Consequently, several artificial problems emerged, including unemployment among men in public life and the moral decline of children within the home.

Some proposed addressing this moral crisis by introducing moral education as an elective subject in school curricula. This measure was adopted in many countries, but it proved entirely ineffective. The reason was that students in schools and colleges generally study only to pass examinations; they do not regard such subjects as part of their character formation.

The reality is that moral education and character formation can take place only in the same manner as they did in earlier times: under the guidance of mothers within the home.

Indeed, this is not an easy task. It requires altering the course of history itself. Such change can be achieved only through sacrifice and sustained effort. It cannot be accomplished merely by holding a few extension lectures

on moral themes or by preparing pamphlets on “moral teaching” and including them in school syllabi.

In ancient times, when civilization was dominated by superstition, many individuals made great sacrifices to help pave the way for the scientific age. Among them was a group of remarkable women, the first notable figure being Hagar. Such women left behind the comforts of city life and embraced life’s challenges. They rejected luxury and ease in favour of simplicity and contentment. They gave up a life of comfort and chose one marked by hardship.

They turned away from personal pleasures and devoted themselves to the greater good of humanity. They lived in this spirit for several generations. Eventually, all doors of success opened for them. At that point, the poet’s words proved true for them: “If you seek a higher position, first humble yourself, for even a single grain must die in the soil before it can bear fruit.”

It is widely acknowledged that despite significant material advancement in the modern era, the better world to which humanity aspires has not yet been realized. Contemporary society may shine with material wealth, but negative trends are rapidly increasing within human communities, including hatred and violence, tension and mental instability, dissatisfaction, divorce, and the decline of human values.

The main reason for this situation is straightforward: both men and women have become engaged in work outside the home, which was once a centre of character formation.

This situation requires men and women to follow the established principle of division of labour and fulfill the responsibilities that nature has assigned to each of them. Men should continue to manage the material and institutional mechanisms of civilization, while women, by assuming responsibility for education, should devote themselves to nurturing the next generation of humanity. This division of labour is presented as the only viable way to build a new civilization; no alternative approach is considered capable of achieving this goal.

Women have traditionally been regarded as the primary teachers and trainers of humankind. In earlier times, women generally educated children within their own homes. During early childhood, almost every child received basic moral training under the supervision of the women of the household. However, in the modern era, the Industrial Revolution has altered this arrangement. Children are now sent to school from a very young age.

However, this should not be viewed as a problem. It simply indicates that the woman's place of work has shifted.

She has moved from the home to the school. In such a situation, it is the duty of women to understand these new circumstances and take charge of children's education in schools, so that the task of nurturing human beings, which once took place mainly within homes, can now be carried out more systematically within schools.

Even today, a woman's role in shaping future generations remains essential. However, with changing times, this role has assumed a new form. In the past, the home alone was sufficient for this responsibility; now, a woman must perform her natural role within the educational environment of schools.

This shift has created a new requirement: women must first prepare themselves. Only then can they effectively fulfill their role in the school setting. The new expectation is that women should acquire systematic education, gain proficiency in the modern science of education, and obtain formal academic qualifications. These qualifications will demonstrate their ability to manage the school—their extended workplace—and to fulfill their responsibilities there. In the present age, women cannot adequately perform this role without professional education.

The Principle of Division of Labour

In human society, ongoing activities are divided into different spheres. One of these is the sphere of government,

also known as administration. The role of this sector is to manage the affairs of the state. In the present democratic age, those who work in this sphere generally change every five years. At the end of one term, elections are held for the next, and those elected assume responsibility for the administration during the following term.

This forms the political system of a society. The success of this sphere depends largely on whether free and fair elections are held at the end of each term, and whether the elected representatives discharge their governmental responsibilities with honesty and integrity.

Apart from this, the remaining activities of society may be broadly divided into two major areas. The first consists of productive activities, including agriculture, industry, and other sectors responsible for producing and supplying the necessities of life.

The second area is the sphere of education. It includes both formal and informal forms of education. With all its branches, this sector is responsible for educating and training each new generation, so that humanity may continually receive capable individuals who can carry civilization forward.

