

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY  
WOMEN IN MALAYSIA

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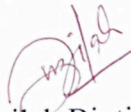
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## AUTHOR DECLARATION

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

I hereby declare that the work in this academic project is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledged.

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In the Name of Allah, The Most Merciful; Praise be to Allah, The Lord Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds.

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## ABSTRAK

Tajuk kajian ini ialah cabaran-cabaran yang dihadapi oleh wanita di Malaysia. Di dalam menjalankan kajian ini penulis telah menggunakan beberapa kaedah kajian seperti kajian perpustakaan, perkhidmatan internet dan juga sumber dari al-Quran dan al-Hadith. Penulis telah mencari sumber-sumber maklumat dari perpustakaan Kolej Universiti Islam Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaya dan juga Perpustakaan Negara Kuala Lumpur. Di dalam kajian ini penulis menumpukan atau mengkhususkan kajian tentang wanita amnya dan memfokuskan kepada cabaran-cabaran yang dihadapi. Di dalam cabaran-cabaran yang di kaji, penulis telah mengklasifikasikan cabaran yang dihadapi contohnya wanita dan cabaran di dalam keluarga dan kerjaya. Penulis juga menyentuh peranan wanita dari tiga aspek utama iaitu peranan kepada diri sendiri, keluarga dan masyarakat. Seperti yang dimaklumi, pelbagai usaha untuk membantu kaum wanita di negara ini untuk menghadapi cabaran yang sedia ada dan juga yang akan datang. Maka dengan itu, penulis mengupas tajuk cabaran-cabaran wanita di dalam arus pemodenan dan mendapati wanita telah mencapai pelbagai kemajuan samada dari segi ekonomi, politik atau sosial.

## ABSTRACT

The title of the research is Challenges Faced By Women In Malaysia. In doing this research the writer used several methods namely literature review, Internet surfing and from the sources of al-Quran and al-Hadith. For this purpose, the writer flipped pages of books and magazines in the libraries of Islamic College University of Malaysia, National University of Malaysia, University of Malaya and also National Library of Kuala Lumpur. In doing so, the subject of challenges of women today is given focus. The various challenges that women are facing are identified such as the problems that women face in their endeavour between raising her family and office duties. The writer also touches on the roles that woman play in the development of the nation and society especially in the era of globalization.

## ملخص البحث

هذا البحث تحت الموضوع التحديات التي وجهتها النساء خصوصا في ماليزيا. في كتابة البحث استعملت الكتابة بعض المناهج وأهمها الدراسة المكتبية وجمع معلومات من صفحات "الشبكة انترنت" ومصادر من القرآن والسنة. بحثت الكاتبة المصادر والمعلومات في مكتبة جامعة العلوم الإسلامية بماليزيا، ومكتبة الجامعة الوطنية بماليزيا، ومكتبة جامعة ملايا والمكتبة الوطنية بكوالا لمبور. وركز البحث على أحوال النساء عموما مع التركيز تحديا تم في هذا اليوم. رتبت كاتبة هذه التحديات حسب حالتها، وعلى سبيل المثال في الأسرة والعمل. إن هذه التحديات أمر واسع حولها. قد اختارت الكاتبة لبحث تحديات المرأة في مجالها خاصة حولها. وبينت دور النساء في ثلاثة المجالات الرئيسية ومنها دورها على نفسها، وعائلتها والمجتمع. ومن المعروف، هناك جهود مبذولة لمساعدة هؤلاء النساء في ماليزيا في مواجهة التحديات الموجودة في يومنا هذا والمستقبل. ولذلك، عاجلت الكاتبة هذا الموضوع عن تحديات النساء في عصر الحديث والنتيجة منها هن قد حققن التنمية المختلفة سواء أكانت على صعيد اجتماعية وسياسية واقتصادية.

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## GLOSSARY

1. 'Abd - servant of Allah S.W.T.
2. Taqwa - god consciousness
3. Iman - faith, belief
4. Khalifah - one who has been entrusted by Allah to safeguard, manage or administer either herself, family, the *ummah* and even the environment.
5. Insan - human being.
6. Mukallaf - Can determine whether bad or wrong decision.
7. Mukmin - Person believe in Islam.
8. Musyrik - Person who avert from Islam.
9. Ummah - Community of Muslim people

## ABBREVIATION

In this research, the researcher used some abbreviations to replace the basis word

1. Ibid - Previous Reference
2. IKD - Institut Kajian Dasar
3. S.A.W - Sallal Lahu alaihi wassalam, Peace Be Upon Him (the Prophet Muhammad).
4. S.W.T - Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala, Most Gracious and High
5. A .S - Alaihis Salam
6. n.a - No Author
7. n.d - No Date

# CHAPTER ONE

## 1.1 BRIEF INTRODUCTION OF WOMEN.

God created all humans from a single male and female who in turn were created from a single nafs (soul). No human is more favored in the sight of God than another except by virtue of one's piety. As the Prophet puts it, people are equal like the teeth of a comb.<sup>1</sup>

Nowadays either women or men, both of them have to face the challenges in this era of globalization. We realize that today we have to face so many challenges in our daily life, even though we do not expect it, but it comes by itself and because of this, the writer takes this opportunity to discuss about the challenges that are faced by women because it seems that this topic is an interesting topic discussed nowadays.

