

The Role Of Women In The Propagation And Defence Of Islam During The Prophet's (PBUH) Era

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Abstract

When we page through the history of the world, we find very little mention of the role of the women. On the other hand Islamic History is replete with the stories of the women who played a vital role in propagating and defending Islam. Bibi Kahdija Bint Khuwailid was the first woman whose support for Islam and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is well-known to everyone. There are other women who rendered their services in various fields, such as: education, Jihad, social works etc. Achievements of Ummul Monineen Aisha, Sayyidah Fatimah, Umm Habeebah, Umm Sulaim and women have been mentioned in this article, so that the women of today may follow in their steps.

Keywords: Muslim women, propagation, defence, history of Islam.

Introduction:

The history of Islam begins with the great role of women. The beginning point of this religion is the key role of women, although the world that claims to be developed today has become the pioneer of women's rights. Due to ignorance and backwardness in Muslim societies caused by the hostile invasion of the West and continuous looting for four or five centuries, the Muslim woman has been kept unaware of her historical role, and she has also been deprived of the role that was entrusted to her by the religion of Islam.

In fact, the history of Islam starts with the constructive and historical role of women.

Our starting point is Hazrat Khadijah al-Kubra, when a woman, commonly regarded weak, became a mountain of courage and greatness and a source of encouragement and stood in the side of the Prophet and became an unshakable support. When Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) came home to his people after from the Cave of Hira bringing them a solution to all problems, the shadows of panic and worry were following him, but she became a witness to the purity, high morals and philanthropic character of her husband. She

became the first to believe in Prophethood and she participated in this great journey of the Holy Prophet. This was Hazrat Khadijah Al-Kubra, a woman. It was a time when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was entrusted with the responsibility of Prophethood:

"يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ قُمْ فَأَنْذِرْ وَرَبِّكَ فَكَبِيرٌ"¹

O You, enveloped in a mantle. Stand up and warn, and pronounce the greatness of your Lord.

O you who wear the cloak (Habib!). Get up and warn (the people of Allah). And describe the greatness (and majesty) of your Lord.

When this message came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), a shiver ran through his whole body. He said to Khadijah Al-Kubra:

" زملوني زملوني "²

Cover me with a blanket, cover me with a blanket.

He lay down with a blanket. At that time, Hazrat Khadijah Al-Kubra, being his life-partner, consoled and comforted him by mentioning his all good qualities. She said:

"By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your kith and kin, help the poor and destitute, serve your guests generously and assist the calamity-stricken people."³

All these are details that she described about the good character of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). So she was the first to testify about the good character of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Ishaq said:

"وكانت خديجة اول من آمن بالله ورسوله"

Khadijah was the first to believe in Allah and His Messenger Muhammad (peace be upon him) (she was the first to accept Islam). And also,

she was the first to offer prayers in leadership (Imamat) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).⁴

She spent her wealth on the propagation and defence of Islam. When the Holy Prophet (PBUH) declared prophethood at the age of forty, Hazrat Khadijah Al-Kubra was a very rich woman. She had more capital than all Arab merchants. But, when after the declaration of prophethood, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) needed resources, Hazrat Khadijah Al-Kubra spent all his capital on the propagation of Islam. She offered all her wealth to the Holy Prophet and served Islam.

After ten years of preaching life, when he was fifty years old, the Quraish boycotted Banu Hashim.⁵ He and his entire family were forced to stay in Shub Abi Talib and suffered so much difficulties during the three years of boycott. Hazrat Khadija Al-Kubra was also in this valley during this boycott. After three years of this boycott, when the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) came out, his age was 53 years and in the same year Hazrat Khadijah Al-Kubra passed away. So Hazrat Khadijah Al-Kubra continued to provide services for Islam for thirteen years after declaration of Prophethood. This indicates that the mission was of the Holy Prophet and Khadijah Al-Kubra was his assistant.⁶

