



## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BEST WOMEN OF CREATION

Shaykh Saleem al Hilaalee

Verily Allah created us to worship Him, and He created everything in pairs (male and female) in order that life may continue and that His worship may be established. Allah says,

“And Allah did create you (Aadam) from dust, then from Nutfah (male and female discharge semen drops i.e. Aadam's offspring), then He made you pairs (male and female).”<sup>2</sup>

Both the man and the woman have obligations and duties to fulfil, each o-ne's duties in harmony with the other's; the woman's duties complete and perfect those of the man, and the man's duties complete and perfect those of the woman. From those qualities which Allah and His Messenger (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) have praised, and which are required in a believing woman in order for her to perform her duties correctly, the greatest of these is the quality of her possessing the Deen. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said,

“A woman is married for four things: her wealth, her family status, her beauty and her deen. So you should marry the religious woman (otherwise) you will be a loser.”<sup>3</sup>

As for the husband, he should also be a righteous man, as the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said,

“When someone with whose deen and character you are satisfied asks your daughter in marriage, accede to his request. If you do not do so, there will be temptation on Earth and extensive corruption.”<sup>4</sup>

Indeed the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) was sent to perfect the people's character, and he (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) praised the woman who possesses these noble qualities and perfect character, saying that she is to a man the best possession in this world -

“The whole world is a provision, and the best object of benefit of the world is the pious woman.”<sup>5</sup>

Allah has created the woman as a companion for the man, in order that they may live in this world performing their duties and observing Allah's commands correctly. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said,

“I was sent to perfect good character,”<sup>6</sup> and, “Among the Muslims the most perfect, as regards his faith, is the one whose character is excellent, and the best among you are those who treat their wives well.”<sup>7</sup>

In order to achieve success in this world and the Hereafter the woman must adopt this methodology of perfecting her character, beginning with those affairs concerning her home. The woman is an essential component in the building of the home in order that it may be established upon Taqwa (fear of Allah & piety). Allah says that those who believe say,

“Our Lord! Bestow on us from our wives and our offspring who will be the comfort of our eyes...”<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the correction of the household is the first step towards the correction of the society.

**THE RIGHTEOUS WOMAN** is the one who knows her responsibilities, her rights and obligations, and performs those acts which are obligatory upon her. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said,

“If a woman prayed her five daily prayers, fasted in the month (of Ramadan), protected her private parts from illegal sexual intercourse, and obeyed her husband, it will be said to her: ‘Enter Paradise from whichever gate you like’.”<sup>9</sup>

And he (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said,

“Islam is based on (the following) five (principles): to testify that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that Muhammad (sallallahu 'alayhi wasallam) is His Messenger, to offer the prayers dutifully and perfectly, to pay Zakaat, to perform Hajj, and to observe fast during the month of Ramadhaan.”<sup>10</sup>

This is the first thing which the woman must take care of in all circumstances; whether difficulty, ease, pleasure or dislike - i.e. to perform the five obligatory pillars of Islam. Allah says, recorded in a hadeeth qudsi, “And the most beloved things with which My slave comes nearer to Me is what I have enjoined upon him.”<sup>11</sup>

**THE RIGHTEOUS WOMAN** should know the rights of her husband upon her and should obey him in all that is obedience to Allah. When Mu'aadh (radiy Allahu 'anhu) came to the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) and wanted to make sajdah (prostration) to him [as an act of respect], he (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) stopped him and said, “If I were to order anyone to prostrate himself before another, I should order a woman to prostrate herself before her husband.”<sup>12</sup> This is because of the great position of the husband with regards to his wife. He (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) also said,

“Whenever a man calls his wife to their bed but she refuses to come, letting him spend the night angry with her, she is cursed by the angels until she relents.”<sup>13</sup>

And he (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) also said,

“By the o-ne in whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad! No woman has fulfilled her obligations to her Lord until she has fulfilled her obligations to her husband. Even if he were to ask her for herself when she is mounted in the saddle, she would not refuse his request.”<sup>14</sup>

