"Lo! The noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct."

(Al Quran-49:13)

CHAPTER - THREE

Education in Weaker Sections of the Society
EDUCATION IN WEAKER SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY

1) **Elementary Education**: It was unanimously agreed that in Islam the education of the local children and the slaves was compulsory and the Divine command states: 66:6 - "O ye who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire."

Thus the parents and the guardians were made responsible for the education of their children. A child was like a clean slate, and he was not a sinner by birth and according to a tradition 'it is the parents who make him a Jew or a Christian.' Therefore, the child was the trust in the hands of his parents capable of highest development and if due attention was not paid, he would be the lowest of the low. He was to be educated carefully. It was the duty of parents to take care of their children's proper education and their mental, physical and spiritual health. If their carelessness ruined the child, they would be held responsible. The parents and the teachers would be answerable for the ignorance of their wards on the Day

1. Hammam bin Muznabbih: Sahifa, Dr. M. Hamidullah, editor, p. 100, Hadith No. 66.
2. Q.95:4
3. Q.95:5
of Reckoning. The Prophet has said that a father can confer upon his child no more valuable gift than a good education and according to another hadith, it is better that a man should secure education for his child than give a sa' in charity.

The educational ideals of Islam not only emphasized the responsibilities of the parents for their children, but even for slave girls also it was a meritorious act which had a double reward. So much so that adhan (prayer call) was said into the ears of the newly born baby which may be interpreted as the beginning of a child's education. When the child was able to speak a few syllables, he or she was taught the first article of belief: 'There is no God but Allah'. In the family of 'Abdul Muttalib when a child could speak words and sentences, the Prophet taught him the verses of the Quran and the last two verses of the chapter Exile (Al Hashr):

59:23 - "He is Allah, than whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Gardian the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb, Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as partner (unto Him)."
59:24 - "He is Allah, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise."

The Prophet commanded children to gain knowledge from their neighbours and study in the neighbourhood mosques. The Prophet enjoined his people to train the child to offer prayers at the age of seven, at the age of nine he was to be given a separate bed; and he was to be inflicted corporal punishment if he neglected and missed his prayers. At the age of seventeen, the father should give him in marriage. Then the father should recite:

Allah! Do not make him a sedition for me (in this life or in hereafter)."

The development of scientific activities under Islam gave impetus to the advancement of elementary education. Kuttab as a teaching and learning place of the Quran and other elementary subjects including the art of reading and writing spread early in the Muslim society particularly in 2 H. when the Prophet offered freedom to the captives of Badr who could teach reading and writing to ten Muslim boys.

Under the four orthodox caliphs their whole empire was resounding with the voice of the Qur'an. A network of mosque schools had been established during the period under study throughout the Muslim world and a sort of compulsory educational system grew up. Where the poor, the free, the slave every one alike enjoyed the same right to education. During the rule of caliph 'Umar al Farooq elementary schools had become common, according to a report of Sulaym Abu 'Amir that when he came to Medina as a prisoner of war, he was sent to a teacher to teach him; and when he could not write properly min the twenty-fourth letter of the Arabic alphabet, the teacher said: "Write it round like the eye of a cow."¹

**Kuttab** i.e. the elementary schools have been mentioned in some ancient works and historical records of the early period of Islam for example according to a report of Bukhari, once Umme Salma the mother of believers called some boys from the school to help her in cleaning wool.² Another report is that once several Christian slave boys were brought to caliph 'Umar al Farooq who sent them to a kuttab.³ This reveals that

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2. Bukhari: Kitab ud Diyat, chap : min isti'ar 'abda aw sayya.
3. Al Baladhuri : Futuh ul Buldan, p.149.
attention was being paid to educate even the slave children and they were studying in the schools meant for Muslim children.

Ibn S'ad has recorded that once Companions Abu Huraira, 'Abdullah b. 'Umar, Abu Sa'id and Abu Qatada happened to pass by a kuttab and the fragrance of their dresses attracted the school boys. Thus we came to know that kuttabs were separate places for teaching elementary subjects. The Companions and the learned scholars were engaged in greater tasks than teaching children as highly qualified scholars did not teach in elementary schools, but we find some famous personalities who had taught school children for example Sa'd b. Shaddad began his career as a teacher in school before holding the office in government, the poet Kumait (d.82H.) a companion of Caliph 'Ali in Kufa, was a school teacher, Jabir b. Hayyan was a school master in Taif¹, Dahhak b. Muzahim (d.102 or 106/720 or 724) was running an elementary school in Kufa, where free education was imparted and no tuition fee was charged.² The growing interest in education encouraged enterprising teachers to start schools which

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1. Ibn Hajar: Isaba fi Tamiz is Sahaba, p. 460.
were fee charging schools such elementary schools were established even in Bedouin settlements. There are very famous verses of al-Farzdaq (23-110/647-728) satirizing Hajjaj b. Yusuf (d.95/713) the famous Umayyad governor of Iraq: 'There was a time when he was a humble person who used to teach village children in return of bread.'

