

## The Role of Women in Social Organizations during the Prophetic Era: Contemporary Lessons for Community Development

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**Abstract:** The role of women in social organizations during the Prophetic era offers profound insights into contemporary community development. This paper explores the multifaceted contributions of women in the early Islamic community, highlighting their involvement in social, economic, and educational spheres. The Prophetic era, marked by significant socio-political transformations, saw women actively participating in community welfare, providing social services, and engaging in public discourse. Through historical analysis, this study examines the leadership roles of prominent women figures, such as *Khadijah b. Khurwaylad*, *Aisha b. Abi Bakr*, and *Umm Salama* etc., who played pivotal roles in the advancement of social justice and communal harmony. The methodology employed in this research includes a comprehensive review of classical Islamic texts, hadith compilations, and contemporary scholarly interpretations. By contextualizing the historical contributions of women within the framework of modern community development theories, the paper aims to draw lessons applicable to today's socio-cultural landscape. The analysis reveals that women's involvement in the Prophetic era was not limited to domestic spheres but extended to active participation in trade, education, healthcare, and conflict resolution. This paper argues that the inclusive and participatory model of social organization during the Prophetic era can serve as a blueprint for contemporary community development initiatives. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and leveraging women's potential and social role to promote cohesion. The study concludes by suggesting practical strategies for integrating these historical insights into modern community development programs, advocating for policies that support women's leadership and active participation in all sectors of society.

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## 1. Introduction

The role of women in social organizations during the Prophetic era is a multifaceted and significant topic that offers valuable insights for contemporary community development. This era, spanning the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the early years of Islam, witnessed profound social transformations, particularly regarding the status and roles of women. Understanding the contributions of women in this period not only sheds light on the historical context but also provides contemporary lessons for fostering inclusive and effective community development.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, women's roles and statuses varied by social class. Upper-class women had certain rights, such as owning assets through inheritance, dowry, or marriage gifts, though their inheritance was often controlled by male relatives. These women could run businesses and were respected within their tribes. Notably, figures like *Khadijah* owned significant property, and women like *Hind bint Utbah* indirectly influenced political and war matters, demonstrating their social influence.<sup>1</sup> Despite these privileges, Women of the lower classes in pre-Islamic Arabia faced severe discrimination, including practices like female infanticide due to poverty and shame. Marriage customs reflected a patriarchal society, with forced marriages and widows treated as inheritable property. These hardships highlight the challenging roles of women, setting the stage for Islam's transformative impact on women's rights and status.<sup>2</sup>

Islam's transformative approach to women's roles reshaped societal norms, elevating their contributions to the economy, education, and social welfare. Islam emphasized that women should not be treated as commodities. It forbade their distribution as part of inheritance after death, unlike other material possessions.<sup>3</sup> In the early Islamic era, women played significant roles in economic and social organizations, contributing to community development through entrepreneurship, agriculture, healthcare, and

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1. Hiam Salah EI-din Ali EI-gousi, *Women's Rights in Islam and Contemporary Ulama: Limitations and Constraints (Egypt as Case Study)*, (University of Leeds, School of Modern Languages and Cultures, November 2010), 40-41
  2. Ibid.
  3. Aisha Siddiqa and Ruby Ruby. "Status of Women in Islam and the Present Indian Scenario." In *INSANCITA: Journal of Islamic Studies in Indonesia and Southeast Asia* 3, no. 1 (February 2018): 1-12.

education. *Khadijah bint Khuwailid*, the Prophet's wife, was a successful businesswoman,<sup>4</sup> and other female companions, like *Khawla and Asma' b. Abu Bakr*, were active in trade and agriculture.<sup>5</sup> Women such as *Zainab Bint Abu Muawiyah*, excelled in handicrafts, supporting their families and giving to charity,<sup>6</sup> while *Rufaida Al-Aslamia* pioneered in healthcare, treating the injured during battles and training other women.<sup>7</sup> Education was also a vital domain, with *Aisha b. Abu Bakr* serving as a prominent scholar and teacher, emphasizing the importance of women's contributions to knowledge sharing and societal growth.<sup>8</sup> These contributions provide valuable lessons for contemporary community development, particularly in fostering inclusive, gender-equitable societies.

By exploring the key contributions of women during the Prophetic era, this paper highlights how their roles in business, education, and healthcare provide valuable models for fostering inclusive and gender-equitable community development today.

