



Daughters as Blessing or Curse: Islamic Conception and Social Construction

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Abstract

The present study intends to develop an understanding regarding the differences between sons and daughters which exist at sociocultural level and the relevant Islamic teachings. It contends that most of the social practices are not a true representation of Islamic teachings. Religion, nevertheless, remains an integral part of almost every social system: it determines normative structures and their functioning. Exploring both the dimensions---social and religious---further enabled us to have a comprehensive understanding of gender conception. These are also helpful in dispelling the long existing misconceptions which have been leading to various objectionable and staunch practices. Most of the available literature and researches have been consulted to develop an in-depth knowledge regarding the female child, whether she is considered as a blessing or a curse. It is found that most of the social practices are in contradiction with the Islamic teachings. Flawed interpretations mislead masses and traditional mindsets are usually resistant to change. Islam emphasized on an unbiased stance for male and female conception, only will of God matters in this regard; however social attitudes are not found the same and deviates from Islamic guidelines in many ways.

Keywords: *Social construction, Islamic teachings, Daughters, Blessing, Curse.*

Introduction

This paper aims to understand the differences between sons and daughters which exist at sociocultural level and the relevant Islamic teachings. It is often observed that most of the social practices are not usually indicative of religious teachings.



Every society comprises of various social institutions and religion is fundamental one all these; it provides guidelines for the functioning of the rest such as family, economics, law, politics and others. Gender, another socially constructed concept cannot be disassociated from the larger social structure; therefore, both the aspects will be explored for better comprehension. Relevant available literature is consulted for the purpose. This research paper is divided into two sections: the first part sheds light on social construction of birth of daughter either as a blessing or curse. Moreover, how she is treated over the course of life, sociological factors will be discussed in this regard. The remaining half of the paper describes how does Islam envisage the birth of daughters along with its significance.

Social Construction and Daughters

Pakistan is predominantly a patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal society. The patriarchal system refers to male domination over women. In a patrilineal society the property is passed down from father to son/male heir whereas patrilocality refers to household arrangement where couple (and other family members) resides at male's house. Studies have shown that patriarchal structure is commonly found in many parts of South Asia; sons inherit property from fathers and family usually lives in a man's house.¹ Parents in these countries tend to invest more in male child compared to the female child. The main reason for this differential behavior associated with the two genders primarily relates to future rewards expected from sons. In many parts of these countries, females are not even sent to schools and discouraged to attain any form of formal education; the reason being that the young girls are expected to leave parents' house after marriage and will continue to play their traditional role primarily consisting of household activities.² Male members of the household are usually considered breadwinners, therefore, usually remain involved in outdoor (or indoor) work for earnings.³

One can take example of an Asian country that is China where parents prefer son's house for living in their old age.⁴ Due to this sole reason parents tend to have more social, emotional and economic investment in their sons and also take pride in birth of male child. As there are no such future rewards being expected from daughters, therefore any type of investment appeared to go in vain.⁵ These (sons) later get control over various resources, have greater physical mobility, tend to take decisions independently.⁹ Girls are considered burden whereas boys as assets.⁶ Men,

on the other hand are provided with better economic, political and social resources as these are considered fruitful and rewarding in later part of their lives.⁷ There has been less investment in girls' education due to aforementioned reasons. Furthermore, academic curriculum in schools also contribute to stereotypical gender perceptions.⁸ It implies that school curriculum and the way it is taught reinforce prevalent gender notions and underlying inequalities.¹⁰ Not only fathers take pride in the fact that they have a male heir, even mothers perceive son a prized resource as in their old age, women could suppress conjugal ties of young couples to keep the mother - son bond strong.¹¹

In Asian countries, the head of the household is mostly men who are responsible for taking care of financial matters along with decision-making regarding major decisions.¹² In Pakistan, in-egalitarian gender relations can be particularly witnessed due to structural inequality and differential investment.¹³ Birth of son brings happiness to the family, they distribute sweets among relatives and friends, also slaughter an animal to give a feast to them.¹⁴ Exchange of gifts is also customary practice on the birth of a child but that too is mainly determined by the sex of a child.¹⁵ Number of sons is another determinant of the social status of the family in Pakistani society.¹⁶ Sons provide social and economic support to their parents particularly in their old age.¹⁷ Daughters are considered as liabilities since the day they are born in the social-cultural set up of many parts of Pakistan. An Asian study has also revealed similar results, they found that parents rarely rely on their daughters, however, daughters remain in touch with their elderly parents.¹⁸

There are various factors which cause a negative attitude regarding daughters and almost all of these are socially constructed and traditionally practiced. Dowry is one such consideration that burdens parents and make them less happy at the birth of a female child. It is a popular tradition which commonly practiced in the subcontinent. Dowry comprises of material goods which are given to daughters on their marriage; these might include household items such as furniture, electronics, utensils etc., also expensive possessions like gold jewelry. It is also one causal factor that father and brother deny the property right of the daughter claiming or justifying that they have already invested enough in the marriage. One can understand that all these arguments somehow get associated with the financial factor. Men, in these cultures always wish to keep hold on the property and income as this gives them a sense of power and domination.