This evidence shows that there had been elementary schools even in remote villages and the community paid to the teachers of the elementary schools. However the elementary school teachers were low paid and had a low social status. There were many proverbs and anecdotes in Arabic describing the elementary school teachers as fools e.g. More foolish than an elementary school teacher or seek no advice from (elementary school) teachers. So much so that a judge during the period of Caliph al Mamun refused to accept evidence by an elementary school teacher because of his low status in the society. The elementary school teacher could use rod and inflict corporal punishment. One of the captives of Badr used to beat the boys severely, who were sent to him to learn from him reading and writing, because of his enmity towards the Muslims. 

period the school masters could use force and it was officially allowed to cane the soles of the feet only of the boys but not to injure them. Most often kuttabs were attached to mosques or private houses, where a mua'llim was expected to give lessons in reading Quran, in art of reading and writing, and simple arithmetic. For young children studying in kuttab, there was no choice of subjects. Caliph 'Umar al Farooq had circulated letters to all the districts to teach their boys swimming riding and proverbial usages and good poetry. The children repeated the Quranic verses to memorize them and copied the Quranic verses on their wooden tablets for their writing practices, and those who had learnt reading and writing, copied the verses of the Quran on their tablets to memorize them. More emphasis was on memorization and oral work in elementary schools. There was no fixed age for admission in elementary schools but more often the boys between the age six to ten came to school. Sometimes the elders had to attend kuttab to learn reading and writing. Small girls were also allowed to come and learn in those schools. There was no age limit to complete the kuttab education, and probably examinations were not

1. Hitti: op. cit.

held at the end of education. It depended on the teacher's satisfaction on a child's performance.

It had been a custom of people of Mecca that they sent their small boys desert where they stayed in bedouin tribes and learned pure Arabic language and eloquence. The Prophet also had such experience.¹

There were no secondary schools during the period under discussion. After completing their elementary education most of the boys worked with their fathers. Besides the mosque schools, private tutors were a common feature in urban areas. The rich who had settled in towns, compelled by the sedentary life of the area engaged private tutors to educate their sons. The private tutors and preceptors were expected to give lessons to the boys in reading the Quran the hadith and in history maghazi and provide instructions in oratory, literature, grammar, penmanship, polite conversation, swimming, riding, and rudiments of astronomy, etc., as supplementary subjects.

Some literature for moral training of children was also produced to educate boys through stories, and proverbial usages (amthal) were collected and compiled to be

¹. Ibn Hisham: Sirah, p. 103.
taught to children to give them good moral training.

For this purpose educative material was borrowed from foreign cultures also for example *Kulaila wa Dimna* was translated into Arabic by different persons including Ibn al-Muqaffa who translated some other educative works also from Persian, e.g. *Adab al Saqhif* and *Adab al Kabir*.¹

The expenses of the education of a child were to be borne by the child; if the child had no property, it was the responsibility of his guardian to look after his education.

The Aristocratic Education of Princes at the Royal courts

Besides compulsory religious subjects for the education of princes the main subjects were language and literature, battle narratives, swimming, hunting, riding, discipline and noble conduct (adab). For higher education greater importance was attached to artistic activities like poetry and oratory. The educational ideals of some of the Umayyad and the Abbasid rulers can be grasped by the instructions given by them to the tutors of their sons. Caliph 'Abd ul Malik (685 - 705 A.C.) gave instructions to the tutor of his sons to teach them swimming and to accustom them to sleep little.²

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Hajjaj the famous governor advised the tutor of his sons to instruct them in swimming before teaching them writing because they could find one who could write for them but not a swimmer in their stead.¹

Sulaiman b. 'Abd ul Malik said to the preceptor of his sons to teach them poetry for soundness of their wisdom, intelligence, liberality and dignity and gave him instructions to bring his sons in closer contact with nobles to acquaint them and to follow their qualities of conduct.

'Umar b. 'Abdul 'Aziz was very strict in the education of his sons. He made Salih b. Kaisan their tutor. He wrote him to teach his children hardship (kushunat) to establish in them faith to draw their attention to denounce companionship because companionship creates negligence (of religion) let them laugh less, as too much laughing makes the heart dead. The first thing which they should learn from the trainer, should be a dislike for music.

The days programme started with recitation of passages from the Quran after that the use of bow and arrow. The boys were required to go out barefooted and use seven arrows then come back for noon rest (qiliwla) because

¹ 'Uyun ul Akhbar, II, 166.
'Abdullah b. Mas'ud used to say: 'children do qiliwla because Satan does not do qiliwla.' Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd ul 'Aziz was very particular about the linguistic studies of his sons. He could not tolerate grammatical mistakes in their speech.

