



Women in Islam

There are widespread erroneous misconceptions about the status of women in Islam. This misconception was augmented by some news media and groups with political objectives that made little effort to correct their understanding before broadcasting their views on this matter. Adding to this misconception are the regrettable practices in most so called "Islamic" countries or societies where myths, traditions and innovations have won over the true Islamic (Quranic) teachings and where women are traditionally subdued and oppressed.

It is not possible for anyone to justify any mistreatment of woman by any decree of rule embodied in the Islamic Law, nor could anyone dare to cancel, reduce, or distort the clear-cut legal rights of women given in Islamic Law. Throughout history, the reputation, chastity and maternal role of Muslim women were objects of admiration by impartial observers.

It is also worthwhile to state that the status, which women reached during the present era, was not achieved due to the kindness of men or due to natural progress. It was rather achieved through a long struggle and sacrifice on woman's part and only when society needed her contribution and work, more especially during the two world wars, and due to the escalation of technological change.

In the case of Islam such compassionate and dignified status was decreed, not because it reflects the environment of the seventh century, nor under the threat or pressure of women and their organizations, but rather because of its intrinsic truthfulness.

If this indicates anything, it would demonstrate the divine origin of the Qur'an and the truthfulness of the message of Islam, which, unlike human philosophies and ideologies, was far from proceeding from its human environment, a message that established such humane principles.

The Qur'an provides clear-cut evidence that woman is completely equated with man in the sight of God interims of her rights and responsibilities. The Qur'an states: **"Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds"** Qur'an 74:38. It also states: **"So their Lord accepted their prayers, (saying): I will not suffer to be lost the work of any of you whether male or female. You precede one from another."** Qur'an 3: 195.

Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him will We give a new life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to the their actions. (Qur'an 16:97, see also 4:124).

In terms of religious obligations, such as the Daily Prayers, Fasting, Poor-due, and Pilgrimage, woman is no different from man. In some cases indeed, woman has certain advantages over man. For example, the woman is exempted from the daily prayers and from fasting during her menstrual periods and forty days after childbirth (Or as soon as the bleeding stops). She is also exempted from fasting during her pregnancy and when she is nursing her baby if there is any threat to her health or her baby's. If the missed fasting is obligatory (during the month of Ramadan), she can make up for the missed days whenever she can. She does not have to make up for the prayers missed for any of the above reasons. Although women can and did go into the mosque during the days of the prophet and thereafter attendance at the Friday congregational prayers is optional for them while it is mandatory for men (on Friday).

This is clearly a tender touch of the Islamic teachings for they are considerate of the fact that a woman may be nursing her baby or caring for him, and thus may be unable to go out to the mosque at the time of the prayers. They also take into account the physiological

and psychological changes associated with her natural female functions.

The Qur'an clearly indicates that marriage is sharing between the two halves of the society, and that its objectives, besides perpetuating human life, are emotional well-being and spiritual harmony. Its bases are love and mercy. Among the most impressive verses in the Qur'an about marriage is the following. **"And among His signs is this: That He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest (Tranquility), peace of mind in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo, herein indeed are signs for people who reflect."** Qur'an 30: 21.

According to Islamic Law, women cannot be forced to marry anyone without their consent. Besides all other provisions for her protection at the time of marriage,

The rules for married life in Islam are clear and in harmony with upright human nature. In consideration of the physiological and psychological make-up of man and woman, both have equal rights and claims on one another, except for one responsibility, that of leadership. This is a matter which is natural in any collective life and which is consistent with the nature of man. The Qur'an thus states: **"And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them (What is commonly accepted to be good), and men are a degree above them."** Qur'an 2: 228.

Such degree is Quiwama (Qawamah) Responsibility of (maintenance and protection). This refers to that natural difference between the sexes, which entitles the weaker sex to protection. It implies no superiority or advantage before the law. Yet, man's role of leadership in relation to his family does not mean the husband's dictatorship over his wife. Islam emphasizes the importance of taking counsel and mutual agreement in family decisions.

Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) said: "The best of you is the best to his family and I am the best among you to my family".

