The Problem of the Muslim Woman in Malik Ben Nabi' Perspective

Noura Boumaraf[*]

Laboratory for studies in history, culture, and society- University of batna-1- (Algeria), email: noura.boumaraf@univ-batna.dz

Abstract: Malek Ben Nabi, through his writings within his framework of the intellectual civilization project, has treated various topics. However, the central issue that preoccupied him is the problems of civilisation where he turned his concentration on the problem of women as being one part of the human being. Hence, Thisresearch endeavors to address one of the important issues in social history, specifically related to the Muslim community and the issue of Muslim women as discussed by Malek Ben Nabi. In this respect, as society is the first pillar of civilization, and women are a part of it, Malik Ben Nabi studied the differences that existed and were experienced by Arab and Western women. Through his experience, he tried to highlight the differences that existed and called for focusing on the psychological aspect of women and finding a solution to it.

Keywords: *Malek Ben Nabi ;women' s problem;tradition ;civilization ; women's liberation*

1. INTRODUCTION

Through his writings, the Islamic philosopher addressed a range of significant social issues, and perhaps the issue of Muslim women may have been the one that most occupied him as he devoted an entire chapter to it in his book "Conditions of the Renaissance" and considered it an integral crucial part of the civilization's problems and the major contributor to civilization's issues. Hence; in this research, the researcher attempted to depict the Algerian thinker Malik Bennabi's view on the issue of Muslim women and his reformist ideasand vision to re-establish an Islamic society built upon solid civilizational pillars and foundations. In addition, we also tried to highlight some other academicscholars and thinkers' opinions on the subject, both those were against or supported him, such as Qassim Amin in his book entitled "The Liberation of Women" and Abbas Mahmoud Al-Aqqad with his contributional book "Women in the Quran ». Thus,

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[*]**Corresponding author**

this article attempted to shedlight on these important elements as all the advancements that society witnessed due to the technological revolution affected all life aspects within the compliance with the Western European society and in return served to re-raise and resurface the Muslin women's issue in the contemporary Islamic thought after the latter became demanding and seeking their rights and competing with males in various fields of life; and hence departed from her instinct nature and character that Allah created her upon. As a result, the traditional approach or style of presenting women's issues is no longer compatible with our Islamic society's open-minded thoughts on Western civilization.

The issue at hand concerns the various roles and status of women in Muslim societies. It meets the requirement for a thorough comrehensive understandingwithin the context of Malik Ben Nabi's perspective concerning the many facets of this complicated subject aming to determine how Muslim women's roles and positions are defined, examine their historical and contemporary contributions to civilization, and analyze the viewpoints of famous intellectuals on their participation in professional and leadership roles.Hence, the cuurent study is addressing the issue of women in Muslim society, focusing on their status, roles, their civilizational contributions, and the thoughts of intellectuals regarding their employment and leadership positions.From this perspective, we can ask the following question:

- How does Malik Ben Nabi's perspective frame, conceptualize and define the status and the problem of the Muslim woman within the historical and cultural context of Islamic societies?
- To what extent have historical and ideological factors contributed to the problematization of Muslim women's roles and status as seen through Malik Ben Nabi's writings and viewpoints?
- What is the most effective approach that can be used to address the Muslim women issue in a renewed style?
- Do we follow the Western interpretation of civilization and ignore the origin? That is, do we ignore the roots and origins of civilization in favor of the Western interpretation?

2. A Brief Biography of Malik Bennabi :

Malik bin Al-Hajj Omar bin Al-Hadari bin Mustafa bin Nabi, often known as Malik Bennabi, was born on the first of November in 1905 in the Algerian city of Constantine (Boubekeur, 2010, p. 15).He grew up in a religiouslyconservative family that struggled and suffered mightily with financial hardship, and his

childhood and early years wererelatively similar and not much different from those of most others in his generation(Bariun, 2010, p. 104).Bennabi relocated to Tébessa to finish his secondary education since he experienced and faced very challenging harsh political circumstances during colonization. In 1930, he moved to Paris to complete his academic career and university studies, graduating and earning his engineering degree as an electrical engineer, and becoming one of the most outstanding brilliant students in his class.

