

A research review of the principles and regulations of freedom of expression in the light of Islamic laws

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Abdul Razzaq

PHD Scholar, Department of Islamic & Religious Studies, Hazara
University Mansehra
Email: ar831585@gmail.com

Muhammad Faisal

Assistant Professor Department of Islamic & Religious Studies
Govt. College Balakot
Email: mmfaisal1978@gmail.com

Bibi Hanifa

Head Department of Islamic & Religious Studies Govt. Girls
Degree College Qalandar Abad Abbottabad
Email: Bibihaneefa@gmail.com

Abstract

In a limited world, everything has a limit, similarly there is a limit to freedom. Freedom is a blessing within its limits, but corruption beyond its limits is corruption. The limit of intellectual freedom is that it is known and proven. Be within the realm of facts, no opinion should be formed based on assumptions and speculations, and no ideological building should be built based on such unoriginal things. Therefore, a person should avoid irresponsible words and expressions. It is necessary to fully examine the matter before, otherwise there is salvation and comfort in silence. In this article, the same questions will be answered in the light of Quran, Hadith and international laws. Does Islam absolutely allow expression of opinion? Are there limits to the expression of men's opinions? Has Islam given freedom of expression to women? Does a woman have the right to freedom of expression in international law? Was the opinion of the Companions respected during the time of the Prophet? Can women's testimony be accepted like men's? Are women bound by the husband's or father's permission in dealing with finances? The verse number will be given and the rest of the references will be given according to the Chicago Manual style and the principles and rules of freedom of expression will be examined in the light of the original sources and the positive and negative aspects of these rules and regulations will be highlighted and The results obtained will be mentioned in the end of the research.

Keywords: Freedom, Islam, Quran, Hadith, International Law, Limits, Truthfulness, Harm prevention, public interest, Violence, Respect, Prophet Muhammad, Gender equality, Women rights, Historical precedents, Dialogue, Consultation.

Introduction

Islam does not grant absolute freedom of expression to women and men, but rather establishes limits and principles along with the right to freedom of expression. These principles and regulations are mentioned below. Because unrestricted freedom of expression in any society leads to disputes and corruption, and the purpose of freedom of expression is lost. The West also initially granted absolute freedom, but after the emergence of negative consequences, they also established limits. On the other hand, Islam has determined limits from the beginning where it granted the right to freedom of expression, so that society can be completely clear of corruption. This is also a natural law, and limits are what differentiate between humans and animals. Therefore, there is no concept of granting freedom to parents in Islam and the religion of Muhammad (peace be upon him). In the eyes of Islam, such a person is worse than an animal. The honor of humanity is in servitude, and worship is its ascension. Therefore, Muslims' focus is on the servitude of Allah. In Islam, every individual is free, but there are certain boundaries. This freedom is not unlimited.

Expression of opinion's (اظہار رائے) lexical and terminological definition:

Expression means to open, to express, and the meaning of expression is to state, to express.¹ Freedom is called "Huriyyah" in Arabic. The word "Opinion" is used in English for expressing an opinion (رائے) and in Arabic:

“ما يترجح لانسان بعد فكر وتأمل”²

“After contemplation and reflection, the thing that becomes relevant to humans is their opinion”

In the past, the word freedom was used in contrast to slavery. Ibn Manzoor Afriqi writes:

“الحر بالضم نقيض العبد”³

“Freedom is the opposite of slavery.”

Expression of opinion (اظہار رائے) meaning and concept:

The meaning and concept of expressing an opinion is to express every accidental, conflicting, and critical point of view in one's thoughts and ideas without any fear or danger, as it is in Muheet Fī al Lughah:

“اظہر واعتلن : مثل اشتهر وعالنته اظہر کل متا للآخر ما فی نفسه”⁴

“It means: declaration and expression, that is, expressing one's thoughts in front of others”

From an Islamic perspective, freedom of expression is understood as follows:

Islam has given humans the freedom to express their thoughts in all possible ways, but within limits, so that no one's rights are violated and the structure of society remains strong. In this regard, there are texts from the

Quran and Sunnah.⁵

According to the famous Western thinker David Hume:

*"The ability to inform others of one's opinions in an individual or social capacity without any kind of obstacle or restriction, as long as its purpose is not to annoy or deprive others of their fundamental rights"*⁶

According to the United Nations, freedom of opinion is defined as follows:

*"Every individual in society has the full right to religious and intellectual freedom, which includes the freedom to change beliefs and practice all religious rituals"*⁷

In Western context, freedom of expression means

*"absolute freedom from parental control, God, prophets, religious restrictions, and traditional constraints."*⁸

The principles and regulations of freedom of opinion in the Quran include:

(a) Humans are not completely free to speak:

Whatever comes to a person's mind, thoughts, and heart without thinking and understanding, it is not allowed to spread it to others because whatever a person says, Allah will hold him accountable for it. Allah has assigned the duty of recording every action to the noble scribes. They preserve every second of our speech. On the Day of Judgment, we will be held accountable for every word that comes out of our mouths.

