
ENGLISH–WOMAN'S SOCIAL MOBILITY IN ISLAM AND CONTEMPORARY PĀSHŪN SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY OF DISTRICT BĀNNŪ AND LĀKKI MĀRWĀT

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ABSTRACT:

*Women were once considered second rate creatures were deprived of their basic human rights in the pre-Islamic Arabia, like rest of the civilizations in the world at that time. Islam lifted their status from the man-made discrimination and unjust dominance. Women were granted a just status in all spheres of life and their physical, psychological, financial and social needs were given due consideration. As a result, they were able to play an active and productive role in the uplifting and developing the newly-established Islamic State in *Mādīnāh* by providing a range of different kinds of services to the community. The fundamental sources of Islam and literature review of Islamic historical texts illuminate their active social participation and mobility. Contrary to the teachings of Islam, the woman is often restricted and confined within the four walls of the house in contemporary Pashtun society even though she has the capacity and ability to play her due role in social welfare and development*

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of society by participating along with the male counterparts as per their natural capacities and following the principles of moral conduct as laid down by Islam. An attempt has been made in this paper to study and explore the background, context and factors responsible for the restricted social mobility of women in District Bānnū and Lākkī Mār wāt and highlight the original teachings of Islam in this respect.

KEYWORDS: Women, Social Mobility, Islam, Pāṣṭūn Society, Bānnū, Lākkī Mār wāt

Introduction:

The woman is not merely a subject to a man; she has her own independent personality.¹ *Hazrat Umer* (Allah be pleased with him) said that we never valued women in the era of ignorance (*Jāhīlīyyāh*) until the injunction of Allah Almighty was revealed in their favor and their rights were clarified by the Quran and the Messenger of Allah (May Allah's peace and blessings be upon him) in every possible detail.^{2,3} Literature indicates the devalued status of women until the dawn of Islam. Islam, as from the very beginning, emphasized on women rights as given to them by Allah Almighty.⁴ Even though Islam enhanced the value and status of women both theoretically and practically in the Prophetic era⁵, neglecting Muslim women rights in collective matters is a reality of the contemporary Muslim states and societies.⁶ The Muslim societies in the contemporary world are not presenting to us the role model of Islamic teachings, in which the Qur'an and *Ṣūnnāh* provided women the just rights in all spheres of life.⁷ Theoretically, Muslim woman seems as the most fortunate princess of her own kingdom (home) but, practically, she might not enjoy the theoretical rights in the contemporary Muslim societies.

Cultural traditions and values are more dominant in contemporary Pāṣṭūn

society than the religion.⁸ There are certain traditions regarding nuptial ties in which a bride is sold like an animal and even she does not know about the background and personality of the bridegroom. Although the tradition is decreasing with the passage of time due to increasing literacy and awareness, still the tradition exists in some areas.⁹ Undue and unnecessary restrictions on women's social mobility are one of the issues that needs to be addressed; people should be informed about the real status and individuality of the woman instead of treating them as a commodity or property of man that solely and unquestionably belongs to him. People should be informed about the stance of Islam and that it has not restricted women's social mobility in terms of participating in the social and political struggle for the welfare and well-being of her own self, her offspring, and society at large.¹⁰ Moreover, if the Muslim societies become an ideal and actual role model by following the teachings of Islam than the light of Islam can be spread out over the entire globe and the process can speed up.¹¹

Bānnū:

It is one of the main districts of Southern *Khyber Pākhtūnkhwā*, adjacent to the tribal area of North *Waziristan*, district *Karak* and district *Lākkī Mārwaṭ* respectively. According to the available historical records, *Bānnū* had an important strategic position in the tribal areas as it was used as a military base during British rule for subjugating the tribal areas. The inhabitants of the said district are known as *Banochis* and they speak a unique and specific dialect of Pashto. Main ethnic classes are *Bānochīṣ*, *Wāzīr*, *Nīāzī*, and *Mārwaṭṣ*. Moreover, the ratio of Muslims is 99.5%, *Ahmadis* 0.3%, Christian 0.19% and Hindus 0.03%. 98.3% inhabitants of

