

## Women In Islam

Muslim women have contributed to political life since the beginning of Islam. They pledged allegiance to the Messenger (PBUH) as men pledged allegiance, and emigrated as men emigrated, and struggled for the sake of God. Despite our preachers and sheikhs appearing on satellite channels on every occasion and chanting the honor of Islam for women, it is no secret to anyone how the inherited jurisprudence devoted a humiliating situation to them, perhaps unintentionally, but it is a situation that suits patriarchal societies dominated by the tribal and clan spirit. According to this jurisprudence, a woman is a possession with things and animals, and she is deficient in reason and religion. She needs a guardian to marry her and a protector to travel with her, as she is a minor partner who cannot take care of herself. This inferior view, is far from what came in the Holy Revelation. The previous interpretation presents ready-made arguments for all those who accuse Islam of backwardness, and gives a justification for oppressing women even from themselves, who are often content to give up their rights to an unjust man, who has preference over them, on the grounds that God gave him guardianship, so she must obey him and submit to his desires so that the angels do not curse her. And she has to hide her body so as not to seduce the man, and all of this in most cases will not make her reach Paradise, as in the opinion of the people of heritage, most of the women are in Hell.

But if we look at the status of women in the Holy Revelation, we find a completely different view, as God Almighty equated the male and female on the rational human level saying: "O people! Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious of you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware." (Al-Hujurat 13), and on the human physiological level says, "And that He created the two pairs, the male and the female" (Al-Najm 45), and addressed Muslims, men and women, and believing men and women, without giving preference to one of the two parties.

"They are a protective cover for you as you are for them" (Al-Baqarah 187), "And among His signs is that He created from your kind male and female, that you may marry and find tranquility, and He put between you affection and mercy."  
“

Here we will look carefully at the concepts and the verses on which the early scholars based their understanding:

## 1. The man's authority over the woman

Based on their understanding of the verse: 34 of Surat Al-Nisaa, the early interpreters said: [Men are in charge of women], that is, they are in charge of them by commanding and forbidding, spending and directing, just as the rulers are in charge of their subjects, because of what God has bestowed upon men of reason and management. He singled men out for they are in charge of earning and spending. Allah Almighty mentioned that women are of two types:

The first category are the righteous and obedient women, the second category are the disobedient, rebellious women, who are arrogant and disdainful of their husbands. So you, men, should follow the paths of reform with them: advice and guidance.

Most of the commentators adopted this interpretation or something close to it. In view of the importance of this topic, I cite here another interpretation by Dr. Muhammad Shahrour in the contemporary reading of the Qur'an:

As the Almighty said: {29} "Believers, do not consume your wealth among yourselves in falsehood, except there be trading by your mutual agreement. And do not kill yourselves. Allah is the Most Merciful to you.." And His saying: {32} "And do not covet the favors which Allâh has bestowed on some of you to excel others. Men shall have the share of the fruit of their labor, and for women is the share of the fruit of their labor. You had better seek from Allâh His bounty. Verily, Allâh has perfect knowledge of all things.." Then he mentioned in this verse: {34, 35} Men are the full maintainers of women, because Allâh has made one of them excel the other, and because men spend out of their wealth on them. So virtuous women are those who are obedient (to Allâh) and guard (their own chastity as well as the rights and secrets of their husbands even in (their) absence, as Allâh has guarded (the women's rights). As for those women (on whose part) you apprehend disobedience and bad behavior, you may admonish them (first lovingly) and (then) refuse to share their beds with them and (as a last resort) punish them (mildly). If they, then, obey you, you shall seek no other way against them. Indeed, Allâh alone is High, (and) Great. But if you apprehend a breach between the two (- a man and his wife) then appoint one arbiter from his people and one arbiter from her people; if the two have a mind to effect reconciliation, Allâh will bring it about between them. Verily, Allâh is All-Knowing, All-Aware. (An-Nisa' 34 and 35).

In Dr. Shahrour interpretations he says: If we look at the previous verses 29, 32, we see:

(1) t this verse of guardianship came within the context of talking about financial transactions. Thus, the basis of guardianship here is the financial and administrative capacity of a person, and has nothing to do with gender .

, (2) the word (رجال) in Arabic is used in the Quran in many verses to include male and female like Allah saying:

الحج ( 27 ) وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ

Those (رجال) who perform pilgrimage come walking or riding which includes males and females.

Thus, the meaning of the first part of the verse is: some males are better in management than other males and females, and some females are better than other males and females. The context is not preference by sex / gender, but by financial and management ability. In addition, The theme of the verses is not simply talking ability between husband and wife, but about ability in a wider sense.