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) would go out to preach, the infidels would throw stones at him and shot arrows at him till his body was full of blood. If he returned from the markets of Taif, they would hurl stones at him. His feet were injured, the pure body was full of blood and he was so injured that it was not possible for him to lift the blessed feet. The angel appeared and said, O Messenger of Allah! They have oppressed you so much, if you allow, we will grind the village of Taif between the mountains and destroy it. If you give permission, we will raise the town of Taif to such a height and turn back that its

population will be destroyed forever. But the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: “No, I hope that the descendants of those who threw stones at me today will believe in me in future. Today they do not recognize me, but I hope to be recognized and accepted by them tomorrow.”⁷

When he returned from such painful visits, Hazrat Khadija Al-Kubra used to welcome him at home with a smiling face. She encouraged him, shared her patience and her determination. And thus, her assistance in these situations was of great value. This is the reason when Hazrat Khadijah Al-Kubra passed away and Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqah was in marriage of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in the life of Madinah Tayyaba, he used to remember her. Whenever the Holy Prophet mentioned Hazrat Khadijah al-Kubra, just as women are envious, Hazrat Ayesha Siddiqah used to ask, O Messenger of Allah! Hazrat Khadija Al-Kubra has passed away, but do you still remember her? He said: “Aisha! The kindness Hazrat Khadijah Al-Kubra did to Islam is more when compared to those who have supported me in times of sorrow and suffering. The favours of Khadijah are greater than those of other people who helped me in times of difficulty. How can I forget her?”⁸

Whenever Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) slaughtered a sheep, he would cut it in parts and send it to woman friends of Khadijah. After the declaration of Prophethood, she was the first to support Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Therefore she got the title of “Benefactor to Islam” a title which was not earned even by any companion.⁹

Today, if we want to promote our mission, see Islam emerging as a great power and deliver the caravan of Muhammadian Revolution to its destination, we have to revive the way of Khadijah.

In the cave of Hira, a man met an angel. It was not a common incident. Rather it was the

beginning of connection of heaven and the earth. It was natural for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to be worried and surprised. It was not unusual. It would have been unusual, if Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) had not been worried. Allah wanted to show the great status of woman and keep her important role alive, because her role was forgotten. So he made the role of Khadija as an example in order to show the great status of women and remind people of it.

It is similar to the matter of Hajirah (wife of Ibrahim, peace be upon him), as Allah made it obligatory for people to run between two mountains, Safa and Mawah, in order to revive her way. In same way, the role of Khadijah will always remind us of her important role.

Many difficulties were endured by women in the way of Allah. The first martyr in the way of Allah a woman, Bibi Sumayyah, who preferred to be killed over giving up her faith.¹⁰

Women were also among those who migrated in the way of Allah first. When the beloved daughter of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Khadijah, Ruqayyah, migrated along with her husband Uthman, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “Uthman and his family are the first to migrate in the way of Allah after the migration of Prophet Loot (Lot) (peace be upon him) and his family.” Muslim women also played an important role during their stay in Abyssinia.¹¹

In the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) women played a great role in every walk of life happily and diligently, be it education, social works, jihad or affairs of politics and government. Women have played a key role in all these fields.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) used to hold various gatherings time by time in which all companions, men and women, would

participate. Once some women requested Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to hold a special gathering for them in order to discuss issues related to women only. So Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) appointed a special day for women in which only women could come and ask about issues and affairs that were related to them.

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" قالت النساء للنبي صلى الله عليه وسلم: غلبنا عليك الرجال، فاجعل لنا يوماً من نفسك، فوعدهن يوماً لقيهن فيه، فوعظهن وأمرهن "13

Some women requested Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to fix a day for them as the men were taking all his time. On that he promised them one day for religious lessons and commandments.

This Hadith shows that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) regarded education and training of women more important than that of men.