Ben Nabi (may God have mercy on him) studied sociology, philosophy, and history in addition to his area of expertise as he did not limit his concerns and limits to his field of research and specialization. During his academic and intellectual development,he was (Bariun ,. F., 2010; Milad Z. , 1998)influenced by numerous pieces of literature that called and urged for renewal, revival, and renaissance, including the books "Umm Al-Qura" by Abdulrahman Al-Kawakibi and "Risalat Al-Tawhid" by Sheikh Muhammad Abduh. All of these texts amply demonstrated his yearning and desire for reform, renewal,and regeneration(Boubakeur, 2010, p. 17)

Malik Ben Nabi began to analyze prior attempts at the resurrection and review the previous revival as he thought deeply and hard about the tragic, awful, dire, and miserable circumstances that had befallen his country. This raised his awareness of the depth of the problems that are plaguing his society and culture(Bariun, 2010, p. 101) which led him to devote and dedicate his life to studying and search these cultural and intellectual issues; thus, in 1949, he published the book "Conditions of the Renaissance," which addressed the issues of civilization, revival, and resurrection in the Islamic world (Milad z. , 1998, p. 46)

He passed away, may God have mercy on him, on Wednesday, the fourth of Shawwal in the year 1393 AH, which corresponds to October 31, 1973. He left behind a life full of intellectual and political conflicts and struggles as well as a powerful demand and call for renaissance and cultural regeneration (Boubekeur J. , 2010, p. 19)

3. Women in Malik Ben Nabi's Thought

3.1. Malik Ben Nabi's Perspective on the Women's Issue
. Malek Women's rights are a crucial component and factor in promoting progress and renaissance, thus Ben Nabi did not see them as being apart and isolated from the problem of humanity. Together with males, women represent the two poles of mankind and the two wings of society, without which one is meaningless. Moreover, Ben Nabi pointed out that the issue the problem facing women is

essentially a problem that affects both the individual and society. He further indicated that giving women their rights at the expense of society will ultimately cause society deterioration, and this decline will, in turn, cause women to decline.Malek Ben Nabi(Bariun, 2010, p. 113) believed that addressing the issue of women separately from the disputes and conflicts of those who advocated for their liberation or those who push for their isolation from society is the most crucial component and the first step towards resolving it. Furthermore, he claimed that the issue should then be resolved in a way that interests and benefits society and its advancement as well as its progress. Ben Nabi strongly and harshly criticized the superficial approach and solution used by Eastern women, who believed that the only way to solve their issue was to imitate the behaviors of European women without taking into consideration the foundations and principles on which European women built their progress. In addition to this, he also discussed the risks associated with women's absence and their disinterest and lack of engagement in societal issues. Therefore, he advocated and called for women to be responsible for finding solutions to their difficulties and take charge of their progress and development (Said, 2018, p. 27)This thinker further argued that women's problems should not be treated as feminist ones but rather as societal ones because they are not only related and limited to a woman's gender. Therefore, Ben Nabi disapproved of outsiders' answers, views, and imported solutions and considered the Western idea of "women's liberation" to be an error and a miscarriage in the Renaissance's development and progress.

4. Some Thinkers' Perspectives on Women's Issues :

Malik bin Nabi believed that most scholars, based on their research and studies, tend to implicate women instead of liberating them, and one of the most notable and prominent among them in this regard is Qasim Amin, who was one of the first writers to promote and advocate for women's rights in his book "The Liberation of Women. He attempted to emphasize the importance of educating women by arguing that men and women are equal. He further advocated that women who are educated learn how to take care of themselves and develop a semblance of independence, that is, by education,women become responsible for themselves and gain a sense of independence "(Wkrim, 2020)However, in Qasim Amin's writings on the subject of Muslim women, one cannot find the implication and connotation of women that Malik bin Nabi suggested and referred to. According to Amin, women constitute and make up half of society and their illiteracy and ignorance deprive and prevent half the country from taking benefits and advantage of their labor. Hence, it is obvious that this will do considerable and significant