Bānnū speak *Banochi* dialect of Pashto while the rest 1.03% speak Ūrdū and Punjabi respectively. It has a total population of 1.073 million consisting 52% male and 48% female population. 95% population belongs to the rural area while 5% are residing in the urban area. The total geographical area of the district is 1,227 square kilometers. It has 49 Union Councils and 2 Tehsils, Tehsil *Bānnū* and *Domel*. Furthermore, it is famous for the drain basin of *Kūrrām* and *Tochi/Gambila*.¹²

Lākkī Mārwaṭ:

Lākkī Mārwaṭ is connected with districts *Kārāk* in the North and *Bānnū* in the North-West, districts Dera Ismail Khan in the South and Tank in the South-West. In the West of *Lākkī Mārwaṭ* is South Waziristan Agency. The main ethnic classes are *Mārwaṭ*, *Bānochi*, *Khāṭṭāk*, *Wāzīr*, *Bheṭṭānī*, *Nīāzī* and *Gāndāpūr*. Its population is 815000 with the ratio of 51% male and 49% female. 86% population belongs to the rural area while 14% are residing in the urban area. It has 33 Union Councils and 2 Tehsils, Tehsil *Lākkī Mārwaṭ* and *Ṣerāī Nāūrāng* respectively. It was created as a district on July 1, 1992. Before creation as a district, it was a Tehsil of district *Bānnū*.¹³

Research Methodology:

Nature of Research:

This Research Work is empirical in nature and is mainly based on field work. This research is qualitative as well as quantitative. Primarily, inductive method is adopted in the study and during the process of drawing conclusions. The research is based on a historical, comparative and analytical approach using both explanatory and analytical methods.

Data Collection:

The total population of the targeted region was estimated as follows:

- Bānnū: 1.073 million
- Lākkī Mārwaṭ: 0.815 million.

Data was collected through questionnaire. Moreover, observation and interviews with the experts of local cultures and historical review was conducted.

Sampling:

The sample size for both districts was 384, in which 219 (149 male and 70 female) questionnaires were allocated to District Bānnū and 165 (103 male and 62 female) to Lākkī Mārwaṭ on the basis of their share in population i- e 57% and 43% respectively. 12 union councils from each district were randomly selected for field data collection. Furthermore, samples were distributed on the basis of population, both rural and urban, main ethnic groups, social classes, gender, and age. Only married people were included in the study because the study is heavily based on the domestic affairs and experiences and a married person can observe and experience all such matters better than an unmarried person. Moreover, the research is a product of the combination of published materials, books, research journals, research papers, survey reports, newspapers, magazines articles and field work. Special attention has been paid while making the questionnaire to ensure neutrality, objectivity, and suitability.

Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistics, such as frequency tables, have been used to analyze

the data. The main contents of the table were, it contains numerical data of both districts based on the responses of both male and female shown with the exact numbers, percentages of their separate responses as well as aggregate percentages.

Translation of the text of the holy Qur'an is taken from the English translation of holy Qur'an compiled by *Māūlānā Wāḥīdūdḍīn Khān*.

Discussion:

Being human beings, women have equal rights like men in terms of entering into contracts, holding own property and disposing of it as they wish but within the boundaries of moral discourses of Islam. According to the teachings of Islam, a woman is not merely a subject of man. Being a human being, she has her own individuality and complete personality in all respects. She has an equal right to nurture her religious capabilities, work for her faith, attain education, acquire a job, do business, possess something and take advantage of it and demonstrate her creativeness in an enterprise. She is chief of herself in all respects.¹⁴ There is no gender-based discrimination between man and woman. Everyone will get the fruit of his/her deeds in this world as well as in the life of Hereafter.