These ahaadeeth emphasize the great responsibility of the woman to obey her husband in all that is in obedience to Allah, for surely obedience to the husband is part of obedience to Allah. Allah has ordered the woman to be obedient to her husband and the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) praised the woman who brings happiness and pleasure to her husband. He (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said,

“Marry the loving and fertile, for I will compete with the other prophets with the number of my followers.”<sup>15</sup>

This type of woman is the o-ne through which a man would receive happiness in his home and o-ne who will raise a righteous family. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said,

“Everyone of you is a guardian, and is responsible for what is in his custody. A lady is a guardian of her husband's house and is responsible for it.”<sup>16</sup>

And Allah (subhannahu wa ta'ala) said,

“And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance.”<sup>17</sup>

By doing this, a woman can become of those truly obedient to Allah.

It must be noted that obedience to the husband is mentioned as being o-nly in those affairs which are good, i.e. o-nly in that which complies with the shari'ah (Laws) of Allah. So, if he orders her to pray, fast, and take care of the home, then this is all good and she should obey him in doing so. However, if he orders her with disobedience to Allah, then "There is no obedience to the creation when it involves disobedience to the Creator."<sup>18</sup> So if he orders her to be neglectful of her prayers or in her fasting, or he wants her to beautify herself in a way which is not permissible, or to leave the house wearing perfume etc., then she should not obey him in this as this is disobedience to Allah. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said,

"No obedience for evil deeds, obedience is required o-nly in what is good."<sup>19</sup>

**THE RIGHTEOUS WOMAN** should take care of and guard her herself and her honour. Allah praised Maryam the mother of 'Isa (alayhis salam) for possessing this great quality of chastity. From this guarding of chastity comes many other affairs.

1. Lowering the gaze. Allah has ordered both the men and the women to lower their gaze and to protect their private parts.<sup>20</sup>

2. Not leaving the house wearing perfume or displaying ornaments. Allah has ordered the woman to cover herself up in order to protect her honour and chastity. It is the practise of jaahiliyyah (ignorance) for the women to go out uncovered, and they consider this to be progress and liberation! Rather, it is from the ways of shaytaan. Allah mentions in the Qur'aan that when shaytaan whispered to Aadam and Hawwa, and they ate from the tree, their private parts became apparent to them.<sup>21</sup> So the way of shaytaan is to make apparent and to display the 'aurah. Every society in which open displaying of the people's private parts is prolific is an evil society and is upon the path of destruction. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said, "When a woman applies perfume and then goes about in an assembly, she is like such and such i.e. an adulteress."<sup>22</sup>

**THE RIGHTEOUS WOMAN** should not be o-ne who is given to complaining and nagging, rather she should be o-ne who brings happiness into the home. We can take an example from the story of Ibraaheem (alayhi sallam), when he left his wife, Hajar, in Makkah. Hajar said to him, "Who has ordered you to do this?" Ibraaheem answered her, saying, "Verily, my Lord has ordered me to do this". So she said, "If this is Allah's order, then Allah will never leave us and destroy us." A further example can be found in the story of Ismaa'eel (alayhi sallam) and his wife. Ibraaheem continued to visit Hajar and his son Ismaa'eel, until when his son had grown up and married he visited him at his home in Makkah. He knocked o-n the door and found that Ismaa'eel was not home. His wife was present but she did not recognise her husband's father. Ibraaheem began to question her as to her situation and whether or not she was contented etc. She replied that they were in a period of great poverty and trials, and she began complaining about her situation. So Ibraaheem said to her, "When Ismaa'eel returns, tell him to change the outer screen (lit. veil) of his house. So when Ismaa'eel returned, his wife informed him that an old man had visited him whilst he was out and that he had asked her about her situation, to which she replied as she had replied. Then she told him of the message Ibraaheem had left. Ismaa'eel then said to his wife, "Verily, it was my father and he ordered me to divorce you." So he divorced her and married another woman. Some time later Ibraaheem came again to visit his son and again found that he was not home. So he asked Ismaa'eel's new wife about her situation and whether or not she was content. She replied, "Alhamdulillah. Allah has given us great blessings and given us all that we need," even though at the time she had absolutely nothing in her house. So, before Ibraaheem left he said, "Tell Ismaa'eel to keep the outer screen of his house." When Ismaa'eel returned, his wife told him of his visitor and what he had said. Ismaa'eel said, "That was my father and he told me to keep you as my wife."<sup>23</sup>