The Abbasid Caliph Harun (d.809 A.C.) gave instructions to the tutor of his son Prince Amin that he should neither be too strict to spoil the qualities of the prince nor he should be too lenient which would make him idle. If the prince is careless to pay heed to the admonitions of the tutor, the tutor could use force, otherwise he should give him training with kindness and gentleness.

ii) Education of Slaves, Clients (Mawali) in the Islamic Cultural Setup

The Islamic principle of equality was fully recognized in the educational systems throughout the Muslim world. The teachers extended equal treatment to all the students, and the students who belonged to the weaker sections of the society, had no difficulty in getting admission to educational circles. This principle has been so much emphasized in Islam, that even the Prophet

1. Ibn ul Jawzi: Sirat 'Umar b. 'Abdul 'Aziz, Chap. 38.
was exhorted by the Lord of the universe: During the early period of Islam at Mecca, the Prophet was once engaged in conversation with Al Walid, one of the leaders of the tribe of Quraysh, to persuade him to understand the truth of Islam. A blind man Ibn Umme-Maktum came and asked a question to the Prophet. This interruption which was spoiling the chance of Al Walid's conversion annoyed the Prophet and he did not pay attention to the blind man. So Allah revealed the verses of the chapter 80 of the Quran, He Frowned. Therefore, there were neither intermediaries between Allah and His bondmen in Islam, nor was segregation in education allowed. And says the Quran:

49:13 O mankind. 'Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct.

On the occasion of the Farewell Pilgrimage the Prophet again taught the lesson of equality and brotherhood among those gathered there:

'Lo! you are all sons of Adam and Adam was created of clay, the blacks have no precedence over the whites nor

the whites over blacks: Arabs enjoy no superiority over non-Arabs nor the non-Arabs over Arabs. The best amongst you is one who is more pious, God-fearing.'

The Prophet had made all Muslims brethren unto one another. This brotherhood transcended all the man made barriers of countries and nations. The seekers of knowledge from all parts of the Muslim World, black and brown, the Arabs, the Turks, the Iranians, the Spanish, submerged their differences in the brotherhood of this teaching which was common to all. All mankind, formed the family of God.

Basic needs of all must be satisfied. Whatever one likes for himself, he should like the same for his fellow brothers. Everyone should be given cooperation in righteous conduct but not in evil and wrong deeds, says the Quran:

5:2 - "help ye one another unto righteousness and pious duty.

Help not one another unto sin and transgression"; 'Ubada b. Samit narrated that the Prophet said: 'Learn from me; learn from me'.

Khalid b. Arara narrated that caliph 'Ali said:

'Is there anyone to ask from me questions, and make use of it for himself and for others'.


2. Ibn 'Abd ul Barr: Jame' Bayan ul 'IIm, Abdur Razzaq Maliha-badi translator, Urdu p. 87.

3. Ibid.
Sa'id b. Jubair said that he was anxious that people should gain knowledge from him.¹

Sufyan Thawri used to say: By God. I should go to the students of hadith (to teach them) if they would stop to come to me.² Rabi' b. Sulaiman narrated that Imam Shafi'i once told him: "Had it been possible to make knowledge a drink for you, I would have done it."³

It had been the custom of great teachers that they did not accept any remuneration from their students. Prophetic traditions also discouraged the same. 'Ubada b. Samit whom the Prophet had appointed to teach the students of Suffa, narrated that the Prophet did not allow him to accept the bow which a student presented him.⁴ The rich and the dignitaries clad in best attire came riding on horse back, and the poor in patched garments, on foot, and sat side by side with the same confidence in the circles and assemblies of the learned which were open to all. And the promising poor students were encouraged and sometimes helped financially by the erudite shaykhs who imparted free education. For the financial assistance of the needy students some of the savants worked and the money thus

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
earned was spent on deserving students so that they could devote themselves whole heartedly to their studies.

Imam Abu Hanifa was a businessman. He bought silk articles from Baghdad and sold them in Kufa. He spent his profit on students and exhorted them to thank God only and that there was no need to thank him, because whatever he had spent on them, it was the profit that he earned and not from the capital. It was His beneficience that He made him a means of their assistance. Thus a number of intelligent students from the poor class had an opportunity to receive higher education. 'Abdullah b. Mubarak (d.181 H.) the great traditionist was a trader. His aim of trade was to help the scholars from his earnings. Once he remarked that had there not been Sufyan b. 'Uyayna (d.198 H.), Sufyan Thawri (d.161H), Fuḍail b. 'Iyaḍ (d.197H.) Ibn Samak, and Ibn‘Ulāyya (d.193H.) the five famous scholars he would have not engaged in that business. The Prophet himself helped the needy students. The students of Suffa, the residential school of Medina had been a concern of the Prophet. He refused his daughter Fatima when she requested him for a maid slave on the ground that no provision had been made for the people of Suffa, therefore her request

could not be granted. According to a tradition of the Prophet, the teacher should never allow his students to beg but encourage them to help themselves and not be a burden on the society.

The teachers had been kind, considerate affectionate and sympathetic to their students. The Prophet said: 'I am to you like a father, who desires to save his child from the fire of hell, which is more important than any of the efforts of the parents to save their children from the fires of the earth.'

The spiritual basis was the binding force in education, and by maximum devotion, single mindedness and purity of motives of the teachers and the taught, the Muslim scholars from different parts of the Muslim world attained perfect command over the Arabic language and lexicography; and by their ambitions and continuous activity the mawali surpassed the Arabs in acquisition of the Islamic sciences. They made important contribution to the study of World religion; and helped the neo-converts to be the zealous adherents of the faith. 'Ikrima the mawla of Ibn 'Abbas was his famous disciple and narrator.

