

The Role of Women in the Development of Muslim Societies: Insights from Hadith Nabawi Sharif

OTHMAN SQALLI HOUSSAINI

Lecturer, Expert

Cultural Policies and Management

Kingdom of Morocco

Introduction

Guided by the principles laid out in the Holy Quran and the hadith, the impact of women in the development of Muslim societies has been both significant and multi-faceted. The Hadith – which is a collection of the sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon Him - provides deep insights into the status and responsibilities of women in various spheres of life. These teachings underscore the importance of women's contributions to the spiritual, social, and economic development of Muslim communities.

Women have always played a role of paramount importance in Muslim societies. Although it changed according to different eras and cultures, women's role remained firmly grounded in the fundamental teachings of Islam. Thus, women have played crucial roles in religious, political, social, and cultural spheres. Their contributions have shaped the development of Islamic civilization and continue to

influence contemporary Muslim societies.

The Quran and the Hadith provide numerous examples that highlight the role of women in Islam. The Quran addresses both men and women equally, emphasizing their spiritual equality. Verses such as "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong" (Quran 9:71) reflect this egalitarian view.

As for the Hadith Nabawi Sharif, it serves as a source of profound wisdom and guidance for Muslims, providing us with numerous sayings of the Prophet Muhammad - peace be upon Him - that emphasize the importance of women. Such teachings have encouraged the respectful and equitable treatment of women since the advent of Islam.

Of note is the fact that the teachings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad - peace be upon Him - as captured in the Hadith, revolutionized the status of women, preserving their dignity and ensuring respect for women as well as their active participation in society. Several Hadith emphasize the importance of education for women, their roles within the family, and their broader contributions they make to society. (El Tibi 2014)

In this regard, Amir Al Mouminin His Majesty King Mohammed VI - may God assist Him - has shown unswerving dedication to preserving and enhancing the status of women in Moroccan society. His Majesty's endeavours in this regard are firmly rooted in the

principles of Islam, as laid out in the Quran and the Hadith Nabawi Sharif, which provides a framework for the dignified and equitable treatment of women.

1- Women's Contributions in Muslim Societies

The principles derived from the Hadith Nabawi Sharif remain relevant today. They advocate women's active engagement and empowerment in all aspects of life. In modern Muslim societies, the role of women continues to evolve, leading to greater women participation in education, professional fields, politics, and community leadership. Islamic teachings, when properly understood and applied, provide a strong foundation for supporting women's rights and their contributions to societal development.

One of the key areas highlighted in Hadith is the pursuit of knowledge. Prophet Muhammad peace be upon Him - stated, "Seeking knowledge is a duty upon every Muslim". (Sunan Ibn Majah) This Hadith explicitly includes women, confirming their right to education and intellectual pursuits.

Educated women have historically played crucial roles in Muslim societies, contributing to fields such diverse fields as medicine, literature, and jurisprudence. Notable examples include Aisha bint Abi Bakr, one of the Prophet's wives, who was a renowned scholar and teacher. (Akhmedshina 2023)

Hadith also places significant emphasis on women's family roles, underscoring their importance in nurturing and educating the next

generation. The saying of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon on the topic of women highlights their value as mothers, wives and caregivers. It also underscores the importance of treating them with kindness and respect.

The Hadith also acknowledges the critical role mothers play in the upbringing of children, shaping their character and instilling moral values. As mothers, women are seen as foundational pillars in the development of a morally upright and educated society.

On the socio-economic level, Hadith also encourages the economic participation of women. Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, the first wife of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon Him -, was a successful businesswoman, providing a powerful example of female entrepreneurship in early Islam. The Prophet's support of Khadijah's business endeavors underscores the importance and acceptance of women's involvement in economic activities. (Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs 2019)

Prophet Muhammad peace be upon Him - also said, "The upper hand is better than the lower hand", (Al-Sunan al-Sughra). This Hadith illustrates the importance of self-reliance and economic engagement as key principles for both men and women. Women's economic empowerment is crucial for the overall development of Muslim societies, as it leads to greater financial stability and growth.

Women in early Islamic society were also involved in political and social affairs. The Prophet peace be upon Him - consulted women

on various matters and included them in significant community decisions. For instance, Umm Salama, one of the Prophet's wives, played a critical advisory role during the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah by providing critical advice that helped resolve a difficult situation. (Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs 2021)

It is a fact that the Hadith narrates instances where women participated in public life and voiced their opinions. This active participation is vital for the development of inclusive and representative communities, ensuring that women's perspectives and needs are addressed in societal governance.