Having discussed the social practices and plausible reasons behind that, it is also important to consider the religious side. There has been distorted image of Islam and that is being reflected in many social practices. If we talk about education then Islam stresses education for both men and women without any discrimination.¹⁹ In sociological context, feudalism and patriarchy are the two major obstacles to female education.²⁰ Furthermore, a common practice among the feudals of Sindh is that young females are married to Quran so their property can be detained and held by the male members of the family. Males have also affiliated the concept of honour with the females of the family, men over protect their women, restrict their movement and also their life opportunities; this can be observed in many Muslim societies.²¹ Religion, in any society play an important role as it shapes minds of people; there are various provisions in Islam which emphasizes women's rights.²² These religious guidelines are not practiced with true spirit which lead to many social misconceptions about the gender. Education is an obligation for both men and women as per Islamic ideology.²³ With the change of time and growing awareness, many scholars are also emphasizing education as one of the fundamental rights of women.²⁴ However, this might not include a large body of the Pakistani population. The following section discusses this phenomenon mentioning various religious provisions to have a better and comprehensive understanding.

Islamic Guidelines about Daughters

In the following pages, the issue has been discussed in the light of the Holy Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions. The exegetical literature has been referred to and opinions of some scholars of the Holy Book and Sunnah have also been quoted.

The Holy Qur'ān and Birth of Daughters

The Holy Qur'ān tells that Allāh Almighty creates a human being as male or female as He intends. Belonging to either sex is a Divine plan, not a sign of inferiority in any way. The following verses elucidate that the process of procreation of human beings, embryonic development and sex differentiation is divinely willed. The Holy Book describes that the process of reproduction is in accordance with the plan and knowledge of the Almighty Allāh:

"وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنْثَى وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ وَمَا يُعَمَّرُ مِنْ مُعَمَّرٍ وَلَا يُنْقَصُ مِنْ عُمُرِهِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ"²⁵

“And [remember:] God creates [every one of] you out of dust, then out of a drop of sperm; and then He fashions you into either of the two sexes. And no female conceives or gives birth unless it be with His knowledge; and none that is long-lived has his days lengthened - and neither is aught lessened of his days-unless it be thus laid down in [God’s] decree: for, behold, all this is easy for God.”

Elucidating the meaning of the verse ‘Abdullah Yusūf ‘Alī states: “Things that appear most secret and mysterious to man are all known and ordained by God. They are all subject to God’s Laws and Decrees. The mystery of human birth, the mystery of sex, the mystery of life and Death and many other things, seem to man inexplicable. But they are all ordained by God, and their reasons all fully known to Him.”²⁶

At another place it has been underlined as follows:

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنَزِّلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي الْأَرْحَامِ"²⁷

“Verily, with God alone rests the knowledge of when the Last Hour will come; and He [it is who] sends down rain; and He [alone] knows what is in the wombs.”

‘Abdullah Yusūf ‘Alī states that the wombs are the sites in which mysteries of animal life, embryology, sex and other things remain hidden. It hides in itself the realities of a potential human being, the duration of pregnancy, the sex of the fetus, and his other characteristics.²⁸

About pregnancy, it is further underlined:

"إِلَيْهِ يَرْدُّ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَمَا تَخْرُجُ مِنْ ثَمَرَاتٍ مِنْ أَكْثَامِهَا وَمَا تَحْمِلُ مِنْ أُنْثَى وَلَا تَضَعُ إِلَّا بِعِلْمِهِ"²⁹

“In Him alone is vested the knowledge of when the Last Hour will come. And no fruit bursts forth from its calyx, and no female ever conceives, nor ever gives birth, save with His knowledge.”

The process of embryonic development takes place according to the will of the Creator. In spite of all advancement embryologists cannot assure pregnancy, and further the features and sex of the baby are not in the control of anyone except Allāh. The Qur’ān has clearly mentioned it as follows:

"هُوَ الَّذِي يُصَوِّرُكُمْ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ"³⁰

“He it is who shapes you in the wombs as He wills. There is no deity save Him, the Almighty, the Truly Wise.”

About the sex of a baby, it is stated:

"اللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَحْمِلُ كُلُّ أُنْثَىٰ وَمَا تَغِيضُ الْأَرْحَامُ وَمَا تَزْدَادُ وَكُلُّ شَيْءٍ عِنْدَهُ بِمِقْدَارٍ"³¹

“Allāh knows what any female bears (in her womb), and by how much the wombs may fall short (in gestation), and by how much they may increase (the average period): for with Him everything is (created) in accordance with its scope and culture.”

