



ATTENDING UNIVERSITY

Q: Is it permissible for Muslim women to attend university to acquire a degree? Some people argue that it is necessary for a woman to acquire a degree so that she may become self-sufficient in life and in the case of divorce or becoming widowed, she will be able to earn a halaal living and thereby fend for herself and her dependants.

A: Before discussing the issue in question, it is important for us to refresh some fundamental beliefs and facts, which will also serve as an introduction to the actual answer.

The following are among our fundamental beliefs:

- Allah ﷻ is our Creator and Sustainer. We belong to Him alone and to Him we will return.
- Allah ﷻ is our Absolute Creator and Master and we are His creation and slaves. As the Creator and absolute sovereign Master, it is His prerogative to command us as He wills. As His creation and utter slaves, we are obligated to follow His commands and have no right to question Him.
- Allah ﷻ is most Just. He NEVER commits any injustice. Every command of His is also filled with infinite wisdom.
- A Believer accepts every word of the Qur'aan Majeed as the Divine word of Allah ﷻ and wholeheartedly submits to every command of the Qur'aan Majeed, whether his puny logic can fathom the wisdom of the command or not.

Now in the light of the above, understand the following aayah, wherein Allah ﷻ specifically addresses the women:

“And (O you women), remain within your homes and do not display (your) beauty like the former times of ignorance” (Al-Ahzaab, 33)

This verse emphatically commands women to remain at home. They are the queens of the home and they guard the fortresses of their families. While they may leave the home for what Shari'ah has permitted, earning a living for the family is not their responsibility.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE TO EARN?

Islam is second to none in advocating fairness and justice. In every dimension of a person's life, one will find Islam advocating the highest degree of justice. As a result of Islam's unparalleled justice, we see that each spouse is allocated their own responsibilities and duties in their marital life.

It is recorded in the Mubaarak Hadith that when Hazrat Ali ؑ married Hazrat Faatimah ؑ, Rasulullah ﷺ advised them regarding the manner in which they should conduct themselves in the nikaah. Rasulullah ﷺ outlined the duties and responsibilities of each spouse, instructing Hazrat Faatimah ؑ to attend to the duties within the home and Hazrat Ali ؑ to fulfil the responsibilities out of the home.

From this Hadith, we understand that each spouse has been allocated their specific duties and responsibilities. The husband's duty and responsibility is to fulfil the needs and requirements of his wife and family, such as providing them with food, clothing, shelter, etc. He is thus required to leave the home in order to generate an income through which he will be able to fulfil his responsibilities. On the other hand, the wife has been commanded to remain within the confines of the home and not to leave the home except at the time of need, as she has been allocated the duty of tending to the internal affairs of the home. Hence, she should serve her husband, take care of the children and manage the affairs of the home such as cooking, keeping the home tidy, etc. If each spouse acts responsibly and fulfils their respective duties and responsibilities, the home will run smoothly and they will prosper as a happy family. Each spouse will be able to fulfil the rights they owe to Allah ﷻ and the rights they owe to each other. Furthermore, both parents will be able to focus on instilling Islamic values into the children and giving them the correct upbringing which they require.

THE CONCEPT OF GENDER EQUALITY

Islam does not recognize the modern day concept dubbed “gender equality”. In this alien and unnatural system, undue advantage is taken of the wife in the guise of gender equality. The wife, despite being from the weaker sex, is shamelessly exploited and expected to shoulder both her own responsibilities and the responsibilities of her husband by supplementing his income and contributing to the running expenses of the home. Hence, apart from her own duties, she is burdened with the added responsibility of earning an income to assist the husband in fulfilling his duties. It is generally witnessed that when the spouses do not fulfil their respective roles which have been stipulated for them by the Shari’ah, then problems, complications, misunderstandings, quarrels and disputes arise in the nikaah.

THE EXAMPLE OF A WOMAN ATTENDING UNIVERSITY

The condition and plight of a Muslim woman leaving her home to attend university can be aptly likened and compared to the following example:

A poor family, living in a remote village, struggle to fulfil their daily needs. They are nonetheless content and happily continue with their lives. Subsequently, the family is informed of a valuable treasure located at a distant place. If the treasure is obtained, it will improve their standard of living and will make life more comfortable.

The route to the treasure is however extremely dangerous. It crosses through thorny bushes and dangerous jungles filled with wild beasts and serpents. Furthermore, it is well known that people traversing this path often encounter thieves, bandits and even murderers.

Under these circumstances, would any sensible person even consider sending his daughter out into the wild in order to pursue such a treasure, no matter how lucrative it may appear? Obviously, no one will risk the life and honour of his daughter for the mere sake of wealth. Similarly, one should understand that the environment of the university is an anti-Islamic environment which exposes a woman to danger in her Deen as well as her self-respect and chastity.