*Men shall be rewarded according to their deeds, and women shall be rewarded according to their deeds.*¹⁵

Allah Almighty does not waste the deeds of neither a man nor a woman on the basis of their gender. True believer man and woman are called friends of each other as they enjoin for doing good and forbid from doing evil.

The believers, both men and women, are friends to each other; they enjoin what is good and forbid evil, they attend to their prayers

*and pay the alms and obey God and His Messenger. On these God will have mercy, for God is almighty and wise.*¹⁶

Moreover, it is part of the Muslim history that woman was active in many areas of routine life like getting an education, agriculture, business and looking after their orchards. There were a lot of Muslim woman jurists that shows their dynamic role in educating the masses in religious matters. Historical evidence shows that there were Muslim woman poetesses as well. Even few of the woman Companions (Allah be pleased with them) were appointed by delegating them administrative positions during the caliphate of *Hāzrāt Ūmer* (Allah be pleased with him).¹⁷ *Šāyyedā Āyeshā* (Allah be pleased with her) was considered as the best and most competent scholar in religious understanding and knowledge. Moreover, her role was not confined to religious matters, she was frequently consulted in political matters as well and she guided those who consulted her.¹⁸ All the above-mentioned facts show that Islam neither ignores nor underestimate the personality, potential, and capabilities of a Muslim woman. Her potential and creativity can be utilized for the welfare and well-being of Muslim society within the limits and jurisdictions drawn by Allah Almighty in Qur'an. Islamic concept and teachings regarding women's social mobility are different and even opposite than the Western concept.¹⁹ Islamic Concept does not allow women's social mobility by negating divinely ordained principles of morality and decency.²⁰

Table.1 Women Employment

Q. Are women allowed for doing jobs in your family?						
District	Variable	Male	%	Female	%	Aggregate
Bannu	Yes	40	35.08	30	28.57	70 (31.96%)
	No	74	64.91	75	71.42	149

						(68.03%)
Lakki	Yes	21	24.41	41	51.89	62 (37.57%)
Marwat	No	65	75.58	38	48.10	103 (62.42%)

As the Table 4.6.1 points out those 31.96% families in Bānnū and 37.57% families in Lākkī Mārṡāṡ who allow their female family members for doing the job while 68.03% families in Bannu and 62.42% families in Lākkī Mārṡāṡ do not allow female family members for doing the job.

The main reasons as mentioned in Table are 41.33% female in Bānnū and 60.52% in Lākkī Mārṡāṡ are illiterate. Due to illiteracy, they are unable to do any job. The cause of their illiteracy is that female education is not preferred and encouraged as the Table shows. They are not allowed for doing jobs due to male dominance in a family that considers female employment as against the code of honor and moral values mainly based on the assumption that female employment hurts ego and honor of male because the male is basically considered as breadwinner.

Islam recommends education and seeking knowledge for both male and female. Women can better understand and resolve the peculiar issues of other fellow women in a more desirable and constructive way. Women can be inducted in various areas of social life which are entirely and closely related to the issues and concerns of women. They can educate the female future generations. They can cure the female patients better than a male doctor because; a female patient can communicate with a female doctor more conveniently, comfortably and unhesitatingly. Islam does not discourage any such activity that is done while observing all the moral principles. Because the pattern of human needs is that it cannot be fulfilled

without engaging in the collective life.²¹ It is ingrained in human nature to live together as it is a divine system and code.²²

Although Islam does not put the burden of earning on the shoulders of women but it permits it in case a woman needs to work for earning the livelihood due to certain factors. It is not only liked but encouraged by Islam.²³