According to ‘Abdullah Yusūf ‘Alī, the female womb is an example of extreme secrecy even the pregnant knows nothing what is happening in her womb. She does not know her to-be-born would be a male or a female young. She will give birth to one baby or more than one. Her delivery will be short of standard time or it will exceed the standard time. However, the most hidden things are clear in God’s knowledge. He knows every minute detail of her womb in just measure and proportion.³²

Before Islam the Arabs were not happy at the birth of daughters. They had inhumane custom of burying alive their female babies. Their traditions permitted a father to bury his daughter alive as it was considered a disgrace for him.³³

The Qur’ān has described it in the following verses:

"وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ الْبَنَاتِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَلَهُمْ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُمْ بِالْأُنْثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ"³⁴

“And (thus, too) they ascribe daughters unto God, who is limitless in His glory – whereas for themselves (They would choose, if they could, only) what they desire for. Whenever any of them is given the glad tiding of (the birth of) a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger avoiding all people because of the (alleged) evil of the glad tiding which he has received, (and debating within himself:) Shall he keep this (child) despite the contempt (which he feels for it) or shall he bury it in the dust? Old, evil indeed is whatever they decide!”

The Holy Qur’ān has made it clear that having babies is a blessing that is out of human control. The following verses describe the different possibilities regarding fertility or infertility, birth of male babies, female baby or the both:

"لِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ يَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ إِنَاثًا وَيَهَبُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ الذُّكُورَ ۖ أَوْ
يُزَوِّجُهُمْ ذُكْرَانًا وَإِنَاثًا وَيَجْعَلُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ عَقِيمًا إِنَّهُ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ"³⁵

“To Allāh belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He creates what he will (and plans). He bestows the gift of female offspring to whomever he will and the gift of male offspring on whomever he wills, or he gives both male and female [to whomever he wills], and he leaves barren whomever he wills: for, he is all-knowing and infinite in his power.”

Dr. ‘Abdul Wadūd has rendered these verses 42: 44-50 by saying that Allah who owns the sovereign power controls His creation by his laws. He has a definite plan for his creation. He sets the male-to-female proportion according to His plan. To some, He gives either female or male offspring while to others He gives both male and female. He also keeps some of them without an offspring. He is replete with knowledge and is full of power to control the destinies according to His measures and standards.³⁶

Interpreting these verses, famous translator and commentator ‘Abdullah Yusūf ‘Alī observes that the growth of population and the proportion of males and females in it have various sociological and psychological implications. Despite all advancement in medical technology little is known with regards to the determination of sex in the embryo. Although the mechanical aspects of sex determination are available to the medical science, the profound details are beyond the reach of human intellect. It is definitely governed by God and it is governed by a meaning and purpose. He has complete power to carry out His Will and Purpose.³⁷

‘Abdullah Yusūf ‘Alī further writes it is a mystery even to parents themselves how the proportion of two sexes is maintained by God and how some of them are blessed to enjoy the fruits of children and others are denied of it. God put the responsibility of rearing children on some couples while others are not given this responsibility.³⁸ In the above verses mention of daughters preceded that of sons, indicating their birth as a blissful event, not a curse in any way. Ibn Qayyim has interpreted it as follows:

“According to me there is another reason of this (i.e. mentioning of daughters before of sons). Allah gives priority to daughters who were forsaken by the people of ignorance. The reason was to tell the people that this worthless type according

to you should be forsaken, but according to me they have priority to even mention than first.”³⁹

ṣāleḥ b. Aḥmad (d. 880 A.H.), the son of Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal said that whenever a daughter was born to his father, he used to say that the Prophets were the fathers of the daughters, and much praise is mentioned regarding them in the Qur’ān and Ḥadith.⁴⁰

Ya‘qūb b. Bakhtān said that he had seven daughters. Once Imām Aḥmad came to him and said that the Prophets were fathers of daughters. His saying relieved him of his worries.⁴¹

The Qur’ān has underlined the infanticide by fathers due to the fear of hunger or disgrace. It has been told that such girls buried alive would be asked about the cruelty inflicted on them. The Qur’ān points out it the following verses:

"وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ"⁴²

“And when the girl-child that was buried alive is made to ask for what crime she had been slain.”

Muḥammad Asad has appended the following exegetical note on these verses:

“The barbaric custom of burying female infants alive seems to have been fairly widespread in pre-Islamic Arabia, although perhaps not to the extent as has been commonly assumed. The motives were twofold: the fear that an increase of female offspring would result in economic burdens, as well as fear of the humiliation frequently caused by girls being captured by a hostile tribe and subsequently preferring their captors to their parents and brothers. Before Islam, one of the foremost opponents of this custom was Zayd ibn ‘Amr ibn Nufayl, a cousin of ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and spiritually a precursor of Muḥammad (cf. Bukhārī, Fada’il Aṣḥāb an-Nabī on the authority of ‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar); he died shortly before Muḥammad call to prophethood (Fathī al-Barī VII, 112). Another man, ṣa‘ṣa‘ah ibn Najiyah at-Tamīmī - grandfather of the poet Farazdaq - achieved equal fame as a saviour of infants thus condemned to death; he later embraced Islam. Ibn Khallikān (II, 197) mentions that ṣa‘ṣa‘ah saved about thirty girls by paying ransom to their parents.”⁴³

Allah forbade such fathers who were killing their children, especially daughters for fear of hunger. This commandment has been underlined in the following way:

"وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ حَشِيَّةَ إِمْلَاقٍ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ إِن قَتَلْتُمْ كَانَ خَطئًا كَبِيرًا"⁴⁴

“Hence, do not kill your children for fear of poverty: I t is We who shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily, killing them is a great sin.”