" عن الربيع بنت معوذ، قالت: «كنا مع النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم نسقي ونداوي الجرحى، ونرد القتلى إلى المدينة»¹⁴

Rubayyi Bint Muawwiz says: We were in the company of the Prophet providing the wounded with water and treating them and bringing the killed to Medina (from the battle field).

In the battle field, Muslim women rendered various services, such as: providing water and treatment to the wounded Sahabah and shifting the bodies of martyred Sahabah to Madinah. All women, young or old, were equally carrying out this duty. In the battle of Uhud, Syedah Aisha rendered her services. In Battle of Khandaq (trench), some Sahabiat showed their bravery. There was a Sahabiah who had medical knowledge and her tent served as a hospital.¹⁵

In the beginning of Islam, Muslim women played a constructive role in consultation. Many a times, advice of a Muslim woman

changed the conditions which could not be changed otherwise. One of the examples is found in the following story of Hudaibiah Treaty (sulh e Hudaibiah):

When the writing of the peace treaty was concluded, Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) said to his companions, "Get up and slaughter your sacrifices and get your head shaved." By Allah none of them got up, and the Prophet repeated his order thrice. When none of them got up, he left them and went to Um Salama and told her of the people's attitudes towards him. Umm e Salama said, "O Prophet of Allah! Do you want your order to be carried out? Go out and don't say a word to anybody till you have slaughtered your sacrifice and call your barber to shave your head." So, the Prophet (peace be upon him) went out and did not talk to anyone of them till he did that. Seeing that, the companions of the Prophet (peace be upon him) got up, slaughtered their sacrifices, and started shaving the heads of one another, and there was so much rush that there was a danger of killing each other.¹⁶

This story indicates the wisdom of woman in early Islam.

After demise of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) Ummahatul Momineen (Mothers of believers) started to teach the children of Muslims religious commandments related to daily life affairs along with teaching the Holy Quran. The house of Ummul Moumineen Aisha seemed to be a school. Following the way of Ummahatul Moumineen, other women also devoted themselves for spreading knowledge and understanding the religion of Islam. Thus the Muslim women played their role in teaching, promotion of education and narration of Hadith.¹⁷

Umm e Habibah did not wait for her father to accept Islam nor did she feel it necessary to take permission of her father to accept Islam.

By embracing Islam herself, she proved that women do not lag behind men in awareness.

Another instance of such awareness is the story of Umar who entered the fold of Islam because he heard his sister reciting the Holy Quran. Despite knowing that Umar was an angry and brave man, she did not seek permission of Umar. When Umar tortured his sister, she showed steadfastness and bravery. As a result Umar's heart became soft and he converted to Islam. She played a great role in propagation of Islam.¹⁸

Umm e Kulthoom Bint Aqabah was a virgin when her heart began to grow in the love of Islam and she migrated to Madinah. Her family came to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and demanded him to return her to them, but he rejected their demand. She proved that women are not subordinates of men. Rather, they have rights equal to those of men and they are free to make decisions.¹⁹

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) would give much importance to the women and would value their advice. We can quote the following Hadith as an example:

Umm Hani bint Abi Talib gave refuge to a non-Muslim and Ali wanted to kill him. She came to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and informed him about it. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"قد أجرنا من أجزت وأمنا من أمنت"²⁰

We have given refuge to the person you have given refuge. We have given security to the person you have given security.

Muslim women, in the time of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), participated in various battles. They would provide the wounded with water and treatment and shift the bodies of martyred Sahabah out of battlefield. Umm e Ammarah served as security guard for Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and she

defended him bravely. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "Wherever I went in the battle of Uhud, I found Umm e Ammarah with me."²¹

In the battle of Hunain, when Muslims had to retreat in disorder and confusion, dozens of Sahabah gathered around Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to defend him. Umm Sulaim was also among them. She was holding a dagger in order to prevent the enemy from approaching Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

