

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Friday Sermon

HAZRAT MUHYI-UD-DIN AL-KHALIFATULLAH

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20 May 2016 ~
(13 Shabaan 1437 Hijri)

(Summary of Sermon)

After greeting all his disciples (and all Muslims) worldwide with the greeting of peace Hadhrat Khalifatullah (atba) read the Tashahhud, Ta'uz, Surah Al Fatiha, and then he delivered his sermon on the subject of *“Womenfolk in Islam”*

WOMENFOLK IN ISLAM

History is silent as to whether there was any distinction in status between the male and the female sexes during the beginnings of human civilization. In later days no doubt the female sex was regarded as inferior to the male and the idea of inferiority developed to such an extent that the male sex not only claimed a complete superiority over the female sex, but further arrogated to himself the right to utilise and employ the female sex as he liked.

Surveying the history of the world on this point we find that in pre-Christian Europe and Greece, which was the centre of light and learning for a long time and which provided philosophical and scientific inspiration to the Europe of later days, regarded woman as something definitely inferior to man. She was a subservient creature who had come into existence solely for the purpose of breeding citizens for the state and soldiers for the army. Their opinion of women was that these creatures were deprived of any good and was instead the sources of many evils. Such degrading conceptions led to a moral degeneration which ultimately ruined the Greek society. The names of virtuous women scarcely appear in Greek history.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, the general conception of womanhood was of such a degraded type that her very existence was considered ignominious for the family. Female infanticide was consequently practiced on a wide scale. Those women who, however, escaped early death were allowed to live only on sufferance. For, an Arab woman had no rights; she could not inherit property; her person formed part of the inheritance which came to the heir of her

husband, and he was entitled to marry her against her will. Hence, there sprung up the impious marriages of their sons with their stepmothers and others of an even worse character. Polygamy was universal and quite unrestricted; equally so was divorce at least as far as man was concerned.

Such was the condition of the female sex in the world when the Holy Prophet of Islam, the Perfect Man, Muhammad (pbuh) the Saviour of womanhood, stood up in Arabia and, through the Divine Revelation of the Lord of the Universe Who created both the male and the female and Who loves them equally, preached to the world that females were just like males and that they have equal rights, equal honour and an equal status in life.

They were on no account to be treated as the property of the males. They have the right of ownership of property in the same way that males have, though, not in the same percentage as the males, but Islam provides a valid reason for the respective shares which both males and females receive, especially on account of inheritance. The male receives $\frac{2}{3}$ of the assets and money left by one or both of his parents and the female receives $\frac{1}{3}$.

Like I explained many times in the past, this kind of repartition of shares in the wealth or property left by deceased parents comes as a perfect repartition, mainly because of the grand or let us say, double responsibility of the male to care for his spouse and family, and also because if he gets $\frac{2}{3}$, then when he gets married, then his wife brings in $\frac{1}{3}$, and thus both husband and wife as one entity receives a full whole of shares in inheritance.

Sometimes, there are such brothers who after the death of their parents, they fool their sisters and promise them that if they sign on documents to make them have the tangible properties left to them all by their parents, then in return they would give those sisters their part of the inheritance, their dues (shares/ rights) in money form, but unfortunately there exist those kinds of brothers who after promising their sisters do not respect their engagement and deprive them from their shares of the inheritance. There are brothers who later can honour their word and give their sisters their rights (shares), and thus such brothers (who honour their words) must convince those who do not respect their words, for it can happen that a misfortune fall upon them (whereby they leave this world) and they do not have time to reimburse their sisters and thus this become a debt on that brother (or those brothers) who die in this state.

Islam encourages Muslims to make their will and take witnesses so that no trouble can befall the heirs after their deaths. And the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) also encouraged Muslims, especially the heirs to seek to know if their deceased parents had any debt, and to reimburse those debts.

Sometimes, if the woman's family is affluent, her $\frac{1}{3}$ share may even exceed the $\frac{2}{3}$ share which her husband receive from his parents! No doubt also, under the principle of the

division, the female sex has some specialised duties to perform in life, just as the male sex has his own duties.

There are three stages through which the majority of the womenfolk will pass in life, that is, their role as a daughter, a wife, and a mother.

(1) AS A DAUGHTER

Islam denounces in unequivocal terms the pre-Islamic inhumane custom of female infanticide and commands people to love and cherish their daughters even more than their sons.

The Holy Quran says that on the Day of Judgement, the female infant who was buried alive will be questioned as for what crime was she murdered. (81: 9-10). Thus before the Almighty, the victim herself will be able to give evidence against those who killed her, the innocent creature of Allah simply for the sake of satisfying their vanity.