To alert us to this, Allah says:

”مَا يَلْفُظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ“⁹

"Man does not utter any word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record]."

”فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَهُ“¹⁰

"So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it."

Humans are equal in being male and female, just as a man will be accountable for his actions, similarly a woman who speaks and converses will be accountable to Allah for what she says. Therefore, Islam commands to spread goodness and prohibits the promotion and dissemination of evil.

(b) Making fun of someone, searching for faults, and using derogatory titles is not permissible.

Along with freedom of expression, Islam also emphasizes the protection of the dignity of common people. The preservation of dignity is an important objective of Shariah. Therefore, warnings have been revealed against calling people by derogatory titles. Allah says:

”يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُوا قَوْمًا مِنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْهُمْ وَلَا تُنكِرُوا قَوْمًا يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِنْكُمْ وَلَا تَلْمِزُوا“

”11“¹¹”أَنْفُسِكُمْ وَلَا تَنَابَزُوا بِالْأَلْقَابِ بِئْسَ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْفُسُوقُ بَعْدَ الْإِيمَانِ وَمَنْ لَمْ يَتُبْ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ“

"O you who believe, no men should ever scoff at other men. May be, the latter are better than the former. Nor should women (ever scoff) at other

women. May be, the latter women are better than the former ones. And do not find fault with one another, nor call one another with bad nicknames. Bad is the name of sinfulness after embracing Faith. If anyone does not repent, then such people are the wrongdoers.”

People have started calling each other by derogatory titles due to freedom of expression. In the media and press, everyone can be seen attacking each other's honor. But Islam strictly prohibits these things because society is being corrupted due to these reasons.

In a limited world, everything has a limit. Therefore, freedom also has a limit. Without considering limits, society is destroyed by freedom. Making fun of each other, searching for faults, and calling each other by derogatory titles are not allowed in Islam. Contrary to the principles of the West, there is no objection to it. Islam grants freedom, but with limits and restrictions because absolute freedom leads to corruption in society, and without freedom of expression, society becomes stagnant. No human can reach their conscience to others.

In this blessed verse, there are restrictions and limitations mentioned for both men and women. Just as men are equal partners in these commandments, women are also equal in society as individuals. Therefore, just as men are obligated to follow these commandments, women are also required to do so. Similarly, just as men can question women for going against these commandments, women can also question men. Therefore, both genders are equally responsible for following all of these commandments.

(c) Ridiculing and mocking Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is not permissible.

Islam prohibits insulting Allah and the beloved Prophet (peace be upon him) and using inappropriate words for them. It considers those who cause harm and insult them as criminals and deserving of punishment. Allah says:

”وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ“¹²

“And whoever becomes hostile to Allah and His Messenger, then, Allah is severe at punishment.”

Allah also says:

”إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا“¹³

“Surely, those who annoy Allah and His Messenger are cursed by Allah in this world and in the Hereafter, and He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment.”

From the above verses, it is evident that both men and women should be cautious in the use of language and avoid words that may disrespect any individual, including the final Prophet and other prophets.

(d) The rituals of Allah are respectable, and criticism and humiliation of them are not permissible.

All heavenly religions agree on the greatness of the rituals of Allah.

The rituals of Allah are respectable for everyone, disrespecting them is completely unacceptable. The Almighty has guided:

”ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظِمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ“¹⁴

“Having said that, if one observes the sanctity of the symbols of Allah, then such things emanate from the piety of the hearts.”

The Noble Quran has commanded all individuals to respect the noble rituals of Allah and refrain from humiliation.

(e) Concealing the truth is a condemnable act.

Islam has emphasized the importance of expressing the truth as well as condemning the concealment of truth, so that the desire to express the truth is awakened among individuals in society.

