

The Contribution of Women in the Spreading of Teachings of Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W)

Translation of
Husool e Ilm Aur Khawateen

By. Dr. Farhat Hashmi

An **AL HUDA** Publication

www.farhathashmi.com

www.alhudapk.com

PREFACE

This booklet is based on an award winning article taken from the published works of *National Seerah Conference, 1414 Hijri, 1993 – Role of Muslim Women* - written by Dr. Farhat Hashmi

The Contribution of Women in the Spreading of Teachings of Prophet Muhammad's (S.A.W)

As soon as a person develops insight and a sense to question, he is faced with countless queries regarding himself and the environment around him, the most important being, "Who am I?.....Who created me?.....What is the truth of everything around me and how was it made? Whose skillful workmanship is this? The society and the environment say that all this was made by 'Allah.

Who is Allah? What is He like? Where is He? How do we recognize Him? How do we reach Him? What is the proof that He really does exist? A person is perplexed when he tries to answer these questions and in the end when all reasoning fails, in this state of utter hopelessness, human nature needs a mentor who would help him recognize his Creator, and help him believe in his own existence. So his Most Merciful Creator does not abandon him, and to fulfill his need, sends a being who helps him get rid of his bewildered state, acquaints him with his Creator, and saves him from going astray.

RasulAllah (SAW) is that being, that personality, who not only familiarizes the created with their Creator but also apprises them with the latter's likes and dislikes. In his personality we find a living example of Allah's message, and an excellent practical example of the fulfillment of His commands. In his teachings do we find ways of physical and spiritual purification; and we learn from his teachings that man's eternal success or loss depends on his faith in Allah. We obey and follow the Prophet (SAW) and Allah will love us; we answer his call and that will be a means of life for us; disobedience to the Prophet (SAW) will result in exclusion from paradise and rebellion will result in getting caught in conflict and turmoil and be the cause of Allah's wrath. It is essential for every man and woman to obey his commands and accept his decisions with pure sincerity; there is no second option.

The Prophet (SAW) was sent on this earth as a Messenger, as a guide who showed mankind the right path. the Divine Message that he conveyed is for all times and places. Not only were the people who believed in him in his time, were expected to obey him unconditionally, but this law holds for the coming

generations as well, till the Day of Judgement. This is why the path to salvation is not just in following the Quran, but the Prophet's (SAW) Sunnah¹ as well.

For all times, the entry into Islam is not just with (la ilaha illallah----arabic) but with (Arabic----Muhammad dur rasulAllah) as well. The people of Prophet's (SAW)'s time realized the importance of this reality and readily heeded to his call (balligho unee-----arabic)("spread my message even though its one ayah") by transmitting his message of guidance to the coming generations. The Prophet (SAW) declared that it was mandatory for every man and woman to seek knowledge, and in this path of knowledge, if the seeker died, he would be a martyr. Importance of both the teacher and the pupil was highlighted, and it was stated that the teacher's position was something to be envied, and the pupil was given the glad tidings of paradise.

A scholar was given precedence over a worshipper, the ink of a scholar's pen was given precedence over a martyr's blood, and scholars were called the heirs of the prophets and a special prayer of mercy was performed for someone who not only learns, but conveys to others as well. Mothers of the Believers were specially instructed to learn the Prophet's (SAW) ahadith (sayings), along with the Quranic teachings.

After becoming aware of the importance of acquiring knowledge, and the significance of learning and transmitting the ahadith of the Prophet (SAW), not only men, but women also started to fulfill this duty.

Special arrangements were made to include the Prophet(SAW)'s teachings in the education syllabus, other than the Quran, and this became a practice throughout history. So one cannot find a period in time where along with the men, women did not carry out this responsibility with due fervor. In fact some women made such accomplishments that men also took up apprenticeship with them. Women set up such high standards of honesty in the narration of hadith that in the book 'meezan al aitadal' of 'ilm jarah o tadeel', the compiler Alzahbi praises the contribution of these women in these words, 'till today, I have not come across a woman whose narration was suspicious or rejected.'

