

الرُّجُولَةُ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ

MASCULINITY IN ISLAM



All human beings love to be described with virtuous traits and characteristics. Real men like to be recognized as having noble behavior, etiquette, morals, ethics and manners. One of the most important traits that we need to instill in our Muslim youth, especially our young boys, is what is known as ‘Ar Rujoolah’, i.e. (masculinity), how to be a man. In our society we always hear people saying to our young boys as a means to encourage them and make them tougher and to try and train them to bear hardships: ‘be a man’, ‘man up’, ‘take it like a man’, and the likes of these statements. In 2024, in many places throughout the world, we find that ‘Ar Rujoolah’ is decreasing, we find that masculinity is rarely spoken about out of fear of harming the LGBTQ’s or the Feminists. Masculinity is dispraised in the mainstream media, social media, podcasts and looked at as something ‘wrong’, ‘barbaric’, ‘uncivilized’, and the likes.

Unfortunately, in our day and time we find many men- Muslim and non-Muslim alike- doing things that 20 years ago were specifically for women . Now, we find many men trying to look like women, waxing their faces, plucking their eyebrows, shaving their beards off, shaving their legs and arm hairs, and doing things that true masculine men of the past would never have even thought about doing...So as a reminder to myself and all of you, let us discuss what is ‘Ar Rujoolah’ -masculinity-in Islam.

What are the traits and characteristics that Muslim Men should have? How should Muslim men behave, act, and dress? Hopefully this reminder give us a better understanding about how real Men should act, look and behave.

Some define masculinity as being brave, strong and courageous, while others define it as leadership and responsibility. Some define it as generosity and having large dinner parties; while others define it with earning wealth and investing it. Some scholars define it as being available when someone needs you in a difficult situations.

Ar Rajoolah-masulinity- is not having a long moustache and yelling and screaming at one's kids and wives or employees. Ar Rajoolah is not bullying those who are weaker than you or not as strong as you. Ar Rajoolah is not putting your hands on your wife and children so as to beat them, nor is it fighting and wrestling in the streets.

Rather the authentic sign of strength, true-masculinity, and true masculinity is the ability to control one's desires and impulses, especially when angered. A man who cannot control himself-his anger, his urges, his desires- is not only intellectually and physically weak, but also spiritually weak, even if he has the largest muscles of all. The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said

لَيْسَ الشَّدِيدُ بِالصُّرَعَةِ إِنَّمَا الشَّدِيدُ الَّذِي يَمْلِكُ نَفْسَهُ عِنْدَ الْغَضَبِ

“The strong are not the best wrestlers. Verily, the strong are only those who control themselves when they are angry” (Saheeh Muslim #2609)

Brothers and sisters in Islam... The reality is that the real meaning of ‘Ar Rajoolah’ -masculinity carries many of these previous meanings within it as we will come to learn. We must always remember that yes, there are a lot of males, but is every male a “true man”? Is every male truly masculine in his behavior, etiquette, mannerisms, appearance, treatment of others, etc? Let's find out what Allah tells us in the Quran about this topic.

First and foremost in the majority of places in the Quran where the word ‘Dhakar’ (which means male) is mentioned in the Quran it is referring to mostly things related to the worldly affairs, and not related to the ‘deen’. As for the word ‘rajul’ (which means man), we find that it is mentioned in the Quran, as those who are known for their practicing Islam, aiding Islam, and propagating Islam. As Muslims we know that one of the most heaviest responsibilities that Allah placed upon the shoulders of His creatures is the responsibility of receiving and conveying His revelation to the people.

Allah only selected ‘Rijal’ (men) from amongst the creation, he didn’t mention ‘dhukoor’ (males) or ‘inaath’ (females) as being messengers and prophets, rather He only mentioned ‘Rijaal’ (men). As Allah says;

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رَجَالًا نُوحِيَ إِلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْقُرَىٰ ۖ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ
فَيَنْظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ ۖ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا ۖ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ

“We only sent before you ‘O Prophet’ men inspired by Us from among the people of each society. Have the deniers not travelled through the land to see what was the end of those ‘destroyed’ before them? And surely the ‘eternal’ Home of the Hereafter is far better for those mindful ‘of Allah’. Will you not then understand” (Yusuf:109)

So men have always been selected as Prophets and Messengers because of their ability to carry heavy burdens and bear many responsibilities...Men are always the Imams who lead the prayers in congregation, it has never been any other way, nor will it change! Men are those who fight in wars, defend women and children, fight for their homelands. Men are bounty-hunters and those who track down criminals, assailants, bandits, and wrongdoers. Men are those who build the infrastructures of whole cities and countries. Men have always been known as those who are responsible for their families, they are the bread winners, they are the heads of households, they spend upon their wives and families.

