

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## TALK 7

### INDONESIA

# Reclaiming Motherhood: The Importance of the Primary Role of the Woman as a Wife and Mother

Dear sisters,

Assalamu Alaykum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu. I am pleased to be among you today at this blessed gathering; a gathering that is tied by the strongest bond – that of the Islamic creed, the knot that gathered us from across continents and oceans. Alhamdulillahilladzi bi ni'matihitatumusshalihat... wassolatuwassalamu 'ala 'asrofilanbiya'lwalmursalinwa 'ala alihiwasohbihiajmaain...

Dear sisters, Allah (swt) says in Surah Al-Furqan, verse 74, ﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا﴾ ***"Who are prone to pray: "Our Lord! Grant us that our spouses and our offspring be a joy to our eyes and do make us the leaders of the God-fearing."***

This ayah sisters, teaches us how to have a great ideal as Muslim women.

I emphasize this part: ﴿وَجَعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا﴾ ***"and make us leaders of those who have Taqwa"*** to become ***Imam al muttaqeen***– The tafsir of this verse was explained by Ibn `Abbas, Al-Hasan, As-Suddi, Qatadah and Rabi` bin Anas as: *"Leaders who would be taken as examples in good."* Others said: *"Guides who would call others to goodness."* They wanted their worship to be connected to the worship of their children and offspring, and their guidance to go beyond themselves and benefit others.

**Sisters, this generation of leaders can only be realized if we as Muslim women adopt this Quranic vision, then optimize our role as pious mothers.**

However, sisters, this modern life made this Qur'anic ideal very hard to achieve, because today's life is shaped and dominated by Western values that worship secularism and made capitalism its driver, so that the meaning of success in life is nothing more than achieving material pleasure, benefit and gain. The profile of successful women has become those who are well-established in their careers, financially independent and professionals. Today, the peak role of women only merely translates into the language of economics - that is how to produce materials and profits for capitalist businesses and increase revenue and taxes for governments. This is because capitalist states are dominated by the pursuit of profit and wealth over all other values in life. Hence, they place materialism and monetary gain over motherhood and the wellbeing of children and families. Capitalism pressured women to enter the workforce and to compromise or even abandon their vital role as mothers and homemakers – either due to the mass poverty caused by its flawed economic policies and laws, or by exploiting the language of feminism such as 'Women's empowerment' as well as promoting the lie that a higher status and a better economic life would come with greater female employment. Indeed, capitalism and feminism have worked hand in hand to systematically deconstruct the importance of motherhood and to disempower women from fulfilling this vital role.

This is why the true Quranic ideals of Muslim women have been crushed under these secular values. Many Muslim women do not have the focus anymore to raise children and have a family; rather they became individualistic and pursued materialistic goals while also ignoring the suffering of others. Hence, Capitalism preyed upon our noble Islamic vision of motherhood as Muslim women, dwarfing the ideals and narrowing the vision of Muslim girls

to merely getting a job, as well as dwarfing the hope of parents about the future of their children.

### **Great Disruption on Motherhood**

My dear distinguished sisters,

The flawed ideas of feminism and gender equality are easily manipulated by the greed of Capitalism. Although the feminist movement has Marxist roots that are anti-capitalist, today it is symbiotic with the evil power of capitalism. This is seen from a recent term called "gender-capitalism" or womenomics. It is a term that suggests there's a global nexus between the paradigm of gender equality with the new movement of global investment from a coalition of capitalist countries, financial institutions, NGOs and the UN which have focused towards investing in women and girls over the past decade. President of the World Bank, Jim Yong Kim, said in 2012, that more than 80 percent of the World Bank's loans and grants, or a total of more than 28 billion US dollars, were allocated for gender-related projects. No wonder because since 2006 the World Bank has admitted that empowering women is "smart economics".