According to ‘Abdullah Yusūf ‘Alī, female infanticide was a custom among the Arabs. It was because a son was deemed a source of strength in a society consisting of warring tribes, whereas a girl was considered a weakness since she could not participate in wars. The above verse shows that female infanticide is a major sin in the sight of God, especially when it is done in the fear of poverty. Even now this crime is done for economic reasons, and female infants are thought to be a burden on the family ⁴⁵

Muḥammad Asad thinks that in addition to the condemnation of burying children alive, this may be a reference to the pre-Islamic Arabian practice of sacrificing male children to some of their gods. Beyond this, however, the above prohibition is undertaken on economic grounds. ⁴⁶

According to Ibn Kathīr (d. 774/1373), this verse indicates the Allāh’s attribute of Compassion. He is more compassionate than a father. He enjoins parents to provide food, shelter and inheritance to their children. The people of Jahilīyah used to kill their daughters so that they could not inherit from them. Allāh the Almighty forbids killing children. ⁴⁷

“قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَحَرَّمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِرَاءً عَلَى اللَّهِ قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ” ⁴⁸

“Lost, indeed, are they, who in their weak-minded ignorance, slay their children and declare as forbidden that which God has provided for them as sustenance, falsely ascribing (such prohibitions) To God: they have gone astray and have not found the right path.”

The following verse prohibits both killings of children and killing in general very lucidly:

“قُلْ تَعَالَوْا أَتْلُ مَا حَرَّمَ رَبُّكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ أَلَّا تُشْرِكُوا بِهِ شَيْئًا ۖ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا ۖ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ مِنْ إِمْلَاقٍ ۖ نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكُمْ وَإِيَّاهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَنَ ۖ وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّاكُم بِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ” ⁴⁹

“Say: Come, let me convey unto you what God has [really] forbidden to you: Do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught beside Him; and [do not offend against but, rather,] do good unto your parents; and do not kill your children for fear of

poverty - [for] it is We who shall provide sustenance for you as well as for them; and do not commit any shameful deeds, be they open or secret; and do not take any human being's life - [the life] which God has declared to be sacred - otherwise than in [the pursuit of] justice: this has He enjoined upon you so that you might use your reason.”

Killing the children has been told as a great sin the Holy Qur’ān has underlined the Divine injunctions regarding killing:

"وَمَنْ يَقْتُلْ مُؤْمِنًا مُتَعَمِّدًا فَجَزَاؤُهُ جَهَنَّمُ خَالِدًا فِيهَا وَغَضِبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَلَعَنَهُ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُ عَذَابًا عَظِيمًا"⁵⁰

“But whoever deliberately slays another believer, his requital shall be hell, therein to abide; and God will condemn him, and will reject him, and will prepare for him awesome suffering.”

The Holy Qur’ān also clarifies that acceptance of a person is not on the basis of his/her sex. The example of Maryam has been quoted in the Qur’ān.

"إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ فَلَمَّا وَضَعَتْهَا قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَضَعْتُهَا أُنْثَىٰ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا وَضَعْتَ وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنْثَىٰ وَإِنِّي سَمَّيْتُهَا مَرْيَمَ وَإِنِّي أُعِيذُهَا بِكَ وَذَرَيْتَهَا مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ ۖ فَتَقَبَّلَهَا رَبُّهَا بِقَبُولٍ حَسَنٍ وَأَنْبَتَهَا نَبَاتًا حَسَنًا وَكَفَّلَهَا زَكَرِيَّا"⁵¹

“When a woman of (the house of) ‘Imran prayed: O my Sustainer! Behold, unto Thee do I vow (the child) that is in, my womb, to be devoted to Thy service. Accept it, then, from me: Verily, Thou alone art all-hearing, all-knowing. When she had given birth to the child, she said: O my Sustainer! Behold, I have given birth to a female—the while God had been fully aware of what she would give birth to, and (fully aware) that no male child (she might have hoped for) could ever have been like this female—and I named her Mary. And verily, I seek Thy protection for her and her offspring against Satan, the accursed. And thereupon her Sustainer accepted the girl-child with goodly acceptance, and caused her to grow up in goodly growth, and placed her in the care of Zachariah.”

Daughter’s Birth in the Light of Ḥadīth Literature:

The People of Arabia had not good reputation with regard to their daughters and women were usually maltreated. Female infanticide was being practiced in some

tribes. Females were deprived of the right of inheritance. Concubines were being kept by wealthy men. Buying and selling of female slaves was widespread in them and even mothers of their own offspring were being sold. They were practicing unrestricted polygamy at large scale.