Males (i.e. those who haven’t reached the level of true masculinity and true manhood) then they are those who aren’t responsible for their families. They sit at home while their wives are out working and paying the bills. In many cases once the woman is becomes the breadwinner, she transforms into the ‘masculine female’ who now believes she is the ‘shot caller’ that she’s ‘wearing the belt now’; and you find her male spouse now adopting feminine traits and their masculine traits slowly start to disappear until you may see him talking, walking, and acting like a woman. The Prophet

Muhammad mentioned Men, directly after the responsibility of the governors and said:

... وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ عَلَى أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْهُمْ

“the man is a shepherd and responsible for his flock” (Saheehul Bukhari #7138)

Some of ‘real men’ responsibilities are: spending upon their families from their halaal wealth, providing shelter for their families, providing clothing for their families, providing food, medicine, and general maintenance for his wife and children. Providing proper education for their wives and children. Providing wholesome and beneficial environments for their families.

This is what ‘true men do’-they spend upon their families-.When Allah mentioned who are the caretakers of women, did He mention ‘dhukoor’ (males) or ‘rijaal’ (true men)? He mentioned ‘true men’! This is because ‘true men’ are not stingy with their wealth and spending upon their families. True men know that spending upon their families is one of the means of their families respecting them, honoring them, and looking up to him as the head of household and leader of the family. Once this role is flipped upside down, and the woman takes this role of spending upon the family, then you see that he is no longer considered a ‘man’ and is decreased in the eyes of his wife and family and downgraded to only a male. You find that he is more frequently is disrespected, loses honor and respect in his family’s eyes; and the woman now takes the role as caretaker, the leader, the shot caller. This many times leads to destruction of the families, societies and communities. Allah tells us in the Quran:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

“Men are the caretakers of women, as men have been provisioned by Allah over women and tasked with supporting them financially.” (An Nisaa:34)

Dear brothers, if you want to be real men, then you need to spend upon your families. You need to get out and work, hustle, move, drive, walk, seek Allah's halaal-permissible- sustenance within, above, and upon the earth. However, if you're sufficient with being just a normal 'male' and have no honor or dignity in the eyes of your wives and family, then then just sit back and do nothing, loaf off of your wife, the government, your children, and others. May Allah help us to be men and not just males!

Then Allah mentions another virtuous trait of men in the Quran:

لَمَسْجِدٌ أُسِّسَ عَلَى النَّقْوَى مِنْ أَوَّلِ يَوْمٍ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَقُومَ فِيهِ- فِيهِ رِجَالٌ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ
يَتَطَهَّرُوا وَاللَّهُ يُحِبُّ الْمُطَهَّرِينَ التوبة/ 108

“Certainly, a mosque founded on righteousness from the first day is more worthy of your prayers. In it are men who love to be purified. And Allah loves those who purify themselves.” (At Tawbah:108)

Another trait that distinguishes the 'males' from the 'real men', the lions from the alley cats- is that the 'real men' frequent the Masajid (houses) of Allah. They pray regularly in the houses of Allah. Real men are not those who spend hours upon hours in the cafes, the clubs, the hookah lounges, the dance halls, the bars, the playgrounds, or on the corners selling drugs or pimping girls. No, this is where the feminine 'males' who have no guidance hang out. This is where the 'shabaab' go to waste their time, their lives, and their health! We find in this verse that Allah mentioned 'rijaal' (men), and mentioned where they like to congregate. Allah mentioned that 'real men' are those who love to be pure (purity of soul, mind, body, wealth) and love to frequent the masjid. They love to purify themselves from shirk-polytheism, innovations, they love to purify themselves from gangs, and fake friends; they love to purify their hearts from loving anything more than Allah, they love to purify their minds from music the speech of shaytaan (music), from foul speech, from swearing, lying, gossip, backbiting, rumor spreading and all things that can harm one's

mind. True men love to purify their bodies from drugs, alcohol, fornication, and harming themselves, others, and their health.

