

# Role of womens rights in afghanistan



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Do you think that Afghan nation from the outset needs only men to serve it? Before Islam, women were treated like slaves or property. Their personal consent concerning anything related to their well-being was considered unimportant, to such a degree that they were never even treated as a party to a marriage contract. Women were used for one purpose, and then discarded. They had no independence, could own no property and were not allowed to inherit. In times of war, women were treated as part of the prize. Their condition was unspeakable. In addition, the birth of a daughter in a family was not an occasion for happiness, but was regarded as embarrassment. The practice of killing female children was uncontrolled. With the arrival of Islam a verse came from the Quran criticizing those who practiced female infanticide: " And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is filled with inward grief! He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that whereof he has been informed. Shall he keep her with dishonor or bury her in the earth? Certainly, evil is their decision (An-Nahle 16: 58-59)."

Afghanistan is the only country in the world where women are symbolized to all other countries. Afghan women's current situation is not only the result of Taliban, but there exists a history over the centuries of Afghan women's situation. Afghanistan is a country that lost all its economical infrastructures passing three decades of war, has been faced with Economical, Social and cultural problems. One of the major problems that Afghans are suffering is violence against women's rights. Taking in to consideration that many activities have been accomplished since 2001 by international and governmental organizations but statistic show that problems have been

remained and vast number of women are still suffering from violence. Many of women are deprived from education. A few women participate in political and social activities. As observed in Kabul, a woman suffers from violence every 30 minutes and 3% of women participate in governmental decision making activities. Only 11 percents of women were candidates in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Some of the challenging facts Afghan women faces in daily life are listed as following:

Every 30 minutes, an Afghan woman dies during childbirth,

87 percent of Afghan women are illiterate,

30 percent of girls have access to education in Afghanistan,

1 in every 3 Afghan women experience physical, psychological or sexual violence,

44 years is the average life expectancy rate for women in Afghanistan, and

70 to 80 percent of women face forced marriages in Afghanistan (The Plight of Afghan Woman)

Since the fall of the Taliban in late 2001, many people would agree that the political and cultural position of Afghan women have improved substantially. The recently adopted Afghan constitution states that “ the citizens of Afghanistan - whether man or woman- has equal rights and duties before the law”. So far, women have been allowed to return back to work, the government no longer forces them to wear the all-covering burqa, and they even have been appointed to top positions in the government. Although

many people believe that women have equal rights to men, but Afghan women, especially in the rural areas of Afghanistan are not equally treated and their rights are violated. Women are not allowed to get education, women are forced into early age marriage and they have no right to work equally with men and take part in social activities.

In many societies today, especially in Afghanistan, a woman is only valued and considered important if she performs the functions of a man, while displaying her feminine attractions to the public. If women get involved in politics, they would stop marrying, having children, and the human race would greatly be affected. Women are emotional creatures, and incapable of making a sound political decision. Afghan men, Typically among Pashtun families, parents believe that their daughters going to school is an immoral act, such as: being friend with the boys and then claiming to marry with the boy of their own choice. They have the ideas saying that their daughters may adopt non-cultural behaviors at school, such as: changes in their clothing, adapting modern clothing and ways of thinking, which are not accepted in Afghan culture. In most afghan families, relatives and friends advise each others for not letting their daughters attend school. A girl is considered as a financial burden on her parents; therefore, parents give their daughters to men who are in their father's age to receive marriage cost and lessen their home expenses. In the most provinces of Afghanistan, girls are sold to men without knowing a girl's consent, and then these girls are used as labors by her husband and in-laws' family for carrying physical loads of the whole family.

