

ISLAMIC RENAISSANCE IN SOUTH ASIA (1707-1867)

BY: Mahmood Ahmad Ghazi – A Critical Review

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Dr. Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi (1950-2010), a well-known scholar in his valuable book, "Islamic Renaissance in South Asia" examines the glorious Muslim history and explores the causes of Muslim decline in sub-continent. He in this respect highlights the untiring efforts of Shah Wali Allah to block the intrigues of Jats and Marhathas. Dr. Ghazi sketches the efforts of Shah Wali Allah restoring Mughal glory defeating Marhathas by Ahmed Shah Abdali at Panipat. The Shah's social reforms brought a great change in the then society. He laid stress on the authenticity of Hadith and declared it the second source of Islamic law. Shah Wali Allah's successors did a lot for the restoration of intellectual uplift of the Muslims. They set up various institutions to aware the Muslims, their identity. It led to them the political revival. They struggled hard for ninety years and got a homeland of their own where they can practise Islamic teachings independently.

Normally, sub-continental culture does not recognize a person when he is living, but as he passes away all the heroic qualities of him come to the scene there is everywhere his good deeds as is the case with late Dr. Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi. living was a common man but as vanished, grew as a unique hero. He played his turn though calmly and peacefully but miraculized the surroundings by his dedication, zealous and hardworking. Before we introduce and analyse his book let us have a brief view of his life and achievements.

Sketch of Life

The late Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi did not born with a silver spoon in his mouth, but rose to the height of heights just by his hard work and merit. A precised view of his life spane shows he was born on September 13, 1950 at Kandlha District, Mazzafar Nagār-India.¹ His incesstors originally belonged to Thana Bhawan, Mazzafar Nagār, then moved to Khandhla. As Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi was six years his family migrated to Karachi and he got admission to a Madrasa at Bannuri Town Karachi and learnt the Holy Quran by heart.² Among his prominent teachers, Allama

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Melody of life cannot survive without hers”

وجود زن سے ہے تصویر کائنات میں رنگ

اسی کے ساز سے ہے زندگی کا سوز دروں

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breadwinner, so people invest over the male neglecting females. Low income is also a cause. Students from the far flung areas prefer to remain in their localities because they are poor and have no resources to move away from their station. The situation is especially alarming in rural areas due to social and cultural obstacles. One of the most deplorable aspects is that in some places, particularly northern tribal areas, the education of girls is strictly prohibited on religious grounds. This is a gross misinterpretation of Islam, the dominant religion in Pakistan (96 per cent of the population), which like all religions urges men and women to acquire education.

5- Discussion and Suggestions

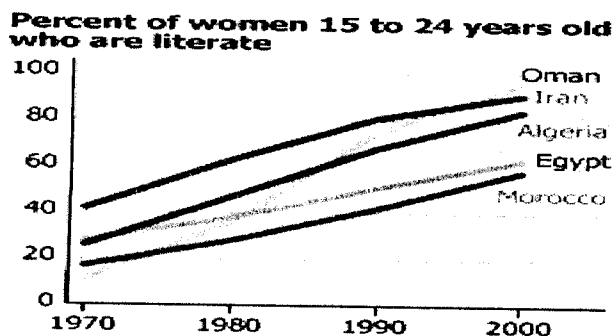
The focus of our study was to see and highlight the role of women in the development of scholarly traditions in early period of Islam. As our study was literature review based, review of literature provided rich and healthy examples of women's role. Some key points of our findings

1. There was not gender discrimination for education in society in early period of Islam.
2. There was mostly informal education.
3. Up gradation of knowledge was main object of learning.
4. Life was simple and trouble-free.
5. Women were aware of their right of having knowledge.
6. In, present Muslim World women had to face many serotype approaches and multi- dimensional cultures.
7. Nowadays life is too much complicated due to industrial and information technology revolutions.
8. Women have to play their reproductive role, a long period of their life is consumed in this very essential duty, but they are not being given any age relaxation than male.
9. If we want to improve their role in education we must provide them some extra facilities for their grooming.
10. Family as well as society must provide cooperative environment to enrich their potentials in scholarly fields, as the development of a nation depends upon the development of sources and human resource is vital source, no doubt women are half of the population.