During the Prophet(SAW)'s age, the mothers of the believers were inquired regarding women's issues; they were also approached for details concerned with the Prophet(SAW)'s personal life after he passed away. Who else could have been a better teacher regarding matters relating to the Prophet's(SAW) personal life after him, than his wives.

The scholastic contributions of the mothers of the believers, including Hafza (r.a), Umm Habiba (r.a), Maimona (r.a), Umm Salmah(r.a), and Ayesha (r.a), are not hidden from anyone; specially the services of Ayesha (r.a) cannot be forgotten. In the history of Islam, no other woman can equal Ayesha (r.a) in her efforts for the promotion of the Prophet's (SAW) teachings. She is one of the few companions whose narration of ahadith exceeds 2000 in number and she was a source of education for all for nearly 50 years after the Prophet(SAW)'s death.

In this process of imparting and learning of knowledge, other lady companions of the Prophet (SAW) also left examples that can be emulated. In this context, the names of Umm e Qais, Umm ul Fazl bint Harith, Fatima bint Qais, Umm e Atiah, Umm e Haani, Asma bint Abu bakr (r.a), Asma bint Amees and Asma bint Yazeed are worth mentioning, whose number of ahadith that they have narrated are,22,30,34,40,46,58,60 and 81 respectively. Other than these, Busra bin Safwan, Umm Sabeeha Khola Aljuhniyah, Umm ul Hussain al Ahmasiyah, Umm e Jundub al Azdiyah, Umm al Hakeem al Khazaiyah,Sara'a bint Nabhaan, Zareena, Khulaidah bint Qais, Khateebah al Nisa ,Asma bint Yazeed and Khansa al Ansariyah (r.a) are among the women who directly narrated ahadith from Prophet (SAW).

History has witnessed that the women who were honored by promoting the Prophet(SAW)'s teachings, belonged to free and respectable families as well as slaves The attendants of the Prophet (SAW), Rozina and Maria also had the honor of narrating ahadith. Other notable names in this category include Maimona bint Saeed, Umaima Mola² Rasul who were narrators of hadith as well.

Other than these, Barirah and Umm e Ulqama (Mola Ayesha (r.a)), Khaira Umm ul Hassan al Basry (mola Umm e Salmah), Nadbah (mola Maimoona (r.a), Mother of the Believers), Zarra and Nadbah (mola ibn Abbas (r.a)), Bananah (mola Abdar Rahman al Ansari (r.a)) and Laila (mola Umm Ammarah al Ansariyah).

During the age of the Taba'een³ , a number of women became famous due to their educational achievements; Ibn Sa'ad,⁴ alone, has written about more than 60 women who were taking part in the pursuit of knowledge among them, Hafza bint Sireen being one of the most famous scholars of hadeeth of her time. When Hassan Basary and Ibn e Sireen were mentioned in front of Iyaas bin

Muaawiyah, he openly stated that in his opinion, no one surpassed Hafza bint Sireen.

Another lady belonging to this category is the famous Umm e Darda al Sughra, whose students include distinguished taba'eens such as Abu Qalaabah, R'jaa bin Haiwah Makhool and Zaid bin Aslam. Ayesha (r.a)'s outstanding pupil, Umrah bint Abd ar Rahman who needs no introduction, knew the largest number of ahadith narrated by the former. One of her students, Abu Bakr bin Hazm was specially ordered by Omar bin Abdul Aziz to compile all the ahadith that Umrah was proficient in and put them in writing. Referring to her, Imam Ibn e Shahab al Zohry told Qasim bin Mohammad, 'I see you hungry for knowledge so shouldn't I guide you to its treasure? Go to Umrah if you want to acquire knowledge.' Qasim bin Mohammad says that I found Umrah to be a sea of knowledge that never dries up.