harm which is undeniable. Therefore, he claimed that nothing is stopping and preventing women from working like Western women (Qasim, 2012, p. 78)As Qasim Amin further outlined in his writings, the decline of Arab women in current social reality can be entirely and solely attributable to traditional restraints and limitations, which are exacerbated and confused when they are combined with certain specific Sharia implications and laws as hedid not hold back in criticizing the exclusion of women from public life and isolation. In doing so, he also defends women's rights to humanity, personal freedom, and respect, which grant them the proper deserved status to actively and productively integrate into the circles and mechanisms of society(Ahmed khalil, 1985). Hence, The liberation of women will not be achieved primarily only through the efforts of women themselves which will fundamentally attain the freedom of women. Women are therefore fundamental intellectual and social forces, and their presence is crucial as it is known and obvious that any marginalized group in society cannot be freed and liberated unless they cooperate in their efforts in the process. The women's liberation movement can either advance or regress in several ways. The degree and the extent of their progress and involvement in the movement to liberate themselves through receiving education and engagement in various diverse professions is the primary criterion for determining their progress or backwardness(Al-Saadawi, 2017, p. 67)

Perhaps the moderate view existed was lied between Malik's callwho defended Muslim women's rights, and believed they have a crucial role to play as individuals in society away from suspicion, and those who are often called advocates of women's liberation, led by Qasim Amin, who see them as being violated, exploited, entangled, and manipulated rather than liberated. Thisintegration andreconciliation between these two opinions can be found in the view of Abbas Mahmoud al-Aqqad, who believed that the seclusion and veilingof women of a moral value do not mean their complete concealment from men and should not appear before them at all, since if this were the case, he argued, the revelation and the Islamic religion would not have instructed and asked Muslims to lower their gaze, which, in his opinion, is proof of women's presence, and women would be allowed and permitted to leave their homes. To participate in society(Al-aqqad, 2012, p. 58).

4.1 Proponents of Women's Liberation and Proposed Solutions :

4.1.1.Malik Ben Nabi's Response to Women's Liberation Advocates :

We are aware that some people with delicate fragile sensibilities may find what we say upsetting and uncomfortable. As Malik Bennabi argued the call for the woman's Emancipation is nothing more than a flawed perspective of those who

have been impacted by Western reality, which has lost its cultural and psychological qualities and values, and had only a limited understanding of the world. He responded to proponents and advocates of women's emancipation by saying, "They accuse us of denying and depriving women of their rights, while in reality, equality is one of the problems undermining their rights. We further emphasize and stress that Muslim women are deprived of all the rights and privileges that Islam has bestowed upon them because of the attempt to make them equal to males" (Abied, 2021, p. 116)

As Malik Bennabi further claimed, those who advocate for women's freedom and liberation by seeking and providing them with jobs and employment are all aimed to enslave and destroy them rather than liberate them. He justified his viewpoint with the Hadith of Jihad whichwomen ought to remain at home to care and serve for their children. In addition, he believed thatthose who support women working, call for their employment, and make utilitarian arguments like claiming, "How can we isolate women from life when they represent half of society?" are simply doing a huge deal of harm to women because doing and involving themin tasks that are not naturally their domain puts them in danger (Abied, 2021, p. 168).

4.1.2 The Issue of Dress in the Thought of Malik Bennabi and Important Proposed Solutions :

After analyzing and discussing the women issue, Malik Bennabi's book "Conditions of Renaissance" devoted an entire chapter to the issue of clothes or dress, claiming and insisting that clothing is one of the factors of moral equilibrium and balance in society. He stressed that time changes are proof that clothing has its soul and spirit, and has developed with its people throughout history and time change,and the evidence of this is that developed nations alter their clothing according to the changes in history which reflected the historical development they passed through (Ben nabi, 1986, p. 123). Hence, the early demands for women's liberation primarily centered on the Muslim women's religious veil and the headscarf worn, showing that this is not a minor problem and a peripheral matter but rather one that is strongly and intimately tied to the culture and civilization paradigm. By doing so, Malik Ben Nabi further discussed and brought up the subject of dress and clothing in its material and symbolic dimensions as a manifestation of the cultural and civilizational identity of both individual and society;thus, highlighting the distinction and contrast that existed between Muslim women's clothing and that one of the Western European f women and indicating and arguing that women's clothing styles reflect their cultural identities in different fields and are infused with civilizational meanings and concepts.

