

Quranic Perspective on the Sexual Decadence of Egyptian and Greek Elite

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Abstract

The present article deals with the condition of socio-sexual anarchy prevailed in the Egyptian elite and other societies as described by Quran referring to Egypt about 4000 years ago. It has been observed that the story of Hadhrat Yusuf (Joseph) has been circulating in the electronic media now a days. These episodes are based on narrative as contained in Bible; mostly they are contradictory from the Revelations in Quran. Keeping in view the impact of electronic media in opinion making of youth, it has been considered appropriate to present the true perspective about the life of Hadhrat Yusuf and sexual decadence of his time revealed in the Quran.

Keyword: Hadhrat Yusuf; sexual anarchy; elite Egyptian society; the Bible; the Quran

Introduction

In almost all Muslim countries, people are still reserved (feel shy) when it comes to the most important sexual instinct bestowed upon man by Allah Almighty. It is considered something to be least spoken about and that too behind closed doors only with few and selective intimates. Muslim parents and elders find it uncomfortable to talk about sexuality education with children. The main reason is because of their cultural brought up and Islamic teachings to be prudent, without indulging in inappropriate or indecent manners while inculcating moral ethos.

Quran has not left this topic untouched; there are about 65 Surah's dealing with more than 400 Ayats, pertaining

to different aspects of the most powerful instinct of human being (Khan, M.A, 2020)¹. Further, the Prophet (PBUH), being the Role Model, clarified many problems of the companions (both male and female) which they asked during his life (Khan, et.al.2020). However the concept of sexual education in Islam is poles apart from the western concept (Khan, 2006)². Islam not only condemns monasticism/celebracy (Surah-Al-Hadid, 23; 32)³, but also strictly prohibits all types of sexual relations/practices outside marriage (Nikah, and serve punishments have been imposed for zina (adultery or rape) (Surah-Al-Noor, 24; 2, 4-5).⁴

An article published in 1989, described the presence of two different sexes (gender) in all living creatures including those not

¹ Khan, M.A,2020

²Khan, M.A 2006

³Al- Quran Surah-Al-Hadith, 23; 32

⁴Surah-al-Noor, 24; 2, 4-5

known to us (Surah Yaseen, 36:36) as indicated by Maududi⁵. In 1999, a book in Urdu (?) highlighted the development of a child in the uterus of a woman. It further discussed many other aspects of reproduction and family system in human beings. It was further desired that someone should highlight such guidance in Quran and Hadith ;(Khan, 1990)⁶, however, English translation of this book was published in 2010 (Khan & Amina Aftab⁷, 2010). Khan, (2006)⁸ further published a comprehensive book which highlighted that Surah Maryam (19:16-23)⁹ dealt with a vast framework of sexuality education including many other topics discussed in it.

The present article intends to study customs related to sexuality (individual/group sex) as revealed in Surah Yusuf (12:4-104) in the elite Egyptian society about 4000 years back. It may be pointed out here that humanity has been dwindling in between the two extremes with respect to this instinct since the known history. One extreme has been the concept of free sex for fun/enjoyment and the other aspects is curtailing this instinct altogether e.g.; monasticism or celibacy. This was advocated by Christian Saints especially Paul. However, as indicated above, Islam condemns both the extremes but permits its accomplishments through the institution of marriage (Nikah). In Surah Yusuf, The Meccans (disbelievers) had asked the

Prophet (PBUH) about the migration of Bani Israel from Palestine to Egypt. Since the Arabs (Meccans) did not know this story, they on the instigation of Jews wanted to ascertain the source of Prophet's information. Allah Almighty not only gave answer to their question but also turned the table on them. They were warned to be ready to face the same fate as those of brothers of Joseph. Some historical background might make it clear.