"عن أنس، أن أم سليم اتخذت يوم حنين خنجرًا، فكان معها، فرآها أبو طلحة، فقال: يا رسول الله، هذه أم سليم معها خنجر، فقال لها رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: «ما هذا الخنجر؟» قالت: اتخذته إن: دنا مني أحد من المشركين، بقرت به بطنه، فجعل رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يضحك"²²

Anas narrates that, on the Day of Hunain. Umm Sulaim took out a dagger she had in her possession. Abu Talha saw her and said: O Messenger of Allah, this is Umm Sulaim. She is holding a dagger. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) asked her: why are you holding this dagger? She said: I took it up so that I may tear open the belly of a Mushrik (polytheist) who comes near me. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) began to smile (at her words).

Umm e Ataiyyah took part in seven battles. She carried out the duties of guarding the camp, cooking and treatment of wounded Sahabah. As it is narrated:

"حفصة بن سيرين تقول: سمعت أم عطية تقول: كنا نخرج مع رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم نداوي الجرحى وندفن القتلى"²³

Umm e Atiyyah said: we used to go with Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (to take part in battles) and we would treat the injured and bury the martyred ones.

Prophet of Allah would advise to behave well towards the women. He used to take care of his wives. His behaviour towards his wives was

exemplary. When entered home he would tiptoed, so that he should not wake up her.

" عن عائشة، قالت: «والله لقد رأيت رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يقوم على باب حجرتي، والحبشة يلعبون بالحراب في المسجد، ورسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم يسترني بردائه، لأنظر إلى لعبهم من بين أذنه وعاتقه، ثم يقوم من أجلي حتى أكون أنا التي أنصرف فاقدروا قدر الجارية الحديثة السن، الحريصة للهو

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I swear by God that I have seen the Prophet standing at the door of my room when the Abyssinians were playing with spears in the mosque and Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was covering me with his cloak so that I might look over his shoulder at their sport. He would then stand for my sake till I was the one who departed; so estimate the time a young girl eager for amusement would wait."

" عن أبي هريرة رضي الله عنها قال قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: لا يفرك مؤمن مؤمنة إن كره منها خلقا رضي منها

آخر" 25

A believing man should not hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her habits, he will like another.

He also said:

"خيركم خيركم لأهله وأنا خيركم لأهلي" 26

The best among you are the ones who are best to their family. And I am the best among you to my family.

Some of us think women should stay at home and carry out house chores. It is like not understanding the actual status of woman. The study of Islamic history shows that when Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) announced his prophethood, the first person to accept his call was a woman, his wife Khadijah. Our mothers, sisters and daughters have to follow in her footsteps. Reviving her way, they have to work together their brothers in order to propagate Islam and carry out Muhammadian revolution. 8000

Sahabah used to learn from Ummul Moumineen Aisha.

It is result of Fatimah's bringing up that Islam found people like Hassan and Husain. She would grind on grinding stone while reciting the Holy Quran. She would draw water and bring it home. The following hadith show illustrates her condition in a clear way:

" عن علي، أن فاطمة عليها السلام اشتكت ما تلقى من الرحي مما تطحن، فبلغها أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم أتى بسبي، فأنته تسأله خادما، فلم توافقه، فذكرت لعائشة، فجاء النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم، فذكرت ذلك عائشة له، فأتانا، وقد دخلنا مضاجعنا، فذهبنا لنقوم، فقال: «على مكانكما». حتى وجدت برد قدميه على صدري، فقال: «ألا أدلكما على خير مما سألتماه، إذا أخذتما مضاجعكما فكبرا الله أربعا وثلاثين، واحمدا ثلاثا وثلاثين، وسبحا ثلاثا وثلاثين، فإن ذلك خير لكما مما سألتماه» 27