What do we see nowadays? Daughters may not be buried alive literally under the sand (*or soil or murdered by any other means*), but parents let go of the rope of authority on their children, especially the girls and give them such freedom that they come to clothe themselves in unislamic clothing, and if those daughters go out to work, and happen to meet boys from other religious backgrounds and fall for them, then these girls drift away from the path of Allah, from the path of righteousness (by marrying those boys/men).

Allah again commands humanity: **“And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We shall provide for them and for you. Indeed, to kill them is a great sin.”** (17:32)

Fatimah was the youngest daughter of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). In dealing with her, he set an example of fatherly love which is a model for mankind. He (pbuh) has declared on several occasions: *“Fatimah is a part of my being; whosoever annoys her annoys me.”* (Mishkat)

He also emphasized preferential treatment towards the female sex and said: *“When you bring anything for your children for distribution, begin with the girls first because the girls love their parents more than the boys.”*

But I must say that unfortunately nowadays, there also exist those daughters who have drifted so far away (from the Islamic teachings) that they do not have any love for their parents and do not care for them and place them in homes, neglected.

(2) AS A WIFE

Marriage in Islamic law is really a contract just like other civil contracts between two parties. As far as the conditions of the contract are concerned, both the parties, the man and the woman, stand upon the same level. Each party has certain rights and duties. Islam commands

justice to be observed in every contract, and so in the contract of marriage too justice should be observed.

The Holy Quran says: **“The women have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable.”** (2: 229).

No doubt, under the principle of the distribution of labour, work should be divided between the pair. The womenfolk have to naturally take care of their offspring until they grow up. They have to engage themselves in bringing them up and so are not in a position to pay attention to securing their means of livelihood. The men, therefore, have naturally been made responsible for maintaining the family, including the wife, and have been given the duty of securing all the requirements of the home. Thus it is not an obligation for a woman to contract a job outside her home, but if the financial position of the household needs her contribution, then Islam does not forbid her from doing so, provided she does not neglect her natural duties as a wife and mother and cater for the well-being of her family members and household activities. In a nutshell, we may say that in a Muslim home, the husband is supposed to work as the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the wife as the Minister of the Interior or Home Affairs.

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) is reported to have said: *“A woman is the queen of her house.”* The Holy Quran describes the position of the wife in a beautiful verse: **“He created for you mates from among yourselves that you might find solace in them and He ordained between you love and mercy.”** (30: 22).

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) said: *“The most perfect of believers in faith is the best of them in morals and the best of you are those who are kindest to your wives.”* In his famous Sermon at the Farewell Pilgrimage, the Holy Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) again laid stress on the good treatment on womenfolk. He said: *“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under a trust from God and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers.”*

Before this saviour of the womankind preached his Message, there was no limit for the males in respect of the number of their wives. Islam really imposed a limit and allowed plurality of marriage up to a limit of four at a time with the idea of abolishing adultery. Polygamy is permitted in place of illegal intercourse in cases where it becomes difficult or rather impossible, in the interest of social health, to restrict marriage to strict monogamy. There are two definite occasions in the lives of human beings when polygamy becomes necessary. For example, if the marriage proves fruitless, the husband can, in most cases, be kept on the path of virtue and uprightness only by allowing a second marriage. Again, when there is a surplus of women, as happens after men have died in wars, human society can be saved from corruption and also extinction by the permission of marrying more than one wife.

The Holy Quran restricts the number of wives to four at a time and also orders complete equality and justice between them: **“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 shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then (marry) only one.”** (4: 4)

The conditions of the marriage contract are to be settled by the parties of the marriage. If, on the one hand according to the Islamic teaching, the husbands are entitled to have the right of divorce, the wives are also entitled to the right of fixing their dowry and maintenance as they like, and they may also take the authority of separating themselves from their husbands when they find it necessary to do so. If agreement at a time of marriage is made with complete consideration and is sustained with trust and piety, the parties stand practically at the same level and there remains no possibility for the womenfolk to suffer.

Islam enjoins justice, equity and straightforwardness. Therefore if those who claim to be Muslims do not observe Islamic principles, then it is their fault and Islam can on no account be accused of that. If today people misuse the permission for polygamy and try to hide their lustful actions under the cloak of Islamic legality, it is their fault and they deserve the most severe punishment at the Court of the All-Knowing Allah who knows what is in their hearts. Indeed Allah favours uprightness and virtue for His servants and has devised ways and means to keep them on His righteous path.

I stop here for now. I shall *Insha-Allah* continue on the same subject in my sermon next Friday. May Allah bless the womenfolk, without whom men are incomplete, without whom the continuation of the human species is impossible, and may He make them real assets for their parents, spouses and children but most importantly for the Islamic cause, the cause of Allah, in humility, piety and generosity. *Ameen*.