As for the word Al Nisa (النساء), it came in the Arabic tongue from “nasa” meaning delay, as the Almighty said to those who used to delay the sacred months: {Nasi’ is only an increase in disbelief} (At-Tawbah 37) and this meaning is understood by the early commentators in a very primitive way, as they said that God created Adam and then Eve was created From his rib, meaning that the female appeared in existence later than the male, and for this reason the females were called Nisa, “meaning they were late in creation.”

And in His saying, the Most High: { because Allâh has made one of them excel the other } it includes both men and women. So the meaning becomes: with what God has favored some men and women over others of men and women. This completely negates the preference of guardianship on the basis of masculinity and femininity, and the preference remains with good management, wisdom, and the degree of culture and awareness, which varies among people. So some men are better than women and vice versa.

And we turn to the second item of guardianship, which is the financial item in his saying: “And with what they spent of their money”. Thus, the owner of the money has the guardianship regardless of his competence and the degree of his awareness and his culture. For example, the owner of a factory who holds high school degree, can appoint a manager who holds higher degrees to manage his factory, and who will be subject to the orders of the owner of the factory because he has the guardianship of spending. Likewise, if the owner of

the factory is a woman and the managers and workers of the factory are males, then she is the guardian of these males. As for those who see the man's authority over the woman in terms of gender, they misunderstood the real context. Among them is Imam Al-Suyuti. The Prophet (PBUH) is attributed to him saying: "A people would not succeed if they entrusted their affairs to a woman" (Musnad Ahmed 19603). And his saying: "Women are deficient in reason and religion" (Bukhari 293), the testimony of one of them is half a testimony, and this is because they lack reason. And during menstruation, they do not pray, and this is the lack of religion. They also say that "most of the people of Hell are women", and that "the world is a pleasure and the best of its enjoyment is a righteous woman."

Here the woman was placed as one of the things that belong to the man. This caused women the feeling of inferiority and self-persecution among women.

And we come to the most important area in which guardianship is embodied, which is the family. **The family**, as the nucleus of society, needs values that manage its affairs, govern its members, and guide its boat between the waves of life. Men are degrees in wealth, education, good manners, and the ability to lead; and women are also degrees in all of that, and there is no doubt that the interest of the family and society lies in the leadership being in the hands of the person of excellence, a man or a woman, or in the hands of the two together, consulting in all matters in the event of equality in culture and administration.

Early interpreters took the word (الصالحات) to mean fasting women and performing prayers, which has nothing to do with guardianship and the ability to spend and manage, while in this context, the word means (qualified for leadership). But what if they don't have it? In this case, she does not qualify for guardianship, so that her name in the verse becomes defiant/unfit (ناشز). Then the verse continues to guide us to what must be done in this case by saying {... so admonish them and leave them alone in the beds and beat them..}. Some have argued that beating (ضرب) here means slapping, punching and kicking. While in Arabic tongue it has many meanings. In this context, the suitable meaning is to take strict measures by withdrawing the leadership role of such person (fire her from leadership). Finally, if all such measures do not solve the problem, then resort to third party mediation. The verses discussed above deal with the case of the **woman being unfit** (ناشز) to lead the family.

Verse 128 deals with the case if the **man** is in the role of guardianship and he **is the unfit**.

وَإِنْ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُورًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ وَأُحْضِرَتِ  
الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

Quran says: “And if a woman fears arrogance or indifference on the part of her husband, then there is no blame on them both that they may be amicably reconciled to each other and reconciliation is the best. greed is ever present in human minds, but if you do good and guard against (this) evil, (you will find) then Allâh is Well-Aware of what you do.”

Look at the Almighty’s saying: “And if a woman fears her baal” and wonder: Why did He not say (from her husband)? Is there a difference between the husband and the baal? We say: Yes, there is a clear difference between them. Baal in the Arabic tongue is the breadwinner in the family and if he combines that with being the sex partner in marriage, he then be referred to as a husband. So, the husband is a baal, but the baal may not be the husband.

So, in what way does the baal becomes unfit for the role of leadership (ناشر):

A - By becoming arrogant and a dictator who collects all powers in his hand, in a way that his wife cannot do anything, small or large, except with prior expressed consent.

B - Turning away, by neglecting the affairs of his home and children.

C – behaving unjustly in case he has more than one wife.

Here comes the Almighty’s saying in the following verse: “You will not be able to be just between your women, even though you are eager. Do not be all together partial so that you leave her as if she were suspended. If you reform and are cautious, Allah is the Forgiver, the Merciful. Al- Nisa 129.

The woman who fears from her husband rebelliousness or evasion has no choice but to do one of two things:

1- Acceptance of this reality. This is what most women do in our culture, under different labels, justifications, and titles.

2- Reject this fact. This is what happens when a woman gets tired of her husband's domination or of his neglect of the family and his lack of interest and feelings towards his wife. In this case, the verse specifies for her what she must

do, which is clear reconciliation, i.e. convergence in points of view, through calm and peaceful dialogue, and in this reform there is good.

