

Elevation of Women's Status (part 5 of 5): Conclusion

Description: A university lecture on how Islam elevated the status of women. Part Four: How Islam saved the status of women.

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Now, I would like to make one final comment and then I'll leave it open for questions. Let's look at the applicabilities of both of these programs. We discussed a lot of ideas, thoughts and beliefs and historical concepts, but when they are actually applied, which of the two view points is more successful? Which brings more bliss to humanity? Is it the secular western view or is it the Islamic view? I have a concrete example which I'd like to share with you. When I was in Beijing this last summer for the UN 4th world conference on women, there was a platform for action which was being discussed by the different nations and organizations there. The aim of the platform for action was to upraise, uplift, and to embetter the status of women around the world, which are of course noble and correct aims; there is no contention concerning that. The platform for action was divided into different areas of concentrations, such as poverty, health, finances, conflicts and violence and so forth, and one of which was the young girl. The 12th issue of the 12 concerned areas for the platform for action concerned the young girl and the status of girls - future women - in the world today. The country which was hosting the conference, China is known for the practice of killing girls. The reason why is because of their large population. Chinese couples are allowed only one child and Chinese people by tradition view males as fewer than females, so as a result will usually kill the female child, in hope that the wife gives birth to a boy.

This is an issue which exists and due to the fact that host was China, the United Nations didn't really want to get into this issue, nor want to talk about it much because it was not politically correct to address that issue in China. Moreover, even though they might have passed certain regulations, platforms for actions and certain commitments which they have required upon citizens of the world to follow, most likely in the end perhaps in twenty-five to fifty years, the status of the children in the world will not have markedly improved.

One of the major reasons why the United Nations was created for after World War II, was the slaughter of so many human beings, including six million Jews in Europe, and yet fifty years later, in the year of the fiftieth celebration of the UN, a genocide in Bosnia, Europe took place. All the human rights acts, all of the declarations in the last fifty years and yet a massacre still occurred. Now when the prophet Muhammad - may God raise his name - was sent to the Arabs, the Arabs had the same practice of killing their young daughters. Arabs would do such an act for a numerous reasons, most of the time due to poverty. Being a desert people without industry and with little means of trade, life was very difficult. As a result, out of fear of poverty they would kill their young daughters and

bury them alive. This is a fact that is mentioned in the Quraan and was well known during the time of the prophet Muhammad, may God raise his name. In the Quran, God condemns the killing of young girls, the burying of them in the ground, and also the attitudes of the Arabs towards girls. One verse in the Quraan says that:

"When he is given the good news that his wife is given birth to a female child, a girl - his face becomes blackened and he becomes ashamed. With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he has had! Shall he retain it on (sufferance and) contempt, or bury it in the dust? ..." Quran (16:58-59)

This is a condemnation of such a practice. Likewise many of the companions of the prophet Muhammad - may God raise his name - before they accepted Islam, killed their daughters. One man came to prophet Muhammad - may God raise his name - and said: "I killed ten of my daughters in my lifetime, will I receive paradise? For will God accept my repentance for this sin, now that I have left this pagan religion of before, worshipping idols and killing girl children and so forth?" Within one generation, within 23 years (the duration that the prophet preached amongst the Arabs), the practice of killing girls ended and no longer existed in Arabia. Likewise, it didn't just stop there, but a change in attitude came towards women, in all aspects.

In the Hereafter, people receive no other reward, but paradise. Again that is the greatest aim for Muslims and that is their motivation and reason of being. So Islam not only tried removing the negative aspect of people murdering their own daughters, but also included the positive aspect of educating girls and raising them in society; which brings me to my final point. Human rights is something of course that we can look at the previous declarations of human rights, irrespective of whether these are true or false, but they have not been able to achieve the aims which they have stated, as the example of human rights, and the mass killings of civilians in Bosnia shows.

In conclusion, Islamic civilization unlike any other civilization is based, of course on revelation, but it is in its essence supported and founded by women. The first person to believe in Prophet Muhammad - may God raise his name - was his wife Khadeejah, and it was through her money and through her support and encouragement of him that the prophet was able to spread the message of Islam in his first year of prophecy. The pagans did not have the ideas of freedom of religion, that one can hold their own beliefs. Such was not practiced by the pagans of Arabia - they saw this as an insurrection, they saw this as a changing of their ways, so they sought to stop it out by torture, by killing and by other means that they could. And likewise, they tried to stop the Islamic revelation, this tradition, when the prophet Muhammad - may God raise his name - preached at first the people of Arabia. Yet as a result from Muhammad's message, there are over one billion Muslims in the world today. They are in every single continent of the world, even in Beijing where the UN was convening. There was a mosque there which is over a thousand years old. This shows how the growth of Islam and the spirit of Islam is not just a Middle Eastern phenomenon or an Arabian phenomenon but extends to all people and races throughout the world.

Where is this teaching from? Of course when prophet Muhammad - may God raise his

name - died after twenty three years of preaching Islam, Islam only spread in Arabia. Islam was mostly spread by four or five individuals who happened to be close to the prophet. One of them was the prophet's wife `Aa'isha. She is among the most to have narrated his statements and likewise she is amongst the three, four, five who have mostly given religious pronouncements, given religious verdicts, and explained verses of the Quraan, as well as sayings of the prophet.

If one looks at any other civilization in the history of humanity, seldom will they find women playing a role in its establishment where it can be attributed to her efforts for its establishment. The famous Greeks - like at the philosophers Plato, Aristotle and others - were all men. The early church fathers writings' were done by men and until today the idea of women scholarship is limited in some areas of the church. The French writers at the French revolution and Voltaire and the Russians were men. The founding fathers of the United States were men. Islam is the only civilization which is known by humanity where a leading input in terms of its transmission and establishment was based upon the efforts of women. Central - and this is an historical matter which is not open to interpretation, it is a fact - these are the people who transmitted the prophet's teachings, these are the people who supported it hereafter. Those are just some thoughts and impressions concerning how Islam uplifted women.

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