Islamic thinkers have acknowledged that men and women have fundamental different natures. While men tend to be absolutist, women tend towards infinity. When men emphasize justice, women encourage mercy and tolerance, when men pursue knowledge, women seek understanding.<sup>2</sup>

But these same thinkers recognize that, in Islam, all of these characteristics, masculine and feminine, are ultimately human manifestations of divine attributes. And just as justice without mercy can be cruel, masculine understanding without feminine temperament can be too harsh. It is therefore time we encouraged more women scholars of Islam and to seek better understandings of Islam.

If we look around in the global scenario we realize that the topics discussed in this world generally relates to women issues. Why? This proves that women issues

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<sup>1</sup>) <http://www.Alhewar.Com/center.Html>.

<sup>2</sup>) <http://members.Ncbi.Com/wa4change/english.Htm>.

are favourite topics everywhere in the country or outside the country. Nowadays, there is a hot issue relating to the women in Afghanistan who are prohibited from working.

Women are very special creatures that were created with men in this world. Like men, woman have been given many specialties. We cannot deny that women are very special in this world and every thing that women do will attract the world's attention. Why does this things happen? The simple answer is a woman is very attractive person. So, in this project paper the writer wants to discuss about women and focus to the challenges in certain fields, for example women and their family. In managing her family of course she will face many challenges in doing her duty. Before I go further, we may be wondering what is the exact meaning of women.

According to Jane Mills in her book entitled "WomanWord", she defined "woman can be no more than a dumb ANIMAL (bird, bitch, filly, mouse, etc). And she can be elevated to the position of GODDESS (Aphrodisiac, vestal, Sheila, etc). She cans CONTAINER and/or contents (dish). For centuries women have known that their rightful place is in the HOME where, as Male PROPERTY, they are either or both the good INFANTILLISED child-WIFE and the good MOTHER As a WORKER inside another's home she may be defined as morally suspect (scrubber, slutwench, etc), or, if EDUCATED, a sexual and beyond maral reproach (governess, Bluestocking, etc). If she takes care of her outward appearance SHE MAY GAIN APPROVAL AS A LADY but too much make-up and she becomes a JEZEBEL; too little and she's a DRAB or a SLATTERN. Her clothing can signify the whole women (as in MUFF, SKIRT, PETTICOAT, etc) and/or woman as PART OBJECT, as in an expression like a bit of skirt. A woman feels her Vagina TO BE JUST ONE PART OF HER BODY BUT WORDS LIKE cunt, twat, beaver, etc are used to donate all other".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>) Mills, Jane, *WomanWords A Dictionary words about woman*, The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc New York, 1989.

Besides the definition above, the writer also took a couple of views to illustrate who are women. Many of us bear in our mind that women are the opposite of men and they are created by God after men. As Muslims, absolutely we had heard the story about women who was created from a crooked rib from Prophet Adam a.s.<sup>4</sup>

According to Islam, the first woman in this world was Eve. She was created after Adam a.s. It can be the proof that beside a man there is always a woman. So we can say that women is the opposite of men? May be it similar but not very exact. There are many history about women but the favourite history in Islam is about eve who is the partner our Prophet Adam a.s. So that, let me take your attention in the story about the first couple in this world.<sup>5</sup>

#### THE ISLAMIC VIEW ABOUT WOMEN.

In this discussion the writer would like to bring the view of Islam about women. Before the sixth century, the status of women was the same as things that can be sold and bought. Women were as material to satisfy the men's desire. In that time, women were not been respected and appreciated as human beings compared to the treatment that the men receive. The women were not given her rights in the right place. Their nature and the primitive culture cause the suffrage upon them at that time which placed the degree of justice based on physical strength.<sup>6</sup>

Only Until the coming of Islam, had it changed this phenomenon. Women were no longer symbolized as second class after men and presumed as the follower to

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<sup>4</sup>) Thomas Patrick Hughes, Dictionary Of Islam, Kazi Publications, Lahore, Pakistan .

<sup>5</sup>) Andek Masnah Andek Kelawa, *Kepimpinan Wanita Islam, Kedudukannya Dalam Syariah*, Penerbit UKM Bangi 1999.

<sup>6</sup>) Ibid.

the men. Women deserved her status and rights in a right place suitable with their nature. Women had been appreciated and respected as human beings.

A special thing that Islam had given to the women is the human equality before men. Islam qualified that women are special creations who have the humanization desire and soul same as men. According to the Holy Quran in surah an-Nisa verse 1.

{ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَتَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا } (النساء/1).

