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A Paper

on

The Position of the Women among the Moslems

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Preface

In the following pages I have tried to show the correct position of the women among the Moslems.

I do not pretend to any originality in the matter, unless it be the selection of material. I have used a very large number of books in the preparation of this paper, and taking the widely scattered material from here and there, have tried to put it into a shape, that would give ^athe connected idea on the subject.

The subject has by no means been exhausted. Only some of the much criticized institutions of the Moslems have been taken and discussed briefly.

A list of books used, is given at the back. Some of these books have been of very great help, others have contributed a single fact or idea. Mr. Ameer Ali's works need a special mention. They are of special interest for all, who want to have a correct idea of Islam and the Moslem History.

I have made a free use of quotations, believing that ⁱⁿ this way no injustice would be done to the authors.

I Condition of Woman

Among the Arabs before Islam.

In Arabia before Islam woman was more degraded than in the Laws of Mannu. She could not inherit property, she was a part of the property inherited by her husband's son, who could force her to marry him. Polygamy was universal and without any restrictions. Divorce was very common at least as far as the man was concerned. The power of divorce possessed by the husband was unlimited. He could dismiss his wife and recall her on his slightest whim. It is said that one Omm-Charifeh had had forty husbands. Indeed the sexual tie among the Arabs was very loose. They recognized no rule of humanity.

The birth of a daughter was shameful and the innocent creatures were buried alive.

The proverbs of a people are index to their character and ideas. A collection of these made by Mr. Jessup will illustrate the Arab view towards women more fully:-

- (1) The best son-in-law is the grave.
- (2) Obedience to woman will have to be repented of.
- (3) The heart of woman is given to folly.
- (4) Leave not a girl, nor a green pasture unguarded.
- (6) Women are the whips of Satan (1)

(1) Bosworth Smith: Muhammad and Muhammadanism p. 97

All these proverbs were current before the advent of Islam. Some of these are attributed by superficial European scholars to the Prophet as his sayings. But this is a mistaken view.

Such then was the condition of the women in Arabia before Mohamed preached the Word of God.

Islam raised the position of woman and made her equal of man both before God and in the eye of the law. From a condition of misery and utter wretchedness she was raised to be man's helpmate and companion.

It is true that Islam at the time of its advent did not abolish polygamy or divorce. It was perhaps impossible to do that. But Islam did lay down the principles which by development in the fulness of time should rid Moslem society of all that is obnoxious and progress-hindering.

Some of the European scholars believe that Islam cannot be reformed, that reformed Islam is no more Islam. Such an attitude of mind I am unable to explain except on the ground of deep-rooted prejudices. ~~If the inspiration of reforms~~ If we draw our inspiration ~~of~~ for reform from the Koran and the words of the Prophet, there can be no reason why a reformed Islam should be no more Islam.

Polygamy, divorce and seclusion are identified with Islam. They are said to be its characteristics.

Now in successive Chapters I propose to show how far Islam and the Moslems are responsible for these institutions.

II

Polygamy and Islam

Polygamy is not an institution introduced by Islam. It was practised by almost all the Eastern nations of Antiquity. At the advent of Islam the Arabs indulged in unrestrained polygamy.

stifica
Poly-
y

We must remember that circumstances at times make the practice of polygamy necessary for the preservation of women from starvation or utter destitution. "Abbe Hue and Lady Duff Gordon have both remarked that in the generality of cases sheer force of circumstances drives people to polygamy in the East. With the progress of thought with the ever changing conditions of the world, the necessity for polygamy disappears and its practice is tacitly ~~aband~~ abandoned or expressly forbidden."⁽¹⁾

Mr. Ameer Ali, than whom, there is no greater⁽²⁾ scholar of Islamic society is convinced that polygamy, at present, is against the spirit of Islam. Everchanging circumstances and continual wars had compelled the early Moslems to practise it.

(1) Mr. Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam

(2) Times of India Dec 4, 1907 "As an interpreter of Islamic history and belief and a reconciler of the Faith with modern progress and enlightenment, he stands without a rival in the Moslem world"

The Prophet's own marriages, Mr Ameer Ali explains admirably ~~to~~ explains in the light of charity, generosity and mercy⁽¹⁾. This belief of his is shared by some of the European scholars also. Here is the testimony of De Bunsen, who says "As to his own example, we are of opinion, that had Khadija survived Mohamed, his faithfulness to her would have made his life a protest against polygamy. Respecting his marriages after Khadija's death, they ought to be considered from the most-humane point-of view, after duly weighing extenuating circumstances" (2). To the reader who want to have a better ~~and~~ understanding of the subject, I refer to Mr Ameer Ali's exposition of it in the Spirit of Islam. It is not in the province of this paper to deal with it at any length.

gamy and
 progress shows the founder's wisdom. Elasticity of laws is the greatest test of their usefulness". It is true that Islam has sanctioned polygamy in the past and that the Koran says "you may marry two, three, four wives but not more" but the verse goes on still further and says "but if you cannot deal equitably and justly with all, you shall marry only one" Now as a matter of fact it is practically impossible to deal justly and equitably with all. Even in the Koran, in another place, it is written that "ye will not have at all in your power to treat your wives alike with equity, even though you fain wanted to do so"

(1) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam p. 332-338

(2) De Bunsen: Islam or True Christianity p. 163.

