

Religious Knowledge, Women Empowerment and *Da'wa*

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Introduction:

Since the independence of Pakistan and the inception of the Islamic Republic, there had been no formal institution functioning for the empowerment and authority for women in the religious domain of the country. Following the traditional norms of the Islamic society, women in conservative families were constrained in their households. Their position for decades was in the contours of typical custodian or mentor in the house. However, in 1980's and 90's a sizable number of mosques and Muslim organizations opened their door to women and started to provide prayer rooms, religious instructions and other services particularly for women believers. The number of these organizations continues to increase incessantly. One can argue for that this new found autonomy of the Muslim women would eventually polarize the phenomena of religious authority itself and as a consequence would cause her own interpretative to dominate. Moreover, this affair would sooner or later rejuvenate the very roots of authority, opening the path for women to become authorized interpreters of religious sources.

Objective:

Enquiring into the present investigation of the Muslim women acquiring formal religious Knowledge, we can observe a close relationship between the acquisition of religious knowledge and empowerment. While opinion anticipates that the dispersion of knowledge would lead to a new subjection to gender authority.(1) Scholars working in the field have started to issue a counter argument, making fray in knowledge acquisition and shifts in religious authority in favor of women's participation in creation and dissemination of religious discourse.(2)

However, it should be noted that the relationships between knowledge acquisition and empowerment have been rarely studied; the focal point of the investigation was the process of recognition and disposition of Muslim women. We also attempted to answers certain questions such as, how authority is formulated through knowledge, how it is discerned, how it is challenged and how it is outlined.

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Arabia, Sudan, Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria also contributed troops and arms. At the war's end, Israel had gained control of the Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights. The results of the war affect the geopolitics of the region to this day." (Wikipedia:- The Free Encyclopedia, s.v. "Six-Day War." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Six-Day_War)

- 55 "The Balfour Declaration of 1917 (dated 2 November 1917) was a formal statement of policy by the British government stating that "His Majesty's government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." The declaration was made in a letter from Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to Baron Rothschild (Walter Rothschild, 2nd Baron Rothschild), a leader of the British Jewish community, for transmission to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain, a Zionist organization. The letter reflected the position of the British Cabinet, as agreed upon in a meeting on 31 October 1917. It further stated that the declaration is a sign of "sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations." (Wikipedia- The Free Encyclopedia, s.v. "Balfour Declaration, 1917." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balfour_Declaration_of_1917)
- 56 Walid Khalidi, "Thinking the Unthinkable: A Sovereign Palestine State," *Foreign Affairs* 56, no. 4, (July 1978): 695-696.

- ⁴⁵ Islam and the Challenges of Modernity: An agenda of Twenty First Century, 155.
- ⁴⁶ Abd Ar-Rahman Al Bazzaz, Sylvia G. Haim, "Islam and Arab Nationalism," *Die Welt des Islam*, New Series 3, issue ¾ (1954):201-218, <http://www.jstor.org/>; In the opinion of Albert Hourani, "Whenever Islam exists, there exists an awareness of the special role of the Arabs in the history: the Prophet was an Arab, the Qur'ān is written in Arabic, the Arabs were "the Matter of Islam"(maddat al- Islam), the instruments through which it conquered the world." (Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1789-1939, 33)
- ⁴⁷ C. Ernest Dawn, "From Ottoamnisim to Arabism: the Origin of an Ideology," in *The Modern Middle East*, ed. Albert Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson (London: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 381.
- ⁴⁸ Islam and the Challenges of Modernity: An Agenda of Twenty First Century, 156.
- ⁴⁹ In the opinion of Lawrence, "Arabs could be swung on as on a cord... Without a creed they could be taken to four corners of the world... but if on the road, led in this fashion, they met the prophet of an idea, who had nowhere to lay his head and who depended for his food on charity and birds, then they would all leave their wealth for his inspiration." (T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*(Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1962), 41)
- ⁵⁰ Islam and the Challenges of Modernity: An Agenda of Twenty First Century, 158; Paul E. Sigmund, *Ideologies of the Developing Nations*(New York: Frederick A Praeger, 1967), 148.
- ⁵¹ Gamal Abdel Nasser, *Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of Revolution* (Washington: Public Affairs, 1956), 22; Gamal Abdel Nasser, "The Principles That Guide Egypt's Political Life," in *Political and Social Thought in the Contemporary Middle East* ed. Kemal H. Karpat (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), 198-203.
- ⁵² Michel 'Aflaq, "The Socialist Ideology of the Ba'th," in *Political and Social Thought in the Contemporary Middle East* ed. Kemal H. Karpat, (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), 197.
- ⁵³ Paul E. Sigmund, *Ideologies of the Developing Nations*, 159; The Manifesto of Ba'th Party was based on the four major articles; 1. The Arab homeland is an indivisible politico-economic unit. It is impossible for any of the Arab regions to perfect the conditions of its life in isolation from the rest. 2. The Arab nation is a cultural unit. All of the differences among its members are artificial accidents which will cease to exist as a consequence of the awakening of Arab consciousness. 3. The Arab homeland belongs to the Arabs. They alone have the right to utilize its resources and its wealth and to control its potentialities. ("The Constitution of the Arab Resurrection. (Ba'th) Socialist Party of Syria," *Middle East Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring, 1959): 195-200, <http://www.jstor.org/>)
- ⁵⁴ The Six-Day War of June 5-10, 1967 was a war between Israel and the neighboring states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. The Arab states of Iraq, Saudi