Allama Iqbal (national poet of Pakistan) said

“All colors of the universe are due to female

discourse to shape and reshape the Islamic laws and codes. Islamic movements in various parts of the world are chanting about the progress they have made in promoting the cause of the women in accordance with Islam and vainly arguing how Islam is rightfully superior in dealing with women's rights. Today education ratio of female is increasing satisfactory, yet they are in the queue of students not in scholars. Here are some reasons for low literacy rate of female Higher Education. A research conducted by Zeb Sadiqe and IsmatNaeem (2010) to investigate female student participation at graduate level in different fields in Asian and Arab countries with the aim of assessing the trends of female of these countries towards different disciplines of higher education, it traces satisfactory enhancement in the ratio of female higher education relatively high percentage of female graduates in Arab countries indicates the efforts made by these Governments to enhance the participation of females at graduate level and in Universities.93 The situation is not very impressive for the Asian countries.



Figure

Literacy Rates Among Young Women in Selected Countries,
1970-2000.. 94

4-Remote Areas of Pakistan

These areas needed special attention and funding for the promotion of female Higher Education, as they have less opportunities and great challenges to meet. The gender inequality has severe effects on the overall literacy figures. People believe that women are not long run family members since they have to leave after getting married. People consider their upbringing of a girl is just like watering a plant in neighbor's garden. Men are supposed to be

said he loved to Allah but engaged in other than Allah, he told a lie, no doubt he is liar).⁸⁴ Nafeesah bint alhasan bin Zaid bin Alhasan bin Ali(b.145AH) memorized Qur'an, she also narrated Hadith for Imam Shafi. She often wept due to fear of Allah, prayed for whole night and used to fast at the day she took diet once in a thrice days.⁸⁵ A'isha Almakkahiah (d:187AH) was renowned lady of Makkah due to her piety. She said to Abu Ubaid Qasim Bin Salam that a scholar must know the art of sitting with manners otherwise he would not be in good books.⁸⁶ Ubaidah bint AbiKalab belonged to Basrah , she used to pray the whole night and wept for forty years even she lost her sight. Abdullah bin Rasheed said I had never seen a person more wise and pious than her.⁸⁷

2.9-Calligraphy

Almighty Allah swore the pen,⁸⁸ because it is a vital source to save the knowledge, Muslims paid full attention to this ability, prisoners of "Badar"(a battle)were asked to teach Muslims to read and write.⁸⁹ Munajjid traces women's roles in Islamic calligraphy, beginning from the advent of Islam and the role of women in different domains.⁹⁰ Umar Raza Kahala(1977 c) told that al-Shifa al-Adawiyah, the women known as "the first female teacher in Islam"who taught the wife of the Prophet, Hafsa to read and write.⁹¹ Abida bint Muhammad Aljahniah was a famous poetess, a learned lady and expert in calligraphy.⁹² Fatima bint al-Hasan bin Ali al-Aqraa who modeled her style on the al-Bawwab, and was in turn imitated by calligraphers all over the Islamic world famous calligrapher.

It describes that

1. There was no gender discrimination and bias in Islamic Society.
2. Women were respected due to their educational abilities.
3. Male also approached female for learning and guidance.
4. Formal educational system was not yet there in the society.
5. A day was specified for female guidance, this provides a base for special arrangement for female education.
6. It was not considered bad to learn from female teachers.

