

Socio-Religious Perspectives of HIV/AIDS among Female Sex Workers in Lahore, Pakistan

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Introduction:

Islam has taken a decisive and strict stance against adultery or fornication (*Zina*). The adultery has been declared as a major sin in the Holy Quran and thus stringently prohibited. Its atrociousness can be determined from the fact that in Holy Quran it has often been quoted adjacent to the most heinous of all the sins, that is, associating partners with Allah (*shirk*).

And come not near unto adultery. Lo! it is an abomination and an evil way.) (Al-Isra' 17: 32)

Adultery invites the anger of Almighty Allah as it is a socio-religious crime and has extremely bad effects on the society. Islam not only proscribes fornication, but also closes the means and avenues leading to it. The Holy Quran assures incentives for those who will not commit *Zina* in this life and in the life hereafter.

"O Prophet! when believing women come to you giving you a pledge that they will not associate aught with Allah, and will not steal, and will not commit adultery, and will not kill their children, and will not bring a calumny which they have forged of themselves, and will not disobey you in what is good, accept their pledge, and ask forgiveness for them from Allah; surely Allah is Forgiving, Merciful." (60:12)

The Holy Prophet (blessings and peace be upon him) said, "*Whoever guarantees me that he will guard his chastity, I will guarantee him Paradise*" (Al-Bukhari). Extremely harsh punishment for adultery has also been explicitly defined in the Holy Quran, with an objective to strictly curb this evil from the society. The calamitous consequences of adultery impinge on persons, families, and societies. Among these are that it involves disloyalty and betrays the belief and harmony that are fundamental for contended family life; it destabilizes a family's peace; it squanders one's energies; it erodes the transparency of one's spirit and, therefore, destroys one's trust; resultantly, exposing the person to the Allah's anger. The fornication also results in numerous diseases, out of which HIV/AIDS is the deadliest one (1), which is mainly passed on through unprotected sex with an infected person.

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women to spread Islam. This duty is considered a liability, as described by a teacher:

From an Islamic point of view, it is 'khayrukum man ta'allama al-quranwa 'allamabu' which means 'the best among you are those who learn the Quran and teach it. This is ofcourse for me a theological motivation. Furthermore, it is a responsibility for which one will not only be rewarded but will be held accountable if you don't hand down this knowledge. In this regard, I see it as my duty.

The effort must be made by the believers themselves under preliminary and provisional conditions. Thus, orthodox Muslims feel a need to transmit their Islamic knowledge to Muslims of future generation that they qualify as being predominantly non religious. They conceive it as the only way of enduring their theology, to consolidate and perpetuate the identity of its community from getting eroded and tainted with the passage of time.

The da'wa also wishes to redress some of the misconceptions linked to women especially concerning those related to their modest dress code and the rights of women. For women this means in particular to do instructional work in the sense of attempting to work against the widespread fallacy that Islam inherently produces gender inequality. In this context, the work of women on da'wa and their perseverance on knowledge acquisition can be rooted to their aim of dissociating Islam from its stereotype connotation of illiteracy. Thus, women pursuit to supplant their innocent passivity on religious issues, through the counter-image of educated and committed women.

Conclusion:

Understanding the women's aim to acquire and impart knowledge is simultaneously coupled with a sense of responsibility towards the construction of a virtuous community, which they try to put into practice in a twofold way. First, they relate it to a reaffirmation of motherhood, and to educate the next generation. Second, they articulate the goal to transmit knowledge and Islamic virtues to the wider Muslim community.

The women's emphasis on religious knowledge acquisition and their participation in the processes of knowledge diffusion provides them with a new role inside the Islamic community: they become the main educators of the next generation and the wider community through *da'wa*.

attributed to knowledge accumulation not only contain an individual component, as described above, but also has a strong collective implication.

The boundaries between public and private spheres hold particular significance. The establishment of the 'Private' domain manifests in the public domain, this gives rise to the relevance of domesticity. The prominence and responsibility that women attribute to the role of a mother comes close to the concept of "Political Motherhood" elaborated by Pnina Werbner .(7) In this concept, the domestic sphere constitutes both a separate entity and a realm, which gain universal and intimate importance. Hence, the domestic sphere, as the women conceptualized it, cannot be limited to a domain that is constitutive for process of individualization, but instead turns out to be a space that is largely societal and political. This idea of 'educated mother' was related to a redefinition of domesticity as a separate sphere, is gaining a central position in the formation of society. This enterprise has been condensed into the key notions of *islah* (reform) and *tajdid* (renewal). Moreover, Muslim women envisage the domestic sphere as a space that should be the basis for the creation of a collective subject, based on Islamic virtues, contemplated for the wider Islamic (transitional) *umma* through appropriate knowledge and supervision. This is the primary focus that has been adopted by the contemporary women in Pakistan. The reverential status of these women, coupled with the devoir to educate their children opens another horizon of spreading the Islam around the world.