Their motivation is none other than for the sake of economic growth amid the global financial crisis that shackles the capitalist countries and their financial systems, as stated by Adrienne Roberts, a researcher from the University of Manchester in the UK, who commented that the movement of Transnational Business Feminism tends to pivot with the global financial crisis shaft in 2008. Hillary Clinton, former US Secretary of State, also previously stated, *"...Limiting women's economic potential is for every country like leaving money on the table. It doesn't make sense, especially when we are still struggling to grow our way out of the economic crisis."*

Clinton's words reveal clearly the real motive of capitalist countries who have the heart to sacrifice their women because they view them as mere workers and the engine of economic growth, NOT as the mothers of future generations and an honor to be guarded.

Capitalism deliberately humiliates mothers to be merely workers, even low-level workers. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) 2013 Global report, 43 million women have been hired as caretakers, cooks, housekeepers, and maids globally. It reflected a drastic increase of 19 million people employed as domestic workers over the last 18 years. Poverty and lack of welfare for millions of women in their countries forced them to leave their homes and their children to make ends meet. It is the global implementation of capitalism with its interest based financial model and free market system with its liberal principle laissez faire-laissez passer that has caused wealth to be concentrated in the hands of the few and consequently spread desperate poverty across the Muslim world and third-world countries. This has subsequently caused the mass feminization and migration of domestic workers, exposing them to exploitation.

These disruptions of motherhood has also spawned a fragile and troubled abandoned generation, as a high price paid for the nation that employs the mothers as the engine of economic growth. The Indonesian Child Protection Commission (2016) released data on millions of toddlers abandoned by their mothers due to working overseas. There are 11.2 million Indonesian children deprived of parental care and affection from their mothers due to their migration abroad for employment, while UNICEF data (2008) indicates that around 6 million children in the Philippines have been abandoned since their mothers became migrant workers. This also happens in China, where 61 million children below the age of 17 have been left in rural areas while one or both parents migrate for work. These abandoned children in China are ensnared with many problems like child trafficking, sexual violence, suicide, crime, and other social diseases, as studied by Li Yifei (2015), a Professor from Beijing Normal University.

Western capitalist countries were actually pioneering these social crises long before the East Asian countries, and it is from them that we can learn that “the death of the family” is not only driven by economic liberalism with its womenomics, but also by their social liberalism with its acute individualistic values such as enjoying the freedoms of single life rather than taking on the commitment of marriage and children, which has caused a massive health epidemic as well as harmed motherhood. These conditions radically destroy family life and have resulted in demographic deserts in various European countries and the US. On January 2018, the UK even appointed a minister for loneliness to deal with what Prime Minister Theresa May called “the sad reality of modern life” for too many people i.e. more than 9 million people always feel lonely and around 200,000 elderly people in the country have not had a conversation with a friend or a relative in over a month. This is the result of the changed face of the family structure in these capitalist liberal states.

It is also the real impact of the disruption of motherhood in capitalist secular civilizations which leads to “the death of thousands of family units” globally. This is a very dark portrait of human civilization nowadays which is far from the light and guidance of Islam. Remember Allah (swt) says: ﴿وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى﴾ **“As for the one who disregards My message, he will have a miserable life, and we resurrect him, on the Day of resurrection, blind.”** [Ta Ha, 20:124]

### Envisioning Our Motherhood Duty

My dear sisters,

We have many dreams, but have we ever dreamed about how to excel in our primary role and important obligations as women as mothers and wives? Have we ever dreamt about our role in creating a distinguished and leading future generation for this ummah? Most of us become mothers without full preparation, just learning by doing, without sufficient knowledge. This is why we need to reclaim our motherhood ideals in our family as well as in our society, the ideal which is the enlightened Quranic vision to create the **Imam al muttazeen (the leader of those who have taqwa)**.