An-Nu‘mān b. Bashīr has narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((اغْدِلُوا بَيْنَ أَبْنَائِكُمْ اغْدِلُوا بَيْنَ أَبْنَائِكُمْ))⁵²

“Treat your children fairly, treat your children fairly.”

‘Ā’ishah (God be pleased with her) has narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((مَنْ ابْتُلِيَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْبَنَاتِ فَصَبَرَ عَلَيْهِنَّ كُنَّ لَهُ حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ))⁵³

“Whoever is tried with something from daughters, and he is patient with them, they will be a barrier from the fire for him.”

Islam has eradicated forever the custom of burying daughters who now occupies special place in the hearts of their fathers.

Al-Mughīrah bin Shu‘bah has narrated that the Prophet of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((إِنَّ اللَّهَ حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ عُقُوقَ الْأُمَّهَاتِ، وَوَأْدَ الْبَنَاتِ، وَمَنْعَ وَهَابٍ، وَكَرِهَ لَكُمْ قَيْلَ وَقَالَ، وَكَثْرَةَ السُّؤَالِ، وَإِضَاعَةَ الْمَالِ))⁵⁴

“Allāh has forbidden for you, (1) to be undutiful to your mothers, (2) to bury your daughters alive, (3) to not to pay the rights of the others (e.g. charity, etc.) and (4) to beg of men (begging). And Allah has hated for you (1) vain, useless talk, or that you talk too much about others, (2) to ask too many questions, (in disputed religious matters) and (3) to waste the wealth (by extravagance).”

Ibn ‘Abbās has narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ أَنْثَى فَلَمْ يَبْدُهَا وَلَمْ يُهَيِّئْهَا وَلَمْ يُؤْتِرْ وَلَدَهُ عَلَيْهَا - قَالَ يَعْنِي الذُّكُورَ - أَذْخَلَهُ اللَّهُ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمْ يَذْكُرْ عَثْمَانُ يَعْنِي الذُّكُورَ))⁵⁵

“If anyone has a female child, and does not bury her alive, or slight her, or prefer his children (i.e. the male ones) to her, Allāh will bring him into Paradise. ‘Uthmān did not mention ‘male children’.”

‘Uqbah b. ‘Āmir (God be pleased with him) has narrated that he heard the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) saying:

((مَنْ كَانَ لَهُ ثَلَاثُ بَنَاتٍ فَصَبَّرَ عَلَيْهِنَّ وَأَطْعَمَهُنَّ وَسَقَاهُنَّ وَكَسَاهُنَّ مِنْ جِدَّتِهِ - كُنَّ لَهُ حِجَابًا مِنَ النَّارِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ))⁵⁶

"Whoever has three daughters and is patient towards them, and feeds them, gives them to drink, and clothes them from his wealth; they will be a shield for him from the Fire on the Day of Resurrection."

Abū Saʿīd al-Khudarī (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((مَنْ كَانَ لَهُ ثَلَاثُ بَنَاتٍ أَوْ ثَلَاثُ أَخَوَاتٍ أَوْ ابْنَتَانِ أَوْ أُخْتَانِ فَأَحْسَنَ صُحْبَتَهُنَّ وَاتَّقَى اللَّهَ فِيهِنَّ فَلَهُ الْجَنَّةُ))⁵⁷

"Whoever has three daughters, or three sisters, or two daughters, or two sisters and he keeps good company with them and fears Allāh regarding them, Paradise is for him."

Abū Saʿīd al-Khudarī (God be pleased with him) narrates that the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((لَا يَكُونُ لِأَخَدِكُمْ ثَلَاثُ بَنَاتٍ أَوْ ثَلَاثُ أَخَوَاتٍ فَيُحْسِنُ إِلَيْهِنَّ إِلَّا دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ))⁵⁸

"There is no one who has three daughters, or three sisters, and he treats them well, except that he enters paradise."

Mālik (God be pleased with him) has narrated that he heard the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) saying:

((مَنْ عَالَ جَارِيَتَيْنِ حَتَّى تَبْلُغَا جَاءَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَنَا وَهُوَ . وَضَمَّ أَصَابِعَهُ))⁵⁹

"He, who brought up two girls properly till they grew up, he and I would come (together) (very closely) on the Day of Resurrection, and he interlaced his fingers (for explaining the point of nearness between him and that person)."

Ibn ʿAbbās (God be pleased with him) has narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((مَا مِنْ رَجُلٍ تُدْرِكُ لَهُ ابْنَتَانِ فَيُحْسِنُ إِلَيْهِمَا مَا صَحِبَتَاهُ أَوْ صَحِبَتُهُمَا إِلَّا أَدْخَلْنَاهُ الْجَنَّةَ))⁶⁰

"There is no man whose two daughters reach the age of puberty and he treats them kindly for the time they are together, but they will gain him admittance to Paradise."