True men frequent the masjid, listen to the Quran, and attend beneficial Islamic reminders. True men make wudu (ablution), make ghusl, groom themselves, wear their best clothing, look their best, smell their best and act their best. The traits that distinguish between the males and the ‘real men’ are: a) they frequent the masjid and they love to be pure in all aspects of their lives, b) they love their income to be pure and free from haram, c) they love their hearts to be pure and free from doubts, d) they love their households to be pure and free from shaytanic behaviors and devices.

Another trait that we find in the Quran Allah mentions another trait of men when He says:

فِي بُيُوتِ أَذْنِ اللَّهِ أَنْ تُرْفَعَ وَيُذْكَرَ فِيهَا اسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ (36)
رَجَالٌ لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا
تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ (37) لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ
. وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ (النور/ 36 - 38)

“Within the houses of worship’ Allah has commanded that He is remembered and His Name is mentioned. He is glorified there morning and evening” (An Noor:36-38)

The mentioning of Allah’s name in the morning and the evening...Allah tells us in the very next verse:

“by men....” Allah didn’t say ‘Dhukoor’ (males) He said ‘Rijaal’ (men)...Why did He say ‘Rijaal’ and not ‘Dhukoor’? because every man is male, but not every male is a man....Allah mentioned why right after this word when he said:

لَا تُلْهِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ
فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَالْأَبْصَارُ

Real men are those who are not distracted—either by buying or selling—from Allah’s remembrance, or performing prayer, or

paying alms-tax. They fear a Day when hearts and eyes will tremble....”

Real men are those who pray on time, while males are those who don't care about what time they pray. Real men are those who don't let buying and selling forget about what is halaaal and what is haram. Real men are those who don't let buying, selling, and their businesses take them away from prayer, keep them far from the masjid and spending for the cause of Allah. Real men fear selling the Haram because they fear a day when Allah will ask them about everything they sold and everyone who was harmed by what they sold. As for males, the alley cats, the strays; then they sell whatever brings them the dollar, whatever pays the bills, by any means necessary; without restrictions or Islamic boundries-whether it's halaal or haram, they don't pray on time, they don't pay zakat and they don't fear a Day when their hearts and eyes will tremble....

“Real men hope that Allah may reward them according to the best of their deeds, and increase them out of His grace. As for males, then they hope for the praise and rewards from the creation, their crew, their clique, their followers; and have forgotten about their creator and what He loves and is pleased with. They would rather hope for the temporary increase of wealth, circle of fake friends and followers on social media of this world. Their concern is pleasing other human beings, at the expense of displeasing their Creator. Which category are you from dearly beloved brothers.....are you ‘real men’ or are you just ‘males’...?”

Another Quranic verse explains to us another trait of “true men”

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا

“Among the believers are men who have proven true to what they pledged to Allah. Some of them have fulfilled their pledge ‘with their lives’, others are waiting ‘their turn’. They have never changed ‘their commitment’ in the least.” (Al Ahzab:23)

This verse tells us that not all believers are true men; they may be males by gender, but they are not truly men, and have not perfected masculinity. They have not reached the level of true Islamic masculinity... The true men are those who have proven true to what they pledged to Allah. They don't waiver in their deen, they don't change their 'aqeedah' (creed). They are not easily swayed by false opinions or incorrect views based on weak evidences or their desires. They fulfill their religious obligations, they fulfill the rights Allah has over them, they pray on time, they pay their zakat, they fast Ramadan, they are obedient and honorable to their parents, they fulfill the rights that their families have over them. These 'real men' remain steadfast upon the true deen, in belief, actions and statements. They don't constantly change their creed, or their appearance (shaving beards, dressing like women, etc.), or their behaviors; unless it is changing from unislamic practices to Islamic practices and beliefs. How many of us males can say that we have fulfilled our covenants and are acting upon our testimonies of faith that we have uttered with our tongues? This is one of the first things that distinguishes the men from the males: that we are truthful with Allah and this religion.

May Allah aid us into being true men and adapting and practicing true traits of Islamic masculinity.

My beloved Muslim brothers, be reminded that many modern ideologies, philosophies, and religions are competing to define what it means to be a 'man'. Now, more than ever- it is ever more critically important for Muslim men to understand masculinity as it was understood by the righteous predecessors.