According to the principle of division of labour, the first sphere of human life—the productive sector—should primarily be managed by men. By using their God-given

abilities constructively, men should continue to bear the responsibility of meeting humanity's material and economic needs in every age.

The second sphere of life—the educational sphere—should primarily be entrusted to women. Women possess natural abilities that make them especially suited to this task, and they can often perform these functions more effectively than men.

This second sphere includes a wide range of fields, such as education, journalism, radio, television, literature, and other related areas. It bears the primary responsibility for shaping human character. In the modern age, new methods of communication have expanded the influence of this sphere more than ever before. Today, it can be managed in a more organized and comprehensive manner than in the past.

The conditions of our time require that, while remaining committed to essential moral principles, women assume leadership roles in both formal and informal education and dedicate themselves to the intellectual and moral development of humanity. As educators and nurturers of future generations, they should fulfill the historic role that nature, according to its creative design, has assigned to them. For women, this represents both a noble mission and a meaningful profession.

According to Islam, both men and women are equally entitled to dignity and respect. In matters of rights and responsibilities, they hold equal status. Equality, however, does not mean that they must perform identical roles. In other words, they are equal in respect but different in their roles.

An aircraft, for example, carries both men and women, but its safe operation depends on different people performing different tasks. If everyone insisted on doing exactly the same job, the aircraft could not even take off. And if such a dispute arose during the flight, it could end in disaster.

The truth is that the division of labour is a fundamental law of nature. Human life depends on this very principle. The same division of labour that is essential for society as a whole also applies to the relationship between men and women. In reality, what is needed is an effective distribution of responsibilities, not uniformity of roles.

By following this natural principle, a balanced social order can be established in which men and women fulfill their respective responsibilities, enabling society to continue functioning successfully without falling into chaos.

CONCLUSION

THE LAST WORD

The system of this world was created by the Creator of nature on the principle of pairing. This principle is so universal that it extends beyond the sphere of male and female. The law that two elements combine to produce a meaningful result is far broader than this; it is true of almost everything in existence. Every significant event in the world comes into being through the combination of two components. For example, when two gases, hydrogen and oxygen, combine, they produce something as meaningful as water.

Similarly, sight is one of the most remarkable and meaningful phenomena in the world. Even if everything else existed in our world, but there was no faculty of sight, the whole world would suddenly become a dark and meaningless wilderness. The phenomenon of sight, however, depends on the combination of two things: light and the eye. If there were light but no eye, or an eye but no light, everything would still exist in the world, but the experience of seeing would not occur. Yet it is upon this experience of seeing that all the beauty and splendour of the world depend.

The same principle applies to man and woman. What is described as the building of life can take place only when both man and woman fulfill their respective roles. Neither can, on their own, carry out the process of building life.

For this joint effort to be effective, one essential element is required: adjustment. The two stones of a mill must move together in harmony for wheat to be ground into flour and made useful for human beings. Yet in this process, one stone must be above and the other below. Only through this practical alignment can the two stones produce something meaningful. Similarly, in the process of building life, harmony between man and woman is absolutely essential.

According to nature's creation plan, woman constitutes half of humanity, and man constitutes the other half. In terms of dignity and status, however, men and women are completely equal. In society and law, both genders possess equal worth in every respect. However, in accordance with the general principle of nature, a system of division of labour has been established between them. Certain areas of human activity are assigned to men, while others are assigned to women. For the collective progress of human civilization, there is no better system than this.

According to Islam, the world in which we live is a test. Being a man is a responsibility, and being a woman is also a responsibility. For both, success or failure is judged by the same standard: how well each fulfills the responsibilities assigned to them.

Throughout history, women have accomplished many great and remarkable deeds. Although recorded history rarely mentions them, this omission is not limited to women alone; it also applies to men. The historiographical tradition established in ancient times primarily emphasized political and military figures. Unfortunately, this approach still prevails today.

As a result, the achievements of non-political men are seldom documented in written history. Likewise, the extraordinary contributions of women, despite their great significance, have received very little attention in historical records.

Based on my study and experience, I have observed that behind nearly every major event in the world, there is, in some form, a woman—often a mother or a wife. When successful people are asked who played the greatest role in their success, most mention their mother, wife, or another influential woman in their lives.