In *Al-Adab al-Mufrad* Imām Bukhārī narrates that the Holy Prophet of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((مَنْ عَالَ جَارِيَتَيْنِ حَتَّى تُدْرِكَا، دَخَلْتُ أَنَا وَهُوَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ كَهَاتَيْنِ، وَأَشَارَ مُحَمَّدٌ بِالسَّبَابَةِ وَالْوُسْطَى))⁶¹

“I will enter the Garden with someone who brings up two daughters until they come of age, and we will be like these two, and he indicated his index finger and middle finger.”

Abū Bakr bin 'Ubaidullāh bin Anas bin Mālik (God be pleased with them) narrated that the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((مَنْ عَالَ جَارَتَيْنِ دَخَلْتُ أَنَا وَهُوَ الْجَنَّةَ كِهَاتَيْنِ . وَأَشَارَ بِأَصْبُعَيْهِ))⁶²

“Whoever raises two girls then I and he will enter Paradise like these two. And he indicated with his two fingers.”

Ibn Mājah has narrated the following ḥadīth on the authority of ṣaṣaḥ:

((دَخَلْتُ عَلَى عَائِشَةَ امْرَأَةٍ مَعَ ابْنَتَيْنِ لَهَا فَأَعْطَتْهُمَا ثَلَاثَ تَمَرَاتٍ فَأَعْطَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِنْهُمَا تَمْرَةً ثُمَّ صَدَعَتْ الْبَاقِيَةَ بَيْنَهُمَا . قَالَتْ فَأَتَى النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ . فَحَدَّثْتُهُ فَقَالَ مَا عَجَبُكَ لَقَدْ دَخَلْتُ بِهِ الْجَنَّةَ))⁶³

"A woman entered upon 'Ā'ishah with her two daughters, and she gave her three dates. (The woman) gave each of her daughters a date, then she split the last one between them. She ('Ā'ishah) said: 'Then the Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) came and I told him about that.' He said: 'Why are you surprised? She will enter Paradise because of that.' "

Surāqah b. Mālik has transmitted the following Prophetic tradition:

((أَلَا أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَى أَفْضَلِ الصَّدَقَةِ ابْنَتُكَ مَرْدُودَةٌ إِلَيْكَ لَيْسَ لَهَا كَاسِبٌ غَيْرُكَ))⁶⁴

“Shall I not tell you of the best charity? A daughter who comes back to you and has no other breadwinner apart from you.”

Imām Muslim has transmitted from 'Ā'ishah (God be pleased with her) who is reported to have said:

((جَاءَتْنِي مِسْكِينَةٌ تَحْمِلُ ابْنَتَيْنِ لَهَا فَأَطْعَمْتُهُمَا ثَلَاثَ تَمَرَاتٍ فَأَعْطَتْ كُلَّ وَاحِدَةٍ مِنْهُمَا تَمْرَةً وَرَفَعَتْ إِلَى فِيهَا تَمْرَةً لِنَافِلَتِهَا فَاسْتَطْعَمَتْهُمَا ابْنَتَاهَا فَشَقَّتِ التَّمْرَةَ الَّتِي كَانَتْ تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَأْكُلَهَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَأَعْجَبَنِي شَأْنُهَا فَذَكَرْتُ الَّذِي صَنَعْتُ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَوْجَبَ لَهَا بِهَا الْجَنَّةَ أَوْ أَعْتَقَهَا بِهَا مِنَ النَّارِ))⁶⁵

“A poor woman came to me along with her daughters. I gave her three dates. She gave a date to each of them and then she took up one date and brought that to her mouth in order to eat that, but her daughters expressed desire to eat it. She then divided the date that she intended to eat between them. This (kind) treatment of her impressed me and I mentioned that which she did to Allāh's Messenger (upon

whom be peace and greeting). Thereupon he said: Verily Allāh has assured Paradise for her, because of (this act) of her, or He has rescued her from Hell-Fire.” ‘Ā’ishah (God be pleased with her), the beloved wife of the Blessed Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) has narrated:

((دَخَلَتْ امْرَأَةً مَعَهَا ابْنَتَانِ لَهَا فَسَأَلَتْ فَلَمْ تَجِدْ عِنْدِي شَيْئًا غَيْرَ تَمْرَةٍ فَأَعْطَيْتُهَا إِيَّاهَا فَفَسَمَتْهَا بَيْنَ ابْنَتَيْهَا وَلَمْ تَأْكُلْ مِنْهَا ثُمَّ قَامَتْ فَخَرَجَتْ فَدَخَلَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَأَخْبَرْتُهُ فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : مَنْ ابْتُلِيَ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ هَذِهِ الْبَنَاتِ كُنَّ لَهُ سِتْرًا مِنَ النَّارِ))⁶⁶

“A woman came to me with two daughters. She was asking (for food) but I did not have anything with me except a date. So, I gave it to her and she divided it between her two daughters without eating any of it herself. Then she got up to leave, and the Prophet entered, and I informed him about her. So, the Prophet said: Whoever is tested something from these daughters (and he/she passes the test), they will be a screen for them from the Fire.”