3- Female Higher Education: Present Scenario

Here is a great flaw between history and actual scenario of Muslim World, in past female Higher Education was neglected, that is why, women are completely absent from the pertinent

which was attend by great poets, and they get their poetry corrected by her and played a role of arbiter in their differences relating to poetry.⁷⁸ Ummul Bra bint Safwan bin Hilal was a poetess and knew the art of speaking, she enchanted Hadhrat Muaawiah by her suitable arguments.⁷⁹

2.7-Women as Distinguished Scholars and Mentors

In early Islamic society women held the position of scholars to whom people approached for guidance and correction. Ummulmuimnin(mother of believers) A'ishah had a sound and conform opinion which compelled the other learned persons to reconsider their opinion.

1-She elaborated verses of Qur'an, narrated Ahadith.

2-She described the daily routine of Prophet (SAW).

3-She explained the measures to retrieve Islamic Law.

4-She were eye witness of many events of life of Prophet(SAW).

AShaf abint Abdullah(d.20AH) was a lady of wisdom and Umar(RA) consulted her and respected her suggestions, sometimes he appointed her as the supervisor of affairs relating to market.⁸⁰Barira (RA) slave of HadhratA'ishah was a wise lady and had soundness in her decision and opinion, she advised Abdul Malak bin Marwan to follow the right path.⁸¹

2.8-Role of women in mystical dimensions

A practitioner of this tradition is generally known as a **ṣūfī** (صُوفِي). Another name for a Sufi is Derwish. Classical Sufi scholars have defined Sufism as "a science whose objective is the reparation of the heart and turning it away from all else but God and to purify one's inner self from filth, and beautify it with a variety of praiseworthy traits. Muslim women also played an important role in purifying their inner and strengthening their ties to Al Mighty Allah. Maazah bint Abdullah alaadwiah(d.101AH) was lived in Basrah, she used to pray day and night ,she said people having the fear of Allah how they can sleep long.⁸² Rabia bint Ismail Aladwia(d.135AH) was Sufi scholar, Sufyan Thory said for her "let us go to her for normative guideline". She often used to on remembering her and usually spent her night in praying.⁸³ Ghufairah Alaabidah belonged to Basrah, used to pray the whole night, when people differ to define the traits of wali (a person loved by Allah) they proceed to Ghufairah for accurate meanings. Once she said **من حدثكم ان وليا لله له شغل بغير الله تعالى فكنذوبه فانه كاذب** (who

had a way never walk on it". Ibn Asakar said she was included in female Hadith narrators.⁷⁰ Tirah bint Marrah bin Ghalib had a great knowledge about different branches of tribes, she expressed the qualities of different families in a rich and literary way while answering Muaaviah bin Abi Sufiyan and due to her good literary capabilities she was bestowed precious dress and ten thousand dirhams.⁷¹ Hazimah sister of Adeyy bin Hatim was a lady of good linguistic exposure and due to her right opinion about Muhammad SAW, Adeyy bin Hatim embraced Islam.⁷²

2.6-Role in poetry

Poetry is essence of literature, and it affects the minds of listener in an impressive way to convey the message in précised manner. It is best said by John Keating (Robin Williams) We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for. Actually, poetry is a magical art, and always has been -- a making of language spells designed to open our eyes, open our doors and welcome us into a bigger world, one of possibilities we may never have dared to dream of. Our National poet Allama Iqbal said "Words have the power to fly without wings".⁷³ Muslim women knew this art, the spice of speech, and were admired for their beautiful thoughts by male critics. Hadhrat A'ishah also wrote verses, and she used to quote poetry in her conversation. Urvah bin Zubair said " I had never seen a person more expert in Jurisprudence, medicine and poetry". And Ibn Abdulbar also paid homage to Hadhrat A'isha by saying that she had the most expertise in three branches of knowledge Jurisprudence, medicine and poetry in her times.⁷⁴ Miqdad bin Alaswad said " I did not know a person among the companions of Muhammad SAW more expert in poetry than A'isha".⁷⁵ She not only wrote the poetry but also has the caliber of criticism and analysis.⁷⁶ Khansabint Amar bin Alharidh was a sahabia(female companion) Prophet (SAW) praised her poetry and bestowed her the title "the best of the poets (ما اشعر الناس فالخنساء). She had very rich poetry which was praised by renowned poets.⁷⁷ Skinabint Husain bin Ali Bin AbiTalib was very respected and renowned lady, she arranged such sessions