Allah Ta'ala has guided:

”إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْتُمُونَ مَا آتَانَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالْهُدَىٰ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا بَيَّنَّاهُ لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْكِتَابِ ۗ إِنَّ إِلَيْكَ يَلْعَنُهُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَلْعَنُهُمُ الْعَالَمُونَ“¹⁵

“Surely, those who conceal the clear signs and the guidance We have revealed, even after We have explained them for people in the Book, upon them Allah casts damnation, and they are cursed by all those who curse.”

This blessed verse indicates that concealing the truth leads to being cursed in this world and severe punishment in the Hereafter. Therefore, expressing the truth and not expressing it is not a matter of absolute freedom for humans, but expressing the truth has been made obligatory for humans and concealing the truth has been made punishable.

(f) Backbiting is not permissible in Islam.

Where Islam grants the right to freedom of expression to its followers, it also considers backbiting, slander, and false accusations as punishable acts. Backbiting is as detestable and abhorrent as killing a Muslim and eating his flesh, and on the Day of Judgment, such people will be given nails of copper to scratch their faces.

”وَلَا يَغْتَابَ بَعْضُكُمُ بَعْضًا“¹⁶

“And do not backbite one another.”

(g) Accusing others without evidence is a condemnable act in Islam.

”وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَآ“¹⁷

“And those who accuse the chaste women (of fornication), but they do not produce four witnesses, flog them with eighty stripes and do not accept their any evidence any more.”

Difference between backbiting and slander

There is a difference between backbiting and slander. Both backbiting and slander are punishable acts, but there is a subtle difference between them. Backbiting is talking about someone in their absence, whether it is true or not, while slander is making false accusations against someone.

(h) Spreading news without verification is not permissible.

Whoever speaks about something should first verify whether the

information is true or not. If the news is true, then it can be spread, otherwise spreading false news is a punishable act. The Almighty has guided:

”وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا“¹⁸

“And do not follow a thing about which you have no knowledge. Surely, the ear, the eye and the heart -each one of them shall be interrogated about.”

This makes it clear that it is permissible to publicize news after verifying it using the abilities given by God. Otherwise, this publicity will be considered false and in the hadiths, it is referred to as hidden falsehood. Therefore, it is not correct for a person to publicize any news without verification.

Speaking is permissible for a person who prepares himself before speaking, meaning that he thinks about whether this news can be true or not, then investigates about it and forms a mental image of the effects of this news on society. After passing through all these stages, it is permissible to spread the news because it is a matter of deceiving people, and Islam prohibits all such actions.

The Almighty has guided:

”يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِن جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَأٍ فَتَبَيَّنُوهُ“¹⁹

“O you who believe, if a sinful person brings you a report, verify its correctness”

Every heard news without verification has been considered false in the Prophetic teachings. Just as freedom of expression is a right, it is also a responsibility. This means that a person should never express an opinion without complete verification and knowledge.

Islam has provided fundamental principles for every aspect of human life, and there is no field of life that has been deprived of this legislation. Similarly, Islam has defined the paths of human thought, which, by following them, the human intellect can reach true success. Syed Maududi expressed the Islamic stance in the Quran by saying:

"The meaning of Islam is obedience and submission. A Muslim is the one who accepts and follows the commandments without any hesitation, obeys the orders of Allah and His Messenger, bows his head before them, and does not abandon Islamic principles by blindly following human beings, whether they are alive or dead." ²⁰

(i) Human thoughts are not completely free.

According to the teachings of the book, when there is a command from God and His messenger, the believers no longer have the freedom to choose. It is not permissible in Islam to think against it or seek arguments and justifications.

The Almighty has guided:

”وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يَعْصِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلَالًا“

”مُؤْمِنًا“²¹

"It is not open for a believing man or a believing woman, once Allah and His messenger have decided a thing, that they should have a choice about their matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His messenger, he indeed gets off the track, falling into an open error"

Human thoughts and reason, despite having complete freedom, are bound by the divine book in making decisions and forming opinions, so that the flight of thought and the correctness of opinions remain on the path of success. Therefore, decisions should only be according to the divine book. Acting upon some commands that are dependent on desires and leaving some will be the cause of disgrace in this world and the hereafter.

One who makes decisions without considering the Quran is a disbeliever and oppressor.

”22 وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ“

"Those who do not judge according to what Allah has sent down, they are the sinners."