Not only the Koran is against polygamy but the Traditions also declare the same thing. "When a man has two wives and does not treat them equally, he will come on the Day of Judgment with half his body fallen."⁽¹⁾ Still in a more direct way says the Prophet "Happy and fortunate is the man who has only one wife, pious and virtuous."⁽²⁾

In what other way can monogamy be more directly inculcated. "Neither Jesus, nor Mohamed could at once efface existing society or obliterate all national and political institutions. Like Jesus, Mohamed contented himself, except where ordinances were necessary to meet the requirements of the moment, with planting principles in the hearts of his followers, which would when the time ^{was} ripe for it, work out their abolition."⁽³⁾

This is not a new idea. Even at the time of al-Mamun, the Moslem doctors "taught that the developed Koranic laws inculcated monogamy"⁽⁴⁾

I believe that in a highly civilized society monogamy must be the only form of married life, and this is exactly the germ principle of Islam.

Polygamy, in reality is not so common among the Moslems as is usually supposed. "Among the Indian Mussulmans" says the learned jurist⁽⁵⁾ "ninety-five men out of every hundred are, at the present moment, either by ^{conviction} or by necessity, monogomists."

(1) Mishkat; Baben Nikah

(2) J.S. Abu Naddar (Paris) in The Parliament of Religion p 1147

(3) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam p. (4) A. Ali: The Spirit of Islam p 327

(5) The Spirit of Islam.

This is not true only about India, the percentage of monogamists is still greater in Persia, where ninety eight men out of hundred marry only one wife⁽¹⁾, while "a case of polygamy" says Mr Urquhart "was unknown in Candia amidst a population of 40,000 Mussulmans"⁽²⁾. And again Mr Nakhshbandi speaking about the Moslems in general says "In fact polygamy is of such rare occurrence (among Moslems) that not more than one husband among thirty has more than one wife"⁽³⁾. Some of the greatest Moslem rulers have been monogamists⁽⁴⁾.

The time is at hand when ~~then~~ Moslems will abolish polygamy. Mr. Ameer Ali expresses an earnest hope "that before long a general synod of Moslem doctors will authoritatively declare that polygamy like slavery is abhorrent to the laws of Islam"⁽⁵⁾.

After all polygamy is not such a great evil as supposed in the West. Evil is a relative term. Polygamy was prevalent among God's chosen people, and David the man after God's heart indulged in unlimited polygamy. Each age had its standard. To judge the Islam of those days according to the standards of the twentieth century is a mistake. Each institution in its time serves its purpose and it is for that reason that it exists at all.

Polygamy has served its purpose in the Moslem society and is therefore a doomed institution.

(1) Col. Macgregor. (2) Urquhart: Spirit of the East ii p. 388 note.

(3) An Nakhshbandi: Moslem Law of Inheritance and Rights of Women XI.

(4) Osborn: Islam Under the Arabs. At Saffah had only one wife. E.H. Nolan. Hist. of India p. 609.

(5) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam

III

Divorce and Islam

Divorce is another fruitful cause of attack on the Moslem society. It is a mistake to think that Mohamed allowed easy divorce. It is no doubt permitted ~~and~~ ^{but} the Prophet himself looked upon it "with extreme disapproval and regarded its practice as calculated to undermine the foundations of society" ⁽¹⁾ Divorce is "subject to formalities which allowed (and we will add recommended) a revocation of a hurried or not well considered resolutions. Three successive declarations at a month's interval were necessary in order to make it irrevocable" The above is what M. Sedillot, than whom no Western writer has analysed the laws of Mohammed better, says. ⁽³⁾ "The frequent admonitions in the Koran ⁽⁴⁾ against seperation, the repeated recommendations to heal quarrels by private reconciliations, show the extreme sacredness of the marriage tie in the eyes of the Arab legislator ⁽⁵⁾

(1)(2)(3)(5) Ameer Ali Spirit of Islam p 347-49

(4) Sura IV-127, 128 "If a woman fear ill-usage or aversion from her husband, it shall be not be blamable (the spirit of the expression means, "it will be commendable) in them if they agree with mutual agreement, for reconciliation is best. (Men's) soul are prone to avarice; but if ^{ye} they act kindly and deal piously (towards wives), verily God is well acquainted with what ye do and if ye agree and act piously then verily God is forgiving and merciful"

Sura IV-39 "And if ye fear a breach between them (man and wife), then send a judge chosen from his family and a judge chosen from her family; if they desire a reconciliation, God will cause them to agree; verily God is knowing and apprised of all"

The extremely cautious permission has been taken up
 mission by the Ulema, the "Fathers of the Church" as usual as a
 pre-termed positive rule.⁽¹⁾ Islam never meant that divorce should
 positive be as easy as is often the case. The rule that after the
 final, that is, after the third pronouncement of divorce a
 man could not take back his wife, unless she was
 actually married to and divorced by another man,
 was intended to be a great check upon divorce. Arabs
 were very jealous of their wives and would take such
 a thing as a great blow to their dignity. It was for pre-
 serving this dignity, that the wives of the Prophet could
 not marry again. The action of retaking a finally divorced
 wife is exceedingly abhorrent and against it the Prophet
 of God has hurled a mighty curse. "Cursed be the second hus-
 band, who makes the wife lawful for her first husband, and cur-
 sed be the first husband, ^{for} from whom she is made lawful"⁽²⁾
 And "divorce itself of all lawful acts is the most abominable
 in the sight of God"⁽³⁾.

