

Status of women in islam

[Religion](#), [Islam](#)



The status of woman in Islam constitutes no problem. The attitude of the Qur'an and the early Muslims bear witness to the fact that the woman is, at least, as vital to life as man himself. Had it not been for the impact of foreign cultures and alien influences, this question would have never arisen among the Muslims. The status of woman was taken for granted to equal to that of man. It was a matter of course, a matter of fact, and no one, then, considered it as a problem at all. There is a lot of talk about woman's rights in Pakistan and other Muslim countries these days.

The Western media is projecting a very gruesome and poor plight of woman in Muslim countries with the intension of distorting the true image of Islam. Unfortunately, this propaganda is proving quite effective and the entire west and a small section of females in our society have misinterpreted Islam as being the cause of their troubles instead of the Aryan culture that we have inherited. In order to understand what Islam has established for woman, there is no need to deplore her plight in the pre-Islamic era or in the modern world of today.

Islam has given woman rights and privileges which she has never enjoyed under other religious or constitutional systems. This can be understood when the matter is studied as a whole in a comparative manner, rather than partially. The rights and responsibilities of a woman are equal to those of man but they are not necessarily identical with them. Equality and sameness are two quite different things. This difference is understandable because man and woman are not identical but they are created equals. With this distinction in mind, there is no problem. It is almost impossible to find even two identical men or women.

Islam was revealed at time when people denied the humanity of the woman. Some were skeptical about it; and still others admitted it, yet considered the woman a thing created for the humble service of the man. With the advent of Islam, circumstances improved for the woman. The woman's dignity and humanity were acknowledged for the first time. Islam confirmed woman's capacity to carry out Allah's commands, her responsibilities and observations of the commands that lead to the heaven. Islam considers woman as a worthy human being, with an equal share in humanity to that of the man.

Both are two branches of a single tree and two children from the same father, Adam, and mother, Eve. The status of woman in Islam is something unique that has no parallel in any other religion. In the midst of the darkness that engulfed the world, the divine revelation echoed in the wide desert of Arabia with a fresh, noble, and universal message to humanity: " O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single person (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife [Hawwa (Eve)], and from them both He created many men and woman (An-Nisa: 1)".

Stressing this noble and natural conception, then the Holy Quran states: " He (God) it is Who did create you from a single soul and there from did create his mate, that he might dwell with her (in love)". (Quran 7: 189) In the early days of Islam when a girl was born, she was buried alive. This custom is still observed in Hinduism. However, the Holy Quran forbade this custom and considered it a crime like any other murder.

The Holy Quran says: " And when the female (infant) buried alive- is questioned, for what crime was she killed?" (Quran 81: 8-9) Far from saving the girl's life so that she may later suffer injustice and inequality, Islam

requires kind and just treatment to her. The saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), in this regard, is following: “ Whosoever has a daughter and he does not bury her alive, does not insult her, and does not favour his son over her, God will enter him into Paradise”. The Holy Quran provides us a clear-cut proof that woman is equal in all respects with man before Almighty God in terms of her rights and responsibilities.

The Holy Quran states:

“ Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds” (Quran 74: 38) In terms of religious obligations, such as offering daily prayers, fasting and pilgrimage, woman is no different from man. In some cases indeed, woman has certain advantages over man. For example woman can and did go into the mosque during the days of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and thereafter attending the Friday prayers is optional for them while it is mandatory for men. This is clearly a tender touch of the Islamic teachings because of the fact that a woman may be nursing her baby and thus may be unable to offer prayers in mosque.

They also take into account the physiological and psychological changes associated with her natural female functions. The right of females to seek knowledge is not different from that of males. When Islam enjoins the seeking of knowledge upon Muslims, it makes no distinction between man and woman. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), said: “ Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim”. This declaration was very clear and was implemented by Muslims throughout history.

According to a hadith attributed to Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), he praised the woman of Madina because of their desire religious knowledge, “How splendid were the women of the Ansar; shame did not prevent them from becoming learned in the faith. ” Under Islamic law, marriage was no longer viewed as a “ status” but rather as a “ contract”, in which the woman’s consent was imperative. The dowry, previously regarded as a bride-price paid to the father, became a nuptial gift retained by the wife as a part of her personal property.