”23 وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ“

"Who is better in judgement than Allah, for a people who believe?"

Human thoughts, despite having complete freedom, are bound by divine scripture in making decisions, so that the flight of thoughts remains only on the paths of righteousness.

(j) It is necessary to follow the divine word.

The guidance is from Allah Almighty:

”24 فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ“

"So, judge between them according to what Allah has sent down, and do not follow their desires against the truth that has come to you."

Although it may or may not be in accordance with the temperament of individuals in society, doubting any one of the commands leads to the disgrace of both this world and the hereafter. The guidance is from Allah Almighty:

أَفَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِبَعْضِ الْكِتَابِ وَتَكْفُرُونَ بِبَعْضٍ فَمَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا خِزْيٌ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُرَدُّونَ إِلَىٰ

”25 أَشَدِّ الْعَذَابِ وَمَا اللَّهُ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ“

"Do you, then, believe in some parts of the Book, and disbelieve in others? So, what can be the punishment of those among you who do that, except disgrace in present life? And, on the Day of Judgement, they shall be turned to the most severe punishment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do"

It is necessary and essential to follow the commands of the Holy Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and it is a crime to change them or deny them using one's own intellect.

(k) When it comes to expressing opinions, there is no freedom of expression when it comes to the laws of God.

The Quran has clearly stated in the clearest words that humans have

no authority in matters where God's law exists. They have no right to declare something permissible or forbidden. Their only task is to follow the commands of the Creator of the universe and the beloved Prophet. Where God's laws and principles exist, no individual, human, community, society, or state has the authority or right to legislate. They have no power to declare something permissible or forbidden. Their only task is to follow the commands of God and His Prophet. The guidance is from Allah Almighty:

”اتَّبِعُوا مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ“²⁶

“(O humankind,) follow what has been sent down to you from your Lord, and do not follow any masters other than Him.”

“Follow the laws of Allah; do not read in someone else's footsteps.”

The obedience to divine command is foremost for a human being.

“Allah Almighty has not imposed restrictions on common people for legislation, nor has He given this authority to His Prophet, that they can alter or modify a matter in which Allah's command is present.”²⁷

Apparently, in matters of revelation, freedom of thought and freedom of expression have no meaning. When Allah's command comes through revelation, no person, not even the Prophet, has the freedom of thought and action in that matter.

The guidance of Allah Almighty is:

”قُلْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي أَنْ أُبَدِّلَهُ مِنْ تَلْقَائِي أَنفُسِي ۖ إِنْ أَتَيْتُ إِلَّا مَا يُوْحَىٰ إِلَيَّ ۚ إِنْ أَحَافَ إِنْ عَصَيْتُ رَبِّي عَذَابٌ يَوْمَ عَظِيمٍ“²⁸

“Say, “It is not possible for me to make changes in it on my own. I follow nothing but what is revealed to me. If I disobey my Lord, I fear the punishment of a terrible day.”

“O Prophet, it is not for you to change this Quran on your own. It is only for you to follow the revelation that has been sent down to you. Otherwise, there is the fear of a great punishment on the Day of Judgment.”

“O Prophet, do not have the freedom of thought and action in that matter. It is necessary to follow the revelation sent by God. Otherwise, there is the fear of a severe punishment.”

In the early days of Islamic history, during the incident of the mutual disagreement between Hazrat Zaid and Hazrat Zainab, the solution to social issues was also determined in relation to the person of the Prophet.

In this regard, there is a question in people's minds that the Prophet, as the leader of the prophets, had said to Hazrat Zaid,

”أَمْسِكْ عَلَيْكَ زَوْجَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللَّهَ“²⁹

“Keep your wife to your self, and fear Allah.”

But Hazrat Zaid divorced Hazrat Zainab against the command. However, there was no expression of disapproval from Allah and the Messenger of Allah regarding this act of disobedience. Rather, the Quran mentioned Hazrat Zaid in relation to this incident in such words that express approval instead of disapproval.

”لَا يَنْبَغِي أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ“³⁰

“To the one who was favored by Allah”

From this, it can be inferred that there is no objection to going against the command of the Prophet.

The answer to this is that if the Messenger of Allah gives personal advice and the Ummah has the choice to accept or reject it, but when it comes to matters of religion or teachings, it is necessary to act upon them in all circumstances.

(l) It is not right to say bad things about someone.