2- Morocco's Initiatives in Empowering Women in Society

The solicitude of the Commandership of the Faithful, under the aegis of Amir Al Mouminin, His Majesty King Mohammed VI - may God assist Him- towards the Hadith Nabawi Sharif, is evident in His majesty's efforts to empower women across legal, educational, economic, and social spheres. His Majesty has consistently demonstrated his commitment to promoting the principles of equality and justice as laid out in the Hadith. His efforts to empower women in Morocco are multifaceted, involving legal reforms, educational initiatives, and societal campaigns. His Majesty's actions serve as a powerful reminder of the profound impact that Islamic principles can have in promoting gender equality and empowering women to achieve their potential to the fullest extent possible. (Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs 2012)

The active participation of women in social and political spheres is another area where King Mohammed VI - may God assist Him - has shown strong commitment. By encouraging women to take on leadership roles and participate in governance, His Majesty ensures that women's voices are heard, and their contributions valued. Moreover, His Majesty the King has launched and supported policies to increase women's representation in political positions and decision-making processes, highlighting the importance of women's perspectives in leadership. This is in line with the practices of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon Him -, who consulted women on various matters and valued their opinions.

Recognizing the Hadith's emphasis on the pursuit of knowledge, King Mohammed VI has also laid emphasis of women's education and economic empowerment, thereby showing that these are critical areas for societal development. Education is a key pillar of His Majesty's policies. Thus, numerous initiatives aimed at increasing female literacy rates and ensuring equal access to educational opportunities for girls and women have been launched. They reflect a conviction that education must be accessible to everyone because it prepares for professional life and increases citizens' awareness of their rights and obligations.

The King's initiatives aim to ensure that women have equal opportunities to acquire education and knowledge. This focus on education not only empowers women but also contributes to the overall development of society.

In accordance with the vision of His Majesty King Mohammed VI, the Kingdom of Morocco has launched various programs to support female entrepreneurship and economic participation. These initiatives help women to become self-reliant and financially independent. This is of crucial importance for the economic development of the nation since Hadith encourages self-sufficiency and economic contribution, and these are basic principles that His Majesty's policies strive to promote among Moroccan women. Thus, numerous social programs initiated across Morocco focus on improving women's health, combating domestic violence, and promoting gender equality.

King Mohammed VI has shown great determination and a keen desire to promote women's rights and enhance their role in Moroccan society. His efforts, which are firmly rooted in the principles of Hadith Nabawi Sharif, encompass legal reforms, educational initiatives, economic empowerment, and active promotion of women's social and political involvement. By aligning his policies with the teachings of Islam, His Majesty the King upholds women's dignity and rights and fosters the advent of a more equitable and progressive society.

3-The Role of Muslim Women in Promoting Peace and Interfaith Dialogue

By embracing the teachings of the Prophet peace be upon Him -, contemporary Muslim societies can harness the full potential of women, fostering environments where both men and women can thrive and contribute to the collective growth and prosperity.

The role of women in promoting peace has gained growing recognition in recent years, thanks to a growing body of research and advocacy highlighting their contributions. Traditionally, peace processes have been dominated by men, with women often relegated to peripheral roles. However, women have historically been at the forefront of peacebuilding in their communities, leveraging their positions as nurturers, educators, and leaders to foster reconciliation and stability.

Women's contributions to peacebuilding are indispensable for achieving sustainable and comprehensive peace. Their unique perspectives and approaches address the emotional, social and economic dimensions of conflict, which are often overlooked in traditional peace processes. By promoting the inclusion of women in peacebuilding efforts, societies can build more resilient and equitable frameworks for resolving conflicts and fostering long-term stability. The international community must continue to support and amplify women's voices as peacebuilders to ensure that their vital contributions are sought, recognized and valued. (Altwaijri 2014)

Muslim women have played a significant role in promoting peace and facilitating interfaith dialogue throughout history. Although women faced various challenges and hurdles, their contributions in these areas have been vital in fostering mutual understanding, tolerance, and cooperation among different religious and cultural groups. (Elatrash, Rahmawati, Alhaq 2023)

Islamic teachings emphasize peace, justice, and compassion. The

Quran and the Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammad - PBUH) provide numerous references that encourage peaceful coexistence and respect for others. For example, the Quran states, "O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another" (Quran 49:13), promoting the idea of understanding and dialogue among different groups.

The Hadith also offers guidance on the importance of peace and compassion. Prophet Muhammad peace be upon Him - said, "The best among you are those who have the best manners and character" (Sahih Bukhari), highlighting the significance of kindness and respect when interacting with others.

4- The Pioneering Role of Women: Architects of the Future and Guardians of Society

Women have always been a driving force in society, despite the fact that their role has often been undervalued, not to say ignored. Today, women are increasingly holding leadership positions in all fields, which is a sign of progress and positive change. The quote "women are the architects of the future" underscores the importance of women's role in creating a better future. They have a significant impact on society, as they are often the custodians of culture, family values, and community life. Women have always been the first educators and the primary caregivers for the cohesion of their community. (Ibarra, Ely, Kolb 2013)

In today's world, women are increasingly involved in culture, politics, entrepreneurship, technology, and many other important fields. They often bring a unique perspective and a more inclusive approach to the challenges society faces. Furthermore, women have a significant impact on the next generation. They pass on values, beliefs, and knowledge to their children, which can have a positive long-term impact on society.