*O Mankind! Respect (and fear) your Guardian-Lord, Who created you, from single person (Adam), Created his mate of similar nature, And from the two of them spread (like seeds) Countless men and women;- Respect and fear Allah, Through whom you demand your mutual(rights), And (respect) the wombs (that bore you): For Allah always watches over you.*

This verse argues that women have the same soul (roh) and humanization instinct as men. The word 'an-nas' in the verse means generally including all human beings who are entitled as 'mukallaf'. The obligation that human must have *taqwa* is closely related to the soul element which exists in the human self. The element was specially dedicated to the humanization. Therefore, the using of the word 'al-nas' includes women who are obliged to be god-conscious to the Almighty. It explains that women has soul and human nature same as men, it also gives answer to the raise question about remain body and the women holy soul.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>) Andek Masnah Andek Kelawa, Kepimpinan Wanita Islam, Kedudukannya Dalam Syariah, Penerbit UKM Bangi 1999.

The meaning of *nafs wahidah* in the verse refer to Adam a.s. As we know Adam a.s is the father of all human beings. According to the verse 13 from surah al-Hujurat;

{يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ} (الحجرات/13).

*O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of Male and female, And made you into nations and tribes, That you may know each other. (Not that you may hate each other). Surely, the most honored of you, In the sight of Allah is (He who is) the most righteous of you.. And Allah has full knowledge And is well acquainted (with all things).*

The verse strengthens the argument that say human comes from one descendant, one family, one father, one mother who are Adam and Eve. So that, men and women are relatives. The Prophet said:" Indeed women is the relatives of men".<sup>8</sup>

Al-Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Rida who is the Muslim scholar and the others agree that *nafs wahidah* is the reality of human which is humanization. Adam a.s is not father of all kinds of human beings in this world.

The two opinions agreed that there are similarities between men and women. The first similarity is from *zahir* aspects, that humans are from one father and one descendant. The second similarity is from *maknawi* or definition, which is all kinds of

humans, have same humanization with others. The verse also agreed that women is a human who is especially created to be a wife and partner to the men. But the *ahli tafsir* did not agree with the opinion that interpreted the word *zaujahah*. Most of them opined that the meaning of the word '*zaujahah*' is referring to wife of Adam a.s., Eve a.s who is created from the crooked rib of Adam.<sup>9</sup> The Prophet said:

*I advice to all of you to be careful and be nice to the women. Indeed women are created from the crooked rib of Adam. If you want to straight it you will break it, and if you ignore it, it will crook forever. Therefore I advice you to be nice to the women.*<sup>10</sup>

The Holy Quran mentioned about women in the verse clearly. Eventough, there are different opinions in interpretation the meaning of *zaujahah*. The first opinion that Eve is another human and she is a human being same as Adam a.s. Otherwise the second opinion admits or declares that man and woman are equal. No human is more favored in the sight of God than another except by virtue of one's piety. Upon the humanization, Islam gives the rights to men and women in religion, economy and social. Therefore, women can play their roles in the society, interact in small groups whether as a leader or the followers.<sup>11</sup>

#### WOMEN IN THE AL-QURAN.

In this introduction about women the writer would like to include verses on women in the al-Quran . Based on Surah an-Nisa' 41, 44 and 19 ;

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<sup>8</sup>) al-Tirmidhi 1938, 1:190.

<sup>9</sup>) Thomas Patrick Hughes, Dictionary Of Islam, Kazi Publications, Lahore, Pakistan.

<sup>10</sup>) Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>) Andek Masnah Andek Kelawa, *Kepimpinan Wanita Islam, Kedudukannya Dalam Syariah*, Penerbit UKM Bangi 1999, pg 9.

{فَكَيْفَ إِذَا جِئْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ بِشَهِيدٍ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ عَلَىٰ هَؤُلَاءِ شَهِيدًا} (النساء/41).

*What if We brought From each people a witness, Against these people!  
Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, Because Allah has given the one  
more (strength) Than the other, And because they support them from their means.  
Therefore the righteous women Are devoutly obedient, And guard in (husband's)  
absence What Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you  
fear Disloyalty and ill-conduct, Caution (and warn) them (Against the specific faults,  
first), Refuse to share their beds (next), Beat them (lightly, at the very last); But if they  
return to obedience, Seek not against them means (of angering them): For Allah is  
Most-High, Great (above all of you).*

{أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا مِنَ الْكِتَابِ يَشْتُرُونَ الضَّلَالََةَ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ تَضِلُّوا  
السَّبِيلَ} (النساء/44).

*O you who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women Against their will Nor should  
you treat them with harshness, That may take away part of the dowry You have given  
to them,- Except where they have been Guilty of open lustfulness; On the contrary live  
with them On a basis of kindness and justice.*

{يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرِهًا وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا  
بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْتُمُوهُنَّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ  
فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا} (النساء/19).

*If you take a dislike to them It may be that you dislike a thing, And Allah brings about through it A great deal of good.*

According to surah al-Baqarah verse; 221.

{وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَاتِ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنَنَّ وَلَأَمَةٌ مُؤْمِنَةٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُشْرِكَةٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ وَلَا تُنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّى يُؤْمِنُوا وَلَعَبْدٌ مُؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِنْ مُشْرِكٍ وَلَوْ أَعْجَبَكُمْ أُولَئِكَ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُو إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ وَالْمَغْفِرَةِ بِإِذْنِهِ وَيُبَيِّنُ آيَاتِهِ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ} (البقرة/221).

*Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), Until they believe, A slave woman who believes is better than An believing women, Even though she (may) allure you. And do not marry ( your girls) to non believers until They believe: A slave man who believes is Better than an unbeliever, Eventough he (may)allure you. Non believers (only) call you to the Fire. But Allah calls (you) by His Grace To the garden (of joy) and forgiveness, And make His signs clear to mankind That they may celebrate His Praise.*

From the verses above, we can make a conclusion that men and women cannot live without each another. They need each other in their life. We can also, see that men have responsibilities as a leaders to women and gives maintenance to their family. But in status as servants of Allah they are equal as stated in verse 124 from surah an-Nisa'.

{وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ  
وَلَا يُظَلَّمُونَ تَقِيرًا} (النساء/124).

*No human is more favored in the sight of God than another except by virtue of one's piety.*

The position of women is related to her faith and loyalty to Allah as in verse 221 surah an-Nisa' that stated that *Mukmin*<sup>12</sup> women is better than *musyrik*<sup>13</sup> women eventough the *musyrik* women are attractive.

## 1.2 SCENARIO OF WOMEN IN THE PAST.

Everything in this world has its own history. The writer also would like to include the scenario of women in the past. It is necessary to look over the past to see their daily life, activities, achievements and others. Long time ago, during the pre-Islamic times, the Arabs carried their aversion to women so far as to destroy them by burying alive, especially their female children. This fearful custom was common amongst the tribes of Quraish and Kurdah. For although they used to call the angles "daughters of God," they objected (as do the Badawi to this day) to female offspring, and used to bury their infant daughters alive. This horrible custom is referred to in the Quran, where it is said, Surah Al-An'am verse 138, " Thus have their associates made seemly to many of the idolaters the killing of their children to destroy them". And again Surah Al-An'am verses 60 and 61, " When any one of them has tidings of a female child, his face is overclouded and black, and he has to keep back his wrath. He skulks away from the public for the evil tidings he has heard; Is he to keep it in disgrace, or to bury it in the dust? <sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>) the person believe in Allah S.W.T.

<sup>13</sup>) person who avert from Islam.

<sup>14</sup>) Thomas Patrick Hughes, Dictionary Of Islam, Kazi Publications, Lahore, Pakistan.

Fortunately, after the coming of Islam this horrible practice disappeared. In that time, all the mothers became very happy because having daughters is not a dishonourable matter anymore.

Women nowadays are very lucky and must be thankful because women are no longer symbolized as a bad things. There are many others stories that relate to women is in the pre-Islamic time or *jahiliyah*. After that time, especially when Islam came, the kismet of women especially to the daughters was protected. Islam came to bring the new exclamation to all human in the world. Through the prophet, Islam brought many good teachings and directly destroyed the inhumane actions.<sup>15</sup>

In the 1980's, women at that time not yet aim any success because in that time we also see the scenario of women still bind by the tradition. In that time, we always hear the old sayings that ' A woman's place is in the kitchen'. We will not forget the traditional quotation women must stand and try their best to break up the tradition. From 1980's and so on women began involving in many positions and also were involved in the corporate field. Many women were exposed in many workforces and after that women began to manipulate the workforce in Malaysia. This not only happens in Malaysia but also in other countries like Indonesia, Philippines and so on. What makes the women change like that? The answer is women want to increase their status in the society and they do not want to be symbolized as a person who only stays in the kitchen forever. They think that they must try to get out from the “ dark future”. Women stood up step by step and finally they no longer feel inferior to men. With support women must be strong to get out from the old perception about them. The positives steps taken has made women no longer being irrespective by the men. The important thing is confidence and the strength to take action.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>) Abdur Rahaman I. Doi, A.S Noordeen, *Women In Shari'ah (Islamic Law)* , 1990

<sup>16</sup>) Nik Safiah Karim, *Wanita Malaysia, Harapan Dan Cabaran*, Kuala Lumpur, K. Publishing 1990.

We certainly cannot argue that women in the past are more passive. Why they acted like that? The answer is they have no confidence. For that time, women were symbolized as shame and weak persons. They were not ready to be exposed to the world. Some of the reason is because they were close-minded. All of the perceptions that said women are only qualified in the kitchen became the strength for the women to get out from the perception. We can see women starting to develop step by step without obvious achievements. Even tough, the achievements came late, but it is not an excuse to say that women do not achieve any development in this decade. When some others say that women have not contributed anything in the past, it certainly cannot be accepted by many of us especially to women, it is wrong facts because eventhough women did not contribute their contribution directly they still contributed to our country indirectly.<sup>17</sup>

We can see usually in the rural area, women are the contributors to the workforce. Many of them work in many fields such as at the rubber estates, paddy fields, coconut industries and so on. Their works were among the main contributors to our country in the past years and until now. Without the contribution of women the country would not develop as well as nowadays.