Historical background:

Prophet Joseph was a son of Prophet Jacob and the grandson of Prophet Isaac and a great grandson of Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH). Prophet Jacob had 12 sons from 4 wives; Joseph and his brother Bin Yamen were from one and the others 10 from other 3 wives. Prophet Jacob had settled at Hebron (Palestine) where his father and grandfather lived; Prophet Joseph was born in or around 1890 BC, he was 17 years, when he saw the dream. He was thrown into the well in jealousy by his brothers. At the occurrence of this event, 15th Dynasty named as (HYKOS) ruled over Egypt. Basically, they were Arabs in origin and had migrated from Palestine and Syria to Egypt in and around 2000 BC. The HYKOS ruled Egypt up to the end of 15th century BC; then there arose the great nationalist movement, overthrowing the power of Dynasty and exiled 25000 or so of them. Memphis was the capital of Egypt when the Prophet Joseph was taken there at

⁵S. A. A. Maududi

⁶Khan M.A, 1990

⁷Khan M.A and Amina Aftab,2010

⁸Khan, (2006)

⁹Surah Maryam (19:16-23)

the age of 17 or 18. He remained in the house of Aziz (who purchased him) for three years and spent 9 years in prison and then became the ruler of land at the age of 30, ruling over Egypt for 80 years of age. In the 9th or 10th years of his rule he sent his father Jacob to come to Egypt from Palestine with family.

Having said all these historical facts, it would be easier to understand that HYKOS kingdom was one of the big powers of that period. Egypt, being most fertile land, was a modern and well-developed country. The story begins from Ayat 4 of Surah Yousuf to Ayat 104, but we shall study it in 5 parts. The story sets off, from Ayat 4-19 dealing with the Joseph's dream and the success of his brother's plan to throw him into a well. They returned crying, telling father about the mishap; however, father did not believe them and instead sought patience from Allah. Subsequently, a water carrier of a caravan discovered Joseph in the well and sold him to a man named Aziz, who sent him to his wife for appropriate care.

The actual story begins from here.
Let us study this from Quran (Ayat23-29)

وَرَوَدَتْهُ الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَغَلَّقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ
وَقَالَتْ هَيْتَ لَكَ ۖ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ ۖ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ
مَثْوَايَ ۖ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ٢٣
وَلَقَدْ هَمَّتْ بِهِ ۖ وَهَمَّ بِهَا لَوْلَا أَنْ رَعَا بُرْهَانَ رَبِّهِ ۖ
كَذَلِكَ لِنَصْرِفَ عَنْهُ السُّوءَ وَالْفَحْشَاءَ ۖ إِنَّهُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا
الْمُخْلِصِينَ ٢٤
وَأَسْتَبَقُوا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصُهَا مِنْ دُبُرٍ وَأَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا
لَدَا الْبَابِ ۖ قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا إِلَّا
أَنْ يُسْجَنَ أَوْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ٢٥

قَالَ هِيَ رَاوَدْتَنِي عَنْ نَفْسِي ۖ وَشَهِدَ شَاهِدٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا
إِنْ كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِنْ قُبُلٍ فَصَدَقَتْ وَهُوَ مِّنَ
الْكَاذِبِينَ ۚ ٢٦
وَإِنْ كَانَ قَمِيصُهُ قُدَّ مِنْ دُبُرٍ فَكَذَبَتْ وَهُوَ مِّنَ
الصَّادِقِينَ ۚ ٢٧
يُوسُفُ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ هَٰذَا ۖ وَأَسْتَغْفِرِي لِدُنْيَاكَ ۖ إِنَّكَ
كُنْتَ مِنَ الْخَاطِئِينَ ۚ ٢٩

“Now the women in whose house he was began to tempt him, and one day she closed the doors and said, ‘come here’. Joseph replied, ‘May Allah protects me from this! My Lord has given me a good abode (and should I, then, misbehave like this?), such workers of inequity never farewell. She advanced towards him, and he also would have advanced towards her, had he not perceived his Lord’s Argument. This was so that We may remove indecency and immodesty from him’ indeed he was one of our chosen servants. At last Joseph and she reached towards the door one behind the other and she rent his shirt (pulling it) from behind, and they met her husband at the door. Seeing him, she cried out, ‘What punishment does the one deserve who shows evil intentions toward your wife? What else than this that he should be put in prison or tortured with painful torment? Joseph said’ “It was she who solicited me”-----At this a member of her own family gave the circumstantial evidence saying, ‘if the shirt of Joseph is rent from the front, the woman speaks the truth and he is a liar, if his shirt is rent from back, she speaks a lie and he is truthful.’ When the husband saw that the shirt was rent from the back, he said, this is

one of our cunning devices; your devices are very cunning indeed! Joseph! Leave this matter. And O woman beg forgiveness from your sin, for you were indeed the wrong doer”.