‘Ā’ishah (God be pleased with her) has also narrated:

((جَاءَتْنِي امْرَأَةٌ وَمَعَهَا ابْنَتَانِ لَهَا فَسَأَلَتْنِي فَلَمْ تَجِدْ عِنْدِي شَيْئًا غَيْرَ تَمْرَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَأَعْطَيْتُهَا إِيَّاهَا فَأَخَذَتْهَا فَفَسَمَتْهَا بَيْنَ ابْنَتَيْهَا وَلَمْ تَأْكُلْ مِنْهَا شَيْئًا ثُمَّ قَامَتْ فَخَرَجَتْ وَابْنَتَاهَا فَدَخَلَ عَلَيَّ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَحَدَّثَنِي حَدِيثَهَا فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ : مَنْ ابْتُلِيَ مِنَ الْبَنَاتِ بِشَيْءٍ فَأُخْسِنَ إِلَيْهِنَّ كُنَّ لَهُ سِتْرًا مِنَ النَّارِ))⁶⁷

“A woman came to me along with her two daughters. She asked me for (charity) but she found nothing with me except one date, so I gave her that. She accepted it and then divided it between her two daughters and herself ate nothing out of that. She then got up and went out, and so did her two daughters. (In the meanwhile) Allāh's Apostle (upon whom be peace and greeting) visited me and I narrated to him her story. Thereupon Allāh's Apostle (upon whom be peace and greeting) said: He who is involved (in the responsibility) of (bringing up) daughters, and he accords benevolent treatment towards them, there would be protection for him against Hell-Fire.”

In *al-Adab Al-Mufrad*, Imām Bukhārī narrates that Ibn ‘Umar (God be pleased with him) has reported:

((أَنَّ رَجُلًا كَانَ عِنْدَهُ، وَلَهُ بَنَاتٌ فَتَمَتَّى مَوْتَهُنَّ، فَغَضِبَ ابْنُ عُمَرَ فَقَالَ: أَنْتَ تَرْزُقُهُنَّ؟))⁶⁸

“It is reported that there was a man who had daughters who was with Ibn ‘Umar when he wished that his daughters were dead. Ibn ‘Umar became angry and said, "While you are providing for them!"

Imām Bukhārī narrates in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* that the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((أَلَا أَدُلُّكَ عَلَىٰ أَعْظَمِ الصَّدَقَةِ، أَوْ مِنْ أَعْظَمِ الصَّدَقَةِ؟ قَالَ: بَلَىٰ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ. قَالَ: ابْنُكَ مَرْذُودٌ
إِلَيْكَ، لَيْسَ لَهَا كَاسِبٌ غَيْرُكَ))⁶⁹

“Shall I show you the greatest ṣadaqa (or one of the greatest forms of ṣadaqa)?” He replied, Yes, indeed, Messenger of Allāh! He went on, To provide for your daughter when she is returned to you and you are her sole source of provision.”

The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) always treated children with indiscriminate justice and impartiality. He and his companions have left beautiful examples for the Muslim community to follow.

Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm has narrated from al-Ḥasan that once, while the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) was among the company of his companions, a child entered and approached his father who patted him on the head, and put him on the right leg. After some time, the daughter of the same man came to her father. He patted her on the head and made her sit on the ground. Thereupon, the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said: why do you not sit her on your other leg? The father picked her up and placed her on his other leg. The Messenger of Allāh said: “Now you have acted indiscriminately”.⁷⁰

About the behavior of the companions, ‘Alī b. Ja’d has transmitted from Ibrāhīm that they used to treat their children with equality, even in the number of kisses given to them.⁷¹

Abū Hurayrah (God be pleased with him) has transmitted from the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting): “The best of you in God’s eyes is the best in terms of morality, and the best of you is the one who is most excellent to his daughters and wives.”⁷²

The love of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) for his daughters and granddaughter is a testimony of women’s status in Islam. The attributes of Fāṭimah (God be pleased with her) has been articulated in ḥadīth literature who is actually representative of all women.

‘Abdullah bin Az-Zubayr has narrated that when ‘Alī b. Abī ṭālib (God be pleased with him) wanted to marry the daughter of Abū Jahl, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

((إِنَّمَا فَاطِمَةُ بَضْعَةٌ مِنِّي يُؤْذِينِي مَا آذَاهَا وَيُنْصِبُنِي مَا أَنْصَبَهَا))⁷³

"Indeed, Fāṭimah is but a part of me, I am harmed by what harms her and I am uncomfortable by what makes her uncomfortable."

Imām Bukhārī has narrated on the authority of Al-Miswar bin Makhrama (God be pleased with him) the following words:

74 ((فَاطِمَةُ بَضْعَةٌ مِنِّي، فَمَنْ أَغْضَبَهَا أَغْضَبَنِي))

"Fāṭimah is a part of me, and he who makes her angry, makes me angry." When 'Alīb. Abī ṭālib (God be pleased with him) wanted to marry the daughter of Jahl (for marriage), and that news reached the Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) who said:

75 ((إِنَّمَا فَاطِمَةُ بَضْعَةٌ مِنِّي يُؤْذِينِي مَا آذَاهَا وَيُنْصِبُنِي مَا أَنْصَبَهَا))

"Indeed Fāṭimah is but a part of me, I am harmed by what harms her and I am uncomfortable by what makes her uncomfortable."