Unlike theories of our day and time (2024) of masculinity that promote the 'alpha male' as dominating other men and women, bullying others, disrespecting others, oppressing others, not caring about other's feelings, etc. As masculinity in Islam is for a man to fulfill the good character traits and dignified manners taught by the religion as a whole.

A true Muslim man is just, kind, compassionate, forgiving, responsible, hard-working, humble, patient, forbearing, truthful, trustworthy, courageous, soft-hearted, honoring women, controlling his lower desires and impulses, fulfilling the needs of others before himself, continually refining his intellect, improving his character, seeking knowledge as a life-long learner, avoiding undignified behavior and sinful deeds, and emulating the character Prophet and his righteous followers to the best of his ability.

‘Ar Rajoolah’ (masculinity) used to be discussed amongst the righteous predecessors: Some of them asked: “What are you doing?” They said, “We are discussing manhood.” It was said: Has not Allah Almighty sufficed you in His book wherein He said, ‘Verily, Allah commands justice and excellence,’ (Quran 16:90)? Justice is to have a sense of fairness and excellence is to prefer others to yourself. What remains of manhood after this? (Source: Al Muroo’ah 1/97)

It was reported that Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

أَصْلُ الرَّجُلِ عَقْلُهُ وَحَسَبُهُ دِينُهُ وَمُرُوَّتُهُ خُلُقُهُ

“The foundation of a man is his intellect, his honor is in his religion, and his manhood is in his character.” (Source: Adab al-Dunyā wal-Dīn pg.17)

The righteous predecessors understood manhood to be comprehensive of all religious virtues in Islam.

It was said to Sufyan ibn ‘Uyaynah: “All things are derived from the Quran, so where is manhood in it?” Sufyan said:

فِي قَوْلَةِ تَعَالَى خُذِ الْعَفْوَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْعُرْفِ وَأَعْرِضْ عَنِ الْجَاهِلِينَ فَقَبِيهِ الْمُرُوءَةُ

In the saying of Allah Almighty, ‘Show forgiveness, enjoin good, and turn away from the ignorant,’ (7:199). In this is manhood.

In contrast, it is not the characteristic of a true man to put on a show of bravado to others, as if the sign of a man were his ability to incite fear and project strength. Rather, a real man is known by the measure of his trustworthiness and his refrain from hurting others; in a word, his virtue.

Abdullah Ibn al-Mubarak reported: Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

لَا يُعْجِبُكُمْ مِنَ الرَّجُلِ طَنَاطُنُهُ وَلَكِنَّهُ مَنْ أَدَّى الْأَمَانَةَ وَكَفَّ عَنْ أَغْرَاضِ النَّاسِ فَهُوَ
الرَّجُلُ

“Do not let yourselves be impressed by the roar of a man. Rather, if he fulfills the trust and restrains himself from harming the honor of people, then he will truly be a man.” Source: al-Zuhd wal-Raqā’iq 681

A true Muslim man is generous and honorable towards the women in his life: his mother, sisters, daughters, aunts, cousins, sisters in Islam, and women in general. The measure of a man’s character is directly related to how he treats women.

Abu Huraira reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said:

أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا وَخَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِنِسَائِهِمْ خُلُقًا

“The most complete of the believers in faith are those with the most excellent character, and the best of you are the best in behavior to their women.” (Source Sunan al-Tirmidhī #1162, with a good chain of narration) Refer back to Ibn Marzubāan’s book ‘Al Maroo’ah, and Adab Ad Dunya wa Deen by Al Mardawee for these narrations and much more about masculinity.

In summary, brothers and sisters in Islam... a true Muslim man is characterized by a balance of all of the virtues taught by Islam: justice, compassion, forgiveness, kindness, humility, patience, truthfulness, courage, responsibility, chivalry, and so on. The concept of the ‘alpha male’ as domineering, aggressive, vengeful,

thuggish, and ‘strong’ is a false and a toxic belief that encourages misbehavior in general and the mistreatment of women in particular. On the contrary, truly strong men are those capable of controlling themselves and traversing the higher, straight path of virtue in opposition to the animalistic tendencies of the human soul.

May Allah enable all of our young boys to be true Muslim men, may Allah guide all the Muslim males to adopt and start living their lives as masculine Muslim men and to abandon all traits, appearances, behaviors, etiquettes and traits that are specific and well known to be feminine. May Allah guide our parents and elders to raise our Muslim boys as true Muslim men and may their fathers be the best living examples of Men for them.



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