## 2. Mother: The Pillar of Social and Moral Development in the Prophetic Era

In Islam, the mother holds a highly esteemed status, playing a fundamental role in shaping individuals and society. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) emphasized this by stating, "Paradise lies beneath the feet of mothers." According to Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, when asked who deserves the most respect, the Prophet (pbuh) replied "your mother" three times before mentioning the father. This prioritization highlights the central role of mothers in nurturing future generations and contributing to social stability.<sup>9</sup>

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4. Abubakar Sani & Bilyaminu Muhammad, "An Entrepreneur (Khadijah (R.A) In the Prophetic House," *Al-Itqān* 5, no. 1 (2021): 121–35.
  5. Tehreem Fatima, Aqsa Tasgheer, Women Entrepreneurship in Early Islamic Era; A motivation for women in modern age, *Al-Qawārīr*, Vol: 02, Issue: 04, (July – Sep 2021).
  6. Ahmed bin Muhammad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Imam Ahmed*, Moasasat-u-Risala, (1421H-2001 A.D), V 25, p 494.
  7. Asqalani, Ibn Hajar, *Asad ul Ghaba Fi Marfati Al Sahaba*, Hadith: 6925.
  8. Nasir and Akhter, Scholarly and Economic Empowerment of Women in Early Islamic Era, *Journal of Research in Humanities*, Institute of English Studies, PU, Vol. 52 No. 01 (2016): 195-207.
  9. Naseem Ahmad, *Women in Islam*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: A.P.H Publishing Corporation, 2003), 497.

The Quran commands gratitude toward parents<sup>10</sup> especially mothers, recognizing the physical and emotional sacrifices they endure during pregnancy, childbirth, and upbringing. A mother's influence extends beyond caregiving; she is a moral guide, educator, and foundation of a righteous society. The Prophet (pbuh) and his companions valued and honored their mothers, reinforcing that a society's moral and ethical strength stems from its mothers. Women in the Prophetic era were not only caregivers but also active contributors to the development of Islamic society. Hazrat Aisha (R.A.) and other female companions participated in religious, social, and intellectual spheres, influencing key decisions. The Prophet's dream of Harisa bin Nauman (R.A.) reciting the Quran in Paradise due to his excellent treatment of his mother further underscores the spiritual reward and societal value of respecting mothers.<sup>11</sup>

The role of mothers in community development extends beyond individual households. Strong, knowledgeable mothers cultivate morally upright leaders and socially responsible individuals, reinforcing the connection between women's leadership in families and broader societal progress. The Prophet (pbuh) emphasized that serving and honoring one's mother is a path to righteousness and divine reward, illustrating how women, as mothers, play a vital role in the moral and social fabric of a community.<sup>12</sup>

This historical perspective offers contemporary lessons: empowering women as mother's leads to stronger, ethically grounded societies. Their leadership within families extends to community engagement, education, and social reform, ensuring the continuation of values essential for a just and prosperous society.

### 3. Economic Contributions of Women in the Prophetic Era

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), women actively participated in various economic sectors, contributing significantly to the social and financial fabric of early Islamic society. They were engaged in business, agriculture, livestock, trade, handicrafts, and other professions, demonstrating their capability to support their families and the broader community.

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10. Al-Qur'ān, 31:14

11. Ahmad, *Women in Islam*, 499-500.

12. Aliah Schleifer, *Motherhood in Islam* (Cambridge: The Islamic Academy, 1986), 12–24.

### 3.1. Trade and Commerce

One of the most prominent examples of women's involvement in trade was *Khadijah b. Khuwailid*, the first wife of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Khadijah was a highly successful businesswoman whose caravan trade operations in Syria and Mecca were larger than those of the entire Quraysh tribe combined. She managed her trade through partnerships, leasing, and profit-sharing (*Mudhārabā*).<sup>13</sup> This example illustrates how women, particularly *Khadijah*, were not only involved in trade but were leading figures in commerce, employing men and supervising large-scale operations. Similarly, other women, like *Qaylah Umm-e-BaniAnmar*, engaged in trade, negotiating prices and conducting business deals.<sup>14</sup> *Khadijah's* model of ethical entrepreneurship, rooted in partnerships and fairness, provides a framework for modern female entrepreneurs, particularly in Islamic economies today.

