

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

THE MUSLIM LADY, HER ROLE AND HER HONOR

by Aisha Atiq Shahid

Evidence from the Holy Quran: Believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another: then enjoin what is right and forbid what is evil.(Surah at-Tawba:71) Quran: And say to the believing women that then should lower their gaze and guard their modesty, and not display their ornaments except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands of their sons, or the sons of their husbands or their brothers or their brother's sons, or their sister's sons or their women or those whom their right hands possess, or the male servants not having need (of women), or the children who have not attained knowledge of what is hidden of women; and let them not strike their feet so that what they hide of their ornaments may be known... (Surah an-Noor:31)

The role of a Muslim lady is quite unique in the fact that Islam has already prescribed here role and responsibility to Almighty God, her husband, her children, other family members, her community, and society, as well as herself. Every aspect of her life from birth to death, has been outlined and placed in perfect order by Creator Himself. As Almighty God cares for and tends to the needs of all creatures, great and small, why would He not address the needs of His superior creation, which is human kind?

Outwardly, it would be extremely difficult not to recognize a Muslim lady, if she is indeed adhering to the commands of Almighty God. Her dress itself, to her submission to God and her acceptance of Al-Islam as her way of life. Her modest dress, as well as behavior, manifests her attempt at following the orders of Allah stated in Holy Quran and the traditions of the Holy Last Messenger Muhammad ibn Abdullah (s.a.s.). For when she goes forth, her attire tells all that she is Muslim, and she wears her attire as a cloak of honor and dignity, for all to see, recognize, and respect.

The relationship of the Muslim lady towards her husband and family members has also been explained in the Holy Quran. She is a loving wife, mother, responsible homemaker, devoted daughter, caring sister, reliable friend neighbor. She is an educator, nurse, facilitator, and councilor. It is her responsibility to see that her family's needs are attended to, if not by her husband, then just as capable. Towards her husband, a Muslim lady is friend, lover, advisor confidante, help-mate, and supervisor of his home. She is this way, because she her husband will obey the command from Almighty God to love, maintain, and protect her at all cost. Men are protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given the one more strength than the other, and because they support them from their means. (Surah an-Nissaa:34). Because she has been given the assurance that she will be maintained, a Muslim lady does not have to go out to work; rather she can stay home and care for her family, which is her main

responsibility. However, if she chooses to work, in the home or out, she may do so and if she chooses to aid her family financially, she may also do so, obtaining thereby Allah's blessings. Yet if she chooses not to aid financially, Allah has stated in the Holy Quran to women what they earn and to men what they earn. Since it is not the responsibility of a woman to maintain her family she does not have to do so, nor give any money to her family. And stay quietly in your houses, and make not a dazzling display of yourselves like that of the former times of ignorance. (Surah Ahzab:33). O Prophet! Tell thy wives and daughters and believing women that they should cast their outer garments over their persons (when abroad). (Surah Ahzab:59). Islam encourages that Muslim ladies stay home and tend to their families. However, it does not mean that ladies cannot go out for business, for family needs, for society needs, or just socially visiting family and friends. If Muslim ladies were expected to only stay in the home, there would not have been rules and guidelines on how to dress and conduct oneself outside of the home. According to traditions of the Holy Last Messenger (s.a.s.), women receive many blessings for being home, yet she may leave her home for various reasons, and not incur Allah's displeasure.

Hadith: The Prophet said to some women, "Those of you who stay at home will gain the action (merit) of the Mujahideen (those who strive in the path of Allah)." The Holy Prophet (s.a.s.) said, "If a wife of any of you should ask permission to go to the mosque, do not stop her." Muslim ladies may work outside of the home in jobs that do not harm their religion. For example, if she is not required to uncover herself, remain alone with a man who is not her relative, serve or associate around alcohol, pork, or drugs, etc... Muslim ladies are doctors, lawyers, teachers, business owners, bankers. They are also politically and socially involved in communities here and abroad. They fund-raise human rights activists, and moral consciousness raisers. They may function in these arenas with the permission of their husbands and the support of their families and communities. If there is a conflict between these activities and home life, the Muslim lady knows and undoubtedly understands that any and all activities outside the home, but never would she abandon her family. Family is her first and foremost obligation. The Holy Prophet (s.a.s.) has stated that, "A woman is the guardian of the family of her husband and of his children, and she will be asked about them (as to what extent she fulfilled their rights)."

Contrary to misconceptions and lies perpetrated against Muslims, in Islam, the Muslim lady is not an object of scorn, nor reduced to one with no moral rights or social obligations. She is not property to any man, nor subservient to anyone. Islam has not taken away any rights, rather it has increased and enhanced her rights and obligations to the Creator and herself. Almighty God answers the prayers of both men and women. She observes prayers, fasting, performing pilgrimage, religious holidays, Islamic injunctions, modest dress and behavior similar to her male counterpart. Her good deeds are rewarded by Almighty God and her bad deeds may be punished or forgiven by Almighty God, just like the Muslim male. As stated in the Holy Quran, women have rights similar to the rights of men. Many verses of the Holy Quran speak about believing men and women, patient men and women, pious men and women, men and women of virtue, righteous men and women, and their rewards with Allah (Almighty God). In the religion of Islam, the Muslim lady has found a perfect way of life. To achieve that

perfection, she must live up to the guidelines prescribed by Almighty God in letter and spirit. She recognizes her obligations and strives to fulfill them according to Islam. She acknowledges that the Supremacy, Sovereignty, Final Authority, and the only Ruler is Almighty Allah. The Holy Quran is the book follows, for in it the essentials of the Islamic system are beautifully laid out for her and each and every Muslim. She has no doubt in its authenticity. She is sure of it and she is sure of herself an her role in this society. She is a Muslim lady, with much deserved honor and dignity. And she is proud and honored to be amongst the God-fearing, God loving creation of the Almighty.

<http://www.angelfire.com/me/anneesa/role.html>