Jawabnah al Musayyab was the name that the famous taba'ee Saeed bin al Musayyab's daughter was known from. Before their marriage, her husband used to attend her father's lectures. On the next day after her marriage, her husband got ready to go to Saeed bin al Musayyab's class, Jawabnah told him to remain at home, because she could also impart the same knowledge to him that her father could.

In the later ages, i.e, the 3rd century, some notable names are: Abida al Madinah, Umm e Omar as Thaqfiah, Zainab bint Sulaiman, Nafisa bin Hassan bin Zaid, Khadija Umm e Mohammad, Abdah bint e Abdar Rahman, Abbasah, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal's wife, and other women as well, who gave formal lectures on Rasulallah's (SAW) ahadith, and great Muhadditheen attended these lectures. Abida, who was an African slave, but had an expertise in relating ahadith was gifted to Habib bin as Walid al Dahoon al Undalasi by her owner, Mohammad bin Yazeed. Her new master was so impressed by her knowledge that he freed her and married her and took her to Undalas (Spain) with him. In Spain, Abida related 10,000 ahadith on the authority of Imam Malik bin Anas and several other Madni scholars; hence she became the source of the spread of the Prophet's (SAW) teachings in Europe.

Another such exceptional lady was Zainab bint Sulayman who was a princess. Her father was the Governor of Basra and Spain during the rule of Al Mansoor. She was also very interested in ahadith and had acquired a lot of knowledge in this context. Famous muhaditheen related ahadith on her authority.

Nafisa who belonged to ahl e bait, was another lady who excelled in this field, and even Imam Shafae'e listened to her relating the ahadith. When the editing of hadith began and hadith books became available, the trend of the women also changed towards the listening and relating of these books. They took part in lecturing on them and people from all walks of life benefited. Karima tul Maroozia is a leading name in this context. Great scholars who related the ahadith of Sahih Bukhari, like Abu Bakr al Khateeb al Baghdadi, traveled from Baghdad to Makkah to listen to Karima relating Sahih Bukhari. Abu Bakr bin Mansoor al Asma'aani states " My father was very impressed with Karima's educational capabilities, and used to say that I have not seen anyone like her".

Even the orientalist, Goldzheir writes about the large amount of Karima's 'consents⁵' to relate the ahadith of Sahih Bukhari. Women other than Karima, prominent in relating ahadith of Bukhari and other hadith books include Musnadah al Quwatt sat al wizra bint Umar who taught in Damascus and Egypt for a long period of time and who was also famous for relating of ahadith of Bukhari. Umm al Khair umm al Khaliq was the last relator of Sahih Bukhari in Madrassa e Hijaz.

Another important name is of Ayesha bint Abdul Hadi, who held a special position in the teaching of Bukhari. Not only did they relate and lecture on the ahadith of Bukhari but women also worked on other famous hadith books; Umm al Khair Fatima bint Ali al Baghdadiyah's name is worth mentioning who was a famous relator of her time, of the ahadith of Sahih Muslim. Fatima al Jawz Daniyah used to relate ahadith of Maujam al Tabarani. Zainab bint al Makki al Harani lived for 94 years; she related the ahadith of Musnad Ahmed, and crowds of students always gathered around her. Ibne Nuqta, has mentioned 10 such women, in his book "al Taqeed ul Ma'arfa Rawayah al Sunan wal Masaneed", who were famous in the relating of ahadith in their times.

In the fourth century, Fatima bint abd Arrahman al Haraaniyah umm Mohammad, Umm Salmah Fatimah (the granddaughter of Imam Abu Dawood al Sajastani, the compiler of Sunan Abu Dawood), Umma tul Wahid bint Abi Abd Allah al Mahamly, Umm al Fath al Islam bint Qazi Ahmed bin Kamil al Baghdadiyah, Jumuah bint Ahmed al Mahiyah, Fatimah bint Halal, and Tahira bint Ahmed al Tanwakhayah are names worth mentioning, who attained an

expertise in the knowledge of hadith and left never-ending impressions on countless people who used to attend their lectures.