Table.2 Reasons of Not Allowing Women for Doing Jobs

Q. Why women are not allowed for doing jobs?						
District	Variable	Male	%	Female	%	Aggregate
Bānnū	Illiteracy	34	45.94	31	41.33	65 (43.62%)
	Male Dominance	19	25.67	25	33.33	44 (29.53%)
	Considered Immoral	21	28.37	19	25.33	40 (26.84%)
Lākkī Mārṡāṡ	Illiteracy	27	41.53	23	60.52	50 (48.54%)
	Male Dominance	17	26.15	15	39.47	32 (31.06%)
	Considered Immoral	21	32.30			21 (20.38%)

The figures mentioned in above Table 4.6.2 show that 43.62% female is illiterate in Bannu and 48.54% female in Lākkī Mārṡāṡ. 29.53% females in Bānnū and 31.06% females in Lākkī Mārṡāṡ are not allowed due to the dominant and authoritative position of male family members mostly fathers and elder brother. 26.84% families in Bānnū and 20.38% families in Lākkī Mārṡāṡ consider it immoral and immodest.

As the variables and its responses shows that the main hurdles in female education are the mindset of male members of the society that has own standards and criterion for categorizing something moral and immoral. The ground reality is that there is no concept of co-education in both areas at secondary schools and college level. Co-education gets to start at the university level but, firstly the ratio of female higher education is lower and secondly, female students observe full body cover by wearing Ābāyāṣ. The excuse of immorality does not seem acceptable and valid because wherever females have access to education, female teachers perform their duties as there. What is more worrisome for the male-dominated mindset is the awareness and consciousness in the female that allows them to seek and ask for their rights and privileges later on. It is a dual and biased approach of the contemporary Pashtun society that it does not look for the same excuse when there is a matter of male education but, the standards and criterion are changed for female education. Besides the fact, both have same curriculum and schools.

Those families who educate their female family members and allow them to serve the fellow female on the basis of their knowledge and understanding are appreciable.

Table.3 Women & Social Mobilization

Q. Are women allowed for playing any role in social mobilization and awareness?						
District	Variable	Male	%	Female	%	Aggregate
Bānnū	Yes	12	10.52	18	17.14	30 (13.69%)
	No	102	89.47	87	82.85	189 (86.30)
Lākkī	Yes	8	9.30	11	13.92	19 (11.51%)
	No	78	90.69	68	86.07	146 (88.48%)

As the above-mentioned figures show that the women's active role in social mobilization is not encouraged and appreciated. Only 13.69% families in Bānnū and 11.51% families in Lākkī Mārwaṭ allow their female family members to play their active role in social mobilization campaigns solely related to the women. The rest of 86.30% families in Bānnū and 88.48% families in Lākkī Mārwaṭ do not allow their female family members in this regard.

The main hurdle in this respect is male dominance and Pashtun culture based on dual standards of honor. Although some families allow their female members for doing the job with heavy heart and a feeling of unknown and strange guilt, most of them said that their sense of honor doesn't afford that female member of their family are engaged in doing jobs.

There are a lot of living examples from the life of *Ūmmāḥāṭ Ūl Momīneen* (Allah be pleased with them) as well as other Muslim women that indicate that how actively they played their role and contributed towards religious training of common people by providing their religious understanding having deep insight and wisdom as all of them were trained and guided by the Prophet of Peace (peace be upon him) directly. It is evident from the Islamic history that Muslim women also took part in the migration from *Mākkāh* to Africa for the cause of Allah.²⁴ A lot of the Companions (Allah be pleased with them) seek the guidance of *Aysha* (Allah be pleased with her) by consulting her in religious issues and especially about those practical examples of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that were known to his wives only. Their contributions were not limited to the religious sphere of Muslim society. There are a lot of examples that show how some Muslim females participated in discharging administrative

duties like *Hāzrāt Shīfā Bīnt Ābdūllāh* (Allah be pleased with her) was appointed as Price Control officer and *Hazrat Samra* (Allah be pleased with her) as a Supervisor of the market; Moreover, she used to punish culprits also in the Caliphate of *Hāzrāt Ūmer* (Allah be pleased with him).²⁵ Furthermore, a lot of Muslim women participated in *Jihad* against polytheists of Mecca by looking after those injured in *Jīhād* and even some of them took more valiant part by fighting the enemies of Islam.²⁶ *Šāyyeḍā Āšmā* (Allah be pleased with her), sister of *Šāyyeḍā Āyeṣḥā* (Allah be pleased with her) used to help her husband in farming and taking care of the cattle at home.²⁷