First, its known that education, especially for girls is among basic requirements for an improved life standard in any society, however 85 percents of women and girls are illiterate in Afghanistan. The United States of America International Aid (USAID) allocated fund to address this challenge that constitute the lowest educational level in the country, and girls are facing many problems in this area. Women's education is a foundation for building women's human capital and a requirement for their meaningful participation, effective leadership, and enjoyment equal of rights. Although, the women's right to education is legally protected by law, the Afghan women have been long deprived of their right to education and still the participation of girls and women in various levels and fields of education is limited and they face numerous constraints. Access to equal education opportunity still is a dream for many women. Despite of educational improvements in recent years, women still face a number of obstacles in their way to education such as early marriage; restricted movement; cultural barriers, security, transport constraints, shortage of qualified female teachers especially in rural areas, poor school infrastructure and facilities and the lower value attached to girls' and women's education. In Afghanistan, the number of girls going to school is less than half the number of school boys and even in some provinces, like Zabul, this percentage is 3%; though the numbers of male and female populations aging between 6-18 year old don't have a considerable difference. Another problem in terms of education in Afghanistan is the number of female schools including elementary and high schools that has decreased considerably. In Kandahar, for example, there are 255 elementary schools, whilst 20 high schools exist in the city. In central region of the country there are 256 elementary schools

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and only 27 high schools, which show unwillingness of girls to study (Commission). Nearly 1000 girls' schools have been destroyed. Girls and teachers have been killed in a return of the Taliban reign of terror. Only 18% of Afghan women have skilled medical personnel present when they give birth (Feminism, Women's Rights Articles & Issues).

In Paktia province last year, a shura of elders decided that a 25-year-old man who sexually abused a 7-year-old relative girl should pay compensation to the child's family. They also decreed the girl should marry her rapist when she's older (The Star). Due to fear of Taliban or local warlords, girls cannot go outside their homes. If they go to schools, they are burnt, acid is thrown on their faces, or Taliban kill their family members. Almost in all provinces of Afghanistan girls are sexually abused and harassed. Girls are kidnapped on their way to school. They are kidnapped for different purposes by the Taliban or local warlords, to make money by selling them or to use for smuggling, or marry them by force.

Second, forced marriages constitute the other serious problems of women in Afghanistan which is exercised on different ways and forms as to payment of huge dowry, underage marriage, engaging in the very early days when a child is born. Widows are still considered as a heritage and are not allowed to marry other man willingly. Forced marriage is considered to be one of the main cases of women rights violation in all over the country. For instance, only in Helmand Province 144 cases of forced marriage is registered by the Commission so far this year, mostly exercised as badal (girls' exchange in families for marriage) and huge payment of dowry. In many parts of Afghanistan, marriages have taken place with threats by the powerful

people, gunmen or in repayment for debts. Another reason considerably increases the number of early age marriages is the poverty in Afghan families.

Third, in Islam, the value and importance of women in society and the true measure of their success as human beings, is measured with completely different criteria: their fear of Allah (SWT) and obedience to Him, and fulfillment of the duties he has assigned them, particularly that of bearing, nurturing and teaching children. Islam is a practical religion, and responds to human needs and life situations. Many women need, or wish, to work for various reasons. For example, they may possess a needed skill, such as a teacher or a doctor. While Islam does not prohibit women working outside the home, it specifies that the following restrictions be followed to safeguard the dignity and honor of women and the purity and stability of the Islamic society. Muslim women are not forbidden from going out in the community, working, or visiting relatives and female friends, if there is no objection from their guardian/husband and they are covered and behave and speak according to Islamic guidelines and, if necessary, escorted by their Mahram (male relative). However, a woman's home should be the main base that she works from. Allah (SWT) instructed the wife's of the Prophet (SAW): " O wives of the Prophet! You are not like any other women. If you keep your duty (to Allah), then be not soft in speech, lest he is whose heart is a disease (of hypocrisy or evil desire for adultery, etc.) should be moved with desire, but speak in an honorable manner. And stay in your houses, and do not display yourselves like that of the times of ignorance, and offer prayers perfectly (Iqamat-as-Salat), and give Zakat and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah

wishes only to remove Ar-Rijs (evil deeds and sins, etc.) from you, O members of the family [of the Prophet (SAW)], and to purify you with a thorough purification (Quran Al-Ahzab 33: 32-33).”

Afghanistan’s social development can only be ensured through democracy and the reduction of poverty, the success of both being assured through full participation of women, especially in rural Afghanistan. Afghanistan has always had elite and middle-class women who asserted their rights and walked towards modernization. But a lot of most Afghan women in rural areas have been one of oppression through tribal customs and dictates. Women’s rights are human rights. They are not simply American, or western customs. They are universal values which we have a responsibility to promote throughout the world, and especially in a place like Afghanistan. It is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do.