Indeed, we know the unrivalled status of honour and respect that Islam affords the mother. In one hadith, it is narrated that... جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، فَقَالَ: مَنْ أَحَقُّ النَّاسِ بِحَسَنِ صَحَابَتِي؟ قَالَ: «أُمُّكَ»، قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ: «أُمُّكَ»، قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ: «أُمُّكَ»، قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ قَالَ: «تُمَّ أَبُوكَ» *A man once came to the Prophet (saw) and said, ‘O Messenger of God! Who among the people is the most worthy of my good companionship?’ The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Your mother.” The man said, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said: “Then your mother.” The man further asked, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said: “Then your mother.” The man asked again, ‘Then who?’ The Prophet said: “Then your father.”* (Reported by Bukhari and Muslim)

Abdullah Ibn Abbas (ra), a companion of the Prophet (saw) and great Islamic scholar, once said, “I know of no other deed that brings people closer to Allah than kind treatment and respect towards one’s mother.” Furthermore, the rewards in the Akhirah for motherhood are huge. The Messenger (saw) said, «إِنَّ لِلْمَرْأَةِ فِي حَمْلِهَا إِلَى وَضْعِهَا إِلَى فَصَالِهَا مِنَ الْأَجْرِ كَأَلْمُرَابِطِ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ، فَإِنْ هَلَكَتْ فِيهَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ فَلَهَا أَجْرُ شَهِيدٍ» **“The reward of a woman, from the time of pregnancy until birth and breastfeeding, is the same as the reward of the one on the path of Allah, and if a woman leaves this world during that time because of the hardship and pains of birth, she has the reward of a martyr.”**

As Islam outlines this vital importance of our role of motherhood as women, we need to have a complete understanding about the Islamic teachings regarding this. Islam came with various rules, some of which are particular to men and some of which are particular to women. It differentiated between men and women with regards to some of these rules and ordered them to accept what Allah (swt) has specially assigned for them. A Hadith of our Rasool (saw) clearly shows the specifications of the family responsibilities of the husband and wife. He (saw) said: «كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَن رَعِيَّتِهِ، الْإِمَامُ رَاعٍ وَمَسْئُولٌ عَن رَعِيَّتِهِ، وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي أَهْلِهِ» **“All of you are guardians and**

**are responsible for your subjects. The ruler is a guardian of his subjects, the man is a guardian of his family, the woman is a guardian and is responsible for her husband's house and his offspring; and so all of you are guardians and are responsible for your subjects.”** [Narrated by Ibn Umar, and reported Sahih by Bukhari and Muslim]

The *Sharee'ah* therefore has made the woman a mother and a housewife (responsible over the home-life and care-taking of the children). That's why, sisters, Islam came to us with rules relating to pregnancy, childbirth, suckling, custodianship and the waiting period (*'iddah*). It did not grant men any part in that because these rules relate to us in our capacity as women. Thus Islam placed on the woman the responsibility of the child in terms of pregnancy, delivery, suckling and custody.

Therefore, these are our most important activities and greatest responsibilities as women. Hence, it can be said that the primary role of the woman is a mother and housewife because it is through this action the human race survives and because we are distinguished by this from men. That is why we also find that the *Sharee'ah* allowed us to break our fast in Ramadhan if we are pregnant or suckling a baby. Also, the *Sharee'ah* exempted us from praying if we are in childbirth, and prevented the man from travelling with his child from the country in which the mother resides, as long as the mother still has custody over the child. All of this is to facilitate the completion of our primary role, which is being a mother and a housewife. The *Sharee'ah* also obliges the man or the state to financially provide for the woman so that she does not have to be the wage-earner for her family, enabling her to focus her time and attention effectively on caring for and raising her children.

Islam therefore views the status of being a mother and wife as a vital role within society that should be fulfilled correctly, protected and supported always.

My dear sisters, as the female servants of Allah (swt), we need to therefore hold on tight to this great responsibility, and prepare our life to become the best mothers for our children. This Islamic view towards motherhood should also shape our priorities in life and how we organise our life. It should be clearly understood for example, that whatever actions we are charged with and whatever responsibilities are placed on us, we should continue in our primary responsibility as homemakers and caretakers of our children. We should not see it as secondary or of less importance to other ambitions in this Dunya; rather we should aspire for marriage and motherhood and it should take a central position in our life. And employment, pursuing our individual interests, nor any other action should make us compromise or neglect this vital duty – for as Muslim women we do not evaluate our success based on the capitalist ideal of the accumulation of wealth or material status or advancement in career but rather on fulfilling all our Islamic duties to the best of our ability, including being the best mother and wife. These points of great importance should also be understood clearly within our communities, the work environment and by the state.