settled in Egypt-they felt a sympathetic interest, based on the historical and cultural links, but no political bond.” (The Middle East and the West,85)

29 Charles Wendell, *The Evolution of the Egyptian National Identity: From its Origins to Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid* (Los Angeles, University of California, 1972), 295-313.

30 *History of Islamic Societies* 622.

31 *History of Islamic Societies* 623.

32 “Our Egyptian-ness demands that our fatherland be our qibla and that we not turn our face to any other. We are happy that this truth is well known by most Egyptians and that is about to become general among all Egyptians without exception.; Tāhā Husayn, “The Future Culture in Egypt” in John Donahue and John Esposito, *Islam in Transition*, 73-76; Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1789-1939*, 206.; For Kamil his Egypt (biladi) was the God of worship, “ Egypt is the world’s paradise, and the people which dwells in her and inherits her is the noblest of peoples if it hold her dear, and guilty of the greatest of crimes against her if it hold her rights cheaply and surrender control of her to foreigners.” (Lutfi Al Sayyid “Egyptianness” in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspective*, 72.)

33 Wilfred Cantwill Smith, *Modern Islam in India*, 246-269.

34 *Islam and Modernity*

35 Mohamad Tavakoli – Targhi, “From Patriotism to Matriotism: A Tropological Study of Iranian Nationalism, 1870-1909” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 34, no.2 (2002): 218-219.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*, 221.

38 *Ibid.*, 222.

39 Leonard Binder, *Iran: Political Development in a Changing Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), 62, 78.

40 *Islam and the Challenges of Modernity: An Agenda of Twenty First Century*, 154.

41 Ajmi says that Arab nationalism was a response to Turkism. “The universalism of pan-Arabism derived to a considerable extent from the universalism of the Ottoman empire of which the Arab states had been a part for four centuries. In other words, scholars, officials and offices slipped from one Universalist system into another. It was an understandable response to the nationalism of the young Turks; if the Turks were a nation so too Arabs.” (Fouad Ajami, “The End of Pan- Arabism,” *Foreign Affairs* 57, no. 2, (1978): 365,<http://www.jstor.org/>); Hisham B. Sharabi, *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World*, 33-56.

42 Casear E. Farah, “The Dilemma of Arab Nationalism,” *Die Walt Des Islam*, New Series8, Issue. 3 (1963): 145, <http://www.jstor.org/>.

43 *Three Reformers: A Study in Modern Arab Political Thought*, 103-104.

44 Najun A. Besingan, “Islam and Arab Nationalism,” in *Middle East Review*, no.2, XI, (Winter 1978- 79): 29. <http://www.jstor.org/>.