As a matter of fact, divorce is rare amongst the higher
 and middle classes⁽⁴⁾ and certainly bears no comparison with
 the prevalence of the custom in the most civilized countries of
 the world⁽⁵⁾.

(1) Ameer Ali: The Spt. of Islam. p 347; (2) Mishkat XIII-C-XV Hughes Dict. of Islam

(3) A well-known saying of the Prophet. (4) An Nakhshbandi. Modern Law etc X II.

(5) Social Progress 1906. In the U.S. America: In Indiana one divorce to every
 five marriages. In Maine one divorce to every 7.1 marriages. Only a few
 of the States collect figures. In Chicago alone there were 2,454 divorces
 in 1903 and the number for the last ten years was 16,388.

Switzerland (1898), 1018; Germany (1899) 9,563; France (1897) 7,460; England (1897) 927

In Japan (1886) 117,964 divorces against 315,311 marriages (Howard: Hist of Mat.
 Inst.). The rate is almost everywhere increasing.

practice Though accepting divorce as a principle, the
 spirit of Islam is against its practice. Divorce is
 not the allowed only in extreme cases. It is a medicine,
 of Islam a very bitter medicine indeed, which must be taken
 when it is the only remedy left to cure the patient, to
 secure the well-being of the family. A Moslem must
 not ~~hate~~^{divorce} his wife nor "hate her for if he be displeased
 with one bad quality in her, then let him be pleased
 with another that is good"⁽¹⁾ and "perhaps a man
 does not like a thing in which God has put much good
 for him"⁽²⁾ During the three months after the divorce
 "the woman remains three months in her harem at the
 man's cost, and he is at liberty to take her back. Indeed
 a single tender glance or word of concession is sufficient
 to restore the marriage"⁽³⁾

It is a great mistake to think, as is often
 the case, that the custom of divorce among the Moslems
 is one sided. It is said that man alone has all
 the power to divorce and a woman is at his mercy.

"In what" says Fatima Khanam, the well-known, distin-
 guished lady of Turkey, in her reply to a French lady of rank
 and education, "is our position inferior to that of ~~women~~
 men..... If the husband has the faculty of divorcing his
 wife, the wife also can divorce her husband"⁽⁴⁾

Theoretically, it seems to the superficial student,
 that a husband has a greater power of divorce, but in practice
 it is quite the contrary. "The wife is entitled to a divorce

(1) Miskat: Baben Nikah (Hughes Dict. of Islam, art. wives.

(2) Koran

(3) Howard: History of Matrimonial Institutions Vol II p. 233

(4) Urquhart: Spirit of the East Vol II p. 385.

when the husband (1) leaves her without support, (2) accuses her falsely of unfaithfulness, (3) refuses to acknowledge the child, which she has borne him, (4) when he abandons the faith, (5) fails to in marital duty. But in practice little use is made of this form, the woman preferring, instead, to declare before the judge, that she is in a matrimonial 'insurrection' by which means the husband is usually led to repudiate her⁽¹⁾

Let us now look upon divorce in the abstract.

It is not an unmixed evil, it is, in fact, some times absolutely necessary for the well-being of society. Ins-justification tances can be multiplied indefinitely and it can be shown by facts and figures, that at times divorce is the only remedy. I conclude the chapter with some obser-vations of persons, who can speak upon the subject with authority. "There are, sometimes, wrongs committed under the shelter of the marriage bond so monstrous as to warrant any legal means of relief." and showing the statistics and proving by facts and figures, the able socio-ologist continues, "After all, in this fact do we not catch a glimpse of the proper sphere of divorce legislation? Divorce is a remedy and not the disease. It is not virtue in a divorce law as appears to be assumed, to restrict the application of the remedy at all hazards, regardless of the suffering of the social body.... Divorce is not immoral. It is quite probable, on the contrary, that drastic, like negligent legis-lation is sometimes immoral. It is not necessarily a merit and it may be a great social wrong to reduce the legal cause for a decree to one 'scriptural' ground. The most enlightened judgment of the age heartily approves of the policy of some states in extending the causes, so to include, intoxication

(1) Howard: History of Matrimonial Institutions. vol II p 233.

from habitual use of strong drinks or narcotics as being equally destructive of conjugal happiness and family well-being The divorce movement is a portentous and almost universal incident of civilization" (1). And lastly the strong words of Commissioner Wright, who says "I do not believe that divorce is a menace to the purity and sacredness of the family, but I do believe it is a menace to the infernal brutality, of whatever name, and be it crude or refined, which at times makes a hell of the holiest relations I believe the result will be enhanced purity, a sublime sacredness to preserve which society must take the bitter medicine ~~divorce~~ labelled divorce. The problem of individual liberty has become the problem of social liberty Individual liberty appears to be the essential condition of social progress." (2)

(1)(2) Social Progress 1906.