THE HARM OUTWEIGHING THE BENEFIT

Some may argue that there are benefits in women attending university, such as becoming independent and self-sufficient. However, one should understand that there are many things in this world which are such that though they may have some worldly benefit, their Deeni harms far exceed and outweigh their benefits. Hence, the Qur’aan declares that such things are impermissible. Allah ﷻ states in the Holy Qur’aan:

“They ask you regarding wine and gambling. Say: ‘In them both is great sin, and some benefit for man; but the sin outweighs the benefit.’” (Al-Baqarah: 219)

It is an established fact that there is some benefit and enjoyment in alcohol and gambling. However, the grave consequences and the long term evil outcomes that affect the person as well as his family and others cannot be denied. Hence, Islam has declared all such things as forbidden which are against the greater welfare and benefit of man.

THE DEEN OF ISLAM

The Deen of Islam is a universal religion that has been divinely chosen by Allah ﷻ as the perfect religion till the day of Qiyaamah. Our Merciful Creator, Allah ﷻ wants the best for us in this world and the Hereafter. Hence, He sent Rasulullah ﷺ with Islam, the complete code of life that will stand the test of all times. Rasulullah ﷺ has said:

“O people, there is no good act which leads you to Jannah and will save you from the fire of Jahannum, except that I have commanded you to carry it out, and there is no evil that will lead you to Jahannum and distance you from Jannah, except that I have prohibited you from it.” (Sharhus Sunnah #4111)

In other words, for men to fulfil every command of Shari’ah that is directed to them, and for women to fulfil every command of Shari’ah that is directed to them, is the only means of acquiring success in this world and the Hereafter. Contravening these commands of Shari’ah is undoubtedly a recipe for bringing ruin and disaster to themselves.

EDUCATION FOR WOMEN

Islam encourages one to acquire beneficial education, especially when it aids one in earning a halaal livelihood and is the means of serving humanity. Such beneficial education is in fact commendable and praiseworthy. Rendering service to humanity, assisting the poor and the underprivileged and even sacrificing one’s comfort to fulfil the needs of mankind are all part of the Deen of Islam, on condition that one does not violate the commands of Allah ﷻ in the process. In Islam, women are not discouraged from acquiring beneficial education. However, due to the abundant and serious harms that accompany the contemporary secular system of seeking education, Islam does not allow women to leave their homes for this purpose.

WHAT ARE THE HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CONTEMPORARY SECULAR EDUCATION SYSTEM?

The contemporary secular system of education opposes the very core values of Islam. By and large, women who pass through this system gradually lose their hayaa and compromise their Deeni obligations. This is due to the fact that most educational institutes are Western orientated. The course offered is thus designed and shaped to promote the mindset and values of the West. As a result of the West showing ultimate importance to education, the importance that Islam lays upon hayaa (modesty), segregation of the sexes, women covering their hair and entire body and remaining concealed from the gazes of strange men, performing Salaah on its prescribed time and many other Deeni obligations are not only overlooked but are actually regarded as a small price to pay just in order to acquire a worldly degree which they regard to be more important. Hence, the mindset, values and lifestyle of a woman attending college or university are clearly corrupted by the Western education of the university.

THE COMMAND OF SHARI'AH

In Islam, women are commanded to remain within the confines of their homes. They should not leave their homes unless there is a valid need. If they have to leave their homes, they should ensure that they leave their homes in the state that they do not make a display of their beauty nor apply perfume. They should be accompanied by their mahrams at the time of leaving their homes, and should not be left alone in the company of non-mahrams. However, in the environment of the university, all these laws of Shari'ah are commonly and openly violated.

Though men are allowed to leave the home to acquire knowledge whereby they will be able to earn a living, however they are also bound by the laws of Shari'ah. Hence, in the process of them acquiring knowledge, if they are violating the laws of Shari'ah then it is also not permissible. Hence, the anti-Islamic environment of the university is an environment from which men should also abstain.

HEART-BREAKING REPORTS

1. Recently, a female matriculant boldly and boastfully rejected Islam, claiming that her tutors had presented so-called 'very convincing' arguments to prove the non-existence of God (May Allah ﷻ protect and save us all).
2. Some Muslim students admitted being influenced by and believing in Darwin's theory of evolution, etc. whereas this theory opposes many clear verses of the Holy Qur'aan (May Allah ﷻ protect us all).
3. In an entire grade of a certain school, almost every female pupil confessed to having had some degree of intimate contact with the opposite gender.
4. In another girls' school, there were even incidents of girls being intimate with each other.
5. Many pupils leave high school plagued by serious doubts and uncertainty regarding the basic and fundamental beliefs of Islam, thereby jeopardising and risking their Imaan.
6. Many students have explained that on account of peer pressure, it was virtually impossible for them to remain free from many vices and evil influences.