Companion Ibn 'Umar's mawla Nafe' was his famous disciple and narrator, Companion Anas b. Malik's mawla was Imam Mohammad b. Sirin, and the Companion Abu Huraira's narrator 'Abdur Rahman b. Hurmuz, was also a mawla. The above mentioned four Companions were of very high rank, they were distinguished transmitters of hadith and other Islamic sciences, their narrations and juristic decisions were transmitted and spread by these four above mentioned mawali disciples which have been accepted and followed throughout the Muslim world. Some of the most distinguished learned among the slaves and freed slaves (mawali) were:

Sulaiman b. Mehran Al -Amash (61-167H) a Persian slave was the savant of Kufa, 'Amar b. Dinar (46-116H) was a slave learned at Mecca, Hakam b. 'Utaiba (d.105H.) was a slave of Kinda tribe and the learned of Kufa; Makhul ad-Dimashqi (d.112H.) in Syria, Muhammad b. Ishaq was a slave of Qais b. Makhrama; Mujahid b. Jubair (d. 102 or 103H.) was a slave of Qais b. Makhzumi; Muhammad b. 'Ajlan (d.48H.) was a slave and the savant of Medina, Mansur b. Zadhan (d. 136H.) was a slave of the Thaqif tribe and a savant in Wasit, Maimun b. Mehran (40-117H) a slave was a learned in Jazira, Imam Rabi'a ar Raiy (d.100 or 136H.) the savant of Medina was the son of a slave, Salama b. Dinar
n6 was the son of a slave. Tawus b. Kaisan (d.106H.) was slave and a learned of Yemen, Yazid b. Abi Habib (53-118H.) a slave and savant of Egypt.
Zaid b. Aslam, was a slave of 'Umar al Farooq and a learned savant.

'Abdul Malik b. Marwan (685-705A.C.) the Umayyad caliph once questioned Imam ibn Shihab Zuhri: Who is the chief of the Muslims and exercising authority over the people of Mecca?
Zuhri: 'Ata b. Aoi Rabah, a mawla.
Caliph: Who is the Imam of Yemen?
Zuhri: Tawus b. Kaisan, a mawla.
Caliph: Who is the Imam of the people of Egypt?
Zuhri: Yazid b. Abi Habib, a mawla.
Caliph: Who is the Imam of Syria?
Zuhri: Makhul, a freed slave of a woman.
Caliph: Who is the Imam of the people of Jazira? (the land between rivers of Tigris and Euphrates)
Zuhri: Maimun b. Mehran, a mawla.
Caliph: Who is the greatest man of Khurasan now a days?
Zuhri: Dahhak b. Muzahim a mawla.
Caliph: Who is the Imam of Basra?
Zuhri: Hasan b. Abi al Hasan, a mawla.¹

¹. This dialogue has been recorded in different works such as Hakim in his Marifat 'Uloom il Hadith, P. 198, Ibn Salah in Muqaddima, Suyuti in Tadrib, Sakhawi in Fatah ul Mudith, and Manazir Ahsan Gilani in Tadwin-i-Hadith, pp. 137-139, have cited it.
During this discussion ibn Shihab explained to the Caliph that it was their knowledge and character that they were held high in esteem by the masses. The same caliph wanted a tutor for his children and he selected Ismā'īl b. 'Uba idullah b. Abi al Munajir, a mawla for the job, and said that the relationship between Arabs and non-Arabs as teacher and taught was very strange and unprecedented, the Iranians had been ruling for hundreds of years. They never required the help of the Arabs during the whole period of their rule except once, when Na'uman b. Mundhir, an Arab was engaged for a very short period and at last they killed him. The Arabs within a very short period of their rule had become subordinate to non-Arabs in the realm of knowledge. Even the tutor of the royal children was a non-Arab who taught them Arabic, linguistic sciences and social values.¹

The reason was obvious that Islamic education was universal, it was for all humankind, while the Iranians worked for Iran alone like the rest of the world, they did not allow others to prosper in their country. Islam made no distinction between the Arabs and non-Arabs. The majority of the scholars from the first century and onward were

¹ Tarikh, 1. Ibn 'Asakir, Vol. 2, p.27.
mawali and non-Arabs so much so that even in the heart of the Muslim world i.e. the holy city of Mecca, the most distinguished teachers like 'Ata b. Abi Rabah, Mujahid b. Jubair, 'Ikrima, Sa'id b. Jubair, Sulaiman b. Yasar, Muhammad b. Muslim Tardus were mawali. Yahya b. Kathir (152-234H.) the great teacher in Spain was also a freed salve, Muslims masses and mighty rulers of Spain respected him and followed his advice.