IV

Seclusion of the Women

stage in life of seclusion of the women is a stage in the life of man woman. It is not an institution characteristic of Islam. Many nations of antiquity practised it, and to this day it is common among nations widely separated and away from the influences of Islam⁽¹⁾

"Among the Arabs women were and are still free. The system of seclusion in vogue in many of the Moslem countries did not come into practice until long after. Among the republican history Moslem, the women moved freely in public, attended the sermons of the Caliphs and the lectures delivered by Ali, Ibn Abbas and others"⁽²⁾

It is true that seeing the corruption of morals around him, the Prophet gave some directions, which were simply meant to improve decency and good behaviour. "But to suppose" says Mr Ameer Ali "that he ever intended his recommendations should assume its present inelastic form, or that he ever allowed or enjoined the seclusion of women, is wholly opposed to the spirit of his reforms. The Koran itself affords no warrant for holding that the seclusion of the women is a part of the new gospel"³

(1) Like China, Korea and the Spanish colonies of South America

(2) Ameer Ali: A Short History of the Saracenes p. 69.

(3) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam p. 35-3

Koran To understand the laws derived from the Koran
 the see- one has to understand the nature of the Book. It
 was revealed to the Prophet, not all at once, but consists
 of revelations wide apart in time, and often for the exigency
 of the moment. Now the garments of the Arab women
 did not cover their bosoms. When in the early morning
 they would go out for the necessary calls, they were
 often insulted by the low people, and the people had
 the excuse, that they could not distinguish the
 good women from bad. It was for this and for general
 morality, that the Koran said "O Prophet speak to
 thy wives and to thy daughters and to the wives of the
 faithful, that they let their wrappers fall low.

Thus will they more easily be known and they will
 not be affronted, God is indulgent, merciful" ⁽¹⁾ and
 again "Tell the believing men, that they should
 restrain their looks and observe continence, this will
 be more pure for them, for God is knowing that, which
 they do. And say unto the believing women, that
 they should restrain their looks and preserve their
 modesty and should not display their ornaments
 except what necessarily appeareth therefrom and
 let them draw their kerchiefs over their bosoms" ⁽²⁾

"These directions are addressed to both men and
 women and have for their object the promotion of good
 manners and decency." ⁽³⁾ It is easy to understand the
 force of these directions, when a man imagines the state
 of society at that time, and the object of the teacher

(1) Koran. Surah XXXIII - 5-9

(2) Koran. Surah XXIV - 31

(3) Nakshbandi

Certainly there is nothing in the above two passages from the Koran, which enjoins the seclusion of the women, and establishes it, if at all, as a permanent institution.

introduced
 reign of
 A.H. II
 It made its first appearance among the Moslems in the reign of Welid II. "The character and the habits of the sovereign favored the growth and development of a practice, which pride and imitation had transplanted to the congenial soil of Syria. His utter disregard of social conventionalities and the daring coolness with which he entered the privacy of families, compelled the adoption of safeguards against outward intrusion. To uncultured minds, walls and warders appear to afford more effective protection than nobility of sentiment and purity of heart. Despite these unfavorable circumstances, women continued, down to the ^{tomb} of Mutawakil the tenth Caliph of the House of Abbas, to enjoy extraordinary amount of freedom"⁽¹⁾

en of the
 et's family
 Considerable light is thrown on the law-giver's recommendation for female privacy by the remarkable immunity from restraint or seclusion, which the members of his family enjoyed. Ayesha, his favorite wife, after his death, personally conducted the insurrectionary movement against Ali; Fatima, his beloved daughter, often took part in the discussions of the Caliphate.⁽²⁾

(1) Ameer Ali: A Short-History of the Saracenes p 199.

(2) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam p 355

en down Mr. Ameer Ali describing the early Moslem society
 a tenth down to the tenth Caliph of the House of Abbas says⁽¹⁾
 In the "Fathers were still proud to assume surnames after
 of Abbas their ^{beautiful} daughters and accomplished daughters⁽²⁾, and brothers
 and lovers still rushed to battle acclaiming the names of
 their sisters and lady loves. The high-bred Arab maiden
 could still hold conversat^{ion} with men without embarrass-
 ment and in absolute unconsciousness of evil. To the
 the beautiful lines of Ferdousi⁽³⁾ were still applicable: -

Lips full of smiles, countenance full of modesty
 Conduct virtuous, conversation lively.