Note how Ibraaheem, this great Prophet of Allah, described the woman as the outer screen of the house. This is because she is the keeper and protector of the house and those affairs concerning it. Whoever enters the house does so by her permission and knowledge. The shayateen wish for the women to leave their homes in their beautification, leaving behind their clothing, so that when the people have taken their pleasure from them, then they turn away from them as if they were nothing. Rather, the woman is as Ibraaheem described her, as she is the o-ne who takes care of the affairs of the home. A poet o-nce said, "The mother is (like) a school. If you take care of the mother, you take care of the whole society." The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said,

"O women, you should give charity and ask for much forgiveness. For I saw you in bulk amongst the dwellers of Hell." A wise lady among them said, "Why is it, Messenger of Allah, that our folk are in bulk in Hell?" He (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) replied, "You curse too much and are ungrateful to your husbands. If o-ne of you has a husband who is good to you for all of his life and then you see o-ne thing from him which displeases you, you say 'Verily, he was never good to me at all'."<sup>24</sup>

So, as the intimate companion of her husband, the woman must ensure to take care of these affairs, for if she is good and righteous then the whole society becomes good. But if there are conflicts and disputes in the home, then this leads to the destruction of the society.

In the Qur'aan, Allah (subhannahu wa ta'ala) mentions some examples of the righteousness of women. He (subhannahu wa ta'ala) gave the stories of four women, two of which were righteous and two who were evil. As for the pious women, they were the wife of Fir'awn and Maryam the daughter of 'Imraan.

When the wife of Fir'awn saw Musa (alayhi sallam) in the cradle, her eyes were full of love for him. She said to Fir'awn, "A comfort of the eye for me and for you. Kill him not, perhaps he may be of benefit to us, or we may adopt him as a son."<sup>25</sup> So he (Fir'awn) granted her wish and Musa grew up in her household. When he became a Prophet and began calling the people to Islam, she answered this call and became a Muslim, despite the fact that she was the wife of Fir'awn - the man who claimed to be Allah Himself, (subhannahu wa ta'ala) - and despite all that she possessed through being the wife of a king; she refused that and chose to be amongst Allah's company. This is a great example of how a woman chose the Hereafter over and above all of the wealth of this world.

The example of Maryam bint 'Imraan was that she took care of herself and her private parts in such a way as shows us the great importance of the woman's being chaste and not going out of the house unclothed ,etc.

The first example of the two evil women is that of the wife of Nuh (alayhi sallam). She used to go and tell the people of Nuh about what he was doing and planning; working and plotting against her husband.

And the example of the wife of Lut (alayhi sallam) is similar. When the two angels came to Lut, she told his people that two young men had come to her house, so the people came in an attempt to do evil to them.<sup>27</sup>

Islam has forbidden that the secrets of the household be divulged outside, and these two examples show the evil of this action. Therefore, the example of a good woman is o-ne who is quick in doing good deeds, she takes care of her private parts and does not spread the secrets of the home. She is o-ne who will be a caller to good, o-ne who closes the doors which lead to evil.

From the Sunnah we have the example of Umm Salamah - the wife of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam), the mother of the Believers. She was a woman who possessed great intellect and was of good opinion. When the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) went to make 'Umrah in the year 6AH, the Quraish prevented him from doing so and turned him back. He (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) told his companions, who were dressed in ihraam ready for 'Umrah, to cut their hair and slaughter their animals. They were astonished, and were hesitant to do this. He ordered them again and still they did not do as he had commanded. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) entered into the tent of Umm Salamah, unhappy and disturbed by what had happened, and he told her that he had ordered his companions to shave their heads and slaughter their animals but they did not do anything. Umm Salamah said, 'Go yourself in the midst of your companions and cut your hair and slaughter your animal. They will follow your example'. So he did this and they all followed his example.