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- Resurrection. (Ba'th) Socialist Party of Syria, *Middle East Journal* 13, no. 2 (Spring, 1959): 195-200, <http://www.jstor.org/>
- 15 In Turkey, nationalism was purely secular while in Indian Sub Continent the factor of Islam was dominating as Muslims were facing Hindu majority.
- 16 History of Islamic Societies 561-562.
- 17 Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (Indiana University Press, 1965), 76.
- 18 Islam and Modernity, 148.
- 19 Islam and Modernity: an Agenda, 155.
- 20 Islam and Modernity: an Agenda, 155.
- 21 History of Islamic Societies, 603
- 22 The Emergence of Modern Turkey, 167.
- 23 History of Islamic Societies, 604.
- 24 In Egypt, the discussion of the difference between patriotism and religion and the meaning of nationalism seems to have begun in 1880 when Sheikh Hussain al- Masrafi, in *Kalim- al thaman* (the eight words), tried to explain such words as watan (fatherland), Ummahhhh(nation), and siyasiah (politics) "which are on the tongues of present day generation". Two decades later, Mohammad 'Umar, in his *Hadir al Misriyin* (The present day state of the Egyptians), Cairo, 1902) still endeavored to explain to his readers the distinction between "nationalism" and "religion." (Heyworth- Dunne , An introduction to the History of Education in Modern Egypt 238, note 2. cited in Manfred Halpern, *The Politics of Social Change in The Middle East and North Africa*[Princeton: Princeton University press, 1963], 197, note 2.)
- 25 *The Middle East and the West*, 76.
- 26 Khaldun S Husry, *Three Reformers: A Study in Modern Arab Political Thought* (Beirut: Khayats, 1966), 29-30.
- 27 *Three Reformers: A Study in Modern Arab Political Thought*, 31.
- 28 Badāwi stated that we should love our fatherland. "The wisdom of the Almighty king has seen it fit that the sons of the fatherland be united always by their language, by their allegiance to one divine law and political administration. These are some of the indications that God disposed men to work together for the improvement of their fatherland and willed that they relate to one another as members of one family. God willed that they relate to one another as members of one family. God willed that the fatherland would so to speak take the place of father and tutor and would be happiness shared by men."(Rifa Badāwi al-Tahtāwi, "Fatherland and Patriotism," in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspective*, ed. John J. Donohue and John Esposito [New York: Oxford University Press, 1982], 7); Bernard Lewis has quoted the sayings of Rifa Badawi in these words. "Their national loyalty was to Egypt-patriotic rather than nationalist. They took pride in their Arabic language and culture and in their Islamic religion, but rejected both Arabism and Islamism as he forces of identity and loyalty. For the Arabs of Asia- those who had not

References

- 1 The word patriotism first cropped up in the eighteenth century, and 'nationalism' only in the nineteenth century. In French, nationalism is to be found once in 1812; the oldest example of 'nationalism in English dates from 1836, and then remarkably, with a theological significance, namely for the doctrine that certain nations have been chosen by God" (patriotism and nationalism in the European History in Johann Huizinga's *Men and Ideas*, New York 1959, 99) Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (Collier Books: Toronto, 1944), 3.
- 2 Alan D. Falconer has cited the sayings of Frank Wright who considers nations as religions. He says, "Nationalisms are not merely "like" religions they are religions. Nation was considered as to be worshipped and adored." (Alan D Falconer, *Reconciling Memories* [Dublin: Columba Press, 1988], 75; Smith also consider nationalism as deity. "Nationalism dispenses with any mediating referent, be it totem or deity; its deity is the nation itself. The emotions it unleashes are those of the community directed itself, self-consciously extolling itself. The virtues it celebrates are exclusively and solely those of the "national self, and the crimes it condemns are those that threaten to disrupt that self. By means of the ceremonies, customs and symbols every member of a community participates in the life, emotions and virtues of that community and through them, re-dedicates him or herself to its destiny." (Smith, Anthony D., *National Identity*, [Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991],78)
- 3 Hans Kohn, *Nationalism: Its Meaning and History* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), 9.
- 4 Kohn mentions nationalism as a movement of freedom also. Nationalism is a movement which also refers for guarding a nation's independence in the face of an external aggressor and at others, to an intellectual assertion of a nation's separateness and identity- or in its extreme form superiority over other nations." (*Nationalism: Its Meaning and History*, 147).
- 5 *Islam and Modernity: An Agenda of Twenty First Century*, 143.
- 6 Reinhard Schulze, *A Modern History of Islamic World* (New York, 2000), 7.
- 7 Hans Kohn, *Nationalism and Imperialism in the Hither East* (New York: H. Fertig, 1969), 64; Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism: Between Islam and the Nation State*(London: Macmillan Press Ltd,1997), 116.
- 8 *Islam and the Challenges of Modernity: An Agenda of Twenty First Century*, 153.
- 9 *History of Islamic Societies*, 562.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *History of Islamic Societies*, 562.
- 12 *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* 62.
- 13 *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, 62.
- 14 John F. Devlin, *The Baath Party: A History from Its Origins to 1966* (Stanford: Hoover Institute Press, 1970), 172; "The Constitution of the Arab