### 3.2. Agriculture and Livestock

Women also played a key role in agricultural activities. In the city of Madinah, the women of the Ansar were heavily involved in farming, particularly cultivating vegetables.<sup>15</sup> The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged this involvement, as seen in various traditions. For example, Jabir b. Abdullah narrated that his aunt, after being divorced, sought the Prophet's permission to tend to her date palms during her Iddah period, and he approved.<sup>16</sup> Other women, like *Umm-e-Mubashir*, owned date palm gardens and contributed to agricultural productivity, which the Prophet (PBUH) acknowledged as a form of charity.<sup>17</sup>

Women were also involved in livestock management, a critical sector for economic development. *Asma b. Abi Bakr*, the wife of Zubair, tended to their family's horse and camel,<sup>18</sup> and *Mu'awiyah b. Hakam's* concubine managed his goats.<sup>19</sup> These instances show that women in the Prophetic era were responsible for the day-to-

13. Muhammad b. Sa'd, *KITAB Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1990), v. 8, p. 31.

14. Ibid. v. 8, p. 363.

15. Khan, Maulana Waheeduddin, *The Woman in Islam*, (Lahore: Dar al-Balagh Publishers, 2016,) p.196.

16. Qushayri, Muslim b. Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim*, (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-Arabi), 1483 AH.

17. *Qushayri*, Hadith No. 1553.

18. *Bukhari*, Hadith No. 5224.

19. *Qushayri*, Hadith No. 537.

day management of agriculture and livestock, providing essential support to their households and contributing to the community's economy. Therefore, Empowering women in agriculture and livestock management, as seen in the Prophetic era, can lead to significant advancements in community development. By fostering women-led sustainable farming and livestock programs, modern societies can enhance food security, boost economic resilience, and promote environmental stewardship.

### 3.3. Handicrafts and Tailoring

Another significant contribution of women during this era was in the field of handicrafts. Women like Zainab, the wife of *Abdullah b. Mas'ūd* were skilled artisans who produced handicrafts and embroidery, selling them to support their families.<sup>20</sup> *Zainab b. Jahsh*, in particular, was noted for using her earnings from her craftsmanship to support charitable causes.<sup>21</sup> This work highlights how women not only supported their households through their economic contributions but also engaged in social welfare activities. In modern times, supporting women in handicrafts and small-scale artisan businesses can empower them economically and socially. Skill development programs, fair trade initiatives, and online platforms can help women market their crafts, ensuring both financial independence and contributions to social welfare, much like the women of the Prophetic era. This approach fosters community development while preserving traditional crafts and cultural heritage.

### 3.4. Perfume and Market Trading

Women also contributed to the perfume trade, which was a prominent business in the Arabian Peninsula. Figures like *Asma b. Mukhzūma*<sup>22</sup> and *Mulaykah*, the mother of *Sa'ib b. Aqra'*, engaged in the perfume business, buying, selling, and trading goods. The Prophet (peace be on him) encouraged this work, and there are accounts of women selling perfumes to other women and even

20. Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 2001, Hadith No. 16086.

21. Qushairi, Hadith No. 2452; Ibn al-Athir, *Usud al-Ghabah*, v. 5, p.494.

22. IbnSa'd, v. 8, p. 220.

directly to the Prophet (peace be on him).<sup>23</sup> This demonstrates that women were integrated into the broader market economy, engaging in door-to-door sales and operating their own businesses. In modern contexts, women's involvement in small-scale businesses, such as the perfume trade, can be fostered through entrepreneurial programs and market access initiatives. Supporting women in establishing home-based enterprises or market ventures, similar to the door-to-door sales of the Prophetic era, can enhance their financial independence and integrate them more deeply into the economy. Microfinance and e-commerce platforms can further empower women to grow their businesses and participate in both local and global markets.

### 3.5. Financial Independence and Management

Women in the Prophetic era were not only workers but also managers and entrepreneurs. For example, *Khadijah b. Khuwailid* invested her capital and supervised business ventures, practicing a form of financial independence rare for women in many societies of the time.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, women like the wife of *Abdullah b. Mas'ūd* were responsible for their family's finances through their economic activities, and they were encouraged by the Prophet (PBUH) to continue these efforts and receive reward for their contributions to both family and community.<sup>25</sup>

### 3.6. Writing and Literacy

Writing was also an important source of livelihood for women during the Prophetic era. Historical accounts suggest that *Shifā b. Abdullah* was highly skilled in writing and literacy, and she also taught other women how to write.<sup>26</sup> Similarly,

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23. Abu Nu'aym al-Asfahani, *Ma'rifat al-Sahabah*, Dar al-Watan, 1998, Entry Mulaykah.