### **1.3 SCENARIO WOMEN TODAY**

Women today are different than before. Women today are not the same as the past, but change into very modern and elegant persons or groups. Long time ago women were those who were placed in the kitchen, but what happens now when we take a look at women today. They stand aside with men. It is not a weird thing when a woman works and achieves success like men, because as stated earlier 'No human is

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<sup>17</sup>) <http://wao.org.my/news/20010228womministry.Htm>

more favored in the sight of God than another except by virtue of one's piety'.<sup>18</sup>

As a multi-racial and multi-religious society with a Muslim majority, Malaysia has proven to the world that Islam is not a deterrent to the advancement of women. Indeed, the true teachings of Islam values women as equal to men and has laid the foundation for a society where women and men should work towards a meaningful partnership. Based on this principle, Malaysia views with grave concern the politicizing of culture and religion for creating power bases. The negative impact of this trend is the denial of the rights of good potentials to move the country through the various roles that they have as a mothers, wives, workers, teachers, advisors and leaders in the society. Malaysian women are lucky women compared to women from other countries. They are as symbol for development and are valuable assets.

If we talk about development of women, we must not forget that women in this country have many opportunities to further their studies. Through women education also, various roles of women can be understood clearly. The achievement of women today are better in education, training, health, general services and business. For example, in the education sector in year 2000, women student were 50 percent from the enrollment in primary and secondary schools. The intake in higher learning institutes were up to 55 percent in 2000. In health sectors the life expectancy of women raise to 74 years old. The death of pregnant women is still in a low rate of 0.2 percent for each 1000 births.<sup>19</sup>

Women contribute in the workforce in this country. This is a direct contribution to our economy including to lessen the drupe to foreign workers. The participation of women in the workforce is also important especially for their own income. The benefit is not only to the women but also to the family. Women also contribute in general services sectors. In this time, there are four women chief

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<sup>18</sup>) Nik Safiah Karim, *Wanita Malaysia, Harapan Dan Cabaran*, Kuala Lumpur, K. Publishing 1990.

<sup>19</sup>) <http://www.smpke.jpm.my/about/cabinet/Shahrizat/DSAJmain.htm> \t

Secretaries and besides that many positions from Chief Director are held by women.

Nowadays there are special training programmes in skills and business for women to help improve themselves and to get a chance to work. Steps have been taken to help them in business in spite of leaning. The existence of Tabung Usahawan Wanita in 1998 helped women in preparing financial support the modal with easy condition.<sup>20</sup>

Before the amendment of article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution it does not allow the differences based on gender, some law amendments had be done to protect the rights of women and their special needs. The law had also been analyzed and amended to include certain provisions like the Evidence Act 2950, Protection Women Act 1973 and Child Protection Act 1991.<sup>21</sup>

The government has also taken steps to strengthen the organizations for women development. Women must express their gratitude because the government had established the Ministry of Women and Family Department in January 2001. The establishment of this Ministry is to implement support services and needs for women for a long term.<sup>21</sup>

All women in Malaysia must express their gratitude and appreciation to the government for the commitment and consideration to develop the women nation. Without the commitment from the government, women of Malaysia will not have the development today. Many efforts that have been done to develop women in many aspects. Women are being given the opportunity to play their roles and be the contributor to the development of economy, social and politic. It cannot be denied that women in Malaysia today succeed to place themselves standing aside or in certain

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<sup>20</sup>) Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>) Dato' Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Palace Of Golden Horses, 25 Ogos 2001.

aspects better than their friends from other countries. Nevertheless, the efforts in developing women does not have a finishing line. This is because many challenges must be faced such as globalization, information age and other challenges in social. The changes that happen around us can bring negative effects and impact to our life if we do not prepare and complete ourselves with knowledge and skills to face the challenges.

The main agenda of the Ministry of Women and Family Development is to realize the equality of gender and ensconce of family institution, including the amendment of article 8(2) of Federal Constitution. For that purpose, two aims had been made. Firstly, women and family will be given help in facing problems in their daily life. Secondly, The Ministry will implement a development strategy which will give benefit to the target group including to guarantee them in their participation in K-economy. The implementation of this strategy needs the cooperation of many parties such as the Government, private sectors, NGO's and the society generally. Only with this approach can we realize the amendment of the article 8(2) to be an advantage to women.<sup>22</sup>

Nowadays, we can see the scenario of women today changing according to time. The achievement of women can be seen today because we can see many women succeed in many fields such as scientists, bankers, lawyers and so on. Recently, a woman was appointed as the Governor of the Central Bank of Malaysia, not to mention many other women who have been for sometime, appointed as Cabinet Ministers including the Minister of the International Trade and Industry.

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<sup>22</sup>) Ibid.