One can say that the first school for the individual is the woman, the light of the future whom we honour today for the pioneering roles women play in the world. By celebrating women, we are shining a spotlight on their contribution to human civilization since the dawn of time. Women are often involved in local initiatives which promote peace, such as community dialogue groups, mediation and conflict resolution programs, not to mention post-conflict reconstruction projects.

Additionally, we must recognize the noble mission of African women, whether they are mothers, sisters, daughters, teachers, scholars or key actors in a wide range of daily tasks, the aim being to promote human and spiritual values.

Women are also key players in promoting human rights, equality, and political participation. They are often staunch advocates for the rights of women and children and for inclusion and social justice. (Karenga, Tembo 2012)

What we need to promote synergy between social and cultural

domains, is to listen to women's grievances. Women are fighting for positive change, although they are underrepresented in decision-making processes.

Conclusion

The Hadith Nabawi Sharif provides crucial guidance on the role of women in Muslim societies, emphasizing their rights, responsibilities, and contributions. This body of knowledge, consisting of the sayings and deeds of Prophet Muhammad peace be upon Him -, is key to understanding the significance of women in Islam. From education and family roles to socio-economic and political participation, women have been and continue to be crucial for the development of Muslim communities. Upholding the teachings and sayings of the Prophet can lead to more equitable, prosperous, and dynamic societies, where the contributions of all members are valued and encouraged.

As modern Muslim societies continue to develop, the principles derived from the Prophet's teachings can foster more inclusive and equitable communities. By upholding the rights and responsibilities enshrined in the Hadith, Muslim communities can harness the full potential of all citizens, leading to the advent of societies that are equitable, dynamic and prosperous.

Women are the pillars of social progress. They make immense contributions in various domains, including education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, and community welfare.



With its teachings advocating respect, equality, and women's engagement and empowerment, Hadith Nabawi provides a strong foundation for fostering women's active participation and leadership for the advancement of society. Likewise, the vision of the Commandership of the Faithful, under the aegis of Amir Al Mouminine, His Majesty King Mohammed VI - may God assist Him – which is rooted in justice, compassion, and inclusion, underscores the importance of preserving and nurturing the pivotal role of women in driving positive change.

By recognizing and honouring women's contributions, implementing policies that promote their rights and opportunities, and fostering environments of equality and respect, Muslim societies can harness the full potential of all their members, thereby ensuring sustainable development and prosperity for current and future generations.

Bibliography

Quran 9:71, Surat At-Tawbah

Quran 49:13, Surat Al- Hujurat

Sahih al-Bukhari 6029, Book 78, Hadith 59

Sunan Ibn Majah 224, Introduction, Hadith 224

Al-Sunan al-Sughra 2533, Book 23, Hadith 99

Mohammed VI Platform for "عناية مولانا أمير المؤمنين بالحديث النبوي الشريف"

.٢٠٢٢ ,Hadith Nabawi Sharif

Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs “ دور المرأة وإسهاماتها: أم المؤمنين أم سلمة - رضي الله عنها- نموذجا”
.٢٠٢١ , Affairs

Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs “السيرة النبوية: خديجة أم المؤمنين رضي الله عنها”
.٢٠١٩ , Affairs

.٢٠١٢ ,Ministry of Habous and Islamic Affairs “عناية الدولة العلوية بالحديث الشريف”

Altwaijri, Abdulaziz Othman. « La femme en islam et son statut dans la société islamique », Société, droit et religion, vol. 4, no. 1, 2014, pp. 15-26.

Akhmedshina, Fania Avzalovna. “The Role of Muslim Women in the Development of Science, Culture and Education in the Period of Early Islam.” Science and Innovation, 2023.

Elatrash, Radwan Jamal Yousef, Sri Tuti Rahmawati, and Ziyad Alhaq. “Women Empowerment
.٢٠٢٣) ٢ .no ,٧ from Quranic Perspective.” al-Burhān Journal of Qurʾān and Sunnah Studies

El Tibi, Zeina. “La place de la femme dans l'islam”, Société, droit et religion, vol. 4, no. 1, 2014, pp. 59-64.

Ibarra, Herminia, Robin Ely, and Deborah Kolb. “Women Rising: The Unseen Barriers.” Harvard Business Review, 2013.

Karenga , Tiamoyo, and Chimbuko Tembo. “African Ways of Being Woman in the World.” The Western Journal of Black Studies, 2012.