24. *Ibn al-Athir*, v. 5, p. 432.

25. Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad*, Beirut: Muassasah al-Risalah, 2001, Hadith No. 16086.

26. Muhammad ibn Isma'il al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Tibb, Bab al-Raqi, Hadith no. 5887

another woman mentioned in historical sources is *Umm Dardā*, who practiced writing on wooden tablets and taught students how to write on them.<sup>27</sup>

From these examples, it is evident that not only did women learn reading and writing, but they also taught others and passed on their knowledge. Moreover, adopting literacy as a profession was not discouraged; in fact, it was considered a respectable and valuable skill.

### 3.7. Fosterage

Fosterage was a recognized and respected profession for women during the Prophetic era. Women not only provided nourishment to infants but also played a crucial role in raising and nurturing them. The importance of fosterage is evident from the fact that Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) himself was nursed by *Halima Sa'diyyah*, who belonged to the *Banū Sa'd* tribe. Foster mothers were given a special status, and their relationship with the fostered child was considered significant, creating familial bonds. It was common in Arab society for children, especially from noble families, to be sent to the countryside for better upbringing and nourishment under the care of foster mothers. This tradition ensured that children grew up strong, healthy, and well-acquainted with the pure Arabic language. Fosterage was not only an act of compassion but also a means of livelihood for women. Many women engaged in this profession, receiving compensation or support from the families of the children they nursed. The system of fosterage, therefore, contributed to both the social and economic structure of early Islamic society, providing women with a dignified role in child-rearing and community building.<sup>28</sup>

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27. Muhammad Abdul Mabod, *Tarikh Madina al-Munawwara* (Lahore: Maktaba Rehmania, 1999), 240.

28. Ghulam Akbar Malik, *Orat ka Muqaddima* (Lahore: Jung Publishers, 1991), 22–25.



#### 4. Women in Education and Knowledge Sharing

Muslim women in the early Islamic era made significant contributions to education and knowledge, shaping intellectual and scholarly traditions. One of the earliest and most prominent figures was *Ayesha*, the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him), who played a pivotal role in the transmission of Islamic knowledge. *Ayesha* gathered and narrated numerous aḥādīth (sayings of the Prophet) and was regarded as a scholar, teacher, and political activist. Her contributions in compiling the Prophet's teachings and instructing others in Islamic jurisprudence make her one of the foremost female scholars in Islamic history.

Another significant figure is *Fatima Al-Fihri*, who founded the first and oldest existing university, the University of Al-Qarawiyyin in Morocco, which was established in 859. This university became a prominent center of learning, and *Fatima's* initiative reflects the deep-rooted value placed on education in early Islam.

Moreover, *Lubna* of Cordoba was a renowned mathematician, poet, and administrator who managed the Umayyad library, which housed over 500,000 books. Her contributions in preserving and disseminating knowledge exemplify the intellectual contributions of Muslim women during this period. The contributions of women like *Lubna* of Cordoba in preserving knowledge remain relevant to modern efforts in cultural heritage preservation. Today, women continue to play a vital role in safeguarding historical texts and traditions, ensuring that these legacies endure for future generations in the digital era.

Additionally, Zainab b. Kamal, a scholar known for her proficiency in Islamic jurisprudence and Hadith, regularly taught students, making substantial contributions to Islamic education. *Fatima b. Muhammad*, known as "*Musnida*

*Asfaḥān*," was another prominent female scholar who lectured on *Saḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* and other Islamic texts, drawing large audiences.

In Islamic history, *Umm al-Khayr Amat al-Khaliq* is regarded as the last scholar of *aḥādīth* in Hijaz, and *Aisha b. Muhammad b. Abdul Hadī* mentored male students in Damascus, breaking gender norms by teaching in institutional forums.

These women, alongside many others, were instrumental in establishing a tradition of female scholarship in early Islam, focusing on religious, scientific, and literary education. Their leadership in educational institutions and contributions to Islamic knowledge serve as key examples of the important role women played in the intellectual and educational development of early Muslim society.<sup>29</sup> By educating both women and men, figures like Aisha not only preserved and transmitted religious knowledge but also established a foundation for women's leadership in educational institutions—an example for modern efforts to increase female participation in academia.