Miswar b. Makhramah reported Allāh's Messenger (upon whom be peace and greeting) as saying:

76 ((إِنَّمَا فَاطِمَةُ بَضْعَةٌ مِنِّي يُؤْذِينِي مَا آذَاهَا))

"Fāṭimah is a part of me. He in fact tortures me who tortures her."

Anas (God be pleased with him) has narrated that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

77 ((حَسْبُكَ مِنْ نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ مَرْيَمُ ابْنَةُ عِمْرَانَ وَخَدِيجَةُ بِنْتُ خُوَيْلِدٍ وَفَاطِمَةُ بِنْتُ مُحَمَّدٍ وَأَسِيَّةُ امْرَأَةُ فِرْعَوْنَ))

"Sufficient for you among the women of mankind are Maryam bint 'Imrān, Khadijah bint Khūwailid, Fāṭimah bint Muḥammad and Asiyah the wife of Fir'awn."

Abū Qatādah al-Anṣārī narrates that the Messenger of Allāh (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

78 ((أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ كَانَ يُصَلِّي وَهُوَ حَامِلٌ أُمَامَةَ بِنْتُ زَيْنَبٍ بِنْتُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ وَلَأَبِي الْعَاصِ بْنِ رَبِيعَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ شَمْسٍ، فَإِذَا سَجَدَ وَضَعَهَا، وَإِذَا قَامَ حَمَلَهَا))

"Allāh's Messenger (upon whom be peace and greeting) was praying and he was carrying Umāmah the daughters of Zaynab, the daughter of Allāh's Messenger (upon whom be peace and greeting) and she was the daughter of 'Aṣ bin Rabī'ah

bin ‘Abd Shams. When he prostrated, he put her down and when he stood, he carried her (on his neck).”

Ḥadīth literature by Shī‘ah traditionists also contains Prophetic traditions about daughters. In “Biḥār al-Anwār” the following tradition has been quoted: “Your best children are your daughters.”⁷⁹

The same book also contains: “One who goes to the market and buys something and brings it home for his wife and children is similar to one who supports the needy. It is better to give a priority to daughters in gift. In fact, whoever pleases his daughter gets the reward of having freed one of the slaves from the line of Ismā‘īl.”⁸⁰

In *Furu‘ al-Kāfī* the following Prophetic tradition is reported: “A female child is a blessing.”⁸¹

Research of Genetics about Daughters’ Birth:

In our society a wife is always held responsible for the birth of a daughter but current research in the field of genetics has proved the sex of an embryo is determined by male partner. The process of inheritance of baby’s sex is briefly as follows:

In human beings, somatic cells contain 46 chromosomes arranged in 23 pairs. Both male and female sex cells (spermatozoan and ovum) have 22 pairs of same types of chromosomes called autosomes. One of the pairs---out of 23 pairs---is different and is called sex chromosomes. In female, the sex chromosomes are of same type i.e. XX chromosomes but in males, the pair of sex chromosomes is somewhat different to female. In male, the sex chromosome is XY. So male sex chromosome is either X or Y. During gametogenesis, chromosome number is reduced to one half i.e. 23 (from diploid number to haploid). It is spermatogenesis that produces two types of sperms i.e. those containing X chromosomes and those containing Y chromosomes. If spermatozoan containing X chromosome fertilizes an ovum, the developing baby would be female and if spermatozoan containing Y chromosome fertilizes an ovum, the result would be a male baby.

So genetically it is injustice to allege a mother being responsible for a female baby. In fact, it is a father who is responsible for birth of a daughter.

Conclusion

The findings, which have been derived from existing sources and available literature reveal that there is a gap between social practices and Islamic teachings regarding gender, particularly daughters. In the social context, female births are less desired, considered a liability, an economic burden, whereas boys are the assets, future care givers and breadwinners. These sociological factors reinforce existing patriarchal structure and male domination and further suppression of women. Socio-cultural values further restrict women's mobility and define their role within the four walls of the house. Moreover, it is usually considered that mother is primarily responsible for the sex of the child, however Islamic teachings inform us differently. It is found that many of the social practices are not true representative of religious Islamic teachings. Islam stresses an unbiased stance for male and female conception, only will of God matters in this regard; however social attitudes are not found same and diverges from Islamic ideology. In Islam, birth of female child is mentioned as a blessing contrary to social construction where daughter is considered as a curse. In traditional and underdeveloped societies, many people look up to religious scholar for guidance. It implies that a huge responsibility lies on their shoulder to communicate the true interpretation of God's words. These religious scholars can play a significant role in bringing about positive change in the existing mindsets of people. Educational institutions and media could also play a very effective role in this regard.

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