# CHAPTER TWO

## 2.1 THE ROLES OF WOMEN.

Allah has created men and women to play distinct roles in the human society. A woman's biology and physique best suit her, at base, for the maternal role so necessary in the creation of healthy and happy families.

According to surah al-Maidah verses 35 and 36 in the Holy Quran, which stated that:

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَابْتَغُوا إِلَيْهِ الْوَسِيلَةَ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي سَبِيلِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ } (المائدة/35).

*When the wife of man said: "My Lord have vowed unto You what is in my womb, surely You are the One who knows and sees".<sup>1</sup>*

{ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَهُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا وَمِثْلَهُ مَعَهُ لَيَفْتَدُوا بِهِ مِنْ عَذَابِ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا تُقْبَلُ مِنْهُمْ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ } (المائدة/36).

*" When she gave birth she said: " I have given birth to a female child". And Allah knew very well what she had given birth to. The male is not like the female."<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>) Professor Dr. Syed Vickar Ahamed Holndel, *Interpretation of the Meaning of The Glorious Qur'an*, New Jersey.

<sup>2</sup>) Ibid.

Alexis Carrel, the French Nobel Laureate, rightly says that the differences which exist between men and women are of a more fundamental nature than is usually realised and that these differences are caused by the very structure of the tissues and by the impregnation of the entire organism with specific chemical substances secreted by the ovary.<sup>3</sup>

As we all know both men and women have their own roles. Nevertheless, women also have their own roles. Roles are duties or responsibilities. As a human being both men and women have different important roles. Since we were children, we also our own roles. Roles are not just for adults but generally it happens to all. Same as plants who have their own roles and the sun also has it roles which is to shine this world. Every thing that God created has their own roles. So the point depends on them to play their roles effectively. Thus it means that with the right upbringing, proper education and training, women must complete their roles whether to themselves, family or society.

The roles played by women are important assets in our country, especially in this era. Changes are required in the social conception and definition of the roles of women. Fundamental to this is the transformation of the self-perception of women increasing their self-respect and self-confidence and developing their human potential to the fullest. There is an urgent need for conscious progress for the conscientisation of men and women regarding the women's issue.

We already know that Allah S.W.T does not distinguish men from women spiritually. Women are different biologically hence physiologically. Women's physiology and emotions are also different from them.<sup>4</sup> Men have been endowed with one extra quality, based on surah an-Nisa' verse 34:

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<sup>3</sup>) Dr. Azizah Yahia al-Hibri. [http:// www. Alhewar. Com/center. Html](http://www.Alhewar.Com/center.Html).

<sup>4</sup>) Paper presented at the Muslim Women In Development South East Asia & Pacific Regional Conference Organized by Regional Islamic Dakwah Council For Asia and the Pacific, Kelana Jaya, October 1982

{الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنِ اطَّعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا} (النساء/34).

*Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, Because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, And because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women Are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence What Allah would have them guard.*<sup>5</sup>

But before this Allah s.w.t did not make him any superior over the woman. The degree of superiority is independent of the sex. Instead it depends on one's *taqwa* and righteousness. In Islam a good Muslim is knowledgeable and exercises patience. It is in the manifestation of these qualities that we can identify the spectrum of areas in which a women can perform her role, participate and contribute either as an individual, a servant of Allah s.w.t., as member of the family, a wife, a mother and finally as a member of the community and the society like being a social worker or a career woman.<sup>6</sup>

Human whether it be a man or woman is endowed with the ability to name things implying that he (this applies to both, man and woman) has the intellectual capacity and capability to acquire knowledge, that he can have authority over Allah's

<sup>5</sup>) Professor Dr. Syed Vickar Ahamed Holndel, *Interpretation of the Meaning of The Glorious Qur'an*, New Jersey.

<sup>6</sup>) Paper presented at the Muslim Women In Development South East Asia & Pacific Regional Conference Organized by Regional Islamic Dakwah Council For Asia and the Pacific, Kelana Jaya, October 1982

creation implying that he can acquire and develop skills and abilities to study and to use things around him for his own good, that he is endowed with desires, the spiritual element which together with the intellect mould up his behaviour and attitude essentially his character.<sup>7</sup>

However the writer is of the view that if we have good understanding of the Holy Quran, we can realize that Allah does not discriminate the intellectual capacity of a man from of a woman. If that is the case both parties especially the man should be more open and ready to accept the new image of women presented by these professionals women. This would also encourage other women to work towards upgrading their intellect. To become a professional the woman has to acquire specialised knowledge, methods either historically or scholarly, principles underlying such skills and methods, maintaining by force of organization or concerted opinions, high standard of achievement and conduct and be committed to a continued study and a kind of work which has for its prime purpose rendering public service.

Now, the women can do this since for a given profession the emphasis is on the acquisition of knowledge, general and technical and a set of code of ethics. This demands a good and high intellectual ability, and skill, which are present in some women. Thus given the right education, training and opportunity a woman can accept and face an intellectual challenge.