Moreover, Malik Ben Nabi pinpointed that it would be unwise to disregard and ignore the issue of acceptable appropriate clothing for both men and women of the Renaissance era today. However, it is even more foolish and imprudent if we simply blindly follow and adhere to tradition without taking into consideration our current situation, needs, and circumstances, as the ones of our aesthetic standards, financial constraints, and duties like prayer, for example.

Therefore, Malik Ben Nabi believed that the first step in helping women resolve and overcome their problems is to rid and detach from our ingrained and instinctual tendency to view women as objects and through a sexual desire lens. This is crucial for both those who go too far in supporting the excessive covering and veiling of women and those who advocate for their clothing to be removed without ignoring and underestimating the role that clothing plays in defining and shaping identity. The philosopher further believed that when women start looking for their solutions and taking the initiative to create their cultural vision, moving away from the haphazard random, and fragmented approach that controls and governs their reality, women's true presence and evidence start actually to be present. Hence, if women understand their religion and reality, recognize their role as caretakers and trustees, and remain steadfast in their goals, their presence can be a powerful force for good, but if they lose focus and direction, their presence becomes aimless.

The philosopher Malik Ben Nabi also suggested a solution to the problem of women by proposing and advocating the calling of a general conference to define and determine the role of women for the benefit of society due to the seriousness and gravity of the civilizational dimension and the severity of its problems. He indicated that the resolutions and decisions made at this conference would serve as the Islamic world's constitution for the advancement of women. By doing so, the Islamic approach to women's lives has therefore been established and developed, and this constitution will act as a strategy and a plan that helps society at this point (Bennabi, 1986, p 120). In conclusion, the philosopher Malik Bennabi succeeded in addressing the subject of women, exposing and highlighting the flaws in other thinkers' approaches to the issue, and outlining the right technique that must be taken by women to be real agents and force for change alongside men avoiding the discrimination that will only worsen the situation. Therefore, marginalizing women hinders the nation's revival efforts and glory because they are a crucial and fundamental component pillar of civilizational construction and the development of the process (Islimani, 2017, p. 363)

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, some ideas and concepts can be drawn :

- ✓ Malik Bennabi believed that women were an essential element and integral part of Muslim civilization and society and that their cultural understanding and awareness promoted their intelligence and intellect
- ✓ Women are the equivalents of males because societies rise and advance together with the polar rise of humanity within them—men and women as women are counterparts of men. Thus, Ben Nabi outlined the centralityand significance of women's contributions to the national Renaissance.
- ✓ The matter becomes more complex when placing Muslim women in a position akin to and similar to that of Western women.
- ✓ Empowering women to become more independent and self-reliant can serve as a path for the feminist movement
- ✓ According to Malik Bennabi, the demand, and the call for women's liberation in the manner in which some philosophers have done so is a trap rather than a means of emancipation for Muslim women. The issue still exists despite the transition and change in women from veiled ladies to women who travel and read newspapers. In addition, the role of Muslim women in society is threatened by emulating and imitating European women without taking into account the principles upon which they built and founded their lifestyle.
- ✓ Women's rights advancement at the price of society means the deterioration of both society and women as they will both suffer. As a result, the problem is a societal one rather than an individual one.

Malik Bennabi was a cultural philosopher who attempted to write on a variety of important social issues that related both people and society within the framework of the need for culture and civilized behavior. He was fascinated and interested by women both as unique people and as powerful groups and influential parties that either supported or undermined civilization. According to Malik Bennabi, women are a crucial integral component of Muslim culture, and their cultural awareness strengthens and enhances their alertness intellectual capacity, and reasoning, allowing them to fulfill their civilizational duties in society. Therefore, Malik Bennabi's writings must flow with a much greater deal of ink than simply one or two articles to do them right.

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