curtain'' (ليس هذا منك بل من خلف الحجاب).⁶⁴ Fatima bint Abbas Albaghdadia(d.714AH) was recognized by Imam Ibne Taimia.⁶⁵ Fatima bint Mohammad bin Ahmad assamarqandi was a student of many teachers and teacher of many students in the field of Islamic Law. She was married to Imam Kasani, the fatawas of her husband and father was not issued without her signatures. She wrote many books in the field of jurisprudence, Amam Kasani always consulted her in complex matters.⁶⁶

2.5-Women's potentials in Literary Field

Women had literary abilities and they set very sparking examples of their exposure, they knew the art of speaking publicly, Ummulmuimnin Hadhrat Khadija(RA) uttered soft words to console the Holy Prophet SAW that precious words showed her ability of good speaking power and these words soothed the Prophet, she said (كلا والله ما يحزنك الله ابدا انك لتصل الرحم و تحمل الكل و
HadhratA'ishah, Hafsa, and Umme Salma (RA.) was known for their confident and courageous conversation and to defend women's integrity on number of occasions. Asma bintYazid bin SakanAnsaria , was a woman of extraordinary caliber in different aspects , had fluent and good exposure of expressing herself in public very well and was given the title of "Khatibatunisaa" (Best speaker amongst women) she became to Prophet (S.A.W.) and asked about the reward of women for their domestic liabilities and responsibilities. She argued her point with such strong logics and examples of their responsibilities by uttering very suitable words, Prophet (SAW) was fascinated by her impressing and convincing style and appreciated her by saying "Have you ever seen a women more beautiful in exposure than her while asking about religious commandments".⁶⁸ These golden words will boost up women's expressing abilities forever, and Muslim women will always feel pride over it. Bakaratul Halalia was also good at linguistic abilities, poetry, prose and art of speaking in public, she warmed up the moral of soldier defending Hadhrat Ali (RA) in the battle of Safeen. She was uttering verses to urge the people on bravery. She was appreciated by Muaavia(RA) during his caliphate on account of her brave exposure.⁶⁹UmmulbaninbintAbdulaziz bin Marwan's conversation made Hajjaj speechless. She has her golden worlds she said "Regret for a miser, if he had a shirt he never wear it, if he

thousand female scholars.⁵⁴ Abdar Rahman al Sakhawi(897hijrah) writes about the Muhadithaat in his famous book 'AzZu al Lama'a. The last volume of this book is completely dedicated to women, majority of who were connected to hadith in some manner.⁵⁵ An 'Index of Shayookh' was written by Abd al Aziz Umar bin Fahad (881AH) in which out of 1100 shayookh, 130 are women, from whom he benefited in hadith and various sciences.⁵⁶

2.4-Women's contribution in the Field of Jurisprudence and Islamic Law

In the Holy Quran we have been told: "Why should not a company from every group of them go forth to gain profound understanding (**tafaqquh**) in religion and to warn their people when they return to them, so that they may beware."⁵⁷ Muslim women also has the caliber to understand and apprehend the objectives of Islamic junctions and retrieve Islamic Law, the name of A'ishah (R.A.) is very popular and bright in this domain. Sahabah approached her to understand the commandments of Hajj, cleanliness, daily routine of Prophet(S.A.W.) and inheritance, although Ilmufrudh was quiet complicated type of knowledge yet she had a grip on it and was a source of guidance in this very important branch of knowledge.⁵⁸ Badaruddin Zarkashi has compiled a book named "الاجابه لايراد ما استدركته عائشه على الصحابه" in which he collected many ahadith in which she had authority of opinion, or she differed with other companions and rejected their opinion with solid citations and they had to withdraw their opinion against her logic. He counted that she objected 19 Sahaba, Umar(R.A.)also included in them, she rejected their opinion in 49 matters.⁵⁹ Hadhrat Umme Salma also guided people in different injunctions.⁶⁰ Muslim also have a rich history of these traditions. Asma bint Asad bint alfrat 61(d.250AH) was expert of Hanfi School of thought. Amtual wahid.bint Husain bin Ismaiel(d.377AH) was known as Faaqeha, she was the most expert in Shafi school of thought . She learned Ilmufrudh, lexicography and mathematics etc.⁶² In nine century AH, Fatima bint Ahmad was the teacher of Imam Sakhavi.⁶³ Fatima bint Ahmad bin Yahya(d.840AH) was good at Jurisprudence, her husband was also jurist and he consulted her in complex matters and she was a final authority in such differences of opinion, at such moments he recognized her abilities by saying to his students " It is not my opinion but the person behind the