Majority of the students who came to Companions were mawali and non-Arabs and were most welcomed. The freed slaves had been given all the respect and rights of a citizen of the state. Thus the non-Arab mawali made rapid progress and surpassed the Arabs in all the branches of knowledge. The Umayyad and 'Abbasid rulers appointed them as tutors and preceptors for their princes, secretaries, revenue collectors, record keepers, and other administrative posts such as viziers and governors, on their part the mawali played a significant role in the transmission of intellectual traditions of their ancient civilizations. The Bermecide family at the court of the Abbasids was one of the examples of Islamic cultural set-up, and its educational policy encouraged the new converts to dedicate themselves in the search after knowledge, with the sole object of inner perfection and the betterment of the society. The Arab
Muslims recognized their superior knowledge and they enjoyed respect and prestige in the society:

Once a bedouin came to Basra and asked who was the greatest imam of the people of Basra, al Hasan Basri, he was told. He questioned that being a non-Arab how did he qualify for such a high rank.

He was told that the Arabs needed the knowledge of al Hasan, while he did not need their world.

The bedouin then laughed and said: “By your life! this is the chiefship”. When anyone asked a question from Anas b. Malik a servant of the Prophet, in his old age, he used to refer it to mawla Ibn Sirin.

Imam Zain ul 'Abidin the great grandson of the Prophet used to attend the assembly of Zaid b. Asalm in the mosque of the Prophet. Zaid b. Aslam was a freed man of 'Umar al Farooq. Someone asked Imam Zainul 'Abidin, the reason for attending the assembly of Zaid an ex-slave and not that of the Quraysh, the Imam replied that one should go to the place where he could gain profit.²

Abul 'Alia ar Riyahi (d. 93H.) said that when he came to the assembly of Ibn 'Abbas the cousin of the Prophet, Ibn 'Abbas offered him a seat by his side on his throne and recognized his superior knowledge while the Qurashites were sitting on the floor. Ibn 'Abbas remarked that knowledge raises the honour of a person and he sits like kings on their thrones.\(^1\) Mujahid b. Juwar (d. c. 102) a freed man of Banu Makhzum and an Imam in the science of tafsir was seen on horse's back while 'Abdullah b. 'Umar held the rein. This was revealed by Mujahid himself.\(^2\)

When Mansur b. Zadhan a learned mawla in Wasit died, the crowd attending his funeral as reported by 'Abbad b. al-'Awwam was so large that his maternal uncle held his hand to protect him from being lost. 'Abbad was a child then.\(^3\)

When Hakam b. 'Utba a mawla came to Medina, people vacated for him the place where the Prophet used to offer prayers in his mosque.\(^4\)

Hasan Basri, Muhammad b. Sirin and Ayyab b. Abi Tamima Sakhtyani (d. 131H.) were great mawali savants and

the chiefs of the youths of Basra both Arabs and non-Arabs.

'Abdullah b. Mubarak (d. 181H.) who was a highly respected savant among the mawali once happened to pass from Raqqa when caliph Harun ar Rashid was also here. The people of Raqqa had come out of their houses to receive Abdullah b. Mubarak. On seeing this a maid slave of Harun remarked that he was the true king and not Harun for whom people were compelled by the police and officials to receive him.

When 'Ikrima the freedman of 'Abdullah b. 'Abbas and the savant of Medina arrived in Basra, people rushed to see him and many climbed on roof tops to have a glimpse of the man.¹

And the Quran had said:

3: 104 - And there may spring from you a nation who invite to goodness and enjoin right conduct and forbid indecency. Such are they who are successful.

iii) FEMALE EDUCATION AND LADY TEACHERS IN EARLY ISLAM

Importance was given to women education in Islam from the beginning. The incident of Fatima d. al Khattab's learning of the Quran from Khabbab has been mentioned in the previous chapter due to which 'Umar al Farooq accepted Islam. According to a hadith of the Prophet the person who had a slave-girl and gave her good education and married her would be rewarded twice. The girls were blessing for their parents because the prophet had said that daughters became veils from Hell for their parents.

The Prophet had kindly paid attention to female education. Women used to offer prayers behind the Prophet in his mosque where he gave sermons. He once said: Do not check women of their share in the mosques. And for their regular exhortations the Prophet had set aside one particular day. He used to speak to women separately when he felt that they could not listen his sermons properly because of distance.

'Ayesha Siddiqa praised ansar ladies because they did not feel shy in acquiring knowledge. She used to say; may God bless the ansar ladies whom shyness could not stop from learning religious facts and asking questions from the Prophet. Because to acquire knowledge was as important for women as for men, and Allah had revealed in the Quran.

33:35 - "Lo! men who surrender unto Allah, women who surrender, and men who believe and women who believe, and men who obey and women who obey, and men who speak the truth and women who speak the truth, and men who preserve (in righteousness) and women who preserve, and men who are humble and women who are humble, and men who give alms and women who give alms, and men who fast and women who fast, and men who guard their modesty and women who guard (their modesty), and men who remember Allah much and women who remember - Allah hath prepared for them forgiveness and a vast reward."

The women remembered the Quran when the Prophet recited it in congregational prayers.

They attended and listened Friday and 'eid sermons of the Prophet. The women were to make their line at the

1. Ibid; P.79 and Ibn 'Abd ul Barr: Bayan ul 'Ilm, PP.69-70.
end of the congregation, and the Prophet raised his voice so that they could listen him clearly.

The Prophet repeated his deliberations for them because of the distance between him and the last row of the women.