She entertained the guests without shyness and as she knew
 her worth she was respected by all around her. A well-
 known author⁽⁴⁾ relates that returning from Mecca, he
 halted at a watering place not far from Medina. The
 heat of the sun drove him to ask for shelter in a neigh-
 bouring house, which appeared to be of some pretensions. He
 entered the courtyard and asked the inmates if he might
 alight from his camel. A lady's voice gave him the sought
 for permission. He then asked for leave to enter the house,
 and receiving permission, he entered the hall, where he found
 a 'maiden fairer than the sun', engaged in some household
 duty. She bade him be seated and they conversed and the
 'words like pearls were scattered from her lips'. Whilst they were
 conversing, the grandmother entered and sat down by their

(1) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam p. 355

(2) Ameer Ali: A Short Hist. of the Saracenes p. 200

(3) Such as Abu Sufra, Abu Leila

(4) Homer of Persia

(4) Abu Tayeb Md el Muffazal ad Dibbi (died 308 A.H.) quoted by
 Kharaiti in his Itā'at al-Kulub.

side, laughingly warning the stranger to beware of the witchery of the fair girl"

Sukaina, the great-grand-daughter of the Prophet was an accomplished lady; her residence was the resort of the poets, fakirs (jurists), and learned and pious people of all classes. The assemblies in her house were brilliant and animated and always enlivened by her repartee⁽¹⁾

Sowra, the daughter of the Almohadi Caliph rode in the street unveiled and Dozy in his *histoire de l'Islamisme*, observes "L'usage de se voiler"⁽²⁾ n'avait pas ete par la femmes Almohavides"⁽²⁾

"It is sufficiently well-known" says a living Orientalist⁽³⁾ of great repute, "that Moslem women have appeared in society unveiled and have given public lectures at universities. It is even said that when Musa bin Tarik invaded Spain, a division of the troops was commanded by a woman"

In Spain "the Saracen lady was an undisguised spectator at the frequent-jousts and tournaments.

Absolute seclusion and segregation of the sexes became general only in the reign of the Abbasside Kadir billah (381 A.H), who did more to stop the progress of Islam than any other sovereign. In the time of Mansur, Rashid and Haman, women seem to have been enjoying perfect freedom. "Reunions and ~~convivial~~ conversazioni at the residences of cultured women of rank and position did not cease until the time of Mutawakkil."⁽⁴⁾

(1) Ameer Ali: Spirit of Islam p 202
(2) Coeffe: History of the Arab Conquest of Spain Vold II p 231
(3) A. Vambrey C.V.O. : Western Culture in Eastern Lands p 313
(4) Ameer Ali: A Short History of the Saracenes p 455.

the chapter or book ^{discussing} dealing
 Hamilton the translator of Hedaya speaks about
 the seclusion and other institutions and customs regard-
 ing women as a treatise upon propriety and decorum
 "In it" says he "is particularly exhibited the scrupulous
 attention paid to female modesty and the avoidance
 of every act which may tend to violate it, even in
thought. It is remarkable, however, that this does
 not amount to that absolute seclusion of women
 supposed by some writers.... In fact this seclusion
 is the result of jealousy or pride and not of any
 legal injunctions, as appears in this and several
 other parts of the Hedaya. Neither is it a custom uni-
 versally prevalent in Muhammadan countries" (1) The
 people of Java for instance never observed the custom.

"The seclusion and veiling of woman" says Mr Hughes
 the author of the Dictionary of Islam (1374) "is put as a
 compliment rather than a restraint"

anticipation
 If the women seem to occupy at present an
 inferior position to man, or lead a miserable life, it
 is not due to any religious injunctions but is rather
 an aspect of the general stagnation of the Moslem
 society. Education is spreading. Educated Moslems
 want educated wives. Women are being educated
 When the Moslem wives are educated, they will take
 their place in society as men's honored and respected
 companions and helpmates. Seclusion is a doomed
 institution. Quite a number of families in India have
 rejected the time honored custom and here in Turkey
 the stages from the veiled face to a half-veiled face, and from
 a thick veil to a transparent and from this to an unveiled face

(1) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam p 354 note.

under an umbrella etc etc are matters of common observations.

After all seclusion is not such an evil as supposed by the European people. It has its place in society and sometimes it is essential for the well-being of the people. It has both its pros and cons.

Mr Bosworth Smith thinks that it has freed all Muhammadan countries from those professional outcasts, who live by their own misery. Of course he speaks of the Moslem countries not under the direct influence of European civilization.

Before dismissing the subject it seems but proper to say something about the life in seclusion. I can speak about India out of my own experience and observations, but I shall let Mr Urquhart say a few words about the Turkish Harem.

In the Turkish Harem, according to him, the women do not pass their time idly and in indolence as is often supposed. "Domestic occupations of the women independently of those avocations, which women have in Europe, are numerous enough to occupy a great deal of their time"⁽¹⁾ Speaking about the salutary influence of the Harem, he goes so far as to say that "the Turk — agriculturist, seaman, general, mechanic or professor — is far below other European nations, as he is above any of them in his domestic virtues, or his social integrity. He exists therefore he has a place among nations only in consequence of these, which, again are not the result of ~~that~~ principles, but of habits; and of habits — the impress of which is derived from the Harem"⁽²⁾

(1) Urquhart: Spirit of the East 367

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 Moslem women in India, with the exception ^{of those} of the lowest classes, do not ~~not~~ leave their houses and go out for shopping, or paying visits, as they do in Turkey. Seclusion, or Purdah, as we call it, ⁱⁿ India, has taken an extreme form ~~there~~, which is without any warrant at all.