It is evident from these Verses that the moral condition of the ladies of high society of Egyptians enjoyed greater sexual freedom, or flirtation, as was rampant today in other societies. Those ladies did not feel any shame or modesty in tempting him. One can argue that it might be an act of few ladies which couldn't be described as collective or majority's attitude, rather few women were tempted and attracted by Yusuf's beauty. Allah, however, saved him from their temptation as it was essential for his spiritual training which he had to perform later. Quran tells that when Zulekha's allurements got viral, the ladies of the elite society began to talk about it. On this, the wife of Aziz arranged a party, invited some of her friends, and while they were cutting fruit with knife, she asked Joseph to appear before them and *“When they caught sight of him, they were so amazed that they cut their own hands and exclaimed spontaneously, Good God! He is no man; he is a noble Angel.”*

Furthermore, in Ayat 32-34, wife of Aziz not only justified her act of enticing Joseph but also threatened Joseph in front of her friends to bear the worst in the form of imprisonment or being disgraced. He at that time sought help from Allah, who warded off their guile from him.

It may be interesting for a student of history that Quran has very clearly portrayed

this picture of some of the notables of Egyptian society – a picture which we find in Hazrat Lot's time when people were indulged in unnatural sexual activities. It's unequivocally mentioned in the Quran, and before that in Bible, that men were fond of gay activities; we may therefore deduce that women's preference may not be different, i. e. their interest might be in lesbianism. The Quranic language is quite sober that instead of writing in plain words, survival of only Lot's daughters makes the whole picture very lucid that during moral decadence in any society gay tendencies often make way to similar carnal desires in opposite gender, which we see in modern day West.

Another alleged and unbelievable moral decline we find in subsequent story of Lot and his daughters contained in Bible where the former is told in intoxication and both of the daughters take advantage of his unconsciousness by establishing sexual relations with him. Without analyzing the concoction one can't believe that a Messenger of God and degeneracy of his daughters commit such a shameful and contemptible step. This type of interpolation is in fact an attempt to justify incest which is gradually and slowly being practiced in advanced countries.

Looking at another great civilization, Greek, we find two extremes. The universally acclaimed “Tenth Muse”, Sappho (c.630-c. 570 BC), the greatest poetess of Lesbos wrote magnificent love poems where she openly described her feelings towards same-sex. The openness

paved the way to other social ills, including wide spread of prostitution, homosexuality and pederasty. Most of the Greek philosophers used to enjoy company of young and handsome boys. Similar was the situation in Rome who gradually surrendered strong families' ties and morals, replacing them with laxity, carnal desires and enjoyment with loose-character women.

The moralists find it surprising that Plato while dreaming of establishing an elite society under Philosopher King didn't mind projecting open-sex, that without respecting family bond, every strong and intelligent individual was free to enjoy the opposite gender. His proposed gymnasium was to have cloth-free joint physical exercises, yet another step towards moral decadence.

A glance at nearby state of Sparta narrates a similar story. Being a war-like community, they were more conscious about physical health instead of pursuing academic and philosophical discourses. Nudity was morally accepted as the youth, both genders, had to participate in parades on the streets without clothes only to demonstrate their muscular beauty.

The Spartans were proud of their hospitality as guests were entertained by offering them wives, not considering it a degrading act. One of the reasons behind debauchery was procreation of healthy and strong-bodied children.

Arnold Toynbee has rightly concluded that a society's creativeness is tied to the control of sexual drives. His research of twenty one civilizations ends with the

conclusion that nineteen were perished due to internal moral corruption and open sexuality.