After that, the verse refers to an incident that may occur during the attempt to reform, when a person attributes all the positives to himself, and denies them to others. Indeed, in the attempts to reconcile the dispute, we see that each party places the responsibility on the other party, absolves itself of every defect and shortcoming, blames the other and attributes the faults to the other, and strips him of all the positives. This makes achieving reconciliation difficult, if not impossible. Thus, the only solution is the compromise. If it does not work, then have separation and divorce.

### **(h) Polygamy**

Polygamy among Muslims is one of the issues criticized by many non-Muslims. It was common before Islam. [38 AlAhzab](#) *“No blame shall lie on the Prophet for (doing) that which Allâh has made incumbent upon him. (Such indeed has been) the law of Allâh with regard to those (Prophets) who have passed away. Indeed, the command of Allâh is a decree that is made absolute;”*

Surat An-Nisa starts by Allah telling “ O people, fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul. ....Allah is ever watching over you” Then He calls people to take care of the orphans and safe-keep their properties saying: “And give the orphans their property and substitute not (your) worthless things for (their) good ones, nor consume their property mingling it along with your own property, for this indeed is a great sin. ([An-Nisa'](#) 2). Then he continues to talk about the orphans saying: “And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between the orphans), then (marry) only one or what your right hands possess; this is more proper, that you may not deviate from the right course. ([An-Nisa'](#) 3). He then goes back to talk about the orphans in ([An-Nisa'](#) 6) “ And keep on testing the orphans until they attain the (age of) marriage, then if you perceive in them sound judgment deliver to them their property and do not consume it extravagantly and hastily as they grow up (fearing lest they should claim it when they attain maturity). And let him (- the guardian) who can afford to do without, let him avoid remuneration, but he who is needy may charge reasonable remuneration with equity. And when you hand over to them (- the orphans) their property let there be some witnesses to attest. And Allâh is enough as a Reckoner (and call you to account).

In retrospect, one should study the verses carefully and notice that marrying more than one is restricted to **marrying the widows** who have children for the purpose of becoming a protector of the woman and provider for the orphaned children.

The orphan is the minor (male or female) who lost his father. Being a minor is explained in the Ayat (And keep on testing the orphans until they attain the (age of) marriage).

Before this Ayat was revealed, the tradition was that when a man dies, one of the relatives will become a protector of the family and abuses his authority by joining their inheritance to his property. Accordingly, this Ayat gave the solution saying, the protector should marry the mother of those minor orphans and treat them like he treats his own children until they reach the maturity age then he gives them authority over their inheritance. However, if the protector is (1) not sure he can be just to the orphans by treating them as he treats his children or (2) does not have the resources to provide for his new extended family, then he should not marry their mother and be content with his one and only wife that he originally married. Thus in the Ayat it says “but if you fear that you will not do justice (between the orphans), then (marry) only one”

### **Description of women in Paradise**

The early scholars had different interpretations regarding the verses that mention women in paradise. Many went to say that women are for the entertainment and enjoyment of men in paradise. Extremists now use this type of interpretation to rationalize terrorist acts (like self-explosion) against who they believe are not adhering to the Islamic rules (Muslims and non-Muslims). It is used to entice young men to do such acts telling them that they will have 70 young virgin girls waiting for them in Paradise.

To explain why did the early scholars promoted such interpretations, one has to look

at the environment and time of the publishing of those ideas.

The books of Hadeeth and interpretations were written during the Abbasid rule. The Muslim empire at the time was at war with its neighbors. In order to entice young people to join the fighting, they created such fabrication of rewards in paradise for those who might be killed during the fighting.

In order to understand the true meanings of such Quran verses, let us examine

the context and true interpretation:

We have to remember that when Allah is addressing the believers He says : Oh those who believe, those who are Righteous, those who are on the right path, those who fear Allah, those who perform prayers etc., He is addressing men and women, not men alone.

2 Looking at the verses describing Paradise. For example in surat Al-Waqiah, it starts by addressing:

“And those that are foremost (in faith). They are by all means the foremost (in the Hereafter)”. It then goes to describe what is in Paradise for both men and women.

(They will be in the Garden seated) on couches inlaid (with gold and precious jewels). (They will be) reclining thereupon (and sitting) face to face. Young handsome boys will go round serving them, who will remain as young as ever, Carrying goblets and (shining) beakers and cups (full) of pure and clean drink. No after-ache will they receive therefrom, nor will they suffer intoxication: And with fruits, any that they may desire: And the flesh of fowls, any that they may desire. And [with them will be their] companions pure, most beautiful of eye, (Chaste) like pearls, well-guarded and well preserved. (Such shall be) the reward of their (good) deeds.”