In the fifth century, daughter of the famous Sufi Hassan bin Ali al Duqaq and wife of Abul Qasim al Qashiry, Fatimah, became famous for getting Sannad e aali (high degree) she used to relate ahadith on the authority of Abu Naeem al Asfaraainy and Hakim Neshapury. Other well known names were Khadija bint Mohammad al Shahjahaniyah, Satita bint al Qazi ibn abi Amr, Khadija bint al Baqal and Jabrah as Sawdah.

In the sixth century, Fatimah bint Mohammad - Musnada e Isfahan, Umm ul Khair Fatimah bint Ali – Musnada e Khurasan, Musnada ul Waqt – Fatimah al Jawziyah, Fakhar un nisa Khadija bint Mohammad, Tajni bint Abd Allah and Shahdah bint Ahmed – Musnadah al Arq are famous for ‘sanad e aali’. Shahdah, who was given the title of ‘Fakhrun nisa’, used to have large gatherings of students on her lectures, and because of her prestigious degree and fame, people wrongly showed themselves as her students. Zaki al Din al Barzali compiled her “Mushaikha” in 8 volumes.

Muhadatheen of all times have believed in traveling long and trying distances for acquiring the knowledge of hadith and getting ‘sanad e aali’. Even though the facilities available for traveling today were not present at that time, women did not hesitate and faced all obstacles in this path. Umm e Mohammad Zainab bint Ahmed al Muqaddasi 6 (died 722 years after hijrah) traveled to Egypt from Palestine, and then Syria and Madinah. During this time she received hadith education from renowned scholars and when eventually she acquired the permission to relate hadith, and started lecturing, students used to travel from far off places to listen to her.

Fatimah bint Sa’ad al Khair was born in Isfahan but traveled all the way to Egypt to gain knowledge regarding ahadith. Sut ul Khutbaa bint Taqi ud Din al Subki (died 773 years after hijrah) traveled to Egypt and Damascus, Umm e AbdAllah Zainab bint Ahmed al Kamal al Muqaddasiyah (died 740 years after hijrah) traveled to Baghdad, Mardin, Syria, Alexandria, and Cairo, for this purpose, and on her way listened to great scholars, and related many hadith books herself as well.

Baai khatoon, a famous muhadditha of the ninth century used to lecture in Egypt and Syria and distinguished scholars used to attend them. She was known as Ayesha bint Ibrahim Jawabnah al Sharahi, and after gaining an expertise in this field, she continued to give lectures in Egypt, Syria and Balbuk etc.

The lecturing and teaching activities of these women were not limited to a few people on a private level, but they used to teach in madaris (educational institutions) as well, where people from all walks of life used to attend their lectures. Ayesha bint Mohammad al Haraaniyah (736hijrah) used to earn her living by stitching clothes and doing embroidery. According to abundant accounts available today, she held a special place in relating some parts of ahadith (ajzai hadith).

While traveling in Damascus during 726 hijrah, Ibn e Batuta listened to her hadith lecture in the Bani Umaiyah University. Another lady Umm al Khair al Hijziah was placed on the respected seat of teaching in Egyptian university of Amr bin al Aas.

During my quest for knowledge in Turkey, Egypt and Syria, I came across several letters (makhtootat) whose seal of sanad e sama'a (Certificate of attending the hadith sessions) shows that a large number of men and women attended these lectures that took place in different madaris. Women also held hadith gatherings over there. A lady named Umm e Abd Allah after teaching Ibn al Bukhari's mushaikha, wrote a statement on its page number 250 which shows that she taught this book in a combined class of 50 men and women 7.