The Prophet sometimes sent one of his Companions in the gatherings of women to exhort them; among them was 'Umar al Farooq. Besides the arrangements made by the state it had been the responsibility of the head of the family to guide members of his family, and teach them right conduct to save them from Hell fire in the life hereafter. The Quran had enjoined them and the Prophet had warned Muslims that they will be questioned on the Day of Reckoning about the conduct of their dependants and subjects. It was their duty to enjoin right conduct and forbid indencency. Islam has promised great rewards to those who impart education to wives, children and other dependants like slave girls, those who bring up girls give them education and behave well and then get them married will have their abodes in Paradise. Islamic teachings made women fond of learning, and they wanted to acquire knowledge to obey and please God.

1. al Quran 66:6
3. al Quran 3:104.
When *sahabiat* read the Quran they followed its teachings and also pondered over its meaning like male Companions. One report is quoted here:

‘Abdur Rahman b. Abi Laila a Follower, once went to a lady while reciting the chapter *Hud*. She said: "O 'Abdur Rahman! Are you reciting the Quran so carelessly. By God! I have been engaged in its (chap. *Hud*) reading for six months,¹ but I have not yet completed it."² There were many *sahabiat* old, young, middle aged who accepted Islam with their male Companions they were slaves like Sumiya, Labina, Zanira, Nahdia, and Umme ‘Abis³ and free, rich and poor from all sections of the society. In the early days of Islam they faced torture and difficulties with courage and endurance; and in later years of economic prosperity they preferred the life of simplicity, but never neglected their duties towards Allah and His bondmen.

Islamic history is full of records of numerous examples of honesty truthworthiness, courage, endurance, sacrifices and devotion among the *sahabiat, tabi 'at*, and

1. *Hud* is the eleventh chapter of the Quran and contains 123 verses only.
tab' tabi'at. Most important among them were 'Ayesha d. Abu Bakr and Umme Salma the mothers of believers.

There were few women who could read and write during the early period. They were: Hafsa d. 'Umar al Farooq, Umme Kulfum d. 'Uqaba, 'Ayesha d. Sa'd, Karima d. Miqdad, and al Shifa d. 'Abdullah, al 'Adwia, who had taught Hafsa d. 'Umar al Khattab and whom the Prophet had asked to continue teaching even after he married her. Two more wives of the Prophet 'Ayesha d. Abu Bakr and Umme-Salma, could read only.

In the pre-migration period when Umme Sharik embraced Islam she used to go from house to house in Mecca to preach Islam. The Meccans became so angry with her that they expelled her from Mecca. Umme Salim accepted Islam and she used to go to different settlements of Medina and spread Islam. Likewise Najia daughter of Suhaib b. 'Umar the chief of the tribe of Aslam, accepted Islam after the migration of the Prophet to Medina. She was very active in preaching Islam, every month she used to go twice to each tribe near-by and explained the teaching of Islam among the women.

Traditionists have divided narrators of hadith into five divisions. Among the first division those Companions have been included whose accounts are one thousand or more than one thousand of hadith. In this division is Ayesha Siadiqa.

The second division of the reporters is of the Companions who have narrated five hundred or more but less than one thousand; there is no female Companion in this division.1

In the third division which is of those Companions whose reports are one hundred or more than one hundred but less than five hundred. In this division is Umme Salma the mother of believers.

Among the fourth division which includes the relaters of forty to hundred traditions are Umme Habiba, Maimuna and Hafsa the mothers of believers, Umme 'Atia Ansaria, Asma d. Abu Bakr, and Umme Hani.

In the fifth division which is of the narrators of forty or less than forty traditions are Umme Qais, Fatima d. Qais, Rabi' d. Mas'ud, Subrah d. Safwan, Kulthum d. Hisin and many others.3


2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.
Sahabiat's services in the cause of education is recorded in several works; such as Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal (d.241H) had compiled *musnad* of one hundred and thirty *sahabiat*, which contains 424 pages and includes several thousand traditions narrated by the female Companions.

Hafiz ibn 'Abdul Barr has mentioned 398 *sahabiat* in *Al Isti'ab* and records are found of five hundred lady Companions in *Usudul Ghaba* by Ibn Athir and in *Isaba fi Tamiz Is Sahaba* by Ibn Hajar. There will be hardly any record of a *sahabia* who had not narrated a tradition.