Believers), Nadbah 41 (molaibn Abbas (r.a)), Bananah (mola Abdar Rahman al Ansari (r.a)) and Laila⁴² (mola Umm Ammarah al Ansariyah).

IbnAbdulbar reported that Umar(R.A.) used to ask the interpretation of dreams from Asma bint Umais .⁴³This partnership of women with men in the cultivation of the Prophetic Tradition continued in the period when the great anthologies of *hadith* were compiled. A survey of the texts reveals that all the important compilers of traditions from the earliest period received many of them from women *shuyukh*: every major collection gives the names of many women as the immediate authorities of the author. And when these works had been compiled, the women traditionists themselves mastered them, and delivered lectures to large classes of pupils, to whom they would issue their own *ijzas*.⁴⁴ Great scholars who related the ahadith of Sahih Bukhari, like Abu Bakr al Khateeb al Baghdadi, traveled from Baghdad to Makkah to listen to Karima relating Sahih Bukhari.⁴⁵ Abu Bakr bin Mansoor al Asma'aani states " My father was very impressed with Karima's educational capabilities, and used to say that I have not seen anyone like her".⁴⁶ In the fourth century, we find Fatima bint Abd al-Rahman⁴⁷ (d. 312/924), known as al-Sufiyya on account of her great piety; Fatima⁴⁸ (granddaughter of Abu Daud of *Sunan* fame); Amat al-Wahid ⁴⁹(d. 377/987), the daughter of distinguished jurist al-Muhamili; Umm al-Fath Amat as-Salam⁵⁰ (d. 390/999), the daughter of the judge Abu Bakr Ahmad (d.350/961); Jumua bint Ahmad, and many other women, whose classes were always attended by reverential audiences. Ibn e Hajar Asqalani has compiled the biographies of fifteen hundred and fifty two women in the field of Hadith , in his book AL Asaba.⁵¹ Women set up such high standards of honesty in the narration of hadith that in the book 'meezan al aitadal' of 'ilmjarah o tadeel', the compiler Alzahbi praises the contribution of these women in these words, 'till today, I have not come across a woman whose narration was suspicious or rejected.⁵² Umar Raza Kahala has written A'alamu Nisaa, a special book , he mentioned 2681 women,1190 out of them are who have written their names in golden words due to their scholarly work in the field of Hadith.⁵³ Dr. AkramNadwi is soon to publish his 40-volume collection on Muslim women scholars with the collaboration of Turkish and Saudi Government in which he will collect biographies of 8000