In the 7th century after hijrah, women's fervor in the pursuit of Rasulallah(SAW)'s teachings did not lessen and they continued according to the method of the day, in which sama'a (attending) to hadith lectures, relating hadith and acquiring permission to relate them was a top priority. Musnada e Khurasan al Shariyah was one such famous lady of that time whose passing away resulted in the termination of the sanad e aali. Ayesha bint Moammar al Asbahaniyah was famous for relating ahadith from Musnad Abi Yaa'li and the renowned muhadith Ibn e Nuqta was one of her students. Musnada e Syria was also a lady with distinctive qualities who had the permission of relating hadith from renowned scholars and she was never weary of relating hadith. Zainab al Makki always had crowds of students gathered outside her door.

Another special lady was Shamiah ummatul Haque who related "ajza e hadith"(parts of hadith?) and Ujaiba bint Mohammad al Baghdadiyah compiled her mushaikha in 10 volumes. Several names of women can also be found in this

regard, in the 8th and 9th centuries as well, a witness to the fact that the Prophet (saw)'s teachings still held a place of importance among them.

Ibn e Hajar in his book 'al darar al kaamnah writes the names of 170 women, who developed this field with their perseverance and enthusiasm. Goldzheir is also amazed at the interest shown by such a large number of women. Reading short autobiographies of these women, one finds out that Ibn e Hajar and a large number of his contemporaries and their teachers and students, all attended the hadith lectures of these ladies.

Studying the history of the eighth century, an interesting fact that emerges, is that the famous Huffaaz of these times, Muhadditheen, daughters of scholars and other family members, were all involved in serving hadith. The abundance in this century cannot be found in any other period of history. Some names worth mentioning in this context are: Isma bint Mohammad Abi al Mowaahib ibn Hasry, Ummatul Aziz bint al Zahbi, Fatima bint al Barzali, Isma bint Khalil bin Kaiklady al Alaai, Ruqaiyya bint ibn Daqeeq al Eed, Zainab bint Ibn Qadamah al Muqaddasi, Zainab bint ibn Jama'ah al Kanaani, Umm al Baha Zainab bint Ibn al Ajmee, Sat ul Na'am bint al Allama Najam ud din al Harani, Sat ul Wuzra bint Umar ibn Amanja satiah Taqi ud din al Subki, Satiah bint Najm ud din al Dimiyati, Ayesha bint Ibraheem (Hafiz al Mazi's wife), Ayesha bint AbdAllah (Mohib ad din al Tabri's granddaughter), Lawzah bint AbdAllah (molah Ibn Daqeeq al Eed), Sat ar Rakab (Ali ibn Hijr's sister), and Zainab bint AbdAllah Taqi ud din (Ibn Taymiyah's neice).

It was not only women who benefited from the educational capabilities of these women but men also gained from them in all periods. The teaching of Ayesha (r.a) to the Companions of the Prophet (SAW) is known to all, and this imparting of knowledge continued in later times as well. The names of Umrah and Karimah al Maroziah have been mentioned earlier in regard to the countless number of people who attended their hadith lectures. The compiler of the history of Damascus, Ibn Asaakar mentions 80 women in his 'mushaikha' from whom he took lectures on hadith. Abu Tahir as Salfi in his books 'Mushaikha al baghdadiyah', 'Maujam as Safar' and 'Mushaikha al asbahaniyah', and Abu Sa'ad al Sama'ani in his book 'al Khabir fi al Maujam al Kabir', mentions about several ladies whom they consider their 'shayookh'(teachers) from whom they either listened to hadith or got permission to relate. Ibn Khulqaan, the compiler of 'Wafiat ul A'ayaan' was a student of Zainab al Sha'ary (524 hijrah).

Even though Ibn e Batuta was not a Muhadith, in his enthusiasm to acquire the knowledge of hadith, he attended lectures of various men and women, especially Zainab bint Ahmad al Kamal (710 hijrah). The famous Muhadith of the 9th century, Afeef ad din Junaid attended Fatima bint Ahmad bin Qasim's lectures of Sunan ad Darmi. Nafisa bint Ibraheem was a teacher of Barzaali and Zahbi and Haafiz al Iraaqi and al Haithmi were students of sat al Karb bint Mohammad al Bukhari.

