

# The role of women in christianity, islam, and hinduism: a comparison essay exampl...

[Religion](#), [Bible](#)



The role of women in various religious groups has been one of the most hotly-contested issues regarding organized religion in the modern era. Since women began to attain equal rights around the globe, various religious organizations have had to reassess the way that they include-- or do not include-- women within their organizations. Some women's rights groups have attacked organized religion as being backwards and detrimental to the fight for equality for women, while others have made attempts to work to change religious organizations from the inside out, stating that the problems within religions are the work of men, not of God. Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism each have different struggles with women's rights and require different things from their female members, and have handled the growing equality of women in decidedly different ways.

Christianity is an all-encompassing umbrella term for a wide range of different types of religious faiths, many of which have little in common other than a basic belief in the Bible. However, overall, women have long been considered important in the Christian faith, although they have never been considered equal to men. In the Book of Job, Job is a highly religious, faithful man, who has long served God to the best of his ability. God and Satan make a pact, one day; Satan to tempt Job, and God to punish him to determine the extent of Job's faith (Ostervald).

Job's wife is the embodiment of sin in this story: she suggests that Job curse God for his punishment, because she does not have the faith that Job has. She openly mocks Job for his faith, urging him to turn his back on God. Job continues to honor his wife, however, and is thus presented as more virtuous as a foil to her sin and selfishness.

This is a common theme throughout Bible stories: Lot's wife, for instance, disobeys orders and looks back to the burning cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and is turned into a pillar of salt. In the quintessential story of female disobedience, Eve disobeys God and eats from the Tree of Knowledge, causing humanity's expulsion from the Garden of Eden (Ostervald). In the Bible, women are often used as disobedient figures, or figures that disobey God; to find a female Biblical figure who is faithful and virtuous is much rarer than to find those who act in ways that God has decreed to be sinful (Ostervald). Indeed, this is not limited to Biblical stories: in the Epic of Gilgamesh, for example, there is a story of female temptation similar to that of the story of Eve; these themes of female temptation are rife throughout early Middle Eastern texts of various types (Gilgamesh and Sanders).

Christianity's philosophy on women has evolved in a positive way over the centuries. Today, although women are not allowed into the clergy, they have a place in most churches, and are welcomed into the congregation. Islam, on the other hand, began as a much more progressive religion than Christianity, and has generally slowed with regards to women's rights within the religion, particularly in countries that consider themselves heavily Muslim.

The Qur'an has many different edicts that concern women in the Islamic faith, but there is a very significant difference between the Qur'an and the Bible: in Islam, the Qur'an is important, but various teachings on the Qur'an by Islamic intellectuals are often followed within different communities. This is why some Muslim women wear a hijab and some do not, and some mosques are segregated while others are not; various Islamic scholars have vastly different interpretations on the Qur'an.

One thing that many Islamic scholars agree on is that the Prophet, Muhammad, respected the opinions of his wives very much; for his time, he was a very progressive man. This is reflected in the way the Qur'an treats women: unlike the Bible, which often presents women as sinful, there is no concept of original sin in the Qur'an (Quran. com). For this reason, women are urged to be virtuous and chaste, but they are not treated as purveyors of sin in the same way that Biblical women are.

Islam and Christianity are two religions born from the same Middle-Eastern roots, but Hinduism was born from other roots entirely. Where Islam and Christianity are both monotheistic religions, Hinduism is polytheistic, and some of the gods within the Hindu pantheon are female. Traditionally, Hinduism allows women the right to own property, where Abrahamic religions were much more unwilling to grant women this right until later in their histories; in addition, women in Hindu cultures are often allowed pre-nuptial contracts based on the property and goods that they bring into the marriage.

However, there are Hindu religious practices that are problematic for the women within the culture. Perhaps one of the most disturbing practices is the practice of honor killing if a woman brings dishonor upon her family before marriage; however, Sati, or the practice of a widow throwing herself into her husband's funeral pyre, is similarly disturbing and problematic for women's rights. Those who practice the Hindu religion also have a tendency to be part of a caste-based society, which often puts women on lower social rungs than their male counterparts.

Women in religious groups have always had problems because most

religious texts were written long before any kind of equality for women was considered normal in society. However, women have made strides within different religious organizations and the cultures that they exist within by pointing out that many of these texts were inspired by God but written by man, and were therefore altered in such a way to reflect the sensibilities and social mores of the times. Slowly but surely, religious groups are adapting to the changing role of women in society, and becoming more open and inclusive within their congregations to the women in their communities.

## References

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