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Islamic Teachings and Social Structure: Convictions and Contradiction

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Sultan Shah and Dr. Ayesha Farooq

Reviewed by

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This interdisciplinary work aptly addresses the dichotomy that has long ripped the social fabric of our society. It inspires readers' abilities to appreciate the distance between our convictions and contradictions-between what we say and what we do-between what we believe in and what we act upon. It is this very distance between the religious and the social that has disturbed the authors, who see religion as a comprehensive framework for society and society a platform for religion. Hence, in their view, this distance can be reduced by rebuilding the social structure with the mortar of Islamic teachings.

Associated with Government College University Lahore, Dr. Shah is former Dean, Faculty of Languages, Islamic and Oriental Learning and Dr. Ayesha is Chairperson, Department of Sociology. Provided the knowledge and experience of the authors, the book is replete with specific intellectual information for the readers of Islam and Sociology. Throughout the book, sociological data-based evidence has been supported by the injunctions of the Qur'an and Hadith. They lament in the book that we are still living with the aftermath of age-old conceptions of women's inferiority and hatred for

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daughters. They point out that their due rights granted by the Sharī'ah were routinely ignored and violated. Even a society that claims to be a Sharī'ah-follower is rife with myths and misconceptions. They believe it's high time for a paradigm shift from agreeing with blind conventions to entertaining a wary criticism.

Dr. Shah and Dr. Ayesha expand the theme of Faird Younos's *Principles of Islamic Sociology* of rethinking the role of Muslim society in the contemporary world by implementing Islamic values. While Younos's work was meant to describe social issues in an Islamic perspective plainly, Shah and Ayesha have been more scientific in their approach. They draw upon data from a variety of sources and present it in tabular and graphical forms. Contrary to Younos, they also give Arabic text of the Qur'anic verses and aḥādith with care and diligence. They have also pointed out some social issues that were never touched by Younos, such as consanguineous marriages, exchange marriages, population growth and aging.

The book predominantly covers issues related to gender and marriage-chapters one to four. As intended, the seven chapters have been placed in independent zones. Each chapter discusses a specific social issue in a particular context. The first chapter, for example, highlights with evidence the direct relationship between consanguineous marriages of parents and visual impairment in the offspring. The consequences of exchange marriages, another kind of social malpractice, have been discussed in a separate chapter-the third one. Unfortunately, the second chapter entitled *Daughters as a Blessing or Curse* seems to have been plugged in between the two. This could have been placed down the order along with the fourth chapter, *Institutionalization of Gender*. The fifth and sixth chapters are on population growth and aging respectively. The last chapter is unique in content. It maps out Dr. Muhammad Iqbal's sociological thought, found in his prose work, on the canvas of a Muslim society. The authors assert that in Iqbal's view, 'change is an inevitable part of any living society and humans can, and should, play a proactive role in bringing about social change in the existing system, according to the emerging need of the time.' (p.140)

In a nutshell, *Islamic Teachings and Social Structure* is a worthy addition to the literature on the sociological aspect of Islam. It sets an example for other writers on collecting empirical data and translating it into Islamic terms to bring the religious and social fronts on the same page. The book is unquestionably going to benefit students, teachers, and researchers alike.