We should note:

(1)The people addressed certainly include the early men and women who believed in Prophet Muhammad.

(2) This happens on the Day of Judgement, whereby people are judged according to their deeds. The Righteous will then go to Paradise.

(3) Just before the Day of Judgement, Allah tells that all the universe we know will go to ruins and will be replaced with a new creation, a new universe composed of different material (Only Allah knows how). Thus shape, contents and form of people of Paradise will be made of nothing we know about.

(4) In order for people to visualize Paradise, Allah describes it using terms familiar to human beings. Thus, from the descriptions in the verses, one could imagine it as a Garden/ Park with trees, rivers and springs around and in between, Greenery, seating places made of best material and relaxing furniture. Handsome Young boys and beautiful young girls, will be serving the most delicious foods and pure drinks.

(5) In such descriptions, there is no relation what soever to imply that men will be having sexual relations with virgins or any reference to men marrying them. It is a place where one will have peace and the best of anything he might desire. So believers should do their best to abide by Allah's teachings to deserve such rewards. Thus Allah says:

“Therefore, race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a Garden as wide as heaven and earth, prepared for those who believe in Allah and His Messengers. Such is the Favor of Allah; He gives it to whom He will. Allah is the Owner of great favor.”

Those who believe: include men and women.

In another Quranic verse it says: “It has been made fair seeming to the people the love of the desired things comprising women, sons, stored up heaps of gold and silver, well-bred horses, cattle and tilth. That is the provision of the present life. Whereas with Allâh is the fairest goal (of life).”

Most of the early commentators agreed on the following interpretation:

Desires are beautified for people including : **women** (النساء), it began with women because the temptation with them is more severe, and the pleasure in them is more. To justify such understanding, they quote the hadith: “I did not leave after me a temptation that is more harmful to men than women.” The verse next mentioned the sons (البنين) , then overhangs of gold and silver i.e. the abundant wealth of gold and silver [And the well-bred horses] meaning purebreds, [and cattle] meaning camels, cows and sheep, some of which are mounted, grafted and adorned, [and plowing] meaning planting and planting because in it is the collection of their sustenance. The verse continues to say: [That is the enjoyment of the worldly life] and its fleeting adornment.

On the other hand, there is another interpretation by the contemporary thinker Muhammad Shahrour, in which he starts from the definition of “النساء” and says that the word has two meanings in the language. It was used in the Qur'an with these two meanings. An-Nisaa: It came in the Arabic language from “nasa” and al-Nas' is the delay, as in the Almighty's saying: {An-Nas' is only an increase in disbelief} (At-Tawbah 37).

As for “البنين” refer to buildings and constructed edifices. This meaning is also used in (Al-Israa 6) saying telling the Children of Israel: {Then We turned the ball back to you against them, and provided you with wealth and (بنين) and made you more mobilized}. If we go with the old interpretation that (بنين) means

male sons, then the context becomes meaningless, because they certainly had sons and daughters before Moses came. So, the word (بنين) here are definitely buildings and palaces that they did not have before.

Likewise, in His saying: {Provide you with cattle and (بنين)} (Al-Shu'araa 133), and the talk is about people who were known to have children, and if (Benin) here means male children, can we then conclude that previously He did not provide them with female children! this is illogical.

In addition, the context in the verse speaks of desires as the enjoyment of this worldly life. And the word (متاع) was used in the Qur'an to denote things and baggage as used in the Quran saying: "There is no sin on you if you enter uninhabited houses in which you have belongings (متاع) , and God knows what you reveal and what you conceal." (An-Nur 29), also in ( "O my people, this worldly life is but a (متاع) temporary enjoyment, and the Hereafter is the abode of decision" (39) Ghafir. Also mentioned in the story of (Yusuf 17)

They said, "O our father, we went to run, and left Joseph with our (متاع) belongings, and the wolf ate him..."

And when it is used to denote pleasure, it comes clear in the context describing enjoyment like in the verse: "And if you seek forgiveness from your Lord and then repent to Him, He will give you good enjoyment for an appointed term, and give everyone who has bounty his bounty."

Based on the above analysis of the verses, the sound and reasonable interpretation

is:  
Beautified for people is the love of desires, such as نساء (delayed discoveries that will come later, such as mobile phones, cars, airplanes, TV, etc.), بنين (buildings, towers, palaces, etc.), arched arches of gold and silver (made and decorated ornaments of chains and necklaces of gold and silver), and branded horses (trained for racing, decorated, cattle, and plowing... Cattle and fertile fields . These desires are the things in the life of this world, and their short-lived adornment, and God has a good reference and reward.

In conclusion, women are and men are equal in this life as well as in the hereafter. They are as successful as men are. They are gentle, beautiful and well mannered, but they are not tools for seduction and objects for the enjoyment of men.