Abd ar Rahman al Sakhawi(897hijrah)writes about the Muhadithaat in his famous book 'Az Zu al Lama'a. The last volume of this book is completely dedicated to women, majority of who were connected to hadith in some manner. An 'Index of Shayookh' was written by Abd al Aziz Umar bin Fahad (881years after hijrah) in which out of 1100 shayookh, 130 are women, from whom he benefited in hadith and various sciences.

The amount of women working for the spread of the Prophet Muhammad (saw)'s teachings during the 9th century is considerably larger than in any other period, so reference to the famous women of this period will also be lengthy. Here, for instance, I will mention only one teacher of Sakhawi and Ibn Hajar; Umm Haani Maryam bint Abd ar Rahman al Hooreeniyah (871AH). Apart from having an expertise in literature, poetry and calligraphy, she was a Haafiz e Quran and was proficient in various other Islamic sciences as well. She had the opportunity of receiving education in hadith in Cairo and Makkah. Other than giving lectures on hadith, she gave out permissions of relating hadith as well. Another prominent name is of Maryam bint al Athra'eey who is considered to be an authority in this field. The abundance of her teachers can be ascertained from the fact that Ibn Hajar compiled their Index, and the amount of her students as well is countless.

After reading the books 'Al e'ed', history of Rusi 'Alnoor al musaafir, Mahyi's 'Khulaasa al Akhbaar' and Mohammad bin AbdAllah al Najdi's 'Al Sahab al Waabilah', all written about, the 'rijal e hadith'(Men who the knowledge regarding Narators of Ahadith at their finger tips) of the 10th, 11th and then the 12th centuries, it becomes apparent that the trend of women decreased in this field. The names of only 10 or 12 lady Muhaditheen can be found in these books However, it would be wrong to conclude that interest in hadith among the ladies became totally extinct.

The last link in this series was Fatima al Fuzailiyah (1247 AH), who was born in the later years of the 12th century. She was an expert calligraphist and copied many books with her own hands. She was very interested in hadith, took permission from many scholars, and became famous as a Muhadithah.

The basic reason for the women to be left behind in this field is the low ratio in the rate of education, generally among the Muslim Ummah, and especially among the women. But the progress taking place in this century is promising. Trends are developing for the research and publication of the 'makhtootat e hadith' of hadith books and specialization in hadith as well. In the field of research, Bint al Shaaty and Ayesha Abdar Rahman of Egypt, Munirah Naaji and Bahijah al Hasni of Iraq, Sakinah al Shahabi of Syria and Jamilah Shaukat of Pakistan are prominent names. Iraq's Khadijah al Hadlithi's book 'Mauqaf alnaha min al Ahtajaj bil Hadith al shareef' is also an excellent example.

In the religious education institutions of Muslim countries, as well as a few countries where Muslims are a minority, women are actively participating in acquiring and spreading the Prophet Muhammad (saw)'s teachings. Other than the hadith lectures in the Islamic studies departments of different universities, the initiation of the department of hadith and tafseer on the graduate level, specially for women in the International Islamic University of Islamabad, is an important advancement.

The need of the day is that women face the challenges of the present age and set such brilliant examples of their knowledge and practice, which not only revives the practices of their forefathers, but is also able to return the lost position of the Muslim ummah, which is not possible without the proper knowledge, propagation and practice of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (saw).

REFERENCES

¹ 'Sunnah' includes the Prophet's (a) sayings (b) actions (c) the Prophet's silent approval on other people's particular actions.

² need to explain what the term "mola" means. 'wards' of their custodians, Friend, Mater, Helper.

³ 'tabaeen' were the students of the companions of the Prophet (SAW).

⁴ a famous historian

⁵ 'consent' this was a kind of a certificate, a permission that was given to the pupil by the teacher, allowing him to relate a particular hadith that he had listened from him.