In freedom of expression, one should refrain from saying bad things about someone's religion or practices. It should not be that they speak ill of your religion or faith based on freedom of expression, as Islam prohibits it.

”وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ“³¹

“Do not revile those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they should revile Allah in transgression without having knowledge.”

(m) Insulting or mocking a prophet or messenger is not permissible.

In Islam, it is also stated as a principle of freedom of opinion that one should avoid blasphemy against a prophet or messenger.

”إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا“³²

“Surely, those who annoy Allah and His Messenger are cursed by Allah in this world and in the Hereafter, and He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment.”

(n) Promoting obscenity and indecency is not permissible:

In Islamic principles, it is also mentioned that in matters of freedom of expression, care should be taken not to promote anything obscene or indecent.

”إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ“³³

“Surely, those who like that lewdness spreads among the believers, for them there is painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. Allah knows, and you do not know.”

(o) There is no compulsion in accepting a religion.

Another fundamental principle is that religious coercion should be avoided in this matter. The purpose is clear that no one should be forcibly made to accept any religion or convert from any religion in the name of freedom of expression, because Allah Almighty has said:

”لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۗ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ“³⁴

“There is no compulsion in Faith. The correct way has become distinct from the erroneous.”

(p) Freedom to spread evil and corruption is not allowed

In the country, it is not permissible to express opinions that promote evil and corruption, that destroy the government and people's belongings, and that cause fear and harm to people.

” وَلَا تَبْخِشُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِدِينَ “³⁵

“And do not seek to make mischief in the land. Surely, Allah does not like the mischiefmakers.”

In the blessed saying (Hadith Mubarakah), the principles and regulations of women's freedom of opinion are mentioned:

(a) It is necessary to refrain from telling lies.

According to the principles of expressing opinions, it is important for a person to keep their conscience clear from telling lies and to be cautious of such lies that the listener considers to be true, and they fall into the deception that so-and-so is telling the truth, while in reality, it is a lie. This is the command of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

”كبرت خيانة ان تحدث اخاك حديثا هو لك به مصدق وانت له به كاذب“³⁶

“It is a great injustice that you tell your brother and friend something, they consider your words to be true and correct, while the thing you said was a lie”

In reality, this freedom of expression is completely opposite to the Western concept of freedom, where there is no concept of fear of God, concern for the afterlife, following the example of the Prophet, and moral boundaries and restrictions. Whereas in Islam, freedom of expression is bound by all these religious and moral teachings, which prevent individuals and society from unfair use of freedom of expression.

(b) It is necessary to verify the truth and doubt falsehood.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

”انه ستكون من بعدى امراء من صدقهم بكذبهم -- وهو وارد على الحوض“³⁷

“After me, there will come rulers who will be accepted by those who believe in their falsehood, and they will support them in their oppression. I have no connection with them. Such a person will not be able to meet me at the Pool of Kawthar, and the one who opposes them will meet me there”

This hadith also emphasizes the necessity and importance of freedom of opinion for both men and women, and condemns blind conformity. It is the responsibility of every individual to verify the truth and doubt falsehood. If a person does not verify the truth after it becomes clear, or doubts falsehood after it becomes evident, it will be a cause of regret and remorse.

(c) Backbiting is a reprehensible act.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

”الغيبية اشد من الزنا“³⁸

“Backbiting is worse than adultery”

This hadith also teaches that human speech is not completely free, and one should not start speaking whatever comes to their mind. Speaking is permissible only within the limits of the Shariah, and speaking beyond the

limits of the Shariah is not correct. Islam has declared backbiting as a major sin.

(d) It is better to remain silent than engage in useless conversation.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ -- أَوْ لِيَصْمُتْ”³⁹

“The one who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment should always speak what is right and good, or remain silent”

Speaking is permissible for a person who prepares themselves before speaking, but passing judgments on hearsay is not the way of the believers.

(e) In the access of Allah's limits, man has no authority.

When a woman named Fatimah from the Banu Makhzum tribe committed theft, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) ordered her hand to be cut off. Usamah bin Zaid recommended mercy for her, but the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“إِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ الَّذِينَ قَبْلَكَ”⁴⁰

“Some groups among you were destroyed because they had freedom in committing theft and the weak were not saved from punishment. I take an oath that even if my daughter committed theft, I would establish the law of the Shariah on her”

(f) It is not permissible to express disobedience to the Creator.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“لَا طَاعَةَ -- فِي مَعْصِيَةِ الْخَالِقِ”⁴¹

“Obedience to human beings is not necessary when it involves disobedience to the Creator.”