Yet, even there the women are not miserable. They go out sometimes, in carriages, with their fathers, brothers, or husbands on trips and picnics and have very pleasant time. Besides, 'they find their pleasures and recreations at home in the pure atmosphere of their husbands' and children's love and peaceful occupations of domestic life'. Very often and regularly they read books, not only to themselves, but also to all the women of house and ^{even} ~~going~~ to the ^{low class} women of the neighbouring houses. Their reading usually consists of histories of Moslem dynasties, biographies of the heroes of Islam, anecdotes of the great men, religious books, books on manners, moral essays and poems in praise of God and the Prophet. The Koran, with meaning in vernacular forms, of course, a very great part of their reading. The children also, silently and attentively hear their mothers or sisters read and are often very much influenced. I have found such a life most helpful instrument of character-building. The children are inspired with high ideals. They began to hate evil from the very beginning. In such atmosphere are the children trained⁽¹⁾

(1) It is a pity however that such a life is becoming less and less common every day.

V

Moslem Women In Various Capacities.

In the Moslem society a woman occupies a very high position. If she seems to be inferior to man as she really is at present, it is due to economic condition. From the earliest time women have been inferior to men and this has been due to their inability in carrying on the struggle for existence ~~and~~ because of the period of maternity. As a matter of fact, bodily they are weaker than men and men have kept them under subjection.

A Moslem woman can do anything which she is able to do. There is no legal or religious disability against her.

With some qualifications it can be safely said that she is an equal of man in every respect.

"In what" said Fatima Khanam, in reply to a French lady, "is our position inferior to men?" What is it that a man can have and a woman cannot, unless it be due to physiological and anatomical differences. If a man can be a sovereign; so can a woman, if a man can be a general, so can a woman; if a man can be a Kazi or judge, so can a woman; if a man can be a professor or lecturer, so can a woman. And finally a woman has the right⁽¹⁾ to vote in the Moslem constitution.

(1) ~~the~~ Dr Iqbal M.A., Ph.D. in a Paper read at Lahore and published in The Observer.

legal position. "Women stand higher by the Mussulman law than they do in the Roman ~~law~~ and consequently in the European codes and customs derived from that great mother of Western legislation. The privileges and advantages of a class of society depend chiefly on the laws regarding property, which imperceptibly, but steadily, from century to century confer influence and power to those favored in the distribution. It is most essential to the comprehending of the relative position of the Moslem and Christian women to compare their legal rights as regards property"⁽¹⁾ The Moslem women possess greater legal rights than those possessed by the English women, even since the Married Women's Property Act of 1882⁽²⁾. Whether married or not, she labours under no legal disability, as children do; her contracts ~~are~~ in buying and selling are valid and she only is bound by them. She can manage all her affairs. As soon as she is of age, the law vests in her all the rights, which belong to her as an individual being. She cannot be married without her consent even by the Sultan. Her property is her property and cannot be wasted by her prodigal husband. She has right to have custody of her children. "All the privileges which belong to her as a woman and a wife are secured to her, not by the courtesies, which 'come and go', but by the actual text in the book of law"⁽³⁾. And to quote Mr. Webb of America, "to day there is no class of women in the world, whose rights are as completely protected as those of the Mussulman community"⁽⁴⁾

(1) Urquhart: The Spirit of the East- Vol II p 392

(2) Leitner in De Bunsen's Islam or true Christianity

(3) Ameer Ali: Spirit of Islam p 365

(4) Mr. Webb: The Parliament of Religions p 1048.

As I said above, a Moslem woman can
 ereign occupy the highest-possible position in a state.
 She can ^{be} ruler over men and can have
 dominion over them.

Of the Moslem queens, Rudhia Begum,
 the daughter of Altimish, was the queen of Delhi.
 She was preferred by her father, to her brothers,
 "and she proved herself worthy of the preferance.
 She studiously attended to affairs of state, assumed
 the imperial robes, and everyday gave audience
 from the throne; revised and confirmed the laws
 of her father.... and dispensed justice with rigid
 impartiality"⁽¹⁾

Another Moslem queen was the high-spirited
 Shajar ad-Durr, the slave wife of Saladin's grand-
 nephew, "the woman, who defeated the crusade of
 Louis IX, and afterwards spared the saintly her's life"⁽²⁾

Still another Moslem queen was Abish, the
 last of the princely line of Salghar, "She ruled the great
 province of Fars for nearly a quarter of a century, during
 the troubled period of Mongol supremacy"⁽²⁾

The rulers of the Moslem state of Bhopal, in
 Central India, have been women for several generations
 and have distinguished themselves as patrons of learning
 and the learned.

As for the queen-mothers and royal consorts
 who have actually ruled vast empires, there can be no
 counting.

(1) E. H. Nolan Ph.D., LL.D. History of India p 609.

(2) S. Lane-Poole: Medieval India, p 74,

"It is a curious arrangement of Muslim law" remarks Mr. Hughes,⁽¹⁾ "that a woman may execute the office of a Kazi or judge"

We have already seen that a part of the literary invading army of Musa bin Fakhir Tarick, the conqueror of Spain was commanded by a woman; and we know that Ayesha, the favorite wife of the Prophet led the army against Ali. Nurjahan, the wife of the Emperor Jahangir of India, opposed the troops of Mahabat Khan.

