

Status and Position of Woman from Imam Khomeini's Point of View

From Imam Khomeini's perspective, woman is the most influential of pillars of any society's social system – and her good and bad has a critical impact on society. Contrary to some people's assumptions who think that the Shiite ideology invites women to stay at home and abstain from social gathering, he states:

“Not only does the Shiite ideology not keep women away from the scene of living; rather, it places them in the lofty position of humanity in society.”¹

Thus, the Imam's perspective of women can be interpreted by mean of a humane-Islamic approach and in the bedrock of Islam's progressive point of view. The soul and character rather than his body and physical attributes comprise the truth of human beings. It is for this reason that men and women must be identified not from their physical and external features but rather from the façade of their humanity.

As the son of the liberating doctrine of Islam in the era of modern ignorance, the Imam with regard to the rights – both individual and social – that he espoused for the community of women aspired to restore the women's identity.

In explaining the status of women from Imam Khomeini's point of view, there are numerous subject matters in his thinking, some specimens of which we briefly examine below:

¹ *Sahifeh-ye Imam*, vol. 4, p. 508

Description of role model of the Muslim Woman

The Imam's emphasis on this subject was revolved round the description of the model persona of Islam's great women, Her Holinesses Fatemah Zahra (AS) and Zainab (AS). In model making of the societal role of the Muslim woman, emphasis was placed on her effective and determinant presence in society while at the same time observing Islamic canons and tenets.

- **Description of the social and cultural situation before and after the Islamic Revolution:** The Imam's thoughts in this field was focused on the pathology of the societal-cultural situation of women before the Islamic Revolution and clarification of the worthy status and role of Muslim women in contemporary Islamic movements especially in the Islamic Revolution of Iran and in Islamic communities.
- **Presentation of social, political and cultural strategies related to the issue of women:** In line with his stance vis-à-vis women at various stages of the Islamic movement, the Imam opined that, "Women have a great role in society. Women are the object of realization of humankind's aspirations. Women are the nurturers of honorable men and women. Women are the trainers of society. Women are the trainers of human beings. The happiness and misery of countries depend on the presence of women. With her proper training, woman develops human beings and with her proper training, she develops the country."²
- **The Lap of Woman is the Source of all happiness:** "Woman is the source of all goodness. The role of women in the world possesses special characteristics. The good and bad of a society originate from the good and bad of it women folk."³

The women of our era have proven that they are on par or rather ahead of men in terms of engaging in holy struggle. These same folks that are

² *Sahifeh-ye Imam*, vol. 7, p. 339

³ *Sahifeh-ye Imam*, vol. 16, p. 192

manifestations of moral purity were frontrunners of the movement as well as frontrunners in donating their wealth.”⁴

In the Imam’s system of thinking the family occupies a special position. As the source of manifestation and expression of human emotions, this social institution is the major pillar that secures a society. The mother has a major role in bringing up children. On this subject, he states: “The mother’s lap is the greatest school in which the child is trained – and it is the job of training that is of consideration. Great human beings are the product of the training of great mothers.”

The Imam’s reference to the role of motherhood of women

“The glorious Qur’an trains human beings and women train human beings as well”.⁵ With reference to these words, the Imam considered the mother’s duty to be the same as that of the Divine prophets; and reckons happiness and misery of the nation, country and religion in the light of the mothers’ upbringing.

In another statement, he points out that “May God preserve you for training human beings which is the occupation of prophets. If you bring up one child properly, it is possible that the same child provides for a nation. If God forbid, a bad child is nurtured in your lap, it is possible that immorality will find its way in society.”⁶ Thus, the Imam considers the origin of most social evils and corruptions in lack of receiving maternal affections.

He believes that the foremost sanctuary of the child in times of hardships and straitened circumstances and at the height of pain and suffering to be the mother. At no time is medication and treatment as soothing and effective as the love and affections of a mother whose child is having problem because only the mother brings peace to the child.

⁴ *Sahifeh-ye Imam*, vol. 7, p. 341

⁵ *Sahifeh-ye Imam*, vol. 6, p. 300

⁶ *Sahifeh-ye Imam*, vol. 7, p. 284

The Imam's reference to the presence and role of women in the social spheres

On the other hand, the Imam's emphasis on developing a suitable culture in order to facilitate the active presence of Muslim women in the social, political and cultural spheres can be summarized as follows:

- Role of women in training and development of the Islamic society's individuals and their substantial share in the Islamic Revolution
- Need of the Islamic society for active presence and Jihad (holy struggle) of women in order to move ahead on the route to building a healthy society.
- Autonomy of women in various fields including economic activities

In conclusion, from the aggregate of the points of view and statements of the Imam, it is observed that the Muslim woman is not only capable of executing a political and cultural role in Islamic society; rather, she can and must be influential and play a pioneering role in economic fields.

He not only considers raising the social status of women, their political and social participation and having a say in their own destiny to be the women's right; rather, he regards it a religious obligation, acting upon one's religious duty and responding to Divine invitation. This is the same role model that assists us in better understanding of religion and because of Islam's reverence of woman's personality; its support for her social and political rights and its emphasis on her participation in various social arenas places it in a superior position in comparison with other religions.

From the Imam's supreme point of view, woman is the main axis of development and main pillar of the Islamic system. By giving her an equal human role, her humane and constructive capability must be used in a better manner for the benefit of the entire community.