Dear sisters, although the primary role of the woman is to be a mother and wife, she is not confined to this role or prevented from pursuing other activities, for we know that Islam also guarantees women access to political, educational and economic rights such as the right to work, be an employer, form contracts, invest her wealth and undertake the rest of the societal transactions. Rather it is a means for the man and woman to live in tranquillity with each other in marriage and so they can have children who are looked after and brought up in an effective manner to create a strong future generation and strong societies. Indeed, Islam as a value system has guaranteed women the ability to achieve their personal success as well as the success of their communities simultaneously? Islam gives a unique and immensely lavish lens regarding who the real empowered Muslimah is and how the true success of a woman is also linked to the success of future generations and the society. A true Muslimah is the one who really aspires for her family and motherhood as well as having an active public life and contributing positively to the wellbeing and progress of her community. She is the one who is very aware of all her priorities that are outlined by Islam - whether private or public obligations. She is the one who understands that she is obliged to seek knowledge about her Deen to fulfil her role as servant to her Lord as well as nurture her

children with Islamic values at home; the one who is encouraged to excel in education to benefit herself and society and generate the best parenting at home; the one who is conscious that she is obliged to be politically active, standing against oppression, injustice and corruption and accounting the rulers; the one who is commanded to carry the Dawa, and to teach her children the need to have concern over the plight of the Ummah and to prepare them as the future dawa carriers and Mujahid of Islam. Mothers, who are intelligent, faithful and aware of their main tasks, will bear new generations of Muslims with Islamic personalities who will be vanguards of Islam, righteous and productive citizens of their state and those who will improve the condition of the Muslim Ummah and their society.

All of this is rooted upon the unrivalled Islamic view of the importance of motherhood and the need to optimize the role of women as guardians of civilization and educators of future generations, and NOT as a labor force and tool to generate wealth for companies and states. In Hizb ut Tahrir's *Draft Constitution* (Muqaddimah Dustur), in the section regarding the Social System of Islam ("Nizam al-ijtima'i"), it states, ***"the main role of a woman in Islam is as the mother of her children and the manager of her husband's house. She is an honor that must be guarded and protected."***

The world needs a new political vision of women's empowerment, a vision that is capable to inspire women to have a strong commitment to building a golden generation. Islam actually maintains this sublime, humane and vital relationship between the role of motherhood of women and the quality of the future generation by ensuring that the quality of motherhood remains elevated and effective in the community. Furthermore, Islam encourages families to have many children, ensuring a young, well-populated and dynamic state. Numerous Islamic texts assigned great rewards to marriage and the bearing of many children as the Prophet (saw) said «تَزَوُّجُوا الْوُلُودَ فَإِنِّي مُكَاثِرٌ بِكُمْ الْأُمَمَ» **"Marry those who are loving and fertile, for I will be proud of your great numbers before the other nations."** [Reported by Abu Dawud]

However, the Deen also ensures the sustained birth of the best quality future generation through the support of the educational, social and economic systems of the Islamic civilization.

Dear sisters,

This great Islamic vision for motherhood ensures the creation of a productive future generation instilled with the qualities of leadership and Taqwa. At the same time, it will prevent the depopulation crisis affecting many countries today. So, it is essential that as Muslim women and as Muslim communities we reclaim motherhood and embrace this important view of the woman's position and primary responsibilities in life. This means also building this understanding strongly in our daughters, sisters and society such that being a wife and mother is once again viewed as a position of honour, and is respected and valued within our societies. However, this also requires a system that will facilitate and support this Islamic vision rather than work against it. **It is the Khilafah based upon the method of the Prophethood which implements Islam comprehensively that will return the great status that motherhood deserves within our lands, and also ensure the return of Quranic vision of a generation that is *Imam al muttaqeen*, leaders of those who have Taqwa, Insha Allah!**

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