Women have their own roles, which means that they also have responsibilities to many things. We also cannot say that only men have many roles but women don't eventhough they have different kinds of roles. Therefore, an important point to remember is, women also have roles to many parties. The role and contribution of a woman in many fields such as in society can be looked from two different angles: Firstly, to the family and community highlighting the concept and practice of family

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<sup>7</sup>) Ibid.

life, responsible parenthood and health problems and secondly; to the economic and social development of the society.<sup>8</sup>

These are indeed tremendous tasks that an ambitious woman has to undertake. The potential in doing many roles is unlimited and the expectation is high but it is from an individual Women for example a woman or a group. With twenty four hours a day unchanged, the extent of physical strength and stamina limited by the biological make up of the person, can the individual women become a perfect, efficient good wife, mother and simultaneously a social worker or a career woman? Or would it be possible to look at the Women as a group with different capacities, abilities and inclinations such that the potentials of the women as a whole is limitless, inexhaustible? If such is the case, then the women can venture into all possible kinds of activities. Of course for some of these activities they just have to do it by themselves like giving births, taking care of the children, becoming teachers, doctors, traders and so on. If this concept of collective venture is accepted then more avenues are opened for the women.<sup>9</sup>

It cannot be denied that men play many roles in many fields but that the perception has existed for a long time ago. The main subject now is that both men and women have their own roles that they have to play. For example, men have their roles in the family. Men are also related to be the leader of the family. But what we can see nowadays, even women can be a leader in a family, usually when their husband leave them and with all their efforts they try to be leaders even though it is very hard for them, like many peoples say, 'Nothing venture, Nothing gain'.

Some of us may be opine that the roles will change according to time. We can take many examples such as, roles of individual whether men or women in a society or country. Their important role as a citizen contributes to the country's development.

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<sup>8</sup>) Ibid pg 9.

<sup>9</sup>) Ibid pg 9.

That is the important role or responsibilities to the citizen as their obligation to their country. But the most important thing is that we know what are the important roles that must be played by us.

## 2.2 THE ROLES TO THEIR OWNSELF.

Women have responsibilities to their ownself. Thus it means that with the right upbringing, proper education and training the first role of women is to develop herself to be a knowledgeable, useful and a good person. They should be self-generated, well-disciplined and trustworthy to carry out tasks and responsibilities aptly, amicably and satisfactorily.

The Holy Quran also states that Allah s.w.t. created individuals with different capacities, abilities and inclinations with good reasons. Each individual should be developed to the optimum that she can reach. The potentials within her must be harnessed so that variety of individuals can get together as a group and move in harmony towards making the society a perfect one. Just like the car, each part be it the main part of the engine or the minor part like the handle of the winding the screen up or down has its role. Only when each function well that the car is said to be in perfect condition. In this light, women must see herself not just as an individual but a member of a bigger group with which she cooperates and works with for the sake of the groups survival, development and progress.

Firstly, in discussing the roles of women is her roles to herself or we can also call it as roles as servants of Allah. If the overall well being of a man is to be seen from the Islamic point of view, then the existence of such a state will be manifested by the presence of an insan with taqwa and iman who satisfactorily performs her tasks as the *khalifah* of Allah. After all the purpose of Allah s.w.t. creating man is firstly; to

see who amongst us fully submit to Allah as a good servant of His and secondly; To place *insan* as His *khalifah* or trustee on this earth. <sup>10</sup>

According to surah al-Baqarah verse 30;

{وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ} (البقرة/30).

*Look, your Lord said to the angels; "I will create a vicegerent on earth." One who will make mischief And shed blood in there?- While we (indeed) celebrate Your praises And glory Your Holy (Name)?" He said: "I do know what you do not know."*  
11

This consideration can thus provide us with some means of measuring the extent women have participated and contributed towards the development of the *ummah*.

As a servant and *khalifah* of Allah, her role is manifested through her practices as a woman, a wife, a mother and a member of the society. There are no statistics to show the degree of *taqwa* and *iman* that the women expressed through performing her various roles. The state of piety will be indicated by her personality, her character and her involvement in promoting what is good and evading what is evil. <sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>) Khalijah Salleh, Women In Development, IKD.

<sup>11</sup>) Professor Dr. Syed Vickar Ahamed Holndel, *Interpretation of the Meaning of The Glorious Qur'an*, New Jersey.

<sup>12</sup>) Khalijah Salleh, Women In Development, IKD.

In discussing the roles of women to herself we can include that her role as *khalifah* of Allah S.W.T. The word *khalifah* means one who has been entrusted by Allah to safeguard manage or administer either herself, her family, the *ummah* and even the environment. This is consistent with mankind who is Allah's form of highest creation. They are creatures capable of submitting to or revolting against the commands of Allah and thee creature who with the help of his fellow creatures are capable of establishing a complex and sophisticated social system. This means that women too will have a share in building up such a system. Since the early decades of this century the history of Malaysian women 's involvement in development has shown that the women's contribution to the development of the society has been multifold. Women have contributed towards the education, economic, social and welfare upliftment of the society either through various governmental agencies private corporate bodies or voluntary organizations.