Ali (may Allah be pleased with him) "Fatima complained of what she suffered from the hand mill and from grinding, when she came to know that some slave girls of the booty had been brought to Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him). She went to him to request for a maid-servant, but she could not find him, and told Aisha of what she needed. When the Prophet (peace be upon him) came, Aisha informed him of that. The Prophet (peace be upon him) came to our house when we had gone to our beds. (On seeing the Prophet) we intended to get up, but he said, 'Keep at your places,' I felt the coolness of the Prophet's feet on my chest. Then he said, "Shall I tell you a thing which is better than what you have requested me for? When you go to your beds, say: 'Allahu Akbar (i.e. Allah is Greater)' for 34 times, and 'Al hamdu Li llah (i.e. all the praises are for Allah)' for 33 times, and Subhan Allah (i.e. Glorified be Allah) for 33 times. This is better for you than what you have asked for."

We learn from the above-mentioned Hadith that how much she suffered and how many difficulties she endured. She would fast, worship Allah, raise her two sons, carry out household chores and served. When the night fell, she used

to start prayers and prostrate before Allah. She would spend long nights of winter in worshipping Allah and prostrating before him till she heard the Azan (prayer call) of Fajr. After worshipping for so long time, when she completed her prayer, she would say, "O my Allah, You have created so short nights that I cannot complete my prayers.

These stories show us that they spent their lives working hard and full of struggle. They worked so hard for Islam that we cannot imagine comparing our lives with theirs.

We have to revive this way of Syeda Fatima and it is possible only when our mothers and sisters adopt the way of piety. This piety will be transferred to their children. Mother's teaching affects the children more than the father. Mother's lap is the first school and place to train the children. From infancy to maturity, it is a time to discipline the children. If the woman adopts the right path, the society will find a good daughter, mother and sister and revolution will take place in the society.

Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) said:

"الجنة تحت أقدام الأمهات"²⁸

Paradise lies under the feet of the mother.

He did not say that Paradise lies under the feet of father, rather he said about him, "Pleasure of Allah is in the Pleasure of the father and displeasure of Allah is in the displeasure of the father." He said about mother the above-mentioned remarks. Here, a responsibility is given to both mother and the children. It is responsibility of children to respect their parents. This is teaching of Islam.

Sadly, nowadays when the children grow up and get education, they regard respect of their parents as useless. When the parents are illiterate or less educated, the educated children think that they these ignorant people do not deserve respect.

But the fact is that we should not respect our parents because of their education or degrees, or according to their piety, or because of their wealth. Rather, we should respect them only because they are our parents.

It is up to mother whether she shows the children the way to paradise or to lead them Hell. It is parents who can inculcate in their children good morals or bad habits. If the mother creates an Islamic environment, the children will adopt the way of Paradise. On the contrary, if she deprives home of Islamic environment, the children will not choose the right path, no matter how much the father tries.

Islam has granted woman a high status and honour. She is declared a way to Paradise as a mother; a model of sacrifice, love and affection as a sister; a mercy as a daughter and a source of peace and tranquillity as a wife. Today, we need wives like Khadijah who sacrificed her wealth in the way of Allah. We need women like Syedah Zainab who played a great role to support Islam and saw her brother, her son and her whole family being killed in the way of Allah. We have to prepare brave warriors like Sumayyah and Umm Ammarah who preferred to be killed over giving up their faith.

Conclusion:

1. While studying the history of Islam, we come to know that, in the time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him), women have played a great role in every walk of life, be it education, social work, fighting in the way of Allah or affairs of politics and government.
2. Also, the women bore more difficulties in the way of Dawah (Propagation) of Islam. The first martyr in the way of Dawah was a woman, when Summayyah (RA) preferred martyrdom over believing in false gods.

3. They were among those who migrated from Madinah first.
4. They played a constructive role in consultation in early Islam.
5. By accepting Islam, Umm e Habibah proved that women are lagging behind men in the matter of awareness.
6. Women participated in various battles and expeditions in the time of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him).

7. Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him) has ordered to behave well towards women.
8. Islam has given the woman respect and honour.

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