This picture is not different from the present-day West and also in the upper strata of Muslim countries in general and Pakistan in particular. It may not be out of place to mention some of the events (amongst many) which have occurred during the last few years in Pakistan and elsewhere. We would like to quote here only two examples: One from Pakistan and other from the most advanced country of the world i.e. France.

During the recent past, crimes have gained momentum in Pakistan. Occurrence of abduction of girls/women/children their rape and murder are being reported daily in newspaper and flashed in media. However, very recently grave scandals of videos of such crimes are being circulated by certain political parties and government institutions. These videos have not only proved to be instrumental in spreading sexual anarchy amongst youngsters but have very badly damaged the fame of Pakistan as an Islamic country. As a result of the adherence of Islamic ethics, there had always prevailed a sense of preserving the sanctity of "chaddar and chardevari". But recently, how two most important parameters have been damaged and that too from those who had to be the custodian of such morals. Further the problem has touched the heights that no remedial measures seem to have been initiated by the responsible segments. This moral bankruptcy, God forbid, may not jeopardize the mere existence of the country.

At global level, recently the Guardian reported allegation of eleven or more top models for their molestation at a young age by the Model Agency Boss Gerald Marie. French Police is investigating it. This happened in France from where started the concept of “individualism”, and thus free sex. May we question to those claiming equality, equity, emancipation and empowerment of women? How and why the women folk are being compelled in porn industry to do what a common man would not like to see his own wife, daughters, and sisters. In addition, the researchers have revealed that in 1990s one million teenage girls became pregnant every year in USA (Burrus, B. B. 2018)¹⁰. Teenage pregnancies and abortion rates among 15-19 year-old girls and women have decreased, falling from 44.0 per 1,000 in 1988 to 10.6 in 2013. But this has been achieved through various birth control campaigns and use of contraceptives (Kost& Henshaw, 2010)¹¹. Consequently, today most of the teenage giving births are unmarried. (ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4852976/) This situation has persisted in addition to criticisms by many intellectuals in the distant past and recent years (Lecky, 1897¹²; Russell, 1970¹³). Some other researchers have also described this flood of sexual anarchy in the West as 'Sexual Suicide' and 'Sexual Tragedy' (Ellis, 1962¹⁴; Gilder,

1975¹⁵). However, student of history is shocked to learn the far-reaching impact of such sexual anarchy in the West, as indicated below:

It is a well-known fact that Reformation Movement by Martin Luther King (1483-1546)¹⁶ (himself being a clergy of Catholic Church) became a symbol of revolt against the inhuman attitude of Christian morality. As such, there occurred separation of Church from the state (Religion and State) and the pope had to confine himself in the four walls of the Vatican City (Rome). Need not to indicate that how badly these two events have influenced the humanity at large.

Consequent upon such a critical position, following issues need to be answered:

- Whether the contemporary world is ready to face the same disaster of extinction from the map due to free sex as faced by the Greek's, Roman's and Egyptian's civilizations in the distant past?
- Since the present-day Muslim religious leadership has not been able to impart such guidance to youth, they are prone to glide into Western civilization.
- It is not enough to convince youngsters that sex (*Zina*) is forbidden in Islam, rather, they are made to be aware of the biological

¹⁰Burrus, B. B. (2018)

¹¹Kost K, Henshaw S

¹²Lecky, W.E.H.

¹³Bertand Russell

¹⁴Ellis

¹⁵Guilder, G.F

¹⁶Martin Luther, (1529-68) Founder of Protestantism

developments and hormonal changes due to puberty and their effects.

- Further, they need to be apprised of the hazards of early free sex in the West i.e., teenage pregnancy as well as other diseases i.e. HIV/Aids. These facts have also raised certain crucial questions:

First: What does sexuality mean for Muslim young ones?

Second: Do children need sexuality education?

Third: Who should give this education to them and the extent of it?

A positive and long-lasting answer to these questions indicates the equal responsibility of parents, schools/colleges and religious leaders. This trio should realize their role and start working hand in hand to make and devise a way forward to keep the intricate balance necessary for a wise and healthy younger generation. Also to bridge the gap a sensible and better understanding between the generations, and eradication of confusion in the youth of today is needed.

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