Khoulā and Opheira held the crafty Peter at bay, before the siege of Damascus, till rescued by Khalid and Shoran.⁽²⁾ Two female cousins of the Caliph Mansur, the founder of Bagdad, fought against the Greeks. The Moslem Amazons have never been wanting and a large number of names can be given if time and space would permit.

Moslem women have been found other in all walks of life. We have seen them as sovereigns, generals, Kazis. There have been many a woman scholars, poetesses, musicians, secretaries to the kings, university lecturer, jurists, preachers, teachers, saints, statesmen and what not.

In the next chapter I intend to tell something about the learning among the Moslem women and there I shall indicate some notable women in various lines.

(1) Hughes: Dictionary of Islam p. 679

(2) Ockley: History of the Saracens p. 115-120.

Learning Among The Moslem Women

Islam has made the acquiring of knowledge a duty of both men and women. Every male and female must seek knowledge even if ^{it} was in the far Cathay. "He who acquires it, in the way of the Lord performs an act of piety; who speaks of it, praises the Lord; who seeks it, adores God; who dispenses instruction in it, bestows alms; and who imparts it to its fitting objects, performs an act of devotion to God". He, who leaves his home in search of knowledge, walks in the path of God. "Ink of the scholar is more precious than the blood of the martyr." No system of religion gives such an impetus to scientific and literary activities as Islam. Observation must be trained. "Travel and see how the world began". "Look at the heavens and think". Look at the colored rocks and meditate". Observe how the plant grows from the seed, how it brings fruits, how the fruits ripen". "A moment's meditation is better than thousands of years of prayers" etc. Such is the spirit of the teaching of the Koran.

It is but natural that truly devout Moslems must be the light givers of the world. At the time when the tide of Moslem Civilization was on the rise; when the Arabs had lighted the Dark world with the torch of learning; when ^{the} men had attained to a wonderful excellence in the arts and sciences, "it was indeed found, that even

the women had become studious"⁽¹⁾. They were not excluded from any of the studies. "They studied sciences, ~~mathematics~~⁽²⁾ mathematics, and history, as well as the lighter arts"⁽⁴⁾. "They studied enough to be companions to their husbands"⁽²⁾

The women had their own colleges, where they studied medicine and jurisprudence. They lectured on rhetoric, ethics and belles-lettres and participated with the stronger sex in the glories of a splendid civilization. The wives and daughters of magnates and sovereigns spent their substance in founding colleges and endowing universities, in establishing hospitals for the sick, refuges for the homeless, the orphan and the widow"⁽³⁾

The daughter of the Mamluk Sultan Malik Tabiri established at Cairo in 684 A.H., a well-known educational institution. The daughter of Malik Ashraf, known as the Khatoon erected a splendid college at Damascus. Zamarud Khatoon, wife of Nasir-ud-daula founded another college at Homs⁽⁴⁾. Maryam, the daughter of Abu Yakub El Faisli, had a college at Seville, out of which came so many maidens and damsels, who subsequently rendered themselves illustrious by their graces and acquirements⁽⁵⁾

The remainder of the chapter I propose to devote to short notices of some of the many thousands of the most noteworthy women in Modern History

(1) G. M. Yonge: Christian and Moors in Spain p 74

(2)(5) Conde: Arabs in Spain i p 484

(3)(4) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam p 579

Umm Ayēsha, surnamed Siddiqah (the Truthful), the favorite wife of the Prophet, was one of the most eloquent women of her time. She has handed down hundreds of traditions. The greatest of the Companions of the Prophet would ask about the religious questions. Abu bin Abi Rabah has called her the greatest jurist of the time, and Orwah said, that he had not seen one having greater knowledge of law (Fikh), medicine and poetry than she. (1)

Fatima the Prophet's favorite daughter "was a remarkable woman for the age in which she lived, clever, accomplished and witty; her sermons, songs and aphorisms, serve as an index to her strength of character and nobility of mind. Her virtues gained her the title of "Our Lady of Light" by which name she is known among the Moslems (2)

Sukainah, the great-grand-daughter of the Prophet and daughter of Hussein the Martyr, was the most brilliant, most accomplished and most virtuous woman of her time — "la dame de son temps, la plus belle, la plus gracieuse, la plus brillante de qualites" — as Perron calls her. Her self no mean scholar, she prized the converse of the learned and pious people. The ladies of the Prophet's family were noted for their learning, their virtues and their strength of character (3)

St. Rabia of Basra, is described as one of the most eminent among the holy persons of her time. Her tomb is a place of pilgrimage to this day for both men and women

(1) Zeinab: Dar ul-Ma'arif (in Arabic) p. 280-83.