Look at the great intellect and good opinion of this noble lady, how she advised the Messenger of Allah (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam), thereby removing his grief and concern. Similarly, the righteous woman should advise her husband in all that is good and will remove anguish and cause of concern from him.

Another example from the Sunnah of the righteousness of women is that of Umm Saleem - the wife of Abu Talhah (radiy Allahu 'anhu). Abu Talhah was a disbeliever when he came to Umm Saleem asking for her hand in marriage. She refused, saying, '*I will o-nly marry you if you become a Muslim*'. So he became a Muslim and she made her mahr (dowry) his Islam. They were blessed with a son whose name was Abu Umayr. He was very beloved to Abu Talhah, but however after a few years he passed away. So when Abu Talhah entered upon his wife and asked '*How is Abu Umayr?*', she answered him saying '*He is in the best of all situations*'. Then she beautified herself for her husband and after he had taken pleasure from her she said 'What do you think if a people had given another people some property to look after and they came o-ne day to ask for their property back, do you think they have the right to do so?' Abu Talhah said '*Yes, of course*'. So Umm Saleem said 'Verily, Allah has taken back His property'. At this Abu Talhah became very angry and said 'You did all of this and then told me the news about my son?' So he went to the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) and told him about what had happened. The Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam) said 'May Allah give blessings upon that night and what you did together'. They were granted a son from that very night and his name was Abdullah. Abdullah had nine other sons, all of whom had memorised the Qur'aan. This was in answer to the du'aa of the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam).

Once a guest came to the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wassallam), so he said to his companions 'Who will take care of my guest tonight?' o-ne of the Ansaar said 'I will, O Messenger of Allah'. So he went home and said to his wife 'What do we have for food?' She said 'We o-nly have enough food for our children'. He said 'Put the children to sleep whilst they are hungry. When the Prophet's guest arrives, serve him the food and put out the lamp and pretend to eat so that he does not think we are not eating'. So she obeyed her husband in this. The guest went back to the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) and told him what the Ansaari and his wife had done. When the Ansaari went to the Prophet (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) the next day, he (sallallahu 'alayhi wa sallam) said 'Allah (subhannahu wa ta'ala) is Astonished at what you did last night with regards to your guest. And Allah revealed the Ayah "And those who, before them, had homes (in Al-Madina) and had adopted the Faith, - love those who emigrate to them, and have no jealousy in their breasts for that which they have been given, and give them preference over themselves, even though they were in need of that."<sup>4</sup>

So what has preceded are some of the examples of how a woman can become amongst the most honourable and the best of creation, and thereby earn Paradise - and may Allah make us from among its people - Ameen.

## **FOOTNOTES**

2. Suratu-Fatir (35):11.
3. Bukhaaree.
4. Tirmidhee, Nasaa'i & Ibn Maajah.
5. Saheehul-Jaami' 3407.
6. Al-Muwwatta Imaam Maalik.
7. Tirmidhee.
8. Suratul-Furqaan (25):74.
9. Saheehul-Jaami' 674.
10. Bukhaaree.
11. Bukhaaree.
12. Tirmidhee.
13. Bukhaaree & Muslim.
14. Ibn Maajah & Ahmad.
15. Abu Daawood & Nasaa'i.
16. Bukhaaree.
17. Suratul-Ahzab (33):33.
18. Related by Al-Baghawee in Sharhus-Sunnah 10:44.
19. Bukhaaree.
20. Suratu-Nur (24):30-31.
21. Suratu-TaHa (20):121.
22. Tirmidhee, Abu Daawood & Nasaa'i.
23. Bukhaaree.
24. Muslim.
25. Suratul-Qasas (28):9

26. See from Suratu- Maryam (19):16

27. See Suratu-Tahrim (66):10

28. Suratul-Hashr (59):9

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