account of her being a fabricating liar. Imam Dhahabi affirms: "There are many men who have fabricated Hadith. However, no woman in the history of Islam has been accused of fabrication."²⁶ In the light of this fact, if the intellectual integrity of anyone should be questioned, it should be that of men. Women have always truthfully conveyed religious knowledge. Amrah bint Abdur Rahman was amongst the greatest of the female Tabi'een or Successors, the generation that came after that of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him. She was a jurist, a mufti, and a Hadith specialist. The great Caliph Umar b. 'Abdul 'Aziz used to say: "If you want to learn Hadith go to Amrah." Imam Zuhri, who is credited with compiling the first systematically edited compilation of Hadith used to say: "Go to Amrah, she is the vast vessel of Hadith."²⁷ Ibn Habban validated her authenticity.²⁸ Ibn Almadini (a very famous expert in sciences of Hadith) said Umrah is the one of the authentic persons in Hdith.²⁹ Umm al-Darda (Khairah bint Abi Hadrad) was regarded by some of her contemporary leading male traditionists as "superior to all the other traditionists of the period, including the celebrated masters of *hadith* like al-Hasan al-Basri and Ibn Sirin."³⁰ 'Amra was specially recognized for authority on traditions related by A'ishah and among her many notable students was Abu Bakr ibn Hazm, the celebrated judge of Medina, who was ordered by none other than the caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz himself to write down all the traditions known on her authority.³¹ Umar Raza Kahala stated that, another of the great Successors, Umm Darda (Hujamiah bint Huayy), taught in both Damascus, in the great Umayyad Mosque, and Jerusalem. Her class was attended by Imams, jurists, and Hadith scholars.³² Umme Aiman (Barkah bint thaalbah) has the honor of two migrations towards Habshah and Madina, she narrated Ahadith from Prophet (SAW).³³ History has witnessed that the women who were honored by promoting the Prophet (SAW)'s teachings, belonged to free and respectable families as well as slaves. The attendant of the Prophet (SAW), Maria also had the honor of narrating ahadith.³⁴ Other notable names in this category include Maimona bint Saeed,³⁵ Umaima bint Ruqaiqah Mola Rasul who were narrators of hadith as well.³⁶ Other than these, Barirah³⁷ and Umm e Ulqama (Marjanah,³⁸ Mola Ayesha (r.a)). Khaira Umm ul Hassan al Basry³⁹ (mola Umm e Salmah), Nadbah⁴⁰ (mola Maimoona (r.a), Mother of the

(S.A.W.)¹⁸ Her 754 narrations are included in Sahih Bukhari.¹⁹ She transmitted two letters 'kitabān' of the Prophet which were found in the case of his sword.²⁰ A great number of 1016 Ahadith are narrated in Bukhari by female reporters.²¹ Hadhrat A'ishah not only reported Ahadith but also settled down the difficult matters in understanding them and retrieving Islamic law. She was very keen to understand the Hadith, so she questioned again and again until she understood. Imam Bukhari(1997a:117) reported, whenever 'A'ishah(R.A) heard anything which she did not understand, she used to ask again till she understood it completely.²² Some scholars said she was the source of one third of Islamic commandments.²³ In the time of the Companions, the question never arose concerning the validity of learning directly from women. If we were to consider, for example, the books of prophetic tradition (Hadith), in every chapter you will find women narrating as well as men. Imam Hakim Naisapuri states: "One fourth of our religion depends on the narrations of women. Were it not for those narrations, we would lose a quarter of our religion."²⁴ To give similar examples, we all know that performing ablution is essential for the validity of Ritual Prayer (Salat). A female companion, Rubiyya bint Muawidh b. Afrah, may Allah have mercy on her, whose family members died in the Battle of Uhud, was a great narrator of Hadith.²⁵ Her narrations can be found in Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Majah, and other compilations. She narrated how the Prophet, peace be upon him, performed ablution after actually witnessing his performance of the purificatory ritual. The companions would go to learn from her despite the fact that Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, Ali, Muadh b. Jabal, and Abdullah b. Masood, may Allah be pleased with them, were all present in Madinah. She was regarded as the expert in the performance of ablution Rubiyya's students included like Abdullah b. Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, the great Qur'anic exegete, and also a member of the family of the Prophet, peace and blessing of Allah upon him. He never asked: "Why should I learn from her when I am from the family of the Prophet and a great exegete?" The same is true for Ali Zainul-Abideen, the great grandson of the Prophet, peace be upon him, and a great scholar himself. Their philosophy was to go to ~~who~~ possessed knowledge, irrespective of their gender. there is no single Hadith which has been rejected from