According to Ibn Hajar, Imam Bukhari has recorded traditions in his *Sahih* reported by female Companions, they are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Asma b. Abi Bakr Siddiq</td>
<td>16</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Asma b. 'Umais</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Hafsa b. 'Umaral Parooq</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Hamna b. Khalid</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Khansa b. Hizam</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Khawla b. Qais Ansari</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Rabi' b. Maudh</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Ramla b. Abi Sufyan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Zainab b. Jahash the mother of</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>believers</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Zainab b. Abu Salama</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td>11.</td>
<td>Zainab Thaqfia wife of Ibn Mas'ud</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Sab'ia d. Harith</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Sauda d. Zum'a'Amria</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Safia d. Huy the mother of believers</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Safia d. Shaiba</td>
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<td>16.</td>
<td>'Ayesha Siddiqa</td>
<td>242</td>
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<td>17.</td>
<td>Fakhta Umme Hani</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>18.</td>
<td>Fatima d. Qais</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>19.</td>
<td>Fatima daughter of the prophet</td>
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<td>20.</td>
<td>Lubaba Umme Faqih</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Maimuna d. Harich, mother of believers</td>
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<td>22.</td>
<td>Ansiba Umme 'Atia Ansaria</td>
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<td>23.</td>
<td>Hinda d. Umayya ibn Mughira</td>
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<td>Makhzumia Umme-Salma</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Umme Haram d. Malhan</td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Umme Ruman (the mother of 'Ayesha Siddiqa)</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>Umme Salim Ansaria</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Umme Sharik 'Amria</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>28.</td>
<td>Umme 'Ula Ansaria</td>
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<td>29.</td>
<td>Umme Qais d. Mohsin</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Umme Kulthum d. Aqia</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Daughter of Khafath ibn Iyma</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total**: 330

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The Divine command to the wives of the Prophet was:

33:34 - "And bear in mind that which is recited in your houses of the revelations of Allah and wisdom."

Therefore the wives of the Prophet as narrators and teachers of hadith had great importance particularly 'Ayesha, Umme Salma and Hafsa had been most distinguished.\(^1\)

Ummul muminin 'Ayesha Siddiqa (d.57/676), the wife of the Prophet, was the daughter of Abu Bakr as Siddiq. Her parents embraced Islam when she was a child. Abu Bakr her father had made a mosque in his house at Mecca where he used to recite the Quran and the Prophet came to their house daily.\(^2\) She enjoyed the company of the Prophet for about 8\(^{1/2}\) years as his wife. She died at the age of sixty five in the year 57H/676 A.C.

She was endowed with excellent retentive memory and a keen critical faculty and her importance and excellence is not due to the number of her narrations the main thing is that she employed a good deal of reasoning, insight, understanding and critical appreciation and deduced law, in which none can equal her accept Ibn 'Abbas.


By her keen critical faculty and reasoning, she corrected the mistakes of many Companions which they committed in understanding and narrating the hadith. Numerous instances of her criticism of the traditions have been recorded in hadith works which prove her understanding and judgement. She was thoroughly acquainted with the poetry, genealogy and the history of Arabs which she had learnt from her father Abu Bakr, who was one of the most knowledgeable persons in those sciences.

‘Urwah b. Zubair once said to ‘Ayesha: ‘0 Mother I do not astonish on your insight and understanding because you are the wife of the Prophet and the daugheter of Abu Bakr as Siddiq and I am not astonished on your knowledge of history and poetry because you are the daughter of Abu Bakr who was the most learned among people, but I am astonished on your knowledge of medicine that how and from where did you learn it”.

She used to listen from her apartment the conversations, discourses and sermons given by the Prophet in his mosque. Whenever, she could not comprehend a saying of the prophet she discussed them with the Prophet who encouraged her by giving answers to all such questions. She

1. Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal; Musnad, Vol. 6, p. 27.
had an advantage over others as she remained in the
company of the Prophet for 8 1/2 years as his wife. The
Quran was being revealed in her house. She listened it
first and knew the reasons of revelation of all its verses.

The Prophet himself paid attention to her education¹. He encouraged her to have discussions with him; and
whatever the Prophet told her she remembered it carefully
and followed it strictly.² Whenever she narrated from the
Prophet, a command or an incident she pointed out the reason,
behind it and explained the wisdom underlying that tradition
and reported with its object and spirit, which made her
narrations more important and effective. Her positive and
logical attitude motivates to act accordingly because of
its objectivity, utility and wisdom shown by her.³

If anyone asked her, a question and she knew that
someone had more knowledge about that problem than her,
she would send him to that person. Once she was asked about
masah on socks, she said: “Ask 'Ali, he has been with the

1. Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal: Musnad-i-'Ayesha pp. 45, 70, 72, 206, Bukhari: Sahih, Chap. Ar Rifq fi al 'Amr.
3. One example is quoted here out of many, Ibn 'Umar narrated a tradition: 'I listened the Prophet saying: those of
   you come on Friday, should take bath.' Ayesha Siddiqa narrated the tradition and added giving the reason that
   people had to work in their fields and they came for Friday prayer in the same dirty condition, therefore, they,
   were directed that they should have taken bath before coming to the mosque.
Prophet during the travels. Once she was asked about to offer prayer after the obligatory prayer of 'Asr. She directed the questioner to ask Umme Salma, the mother of believers.

Whatever she had not listened from the Prophet directly and had listened from some other persons, she was very cautious about it and did not trust the narrator easily, sometimes she asked the reporter to repeat the same after sometime to check the retentive memory of the narrator and the authenticity of the hadith.

It was on account of 'Ayesha's extensive and intensive knowledge of the Quran and hadith that even the great Companions sought her advice. Medina was the heart of the Muslim world. People who visited this centre of Islam from different countries used to come to her. 'Ata b. Abi Rabab the Follower, says that 'Ayesha was the greatest jurist, the most learned and the most popular.

