A reply to the doubts raised regarding the verse 34 sura Nisa

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Abstract*: As we know, piety is the only criterion before God which determines human beings' superiority. Quran asserts this where it states,* ***"the noblest of you before Allah is the most righteous of you****" (the holy Quran, 49:13). Therefore, gender has no role in determining closeness to God. In Quran, marriage has been mentioned as a sign of God which causes human beings tranquility, but why, somewhere else in Quran, we see it is allowed for a man to hit his wife physically in case of her " Noshoz". The present study is going to deal with this issue.*

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Generally, can classified doubts raised in this regard into 6 groups:

a. What is the meaning of " **Qaw'wamiyat**"?

b. Does this term mean man's superiority over women?

c. What are the examples of **"Noshoz"**?

d. If a man doubts his wife's misbehavior, is he allowed to punish her physically?

e. To what extent he is allowed to punish his wife according to Islamic jurisprudence?

f. What's the meaning of "**zarabah**" in the verse 34 of Sura Nisa?

The meaning of "Qawwamon"

"Men are the maintainers of women for that Allah has preferred in bounty one of them over another, and for that they have spent of their wealth. Righteous women are obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah has guarded. Those from whom you fear rebelliousness, admonish them and desert them in the bed and leave them. Then, if they obey you, do not look for any way against them. Allah is high, great." *(the holy Quran,4:34)*

"men are the protectors of women because allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend out of their property; the good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as allah has guarded; and (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last), leave them; then if they obey you, do not seek a way against them; surely allah is high, great." *(the holy Quran,4:34)*

"Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret

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that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and leave them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever high, exalted, great." *(the holy Quran,4:34)*

There are different understanding considering this verse as some interpreters see the word "Qawwamon" as "the maintainers", "ptotectors" and some others "someone who is in charge of something"

According to Allamah Jafari this word is not a legal or Islamic jurisprudence term. This word means a person who has the right to buy or sell other one's property, or a person who is in charge of someone's life, like a person who is taking care of an orphaned child before his coming of age. And it is clear that the responsibility of a man towards his wife is not like this; as according to Islam a woman has complete freedom in making decisions regarding her life economic-wise, religious-wise, social-wise."[1]

In the book "*Al-in*", there is an entry including different meanings of the word "Qawwam" used by Arabs; one of them means a stick that is used to strengthen a young tree in front of winds,… .[2]

This meaning can be closer to this verse as women are like young trees which need a back. According to Islam, due to women's main responsibility which is raising kids, they should be supported by men financially. Therefore we can conclude that here "Qayyomiyat" means support someone else,i.e. taking care of her.

But what is the reason behind this:

*Men are blessed naturally and they should use this blessing to take care of their wives. "***Allah has preferred in bounty one of them over another"**

[1]Sharh Nahjul-Balaghe, allame Jafari, vol.11,p.271
[2]Alin, Khalil Farahidi, vol.5,p.232

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*It is a command from God that men are responsible for answering their wives expenses and support them financially. ***"They spend of their property (for the support of women)"***

But what is the meaning of being blessed as it was mentioned above?

1. What are the causes of this blessing according to scholars?

There are various ideas regarding this blessing. Some believe the reason is due to men's logical ability, and their wisdom." According to them, the reason of men's superiority over women is because of their logical power; Prophethood which is specific to men is a proof on this claim.

A response to the believers in men's superiority over women:

First, Quran repeatedly asserts that men and women are equal regarding all human virtues. "***for men and women who have surrendered believing men and women; obedient men and women; truthful men and women, patient men and women, humble men and women, men and women who give charity, men and women who fast, men and women who guard their privates, men and women who remember Allah in abundance, for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a mighty wage."*** *(The holy Quran,33:35)*

And also it is not fair to say women lack the necessary abilities to be a consulter as Quran pictured their together-decision-making for children ***"mothers shall suckle their children for two years completely, for whoever desires to fulfill the suckling. It is for the father to provide for them and clothe them with kindness. No soul is charged except to its capacity. A mother shall not be harmed for her child, neither a father for his child. And upon the heir is like that. If both desire to wean by mutual consent and consultation, then no guilt shall be on them. And if you desire a wet nurse for your children, then no guilt shall be on you if***

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you hand over what you have given with kindness. And fear Allah, and know that Allah is the seer of what you do." *(2:233)*. Also, in those verses about consultation, women are not excluded. If women can not reach the highest levels of wisdom, how could they become the role models for all ages as it is mentioned in Quran? ***"but to those who believe allah has given as an example pharaoh's wife, who said: 'my lord, build me a house before you in paradise and save me from pharaoh and his work, and save me from a harmdoing nation"*** *(66: 11, 12)*