This narration also proves that human beings are not completely free, but there are limits and restrictions on their actions and opinions. Therefore, before every action, one must think whether it is permissible according to the Shariah or not.

It seems that Allah has shown great kindness to humanity by setting certain limits and restrictions for them. This is the code through which a person can reach the pinnacle of humanity. For the betterment and guidance of mankind, these divine principles have been defined as "the limits of Allah". The inevitable consequence of crossing these limits is destruction and ruin, and it leads to the downfall of both worlds. This is why the Quran says:

“تِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ فَلا تَقْرُبُوهَا”⁴²

“These are the limits set by Allah, so do not go near them.”

The purpose of Islam is to grant freedom of thought and action, but it is not unrestricted freedom for parents. It is a freedom that is bound and conditional, and one can only flourish within the boundaries of certain conditions and limits. Islam allows freedom of expression while keeping in mind the prescribed limits.⁴³

(g) The fulfillment of the limits set by Allah is necessary in every situation.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“عن أبي ثعلبة الخشني قال قال رسول الله ﷺ إن الله فرض فرائض فلا تضيعوها--”⁴⁴

*"Abu Tha'labah al-Khushani narrates that Habibullah (peace be upon him) instructed. Some things are necessary for a person, do not waste them, and do not read too much into them except that you may forget something important."*⁴⁵

(h) It is not permissible for a man and a woman to resemble each other.

Islamic law has cursed those women who resemble men in their appearance and likewise those men who resemble women, because the boundaries of each gender are separate and their purposes and objectives are different. When one gender imitates the other, it is as if they are disregarding their own boundaries and stepping into the boundaries of the other gender, seeking to nullify the benefits and objectives that were specific to their own gender.⁴⁶ It is due to this third gender that in recent days, this law has been introduced in Europe and also in Pakistan, allowing men and women to change their gender. This is the thinking of those who belong to this third gender, who have created such a situation that they can no longer be called men or women.

The Noble Prophet ﷺ strongly condemned this resemblance in a harsh tone:

“ليس منا من تشبه بالرجل من النساء ولا من تشبه بالنساء من الرجال”⁴⁷

"He is not one of us who imitates women, and she is not one of us who imitates men."

(i) Respecting the status of the Companions and the Ahlul Bayt

It is not acceptable to speak ill of the Companions.

The guidance of the presence of the Prophet (peace be upon him) is:

“الله الله في اصحابي --- ومن آذى الله فيوشك ان يأخذه”⁴⁸

"The sanctity of the Companions is our responsibility... Allah will surely punish them in torment."

(j) Prohibition of insulting men:

Islam allows insulting and speaking ill of others during one's lifetime, but it does not permit it after death. In this regard, there is a narration from Hazrat Aisha that states:

“لا تسبوا الأموات؛ فإنهم قد أفضوا إلى ما قدموا”⁴⁹

"Do not insult of those who have passed away, because whatever they had sent ahead, they have received it themselves."

(k) Disobedience of the husband is not permissible:

The Prophet ﷺ commanded spouses to fulfill their responsibilities in a good manner in domestic affairs, and therefore Allah and the Prophet ﷺ made it necessary for women to obey their husbands in permissible matters and

made disobedience and rebellion punishable.

⁵⁰“عن أبي هريرة : قال قيل لرسول الله ﷺ ائى النساء خير؟ تسره اذا نظر”

“It is narrated from Abu Hurairah that he asked Ahmad ﷺ, which woman is better? He replied, When the husband sees her, he becomes pleased with her.”

Meaning that she is not disobedient, but has reached the pinnacle of obedience.

(l) Ingratitude of the husband is condemnable:

Women should lead their lives with gratitude and contentment with their families in all circumstances. Instead of appreciating the favors and practical efforts of their husbands, those who speak ill of them are deserving of going to Hell.

⁵¹“عن حكيم بن حزام قال خطب النبي ﷺ ذات يوم النساء --- قال تكفرن العشير وتكثرن الّعن وتسوفن الخير”

“Hazrat Hakeem bin Hizam narrates that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once addressed the women and said, 'Women will enter Hell in large numbers. You often show ingratitude towards your husband and frequently send curses, and you also create obstacles in acts of goodness.’”