The Holy Quran clearly indicates that marriage is sharing between the two halves of the society and its objectives are emotional well-being and spiritual harmony. Its bases are love and mercy. 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 claim on each other, 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 Holy Quran thus states: “ And they (women) have rights similar to those (of man) over them, and men are a degree above them. ” (Quran 2: 228). Such degree is Quaima (maintenance and protection). This refers to that natural difference between the genders which entitle the weaker gender to protection. It implies no superiority or advantage before 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.

The Holy Quran gives us an example: “ If they (husband wife) desire to wean the child by mutual consent and (after) consultation, there is no blame on them” (Quran 2: 233). Islam gives the option of divorce to the woman and educated men to make a gracious end to the relationship if it cannot be continued. The Holy Quran states about such cases: “ And when you have divorced woman and they fulfilled the term of their prescribed period, either take them back on reasonable basis or set them free on reasonable basis. But do not take them to hurt them, and whoever does that, then he has wronged himself”.

Woman is entitled to freedom of expression equal to man. Her sound opinions are taken into consideration and cannot be disregarded just because she belongs to the female sex. It is just mentioned in the Holy Quran and history that woman not only expressed her opinion freely but also argued as women participated in serious discussions with the Holy Prophet (PBUH) as well as with other Muslim leaders. Apart from recognition of woman as an independent human being acknowledged as equally essential for the survival of humanity, Islam has given her a share in inheritance.

Before Islam, she was not only deprived of that share but was considered as inherited property to man. Out of this transferable property, Islam has made her an heir acknowledging the inherent human qualities in woman. Whether she is a wife, mother, sister or daughter, she receives a certain share from the deceased kin's property, a share which depends on her degree of relationship to the deceased and number of heirs. This share is hers and no one can take it away or disinherit her. Woman enjoys certain privileges which man does not have.

She is exempted from all financial liabilities. As a mother, she enjoys more recognition and higher honor in the eyes of God. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) acknowledged this honor when He declared that Paradise lies under the feet of mothers. She is entitled to three-fourth of the son's love and kindness with one-fourth left for father. As a wife she is entitled to demand of her prospective husband a suitable dowry that will be hers. She is entitled to complete provision and total maintenance by the husband. She does not have to work or share with her husband the family expenses.

She is free to retain, after marriage, whatever she possessed before it, and the husband has no right whatsoever to any of her belongings. As a daughter or sister she is entitled to security and provision by the father and brother respectively. That is her privilege. If she wishes to work or be self-supporting and share family responsibilities, she is quit free to do so, provided her integrity and honor are safeguarded. The Muslim woman is always associated with an old tradition known as the 'veil'. It is Islamic that the woman should beautify herself with the veil of honor, dignity, chastity, purity and integrity.

She should refrain from all deeds and gestures that might stir the passions of people other than her legitimate husband or cause evil suspicion of her morality. She is warned not to display her charms or expose her physical attraction before strangers. The veil which she must put on is one that can save her soul from weakness, her mind from indulgence, her eyes from lustful looks, and her personality from demoralization. Islam is most concerned with the integrity of woman, with the safeguarding of her morals and morale and with the protection of her character and personality.

By now it is clear that the status of woman in Islam is unprecedentedly high and realistically suitable to her nature. Her rights and duties are equal to those of man but not necessarily or absolutely identical with them. If she is deprived of one thing in some aspect, she is fully compensated for it with more things in many other aspects. The fact that she belongs to the female sex has no bearings on her status or personality and it is no bases for justification of prejudice or injustice against her.

It is also worthwhile to state that the status which woman reached today in the west was not achieved due to the kindness of men or natural progress. It was rather achieved through her long struggle and sacrifices and only when society needed her contribution and work, more especially during the two World Wars. In the case of Islam such compassionate and dignified status was decreed, neither because it reflects the environment of the seventh century, nor under the threat or pressure of woman and their organizations, but rather its intrinsic truthfulness of Islam.