(2) Ameer Ali: Short-Hist. of U. Suraemas p. 54. (3) Ameer Ali: The Spirit of Islam p. 361

kha- Shaikha Shuhda, designated as Fakhreen-
 luda Nisa (the glory of women), lived in the sixth century. She
 600 counted among the greatest Ulema. She took lessons
 under the greatest of the Savants, like Abul Khatib
 el Tabrani and Fakhru'l Islam as Shashani and
 others. She wrote many ^{books} on traditions, law, Unity
 of God, and the like. Besides " She lectured, publicly
 in the great mosque of Bagdad, to large au-
 diences on literature, rhetoric, poetry, history and
 belles-lettres. She occupies in the annals of Islam
 a position of equality with the most distinguished
 Ulema. She was also renowned for the excellence
 of her hand-writing.

ns. Fadh'l the poetess, wrote poetry, which is con-
 sidered equal in merit to that of the foremost poets.
 Abu Khashisha acknowledged the superiority of
 Obaidah at Tambouranich. Princess Blaiyeh, the
 sister of Haroun al Raschid, was a poetess of considerable
 talent and one of the most accomplished musicians.
 Zainab Um-ul-Muwayyed was one of the most famous
 lady jurists and Takieh lectured on the traditions
 and was a poetess of great talents. (3)

ain Nazhun the daughter of Abu Bekr al Ghassani, was
 an eloquent poetess, well versed in history and literature.

ab- and a book seller. They lived near Granada. They were
 de excellent poetesses, thoroughly versed in all branches of learning
 and science. Their love of learning brought them into company of
 scholars, with whom they mixed on perfect terms of equality. (4)

(1) (2) (3) (4) Zainab: Durrul Munim and Mo Ameer Ali's Spirit of Islam
 and the Short Hist. of the Saracens.

Ayesha, who was the daughter of Ahmad Ben Muhammad Casim of Cordova, has been described by Abu Hayyan in this manner "there was not a damsel in Spain, who could ~~excel~~ surpass her in beauty or in praiseworthy manner of her life, while there were few, who approached the distinction to which Ayesha had attained in erudition, eloquence, and poetry. She wrote eulogies on the various kings and princes of her time and all admired the merit of her composition as well as the beautiful characters in which they were written, whether on paper or vellum."⁽¹⁾

Mozama, a slave-girl of Abdur Rahman II, composed elegant poems and songs and she was also the secretary of the King.⁽²⁾

Badfa, the daughter of Jaaffer Ben Nosewi El Temimi, had made a very large collection of books on the arts and sciences. She composed beautiful verses and sang with a voice of wonderful sweetness.⁽³⁾

Rudhia, called the Fortunate Star, the freed woman of Abdur Rahman II, was the admiration of her age, for her eloquent verses and for the profound learning displayed in her historical works.³ She travelled much the East, where she was applauded by the learned in ^{all} parts and wherever she appeared, the renown of Rudhia was found to have gone before her.⁽⁴⁾

(1) (2) (3) (4) Conde: Arabs in Spain Vol. I p. 484 and 457

Nur Jehan was the famous consort of the
 ehan Mogul Emperor Jehangir of India. Dr. Nolan
 writes about her as follows: "Her personal charms
 were unrivalled, her mental powers of the highest
 order; indeed it is said, that one of those
 attractions, which captivated her royal spouse
 was her facility of composing extempore verses.
 The magnificence of the emperor's court was in-
 creased by her taste and the expense diminished
 by her good arrangements. To her is attributed
 the invention of the attar of roses. All affairs
 of the state were entrusted to her management.
 She sat behind an open lattice, whilst many
 of the nobility paid obeisance and the coin was
 issued in her name. She was in every respect
 the absolute monarch of the empire. Her in-
 fluence exemplified in the conduct ~~conduct~~
 of the emperor. Though retaining some of his
 old vices, he was never after guilty of monstrous
 outrages as before" (1)

Indian princesses were almost all women
 of great poetic talent. Two names of Jahangira, Roshun
 Ara and Zeibun Nisa may be mentioned with special
 merit.

Of the living women, Fatima Olaiyeh Khanum
 Khanum is the foremost among the educated women of India.
 She is the daughter of Jurdut Pasha ex-minister of
 justice and ex-vali of Aleppo. She was born in 1862.
 She knows Turkish, Arabic, Persian and French
 perfectly and is well versed in other arts and sciences

(1) Dr. Nolan Hist. of India p. 652

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(1) Dr. Nolan Hist. of India p. 652

She had had many interviews with European ladies of knowledge and learning. She writes articles in newspapers, & is author of a number of books.

Zeinab Khanam is the daughter of Ali bin Khanum Hussein. She is an inhabitant of Cairo and is an author. Her book, called *Ad-Darul Manthur* - *fi-Tabaqat Rubat al-Khadud*, is a voluminous one, having as many as 552 large pages. It is a biographical dictionary of women in all nations and in all ages. It gives the selection from the works of authoresses and gives short anecdotes and episodes in the lives of the various women mentioned there in. It is a laborious work, but perhaps not a very scholarly one.

The above are only a few names, which I have chosen at random. To those, who are interested in this subject, I recommend the book called *Ad-Darul Manthur*, written by Zeinab and described under her name.

The reading of this chapter, I hope will throw considerable light on the condition of learning among the Moslem women, who have distinguished themselves in every branch of the polite literature.

Books Consulted.

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