### 2.3 THE ROLES IN THE FAMILY.

A family in Islam is a unit, which a man and woman unite to share life together according to the rules and regulations laid down by the shariah. They become as a close to each other as a garment is to the body. The husband's honour becomes an integral part of his wife's honour and vice versa. They share each other's prosperity and adversity. Thus in Islam the bridal couple are united as husband and wife in the presence of witnesses seeking Allah's blessing to increase the mutual love and compassion and agreeing to care for each other in sickness and adversity. This fundamental of Islamic marriage, if understood and observed by the spouses, is the basis of the institution of a Muslim marriage. In the family, the man is charged with the duty of being the leader of the family and the woman assigned the duty of looking after the household. Even if the man has more responsibility than a woman and thereby has a degree over her, it does not make the husband inherently better than his wife. In the Holy Quran contains a verse which says; And in no wise covet those

things in which Allah has bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than others: to men is allotted what they earn and to women they earn. <sup>13</sup>

According to surah an-Nisa', verse 32;

{وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا  
وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا} (النساء/  
32).

*And it is not wise to seek out those things, In which Allah has bestowed His gifts, More freely on some of you than on others:*

*To men is allotted what they earn, And to women what they earn But ask Allah has full knowledge of all things.*<sup>14</sup>

Commenting on this verse Sheikh Muhammad Abduh who is Muslim scholar says that it does not imply that every man is better than every woman or vice versa, but it emphasises that: " each sex, in general, has some preferential advantage over the other, though men have a degree over women". <sup>15</sup>

If we want to talk about the role of women, we cannot leave out the important role of women in a family. Without a woman who plays her role in a family, the family will not be complete. We can see by ourselves how much the women means to build a happy family. We already know that women are created by Allah S.W.T to be the partner of a man. We also know in a family, there is a woman beside the man to

<sup>13</sup>) Abdur Rahaman I. Doi, A.S Noordeen, *Women In Shari'ah (Islamic Law)* , 1990.

<sup>14</sup>) Professor Dr. Syed Vickar Ahamed Holndel, *Interpretation of the Meaning of The Glorious Qur'an*, New Jersey.

<sup>15</sup>) Abdur Rahaman I. Doi, A.S Noordeen, *Women In Shari'ah (Islamic Law)* , 1990.

assist the man in the family life. It is stated in al-Quran that, women are created by Allah as assistant for men because women are as a completion to men. A woman in a family acts as a wife and at same time as a mother, plays her roles to her family.

If we think carefully, after a women gets married and becomes a wife, from that time her role is to build her own family or we can call her as a home-maker. From that time, we can see how the roles begin to a woman. She must be an assistant for her husband, be a good wife and also a friend to her husband. It is not an easy thing because once we get married, we must understand our partner since marriage it not simple thing and it is more inclined to a partnership. After getting married the roles of women or in other words we can say their responsibilities as women become greatly expanded.<sup>16</sup>

The writer is holding this opinion because before a women gets married she only gives her full attention and concentration to her parents and siblings but once she gets married, her attention changes to her husband.

It is two different situations because in marriage life, women must by themselves, manage their own life compared to when they were just assistants for their siblings and parents. Therefore, the roles of women in a family become more expanded. Later, when they have their own children , the responsibilities become more expanded and they must be ready to face it. When a woman becomes mother her responsibilities is no longer just to her husband but also to her children. In this situation women must play their roles effectively because it determines the objective of the family whether it can succeed or not and it also needs them to be wise mothers in managing their family.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>) Khalijah Salleh, Women In Development, IKD.

<sup>17</sup>) Ibid.

If we realize, those are big roles that women have to do. Actually this also causes a dilemma for the woman who at one instant is reminded to be a good, dedicated mother and a wife while at the same time she is also expected to do her house jobs well. Such a dual role of the women in a highly rigid present frame work of job condition which if carried out satisfactorily she will later enjoy the better side of life or if not, her physique will just succumb to all kinds of stress. The family and society will finally share the consequences.

The well being of an individual is strongly influenced by the state of affairs in the family. An individual whose personal life is being well taken care of by the family can perform his tasks and responsibilities better than those who come from unstable and broken up homes.

In her role in her family we can say that woman play a role to deliver culture and as a changing agent. By nurturing and educating the children, women share their practice, life tradition and all their knowledge to the young generation. Women have clearly moved the heritage and also built the culture of the young generation. Therefore women are the changing agents because they are involved in building something that brings changes to the situation or existing behaviour. Women can use all their powers to take action and ensure that her actions will succeed. For example, if we takes a look at home, the action take place especially when they are nurturing and educating the children. As a role model or culture deliverer to the young generation, a mother shows examples on self-cleaning, discipline, *ibadah*, acquire knowledge and ask for the good and prevent from the bad. The mother is not only a role model on behalf of their children but to make a healthy situation in spite of mind, emotion and attitude development.<sup>18</sup>

## 2.4 THE ROLES IN A SOCIETY.

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<sup>18</sup>) Ibid.