There is a misconceived perception that discourages social mobility of women, which can be termed as dual or biased standards of moral values. Whatever happens in terms of an immoral act that involves man and woman, the woman is considered entirely responsible for it. It seems very difficult that a woman can play her role in social mobilization even that it is completely concerned with the issues of women.

One of the *Hādīth* highlights the position of the women mobility in Prophetic era that a hadith has been reported;

*Āyeṣḥā (Allah be pleased with her) reports that Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him) used to offer the Fajr prayer when it was still dark and the believing women used to return and nobody could identify them due to darkness, or they could not identify one another.*²⁸

Another similar *Hadith* indicates the fact that women were allowed to go to the mosques and perform congregational prayers in the mosques.

It is reported by Ḥāzrāt Qāṭādā Āl-Ānṣārī (Allah be pleased with him) reports: My father said, Allah's Messenger (peace be upon him): said, Whenever I stand for prayer, I want to prolong it but on hearing the cries of a child, I would shorten it, as I dislike to put its mother in trouble.²⁹

Messenger (peace be upon him) never restricted or prohibited their participation in congregational prayer. The above-mentioned *Āḥādīth* prove that Messenger (peace be upon him) encouraged and appreciated them even though they were facing problems like taking care of the babies. The fact is that women could learn religious teachings and understand the reality, wisdom, and nature of the religious teachings by directly learning the teachings from the Messenger (peace be upon him) by attending the congregational prayers. Although the Pious Caliph *Hazrat Umer* (Allah be pleased with him) disliked women's participation in the congregational prayer, he never restricted their participation due to the explicit permission from Messenger (peace be upon him) for attending congregational prayers. It is also mentioned in the books of Hadith that *Ummāḥāt Ūl Momīneen* (Allah be pleased with them) attended a funeral prayer of *Ṣāād Bīn Ābī Wāqāṣ* (Allah be pleased with him) near their apartments.³⁰ Moreover, women also attended the funeral prayer of the Messenger (peace be upon him) as well.³¹

Table.4 Women & Political Representation

Q. Are women allowed for casting votes and political representation?						
District	Variable	Male	%	Female	%	Aggregate
						te

Bannu	Yes – Personal Decision	16	14.03	41	39.04	57 (26.02%)
	Yes – Husband Decision	66	57.89	55	52.38	121 (55.25%)
	No	32	28.07	9	8.57	41 (18.72%)
Lakki Marwat	Yes – Personal Decision	12	13.95	7	8.86	19 (11.51%)
	Yes – Husband Decision	49	56.97	53	67.08	102 (61.81%)
	No	25	29.06	19	24.05	44 (26.66%)

As the figures mentioned in the Table 4.6.4 show that 26.02% wives in Bannu and 18.72% wives in Lākki Mārwaṭ are allowed to cast their votes by their own free will. 55.25% wives in Bānnū and 61.81% wives in Lākki Mārwaṭ cast their votes on the permission and consent of their husbands. While the rest of 18.72% wives in Bānnū and 26.66% wives in Lākki Mārwaṭ are not allowed to cast their votes at any cost.