As the woman's right to decide about her marriage is recognized, so also her right to seek an end for an unsuccessful marriage is recognized. When the continuation of the marriage relationship is impossible for any reason, men are still taught to seek a gracious end for it. The Qur'an states about such cases: When you divorce women, and they reach their prescribed term, then retain them in kindness and retain them not for injury so that you transgress (the limits). (Qur'an 2:231). (See also Qur'an 2:229 and 33:49).

Polygamy is permitted in the Quran, but under strictly observed circumstances. Any abuse of this divine permission incurs severe retribution. Thus, although God permits polygamy, it behooves us to examine our circumstances carefully before saying that a particular polygamous relationship is permissible. This perfect example tells us that a man must give his full attention and loyalty in marriage to his wife and children in order to raise a happy and wholesome family. The Quran emphasizes the limitations against polygamy in very strong words: **"If you fear lest you may not be perfectly equitable in treating more than one wife, then you shall be content with one."** Quran 4:3 **"You cannot be equitable in a polygamous relationship, no matter how hard you try."** Quran 4:129

As a Mother, Islam considered kindness to parents next to the worship of God. **"And we have enjoined upon man (to be good) to his parents: His mother bears him in weakness upon weakness."** Qur'an 31:14, (See also Qur'an 46:15, 29:8). Islam has given mothers three times the rights of fathers. Moreover, the Qur'an has a special recommendation for the good treatment of mothers: **"Your Lord has decreed that you worship none save Him, and that you be kind to your parents . . ."** Qur'an 17:23.

Islam decreed a right of which woman was deprived both before Islam and after it (even as late as this century), the right of independent ownership. According to Islamic Law, woman's right to her money, real estate, or other properties is fully acknowledged. This right undergoes no change

whether she is single or married. She retains her full rights to buy, sell, mortgage or lease any or all her properties. It is nowhere suggested in the Law that a woman is a minor simply because she is a female. It is also noteworthy that such right applies to her properties before marriage as well as to whatever she acquires thereafter.

With regard to the woman's right to seek employment it should be stated first that Islam regards her role in society as a mother and a wife as the most sacred and essential one. Neither maids nor baby-sitters can possibly take the mother's place as the educator of an upright, complex free, and carefully reared children. Such a noble and vital role, which largely shapes the future of nations, cannot be regarded as "idleness". However, there is no decree in Islam, which forbids woman from seeking employment whenever there is a necessity for it (Adhering to Islamic laws).

Any fair investigation of the teachings of Islam and the history of the Islamic civilization will surely find a clear evidence of woman's equality with man in what we call today "political rights". This includes the right of election as well as the nomination to political offices. It also includes woman's right to participate in public affairs. Both in the Qur'an and in Islamic history we find examples of women who participated in serious discussions and argued even with the Prophet (P) himself, (see Qur'an 58: 14 and 60: 10-12).

Women Rights in Islam

The following are some rights, which Muslim women have (Over fourteen hundred years ago):

1. Acquire education and Knowledge.
2. Own independent property.
3. Work to earn money, which she keeps it.
4. Equal reward for equal deed and/or work.
5. Express her opinion.
6. Vote since 1,421 years.
7. Provisions from her husband Choose husband & Negotiate marriage terms of her choice.
8. Obtain divorce from her husband,
9. Keep all her money.
10. Get sexual satisfaction from her husband.

11. Get custody of her children (under normal circumstances)
12. Re-marry after divorce or after becoming widow (After waiting period).

Dress Code

Islam has not prescribed a particular dress style, giving us ample room to accommodate our needs, circumstances and tastes. However, there are principles for everyone and forever. Any garment that accommodates these principles will be Islamic dress.

The dress must cover the body adequately. For men, it is the middle part of the body from navel to knee. For women, it is the entire body except hands and face. These parts must never be exposed to any other person (except in case of genuine need e.g. medical treatment). In addition, the cloth must be neither see-through nor tight fitting.

The dress should provide adornment. It should provide for decent appearance. The appearance should not be an eyesore for decent human beings. For men, this extends the coverage requirements to include most of the body. For women, the essential requirement is that their dress should identify them as respectable ladies who would be honored not harassed. Additionally, Hijab rules aim at protecting them from the gaze of other men.

References:

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