UNIVERSITY AND BEYOND

The university lifestyle poses a significantly greater risk and danger to the Deen of a woman. Imagine, what would be the end result of a woman regularly remaining in the midst of many non-mahram males in an anti-Islamic environment? Free intermingling and casual interaction with each other in such an environment are the norm. Apart from this, since she is aiming to acquire a degree in a certain field e.g. medicine, dentistry, law, etc. she is bound to interact with her tutors and seniors, many of whom are males. She is then expected to fit in the circle and conduct like one of the rest. After qualifying, she is expected to render community service in order to be recognized by the government as someone qualified in that field. In doing so, she is sometimes required to relocate in order to serve the needs of a specific community. Hence, a young woman will often be found living alone in some apartment while working in a government hospital. In certain instances, she will be required to examine male patients and attend to their needs, even if this entails viewing the satar areas of the males. In essence, during this time, she is exposed to every danger which could cause her to lose her Deeni values, respect and hayaa. On account of this type of lifestyle that she has chosen for herself (both in the university and during the course of her career afterwards), she can easily become a victim of abuse, zina, etc. by men who wish to take advantage of her. However, she is prepared to risk all these dangers and in the interim, even sacrifice her Deeni values, just in order to secure some material benefits and financial interests.

FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE

Many parents feel that they should send their daughters to university in order to make them self-sufficient and financially independent. They argue that in the case where the girl is divorced or her husband passes away, if she has a degree or is qualified in some field, she will be in a better position to fend for herself and her family. We should

understand that while Islam does not prohibit a woman from earning a halaal living, Islam commands that she should first be loyal to her Creator by fulfilling the obligations He has placed upon her and by not doing anything that will be a means of earning His displeasure. She should understand that her aim and goal in acquiring a degree is in order to get sustenance, and sustenance lies in the hands of Allah ﷻ. Hence, if the means adopted to acquire her livelihood causes her to become disobedient to Allah ﷻ, then how can she ever expect to become successful in this world and the next?

WESTERN MINDSET

Since the mindset that is created in these Western universities and colleges as well as the environment totally oppose the laws of Shari'ah, her presence in such an anti-Islamic environment will be the cause of Allah's ﷻ displeasure. Furthermore, the argument of hoping to earn some money to become self-sufficient despite losing one's Deeni values, shame and modesty, does not hold any weight in the sight of Allah ﷻ. The reason is that Allah ﷻ has placed the responsibility of those around her to take care of her and treat her with compassion. Under all circumstances, Allah ﷻ has made provisions for her needs to be fulfilled. Prior to nikaah she is the responsibility of her father, and after nikaah, she is the responsibility of her husband. In the event of her husband's demise, Shari'ah commands that she be taken care of by her close family members e.g. father, brothers, uncles, etc. Hence, Islam has made provisions for her welfare at all times and has not abandoned her, left her helpless or forced her to fend for herself at any point.

TECHNOLOGY - THE WEB OF SHAYTAAN

The arrival of technology and its advancements has led to the degeneration of hayaa (modesty and shame) in the ummah. By the press of a button, one is able to view the worst of sins being committed. Many cases of broken homes and broken marriages are the direct result of the misuse of these modern day devices such as the cell phone and internet. The sheer number of females on Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and other social media platforms is staggering. While this may not be confined to those seeking education, it is far more prevalent amongst them on account of the environment they are exposed to. Generally, the mindset of a person and his outlook are shaped by the environment he is in and the company he keeps. For an innocent, modest girl, striking an illicit relationship with a boy becomes easy when she finds herself in an anti-Islamic environment where everybody around her is involved in some illicit activity. Many young girls from respectable homes have been lured and duped into haraam activities, such as drugs, partying, alcohol, zina, etc. on account of the overwhelming influence of the evil environment.

BREAKDOWN IN MARRIAGES

The damage and evil effects of such a lifestyle are gradually revealed later on in a woman's life. Due to the demands of her profession, she neglects her children, household duties and other primary obligations. Often, it is observed that professional women are willing to serve complete strangers in the corporate environment for material gain, but are unwilling to serve their husbands and families at home for the pleasure of Allah ﷻ. At times, they are disloyal to their spouses on account of the illicit relationships they were previously involved in. As a result of their financial independence and "high level" of education, they find it difficult to be obedient to their spouses. Hence, the breakdown in many marriages is a direct result of the incorrect upbringing and the wrong environment the children were exposed to. Just as children are blameworthy for their actions, likewise their parents are also accountable for allowing their children such freedom and placing them in such an immoral environment.

CONCLUSION

It is thus clear as daylight that the harms of educating women in institutes of Western education far outweigh the benefits. Hence, if the basic community needs can be fulfilled through other avenues, such as non-Muslim female doctors, then there is no need for us to open the doors of Western education to our sisters and daughters, as this is a proven means of ruining their Deen and Aakhirah. The need of the time is for us to strengthen our belief that our sustenance has been pre-ordained by Allah ﷻ. We should understand that our sustainer, Allah ﷻ, has taken care of centuries of females before us who did not venture into the open workplace. Similarly, if we trust in Him, He will surely take care of us.

True respect, honour, dignity and happiness in our marital and social lives can only be attained by following the pure and pristine teachings of Islam and the Mubaarak Sunnah of Rasulullah ﷺ. If we seek honour and respect elsewhere, we will bring nothing but disgrace and humiliation to ourselves. Hazrat Umar ؓ has emphasized:

We were the most disgraced of people. Allah ﷻ then gave us honour through Islam. If we ever seek honour in something besides that through which Allah ﷻ has honoured us (Islam), Allah ﷻ will disgrace us." (Mustadrak Haakim #207)

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