



# Iqbal's Concept of Women hood: a Critical Evaluation

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**Abstract:** This paper tries to critically evaluate Iqbal's concept of women hood. In this article an attempt will be made to analyse the status and role of the women as it emerges from the close reading of his works both Persian as well as Urdu. In this regard a particular emphasis will be laid on those

poems of Zarb-i-kaleem in which question of women hood and women freedom has been exclusively dealt with in the light of moral and ethical values of humanity in general and the Muslims in particular.

**Keywords:** Qawwam, Womanhood, Zun-shinasi

## I. INTRODUCTION

The poetry of Iqbal is multidimensional in nature. He is a poet of variegated experiences. He deals with deep metaphysical and philosophical questions. His poetic canvass is of huge dimensions within which so many things and experiences are accommodated which are rarely seen in the works of his contemporaries. From man-man relationship to man-universe relationship, his area of interest is quite discernible from the very first publication namely *Asrar-I-Khudi*. Despite being deeply preoccupied with his imaginary and idealistic world he was well in touch with the ground level realities of life. One such issue was the role and status of the women in the society. His emphasis on the importance of women education and awareness is quite visible even from the superficial overview of his works. However to arrive at any logical conclusion regarding Iqbal's notion of women hood, a critical evaluation of his works is inevitable. In this regard, many poems of Zarb-I-Kaleem which superficially deal the question women hood can be subjected to close reading and subsequent analysis. Furthermore, many scattered verses dealing with the aforementioned subject can be quoted to substantiate our argument.

## II. DISCUSSION

From Iqbalian perspective, the man is the protector of the women's dignity and honors. Such a role has been assigned to him by none other than the God himself. I holly Quran he has been labeled as *Qawwam* and the famous Quranic verse commands like this:

Ar-Rijal-u Qawwamoo na ala Nisa  
Iqbal echoes the same verse when he says:  
Ne parda, na taleem naye ho ke purani  
Niswanayat-e- zan ka nighreban hai faqt mard  
Neither pardah nor education , whehter it be new or  
old  
the guardian of the feminity of  
woman is only man  
Jis qoum ne iss zinda haqikat ko na paya  
Uss qoum ka khursheed bahut jald hua zard  
The community that didn't realize this living  
truth/reality  
That community's sun very quickly became  
yellow [and faded]

But the question arises, can we attribute the quality of Qawwam to every man or to put my question in another way isn't it basic requirement to precisely connote the meaning of the word Qawwam both at literal and figurative level in the light of the religious, moral, social and ethical realities of our times. After all, thousands of cases of exploitation of the woman by the man are pending in the secular and religious courtrooms of our country. In Arabic dictionary *Al-Munjid*, one of the meanings for the word Qawwam is a person capable of fulfilling his responsibilities. Hence, at some level Qawwam is somehow related to capabilities. As such there seems a possibility of transcending the water tight compartmentalization of its meaning from gender point of view. Gender does not seem the only qualification for Qawwam ; rather, the capability to deliver justice and shoulder responsibilities is equally important. In the light of the afore mentioned argument, Iqbal seems well aware about





*All he owned was a sword and a coat of chain[2]*

عشق پرگار مرکز آن مادر  
عشق سالار کاروان آن مادر

*Maadar-e-aa'n markaz-e-parkaar-e-ishq  
Maadar-e-aa'n kaarwa'n saalaar-e-ishq  
Her son was the center of Love and devotion[3]  
He was the chief of the army of Love*

حرم شبستان شمع یکی آن  
خیرالامم جمعیت حافظ

*Aa'n yeki sham'e shabistaan-e-haram  
Hafiz-e-jamee'at-e khayrul-umam  
He was a burning light in the gathering in the  
HARAM,  
He was the protector of the best of the communities*

کین و پیکار آتش نشینند تا  
نگین و تاج سر بر زد پا پشت

*Taa nasheenad aatish-e-paykaar-o-kee'n  
Pusht-e-pa zad bar sar-e-taaj-o-nagee'n  
He kicked the throne and the crown aside[4],  
Only because he did not want to see the fire of  
killing and hatred*

جهان ابرار مولای دگر وان  
جهان احرار بازوی قوت

*Wa'n digar maulaa-e-abraar-e-jahaa'n  
Quwwat-e-baazu-e-ahraar-e-jahaa'n  
And the other son (of hers) is the leader of the pious  
He gave strength to all the revolutionaries of the  
world*

حسین از سوز زندگی نوای در  
حسین از آموز حریت حق اهل

*Dar nawaa-e-zindagi soz az Hussain[5]  
Ahl-e-haq hurriyat amoz az Hussain[6]  
Hussain becomes passion to the ode of humanity  
Hussain gives rise of freedom to the truthful people*

امهات از با فرزند سیرت  
امهات از صفا و صدق جوهر

*Seerat-e-farzandaha az ummahaat[7]  
Jawhar-e-sidq-o-safa az ummahaat  
The character of sons are built by their mothers  
The true spirit of truthfulness and honesty come  
from the mothers*

بتول حاصل را تسلیم مزرع

بتول کامل اسوه را مادران

*Muzra-e-tasleem ra haasil Butool  
Maadaraa'n ra uswa-e-kaamil Butool  
Crop/harvest for the farm of approbation/consent is  
Butool  
For mothers she is a perfect guiding example*

سوخت آنگونه دلش محتاجی بهر  
فروخت را خود چادر یهودی با

*Bahr-e-muhtaaj-e dilish aa'n guna sokht[9]  
Ba yahoodi chaadar-e-khud ra farokht  
Her heart was so overwhelmed by the needs of the  
poor,  
That she sold her own chadar to a Jew*

فرمانبرش آتشی هم و نوری  
شوپرش رضای در رضایش گم

*Noori-o ham aatishi farman barish[10]  
Gum razaayish dar razaa-e-shauharish  
Both angels and Jinn are in her obedience,  
(Because) she was obedient to the will of her  
husband*

رضا و صبر پرورده ادب آن  
سرا قرآن لب و گردان آسیا

*Aa'n adab parwurda-e-sabr-o-raza  
Aasiya gardaan-o-lab Qur'an sara  
She was raised with SABR and submission  
Her lips would be reading Qur'an while her hands  
would be moving the hand mill*

نیاز بی بالین ز او بای گریه  
نماز بدامان افشاندی گوهر

*Giryaa haaye ou ze baalin bai niyaaaz  
Gauhar afshandai badamaan-e-namaaz  
She wept for the fear of Almighty Allah  
She shed tears during her prayers to Him*

زمین از جبریل چید بر او اشک  
برین عرش بر ریخت شبنم همچو

*Asahk-e-oo bar cheed Jibreel az zamin  
Hamchu shabnam reekht bar arsh-e-barin  
Jibreel would pick up her tears from the earth  
So that he may spread dew-drops in Jannah*

پاست زنجیر حق آنین رشته  
است مصطفی جناب فرمان پاس

*Rishta-e-aa'een-e-haq zanjeer-e-pa ast  
Paas-e-farmaan-e-Janaab-e-Mustafa ast  
I am bound by the law of Islam,*



*I am beholden to the sayings of the Prophet*

گر دیدمی تربتش گرد ورنه  
پاشیدمی او خاک بر با سجده

*Warna gird-e-turbat-ish gardeed mi*

*Sajda ha bar khaak-e-oo pasheed mi*

*Otherwise, I would have gone round and round her  
gravesite,*

*And I would have done sajdah on her grave*

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