## 5. Women in Healthcare and Social Services

During the early Islamic era, women played a significant role in healthcare, particularly in areas such as midwifery, first aid, and medical treatment. In the Medinan society, midwifery was one of the essential healthcare services provided by women. Notable figures such as *Salmā* and *Saowdah b. Misrāh* were renowned midwives, attending births and offering their services to the community. For instance, during the birth of *Fātima b. Muhammad*, several midwives, including *Salmā* and *Saowdah*, were present.<sup>30</sup> This indicates that women in Arabian society

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29. Iqra Khan, Maryam Bibi, and Muhammad Amin, "Contributions of Muslim Women in Education," *Pakistan Journal of Educational Research* 3, no. 1 (2020): 76-90.

30. al-Tabarānī, XXIV, 311-312; Ibn Hajar, IV, 274, VIII, 101, 188-189).

took charge of childbirth services, as there is no evidence of men participating in these roles during that time.

Women were also actively involved in providing first aid and medical assistance during battles. Female companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) frequently accompanied the Muslim armies to care for the wounded. During the Battle of Uhud, for instance, women like *Hamna b. Cahsh*, *Hind b. Amr*, and *Rufayda b. Sa'd* provided essential medical care to injured soldiers.<sup>31</sup> These women also treated the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) when he sustained injuries during the battle, using reed ash to stop the bleeding from his wounds.<sup>32</sup>

*Rufayda b. Sa'd*, in particular, is often regarded as the first female nurse in Islamic history. She was known for her role in setting up a mobile medical unit to treat injured soldiers during battles. Her contributions highlight the active involvement of women in healthcare during times of war, where they not only treated wounds but also offered emotional support to the wounded.<sup>33</sup> Her pioneering role in healthcare, especially in the establishment of mobile medical units during wartime, resonates with modern efforts to expand access to healthcare in conflict zones and rural areas.

In addition to battlefield care, women provided medical treatment for common illnesses in daily life. For example, *Aayesh b. Abi Bakr* and her sister *Asmā* were known to treat high fevers by using water, a widespread method in the hot climate of Medina.<sup>34</sup> They also dealt with minor injuries, such as cleaning

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31. al-Wāqidī, I, 248.

32. Ibid, I, 334-335.

33. Ibid, II, 646.

34. Ibid, I, 247-250; Ibn Sa'd, II, 48.

wounds, as illustrated by the case of *Usāma b. Zaid*, whose facial wound was treated by Aayesha.<sup>35</sup>

Women also contributed to psychological healthcare through the practice of *Ruqayyah*, a method combining prayer and medicinal herbs to treat both physical and mental ailments. *Aayesha*, *Asmā b. Umays*, and *Maymūna b. al-Hāris* were well-known for their expertise in this area, offering comfort and healing through religious and therapeutic practices. *Ruqayyah* was not only a form of psychological support but also bore a resemblance to early psychotherapy, aiming to uplift the patient's spirits and provide mental relief.<sup>36</sup> Modern equivalents of practices like *Ruqayyah* include spiritual and holistic healthcare approaches that address mental health by integrating faith-based healing with psychological care. These methods offer a comprehensive approach to mental well-being, particularly in communities where spiritual and emotional health are deeply interconnected.

## 6. Women's Leadership and Social Engagement in the Prophetic Era

Women played an active role in leadership and social engagement during the Prophetic era. The Qur'ān highlights that both men and women are protectors and supporters of one another in enjoining good and forbidding wrong.<sup>37</sup> This underscores their collective responsibility in social and community affairs. Women were not only encouraged to participate in governance and decision-making but were also consulted on key issues. One of the most notable examples of women's leadership in historical and Qur'ānic narratives is Queen *Bilqīs* of *Sabā*.<sup>38</sup> She demonstrated wisdom, consultation, and sound judgment, qualities that were acknowledged positively in the Qur'ān. Her ability to engage in political

35. al-Wāqidī, III, 1125-1126.