The same is true of leaders associated with major historical events. Many have acknowledged that the

strongest influence in shaping their character came from their mother, wife, or another close woman. The famous American inventor Thomas Alva Edison once said, “The real force behind all of my successes is my mother.”

Viewed from this perspective, a woman plays the most influential role in shaping human life—sometimes openly, but more often quietly and behind the scenes. This is a universal human experience: even if it has not been recorded in official history, it is known to everyone through personal experience.

In modern times, a global movement for women’s liberation has emerged. In my view, this movement is unnatural.

More accurately, what the world needs is a movement that promotes women’s responsibility. Such a movement would emphasize the constructive role of women, whereas the unnatural movement for women’s liberation has only fostered a spirit of lawlessness and moral looseness.

The greatest damage caused by this unnatural movement is that half of the institution responsible for building humanity has disintegrated, to the extent that it can no longer effectively contribute to human development. The future of humanity now depends on rebuilding this internal institution exactly as it once existed. Human history has reached an impasse at this point, and it can resume its meaningful journey only from here.

Whether man or woman, both are destined to play an important role in the building of humanity. To fulfill this role successfully, both must prepare themselves accordingly. They must learn the art of managing life: the art of organizing their lives in a meaningful way. They should discover the hidden potential within their personalities. They must undergo deconditioning in order to develop a realistic, truth-centred mindset. Through intellectual growth, they should elevate their level of thinking and gain a deeper understanding of the principle of differentiation: the ability to discern and distinguish correctly between things.

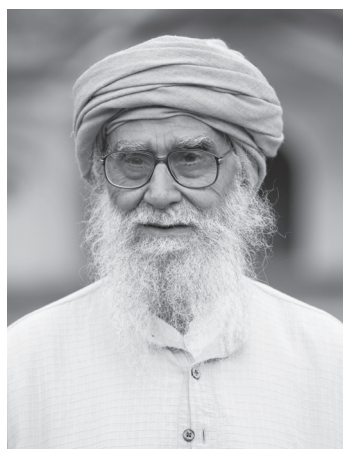
Additionally, it is important to recognize that no significant achievement in this world can be attained without patience. Patience creates inner balance and prevents the unnecessary loss of energy. It prevents minor disagreements from developing into conflicts. Patience is essential for collaborative effort, for it transforms despair into hope. It nurtures maturity: the ability to change what can be changed and to accept what cannot be changed.

To play a meaningful role in life, a person must move beyond the demands of the ego. This requires overcoming such weaknesses as superficiality, selfishness and narrow-mindedness. One must embrace simple living and high thinking, value time and make the best possible use of it.

One must also avoid becoming distracted by matters that are unimportant or irrelevant. The truth is that every woman and every man is born with immense potential. Turning that potential into reality is the true meaning of success.

—Wahiduddin Khan

New Delhi, July 19, 2004



Maulana Wahiduddin Khan (1925–2021), an Islamic scholar, spiritual guide, and ambassador of peace, was internationally recognized for his seminal contributions to world peace. The Government of India posthumously honoured him with the Padma Vibhushan in 2021 for his contributions to spirituality. Maulana authored over 200 books exploring Islam's spiritual wisdom, the Prophet's nonviolent approach, Islam's relationship with modernity, and other contemporary issues. His English translation of the Quran and his commentary on the Quran are widely appreciated for their simplicity, clarity, and ease of understanding. In 2001, he founded the Centre for Peace and Spirituality International in New Delhi to promote a culture of peace and to share the spiritual message of Islam worldwide. Today, the CPS International network continues to carry this legacy forward.

www.mwkhana.com www.goodwordquran.com

www.cpsglobal.org

Woman: The Builder of Humanity explores this question through thoughtful analysis and historical examples. It shows that women have always played a vital and constructive role in human progress—not merely within the family, but in the wider development of society and civilization. The book presents this role as part of the natural order of life. It invites women to understand their unique potential and to fulfil their creative and constructive role with awareness, confidence, and purpose.

Goodword Books
CPS International

PDF



ISBN 978-81-693271-07



9 788169 327107