Knowledge diffusion in da'wa activities:

One of the repercussions of the incessant increase in the education level of the women is that a growing number of them now engaged in spreading the philosophy of Islam and rectifying the heresies and apprehensions linked to Islamic values and traditions, particularly those associated with women. Apart from numerous informal and semi-private initiatives that the women set up themselves, more and more female teachers are employed in the different established Islamic female and gender-mixed organization. A myriad number of Islamic research organization have emerged, led by women, these provide counseling and secular education necessary for accomplishment in the society. This perception of knowledge dissemination can best be encompassed in terms of da'wa (literally: 'call' or 'invitation'). Since the primal years of Islamic foundation in the holy city of Madinah, da'wa has been viewed as a duty incumbent upon believers in order to encourage fellow Muslims in their struggle to lead more devout and pious lives. Nowadays, it has become an institution of immense significance with activism from all factions of the Islamic society. The modern shift in the concept of da'wa has sought

accumulation of knowledge in the women's perspective, constitutes its necessary starting point and vice versa. Such assumption challenge dormant conceptions of religion rooted in the post-Enlightenment tradition, which frames religion as a sub-category lying in semantic opposition to transcendental ideas of reason and individual autonomy. Moreover, women's subjective inclination to critique Islam seems more analogous to their parent's generation, notably, their supposed 'traditional,' 'non-reflexive' emulation of religious practices.(6)

Alternatively, ilm is pertinent to the metaphysical transmission of Islamic credo. Here, the goal is physically the cultivation of certain emotional inner disposition, which is the very basis on which faith is to be constructed and fortified.

This is the interaction of the cognitive and spiritual aspect of Islam. On the one hand, it is the cognitive acquisition of simple knowledge, facts, hadiths, and verses of the Quran and the meaning of their content. On the other hand, it has an effect on the relationship with God. The more I have knowledge, of course, provided that I am convinced of these things, the more I am fulfilled by faith, the more I am proud of my faith, and the deeper are those roots. The more my faith becomes unshakable. This spiritual growth is absolutely linked to this cognitive growth which one achieves through access to the sources.

While this discernment may seem more tilted towards the endeavor to become 'pious subject', there is yet, another dimension with a much more collective orientation involved.

Motherhood and the Promulgation of Knowledge to the Posterity:

A critical point here is that women have bounded their acquisition of knowledge with their appetite to be a good mother, thereby justifying their demand in the arena of religious hegemony. Unlike in the Colonial era, where the notion of knowledgeable women was an unorthodox anomaly, women argue that fostering children under the shade of the learned women will fulfill the requirements of transmitting Islamic values to the next generation.

This limitation does not conceive a restriction on their 'naturally given' role of a mother; rather they saw this as a privilege, most notably because by bringing up her children the women is esteemed as the most important person in charge of the construction or maintenance of the Muslim community and of society in a broader sense. Thus, they have decisive trust to keep, which would ultimately determine the fate of their coming generation. It is therefore important to underline that the high value

Methodology:

For the purpose of exploring the thematic link between religious knowledge acquisition and women empowerment, 20 practicing and publically committed women from Zainab Academy were interviewed using purposive sampling. The interview guide included questions related to the importance of religious knowledge, the feelings and perspectives shared by the sisterhood, the importance of *dawa* and the concept of identity and empowerment.

The study has focused on detailed narrative of the participants as well as their words, phrases, expressions and nonverbal cues.

With regards to ethical considerations, the respondents were given a brief overview of the research, their consent was sought and they were assured that their identity would be kept anonymous. Independently from in-depth interviews, we conducted long term fieldwork that included participant observation and meetings with the teachers to gain an in-depth insight into the world of practicing females at Zainab Academy, Lahore.

Findings :

Women Participation in the acquisition and diffusion of Islamic Knowledge

Most of the women who presently engaged in the dissemination and procurement of Islamic knowledge were involved in the process of Islamization in their youth. This was accompanied by their desire to adhere to the true faith, resisting temptation of the secular milieu and to consolidate their doctrines.(3) They referred to this imperishable Iman(faith) as Sina qua non. These new age Muslim women also reported that , it was not just their zeal and adherence to their faith that motivated them to acquire knowledge but that they also considered rudimentary knowledge deficient. They there by contended to the assertion of the classical and contemporary Muslim scholars that 'faith is defective without wisdom'. (4,5)They considered committing themselves to the study of religion a basic means of cultivating their faith in order to effectively transform their lives. The knowledge of Islam is meant to engulf the believer with divine presence, which the women seldom confronted in the implacable secular society.

Considering the status Islam extols to knowledge, one can access the indissoluble connection between true faith and knowledge. The virtues of knowledge have been accentuated countless in the scriptures, where knowledge is said to embody faith. When women emphasized the significance of knowledge, they generally stressed two different effects knowledge has for a believer. Primarily, it consolidates their tenets, which is considered fundamental to the enlightenment of religion and ushers to a more profound believe. Faith, instead of being a hindrance to the

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 Welt Des Islam*, New Series 8, 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/>.

- 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

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- 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