About the Prophethood which is claimed is specifically for men, first, we can say in Quran, wherever the word Prophet came next to the world "rijal" (men) is in response to disbelievers who asked why Prophet is a human being like themselves? Second, according to authentic traditions accepted by both Shia and Sunnis narrated by Abuzar, amongst 124000 messengers, only there were 313 prophets. So even if we accept the specialty of prophethood for men, we can not decline existence of women among these messengers.

g. When is a woman " Nashezeh"? What are the examples of **"noshoz" (i.e. violating men's rights)**?

h. If a man doubts his wife's misbehavior, is he allowed to punish her?

"Men are the maintainers of women for that Allah has preferred in bounty one of them over another, and for that they have spent of their wealth. Righteous women are obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah has guarded. Those from whom you fear rebelliousness, admonish them and desert them in the bed and leave them. Then, if they obey you, do not look for any way against them. Allah is high, great." (4:34)

Ibn Manzoor in "*Lisan al-Arab*" for the entry Nashezeh wrote that regarding family disputes, if a wife disobeys her husband, she is called "nashezeh" and if a man disobeys his wife, he is "Nashez" and if both disobeys each other it is "sheghagh".

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Generally, there are various interpretations regarding the domain of disobedience; a group of scholars believe that disobedience of a wife is not having sex with her husband. It means she should be ready for having sex with her husband whenever he wishes. There are some exception for this, for example in her menstruation, it is forbidden to have sex with her. So it is better to say according to the first group avoiding sex without a logical reason is the meaning of " Noshoz" .

The second group believes that avoiding sex and going out of home without husband's permission are the meaning of it. It is important to make it clear that as a man is responsible for the life of his wife in all aspects, so it is his right to be aware of her commuting.

Briefly, we can claim the word "nashezeh" is used in the opposite of those women who are good, humble and supportive of whatever they should in the absence of their husbands. Any woman who has not these features is "a righteous woman".

But what is the meaning of those righteous wives who are humble at the presence of their husbands?

It means taking husband's order out of interest and willingly. The word "Qa'enat" has a connotation of peacefulness.

According to the Islamic rules, in case of disobedience regarding sexual issues, a wife should be faced 3 reactions which are mentioned in the answer of the following question.

i. To what extent is a man allowed to punish his wife according to Islamic jurisprudence?

"Men are the maintainers of women for that Allah has preferred in bounty one of them over another, and for that they have spent of their

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wealth. Righteous women are obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah has guarded. Those from whom you fear rebelliousness, admonish them and desert them in the bed and leave them. Then, if they obey you, do not look for any way against them. Allah is high, great." (4:34)

First, a husband should talk to his wife kindly, avoid any harshness. Doubtlessly, if a man could manage this part, the problem would be solved at this point.

But if she continues her behavior, he should move to the next step which is not sleeping with her. According to imam Baqir , " he should turn his back to her in bed." So according to this tradition, a man should not separate his bed from her, change his bedroom or leave the home. At this time, his wife's emotions will provoke her to change her behavior.

But if this strategy was not useful, a man could move to the third step which is "zarabah". Regarding "zarabah" (hitting), there are different ideas which can be classified into two groups:

First group: they interpreted "hitting" as physically beating her.

Most interpreters are in this group. But the hitting in their idea is different from what we normally think. According to them, hitting is not a punishment but it is an alarm or a gesture showing men's detest of the behavior of their wife. The aim here is not taking revenge or belittling her. The hitting here should not hurt her. It should be as if a friend touches his friend kindly. According to imam Riza, this hitting should be done by something like tooth sticks and it should be done kindly. Or according to ibn Abbas, it should be painless.

In fact if a man observes the rights of his wife generally, so this gesture can warn her and change her for better, make her ashamed but if the man is always bad-tempered and due to this his wife gets stubborn, hitting her not only can not help but also will make the situation worse.

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This verse not only is not against women's right but is in fact in favor of them and family. It offers ways to avoid divorce and to solve the problem soon and inside home.

Second group: they interpreted another meaning which comes below.

Some scholars believe "zarabah" in Islam means discipline someone, and a man can not do it himself but he should go to judges.

Conclusion:

As it is mentioned labeling Islam as a harsh religion toward women is baseless; in the opposite, Islam values females and asks men to regard women. The gist of our claim is this tradition which says, ***"the more complete a man's belief, the kinder he is to his wife."***

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