36. Ibn Māja, 3515; al-Tabarānī, XXV, 43.

37. Al-Qur'ān, 9:71.

38. Al-Qur'ān, 27:29-35.

dialogue and embrace Islam upon her interaction with Prophet Solomon (peace be on him) illustrates the capacity of women to lead effectively.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, historical precedents from the Prophetic era show that Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) consulted women on crucial matters. When drafting the Treaty of *Hudaibiyyah*, he sought and followed the advice of Umme Salma, demonstrating that women's perspectives were valued in critical political and social decisions. Similarly, Khadija provided emotional and strategic counsel to the Prophet (peace be on him) at the beginning of revelation, reaffirming the influential role of women in guiding leadership. Women also played a crucial role in religious and social affairs. Aeysha, one of the most knowledgeable scholars of her time, corrected male scholars when their interpretations contradicted the Qur'ān. Additionally, during the time of Caliph Umar, women were consulted in political and economic matters, including discussions on legal and financial policies.<sup>40</sup>

These examples highlight that woman in the Prophetic era were engaged in leadership, decision-making, and governance, offering valuable lessons for contemporary community development. Recognizing and utilizing women's leadership capabilities in modern society aligns with the precedent set in early Islamic history, where their wisdom, consultation, and influence contributed to social and political progress.

## 7. Muslim Women and Science

Historical records highlight the contributions of women in various intellectual and scientific fields, demonstrating their active role in society. One such figure was *Maryam al-Astrulabi* (d. 967), an accomplished astrolabe maker

39. Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of The Glorious Qur'an: Text & Explanatory Translation* (Delhi: Kutub Khana Ishyet-ul-Islam, 1930).

40. Mohammad Elius, Islamic View of Women Leadership as Head of the State: A Critical Analysis, *The Arts Faculty Journal*, July 2010-June 2011, 196-205.

who learned the craft from Bitolus, a renowned tenth-century expert in Baghdad. She was the daughter of *al-'Ijili al-Astrulabi*, himself a skilled astrolabe maker trained under the same mentor. Maryam's intricate and innovative designs in astronomical instruments earned her a position at the court of *Sayf al-Dawlah*, the Hamdanid ruler of northern Syria, where she worked between 944 and 967.<sup>41</sup>

Similarly, women made significant strides in mathematics, a discipline crucial for governance, trade, and inheritance laws—areas deeply embedded in social organization. *Sutayta al-Mahamali* (d. 987), a scholar from a well-educated family in Baghdad, was known for her expertise in arithmetic and inheritance calculations. She developed solutions to complex mathematical equations that had puzzled scholars before her, proving her analytical capabilities went beyond simple numerical proficiency.<sup>42</sup>

Another remarkable woman, *Labana* of Cordoba (d. 984), originally of Spanish origin, played an influential role in the Umayyad court. She was highly skilled in the exact sciences and solved advanced geometrical and algebraic problems, showcasing the depth of women's intellectual contributions in shaping social and administrative structures.<sup>43</sup>

These women, like many before them, illustrate the long-standing tradition of female participation in knowledge production, scientific advancement, and governance, emphasizing that their roles in social organization were not only recognized but essential.

## 8. Conclusion

The role of women in social organization during the Prophetic era was both dynamic and transformative, laying the groundwork for gender inclusivity in various spheres of life. This period witnessed a remarkable shift in societal

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41. Bayard Dodge (ed. and trans.), *The Fihrist of al-Nadim: A Tenth Century Survey of Muslim Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), vol. II: 634-673.

42. Al-Khatib Baghdadi, *Tarikh Baghdad* (Cairo: Happiness Press, 1931), vol. 6, 370.

43. Samuel P. Scott, *The History of the Moorish Empire in Europe* (Philadelphia & London: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1904), vol. 3, 447-448.

attitudes toward women, elevating their status from marginalized members to key contributors in economic, educational, scientific, healthcare, and leadership domains. Women actively participated in trade, agriculture, craftsmanship, governance, and knowledge production, proving their capability and resilience in shaping the early Islamic community.

Islamic teachings emphasized that women were not just passive members of society but active contributors whose skills and intellect were essential for community progress. Figures like *Khadijah b. Khuwailid* in trade, *Aeyshah b. Abi Bakr* in education, *Rufaidah Al-Aslamia* in healthcare, and *Maryam al-Astrulabi* in science stand as testaments to the significant role of women in shaping social, economic, and political structures. Their contributions set an enduring precedent, demonstrating that societal development thrives when both men and women participate equally in various fields.

The emphasis on financial independence, education, and governance ensured that women were not excluded from decision-making processes but were integral to shaping a just and progressive society. Women's contributions in handicrafts, literacy, and social welfare also reinforced the idea that economic empowerment was not merely about personal sustenance but about uplifting entire communities. Moreover, the institution of fosterage highlighted women's role in nurturing and strengthening family bonds, a critical element in maintaining the social fabric of the time.