Imam Zuhri was a Follower and a great scholar who had seen many great Companions, he said: 'Ayesha was the most knowledgeable among all great Companions, he used to ask her questions.\(^1\)

Salama b. 'Abdur Rahman b. 'Awf said that he had not seen greater learned than 'Ayesha in traditions of the Prophet, jurisprudence, opinion (if needed) and the Quranic sciences.\(^2\)

'Urwah b. Zubair said that he had not seen more knowledgeable than 'Ayesha the mother of believers in what was the lawful and what was the unlawful (jurisprudence), in the science of hadith, in poetry and medicine.\(^3\)

The apartment of 'Ayesha was in the mosque of the Prophet, women, boys and others closely related to her used to come in her apartment to attend her assembly, and other students with whom purdah was necessary sat in the mosque near the door. She sat behind the curtain.\(^4\) Her method of teaching was through questions and answers. The students asked her questions and she gave the answers.

\(^1\) Ibn Sa'd: \textit{Tabagat}, Vol.2. p.126. \\
\(^3\) Hakim: \textit{Mustadrak}, cited by S. Sulaiman Nadwi op.cit.p. 199. \\
At times there were discussions in which the students also took part occasionally she herself asked a question and explained it while the audience listened silently.

She paid great attention to the students' language, pronunciation and articulation also. Besides the students who came from different places of the Muslim World, she took under her care boys and girls of different families and orphans and taught them.

She used to go to perform hajj pilgrimage every year. Her tent was pitched near the Mountain of Thilbir. Seekers of knowledge from different countries gathered around her tent to attend her assembly. They asked questions and wanted to remove their doubts. Sometimes they hesitated, but she used to encourage them saying: 'I am your mother, you can ask me, whatever you can ask from your mother.' She behaved in the same way with the great Companions like Abu Musa Asha'ri.

At Mecca she sometimes sat under the roof of the well of Zamzam, students gathered there. She answered the questions of every type from the Quran and the hadith.

1. Ibid.
2. Muslim: Sahih, Kitab us Salat.
Sometimes the seekers of knowledge sent their female relatives to 'Ayesha Siddiqa to ask questions and she explained the knowledge to them.\(^1\)

Ibn Hajar has given a list of Companions, Followers, her relatives, slaves, in his *Tahdhib ut Tahdhib*, who acquired knowledge from her.

Among her female students the most outstanding was 'Umra d. of 'Abdur Rahman. She was a Companion and the granddaughter of Asad b. Zurara al Ansari. She loved her greatly, and because of that people tried to please her.\(^2\) According to Imam Bukhari she served as 'Ayesha's secretary. Dhahabi has included 'Umra in the third division of traditionists.\(^2\)

The name of Umme Salma the mother of believers may also be mentioned here who took keen interest in hadith. She gave many juristic decrees and Ibn al Qayyim has written that if the juristic decisions given by Umme Salma were collected, it would make a treatise. And so were Umme Habiba and Maimuna, the mothers of believers.

There were many female Companions of the Prophet most distinguished among them were Umme Faqal, Umme Ruman, Umme-'Amara, Umme 'Atia, Umme Hani, Asma d. 'Umais, the wife of Abu Bakr and Asma d. Abu Bakr.

1. Imam Bukhari writes that Mukhariq b. Shamasa the chief of Bajara sent his sister to ask 'Ayesha her opinion about the sedition against 'Uthman the 3rd caliph. She replied that she had seen in the same apartment that angel Gabriel had brought revelation from God, 'Uthman was sitting beside the Prophet. 'Uthman!' The Prophet put his hand over the shoulder of 'Uthman and said; 'Yes 'Uthman! Write this.' Imam Bukhari; *Adab ul Mufrad*, cited by S. Sulaiman Nadwi, op. cit. p. 320.

2. Dhahabi; *Tdhkira tul Hurfaz*, Vol.1 p.94.
After them their daughters came forward, who had grown up under the care of the Companions. They imparted knowledge which they had achieved from Companions, many scholars of hadith used to come to them to gain knowledge of hadith. Some of them were outstanding in knowledge and great tabi’in had come to them to learn hadith.

The number of the female Followers who narrated tradition is very large. Ibn Sa'd has recorded about 93 female Followers who had been imparting knowledge.

Besides the Followers there had been many female teachers of tradition and religion. Unfortunately the material compiled on them, is now extinct, but their mention had been made in other works.

By the end of the second century of Islamic era, there had been numerous female Followers of Followers, who had been engaged in transmission of knowledge. Among them were Umme-'Umar c. Hasan b. Zaid; Zainab d. Sulaiman the granddaughter of 'Abdullah b.'Abbas, there was another Zainab from the same family. She was in Hims. 'Ubada. d. 'Abdur Rahman was the great granddaughter of Abu Qatada Ansari the famous Companion.

These were some of the famous transmitters of knowledge who had distinguished themselves because of their intelligence, religious knowledge, insight and understanding.

Slave-girls were also engaged in seeking knowledge and learning. Many incidents have been recorded which are informative about the education of slave-girls in literary and religious sciences.