(m) Publicizing sins and transgressions is not permissible:

It is not correct to express and spread sins such as drinking alcohol and other transgressions. Shariah prohibits their promotion.

⁵²“عن سالم بن عبدالله قال سمعت ابا هريرة يقول سمعت رسول الله ﷺ يقول كل امتى معافى الا مجابرين”

“Abu Hurairah narrates that I heard the Prophet ﷺ saying, "I will seek forgiveness for my entire Ummah, except for those who openly commit sins.”

*Imam Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) explains the interpretation of the manifest sinners as those who commit sins openly and manifest their sins.*⁵³

(n) Revealing secrets is not permissible:

Spying and disclosing essential confidential matters and expressing opinions in its confirmation and transmitting it to other countries is not permissible.

أتى النبي ﷺ عين من المشركين وهو في سفر فجلس عند اصحابه يتحدث ثم انفتل فقال النبي ﷺ اطلبوه

⁵⁴“واقتلوه فقتله

“A spy came to your gathering, O Prophet, and started conversing with the companions. Then he left from there. You commanded to search for him and kill him. So, Salma bint Akwa killed him.”

Principles and regulations of women's freedom of opinion in the light of international laws:

Freedom of expression is discussed in the context of Islamic harmony, and then the principles and regulations are debated in accordance with international laws.

Principles and regulations of freedom of opinion in Pakistan:

The principles and regulations of freedom of opinion in Pakistan are stated in the Constitution of Pakistan, Article 19.

*"Every individual will have the freedom of expression in every way, but it will be subject to responsible restrictions that may be necessary for the integrity of Islam, security, defense of Pakistan, or any form of corruption."*⁵⁵

Principles and regulations regarding the violation of dignity in the West:

Western countries have also established laws to prevent corruption because the establishment of a stable society is impossible without it.

*"Adefamation Law is a law which aims to protect people against false statement of act which causes damages to their reputation"*⁵⁶

In the laws, regulations, and charters of the world, the limits of freedom of expression are also mentioned.⁵⁷

Every society has set limits on freedom of opinion and expression according to their desires and preferences, and limits have also been set on expressing facts because without them, their preferences cannot be acted upon. Obscenity and writing and speech that incites hatred have been restricted in Europe and America, and in countries like Australia, France, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, etc., absolute freedom is not obtained, but freedom is bound by limits and restrictions.

In 1984, a teacher named James King expressed his views on the Holocaust, which led to his dismissal from his job, and similarly, in Canada and other countries, those who speak about the Holocaust were given the punishment of death and imprisonment.⁵⁸

Former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on one occasion,

*"I support freedom of expression, but it is not absolute. I cannot allow disrespect and incitement in any way."*⁵⁹

Hinduism is an atheistic religion (disgusted with religion) that orders the burning of its followers.

With limits, society can progress towards freedom, and if absolute freedom is given, humans and animals will become alike. As Laski said, "Historical experiences have elevated principles that force us to live in the right way, and their restriction is a fair limit to our freedom."

Summary:

The crux of this article is that Islam has defined the rights of both men and women by giving them the right to freedom of opinion because progress is not possible in any society without freedom. Islam has given rights like freedom of opinion to humans by making them obligated and distinguishing them from animals. Islam has bestowed upon humans the great blessing of intellect so that humans can use it to express gratitude for the blessings bestowed by Allah and Islam has further shown kindness by acknowledging

that humans are weak and can sometimes fall into the wrong desires, so some limits have been set with freedom so that humans can reach the highest level of obedience to Allah and society can remain peaceful and secure. The personal freedom of every individual is completely protected. Allah has not created humans to be merely forced but has also given them the power to make choices within a certain circle, and it is on the basis of this choice that humans are made deserving of reward and punishment in this world and the hereafter. The purpose of Islam is to promote freedom of expression but it does not approve of opinions that are baseless and against Islamic principles. It has given this right to all classes of Muslims, including men and women, slaves and free.

Conclusion

1. Islam does not give complete freedom to any man or woman, but rather gives limited freedom.
2. In Islam, women are not completely oppressed, but they also have the right to freedom of opinion as men do.
3. Women can also engage in transactions while observing the Islamic veil.
4. Women also have the right to freedom of opinion in international law.
5. In the time of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the opinions of female companions were respected and their testimony was also accepted.
6. Women's opinions were also taken into account and decisions were made according to their opinions.



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