The legacy of these pioneering women provides invaluable lessons for modern societies. Their participation in knowledge-sharing, business, healthcare, and governance offers a sustainable model for contemporary gender-equitable community development. As we examine their contributions, it becomes evident that societal progress is hindered when women are denied their rightful place in the workforce, education, and leadership. The Prophetic era established a framework that recognized women's talents and contributions, ensuring they had access to opportunities that enabled them to flourish.

Modern societies can draw inspiration from this historical context to ensure that gender inclusivity is not merely a policy but a lived reality. By fostering a supportive environment where women have access to education, financial independence, and leadership opportunities, communities can create a more balanced and progressive social order.

## **9. Recommendations**

### **9.1. Promote Women's Education and Knowledge Sharing**

- Establish educational programs, scholarships, and mentorship initiatives that encourage women to pursue higher education, particularly in fields where they have historically been underrepresented, such as STEM, business, and governance.
- Preserve and highlight the contributions of historical female scholars to inspire future generations.
- Increase female participation in religious and legal scholarship, ensuring their role in shaping interpretations of social and legal matters.

### **9.2. Strengthen Economic Opportunities for Women**

- Develop policies that support women entrepreneurs through access to microfinance, business training, and fair-trade networks.
- Encourage sustainable farming and livestock programs led by women, following the model of agricultural contributions seen in the Prophetic era.
- Facilitate women's entry into emerging markets, including digital entrepreneurship, e-commerce, and artisanal industries, ensuring economic resilience and financial independence.



### 9.3. Enhance Women Role in Governance and Leadership

- Encourage women's participation in leadership roles at local, national, and international levels, following the precedent of early Islamic governance.
- Implement policies that support women's decision-making power in public administration, education, and healthcare sectors.
- Foster community engagement initiatives where women can contribute to policy discussions, ensuring their voices are represented in matters affecting societal development.

### 9.4. Support Women's Contributions to Healthcare and Social Services

- Develop training programs for women in healthcare professions, particularly in midwifery, nursing, and mental health services, inspired by figures like *Rufaidah Al-Aslamia*.
- Create initiatives that integrate holistic healthcare approaches, blending modern medical advancements with traditional and faith-based healing practices.
- Encourage women to participate in humanitarian and relief efforts, drawing from historical models of women assisting in battlefield healthcare and social welfare.

### 9.5. Recognize and Preserve Traditional Skills and Craftsmanship

- Support women's handicraft industries through market access programs and online platforms that connect artisans with consumers globally.
- Provide training and resources for women in tailoring, textile production, and perfume-making industries, ensuring cultural preservation and economic sustainability.

- Establish cooperative societies for women engaged in artisanal work, fostering collaboration and financial stability.

#### **9.6.Revive the Institution of Fosterage and Family Support Systems**

- Encourage community-based childcare and mentorship programs that align with the traditional fosterage system, ensuring the well-being of orphaned and underprivileged children.
- Promote family structures that value and support women's roles in child-rearing, education, and moral development.
- Develop financial assistance programs for foster mothers and caregivers, ensuring the sustainability of childcare and family support initiatives.

#### **9.7.Create Awareness and Advocacy for Gender-Equitable Social Structures**

- Launch campaigns that educate communities about women's historical contributions, dispelling misconceptions that limit their role in society.
- Strengthen legal frameworks that protect women's rights in inheritance, business, and governance, reinforcing the principles established during the Prophetic era.
- Engage religious scholars, educators, and policymakers in discussions that promote a balanced and just approach to gender roles, ensuring that traditional values align with contemporary realities.

### **10. Final Thoughts**

The role of women in the Prophetic era was revolutionary in its inclusivity and impact. From trade and education to healthcare and governance, women were integral to the development of society. Their contributions were not only recognized but were actively encouraged, proving that Islam laid a strong foundation for gender equity.

Modern societies must take inspiration from this historical legacy and work toward a future where women have equal opportunities to contribute to economic, social, and political progress. Empowering women in education, business, healthcare, and governance is not just a matter of fairness—it is essential for building resilient, prosperous, and morally sound communities.

By implementing the recommendations above, contemporary communities can ensure that women continue to play a central role in shaping the future, just as they did during the golden era of Islam. The lessons from the past are clear: when women thrive, societies flourish. It is our responsibility to uphold these values and ensure that the contributions of women remain at the forefront of social and economic development.

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