The factor of male dominance and gender-based discrimination can clearly be observed and noticed in this matter as well. 55.25% wives in Bānnū and 61.81% in Lākki Mārwaṭ are allowed to cast their votes only when their husbands grant permission otherwise they cannot cast their votes. The question is that whether women are allowed to participate in political matters like casting their votes? Islam indicates a unique characteristic of Muslim society by stating that *they run their collective affairs by mutual consultation*.³² It shows that both men and women are allowed to participate in collective affairs while following the moral principles of

Islam. Because the teaching mentioned in the above-mentioned *Qūr'ānīc* verse does not exclude women from those who run the affairs through mutual consultation. Society as a whole is mentioned and addressed in the verse. And as women are also equal members of society so they can also participate in the mutual consultation. Moreover, the selection of *Hāzrāt Ūṣmān* (Allah be pleased with him) shows that women were also consented by *Hāzrāt Ābdūr Rāḥmān Bīn Āūf* (Allah be pleased with him) before his election as Cālīph.³³

It is also mentioned in the books of Islamic history that few Muslim women performed their duties as representatives of their fellow women by delivering their questions and queries to Messenger (peace be upon him) and at the same time Messenger (peace be upon him) appointed them as his representatives for other women to guide them in religious matters like *Hāzrāt Āṣmā Bīnt Yāzeed Ānṣārīā* (Allah be pleased with her) came to Messenger (peace be upon him) as a representative of women and asked him few questions that were asked by other women. Messenger (peace be upon him) appointed her as representative and she informed the women about the answers of the Messenger (peace be upon him).³⁴

Being a Caliph, *Hāzrāt Ūmer* (Allah be pleased with him) appreciated, valued and liked the advice of *Hāzrāt Ṣhīfā Ūmme Ṣūlāīmān Bīn Ābī Hāṭmā* (Allah be pleased with her) and he often delegated supervision of markets as well.³⁵

Women are allowed to work and move in society actively, but with few preventive measures and following the moral teachings. The same practice and freedom existed in the era of Messenger (peace be upon him) and the Pious Caliphs (Allah be pleased with them) as well and they actively participated in works like nursing, teaching and all other works that were

considered suitable for them^{36 37}. It has been witnessed as well that *Ūm'māhāt Ūl Momīneen* (Allah be pleased with them) including few other Muslim women had a great and deep understanding and knowledge of Islam and both men and women took advantage of their expertise by attending the academic circles³⁸. They devoted their lives to the cause of Allah and preaching of Islam and fulfilled their duties with utmost commitment and sincerity by transmitting the understanding and knowledge of Islam to the upcoming generations.³⁹

Findings:

1. The majority of the population does not know about the true teachings of Islam, their background and wisdom regarding women's social mobility and gender interaction.
2. Male dominance and social taboos are mainly responsible for the restricted social mobility of woman that are the result of centuries-long cultural values and ancestral perceptions.
3. The woman is considered unfit and ineligible for almost all the activities that take place outside the home due to misconceptions and misperception without having any solid and reasonable religious and scientific proof.

Recommendations:

1. People should be taught and educated about the teachings of Islam about the legal domain of women's social mobility.
2. Males should be informed about the status and individuality of woman that has been granted to them by Islam, instead of following the mindset of male dominance.
3. Women should be allowed to play their role in social development and welfare in accordance with their natural capacities and needs

of the society while keep practicing the principles of moral conduct laid down by Islam.

4. Instead of restricting the social mobility of woman, such an environment should be created where there are lowest chances of interaction with opposite gender and they discharge their duties in a dignified and decent way.
5. Separate institutions and departments should be established for all those matters that is closely related with female only and female office bearers should be appointed for the convenience of the women and society.

Conclusion:

Islam is a religion of nature. All the divine injunctions are for the purification of human soul and society. Both man and woman can support each other in a struggle of purifying their souls and developing their respective societies. A woman should be allowed to participate and play their due role in the light of the moral principles of Islam. No society can emerge as a developed and well-trained society without the active participation of woman in their capacities of a daughter, sister, wife, and mother. There are a lot of issues that can be settled in a more suitable and desired way through the active participation of woman. The solution is to encourage women's social mobility with certain principles of morality instead of restricting their role on the basis of misconceptions and presumed ideas.



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