

WOMEN'S LIBERATION THROUGH ISLAM (PART 1 OF 2): THE VARIOUS RIGHTS ISLAM GIVES TO WOMEN

Rating: 4.1

Description: The various civil, social, political and economic rights which have been given to women in Islam.

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Today people think that women are liberated in the West and that the Women's liberation movement began in the 20th century. Actually, the women's liberation movement was not begun by women, but was revealed by God to a man in the seventh century by the name of Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, the last Prophet of God. The Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet are the sources from which every Muslim woman derives her rights and duties.



Human Rights

Islam, fourteen centuries ago, made women equally accountable to God in glorifying and worshipping Him – setting no limits on her moral progress. Also, Islam established a woman's equality in her humanity with men. In the Quran, in the first verse of the chapter entitled "Women", God says:

***"O mankind! Be careful of your duty toward your Lord who created you from a single soul and from it its mate and from them both have spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty toward God in Whom you claim (your rights) of one another, and towards the wombs (that bore you). Lo! God has been a Watcher over you."* (Quran 4:1)**

Since men and women both came from the same essence, they are equal in their humanity. Women cannot be by nature evil (as some religions teach) or then men would be evil also. Similarly, neither gender can be superior because it would be a contradiction to equality.

Civil Rights

In Islam, a woman has the basic freedoms of choice and expression based on recognition of her individual personality. First, a non-Muslim woman can not be forced to convert for marriage, or upon the conversion of parents. The Quran states:

“There is no compulsion in religion. Right has been made distinct from error.” (Quran 2:256)

Women are encouraged in Islam to contribute their opinions and ideas. There are many traditions of the Prophet which indicate that women would pose questions directly to him and offer their opinions concerning religion, economics and social matters.

A Muslim woman has full right to approve or deny a proposal of marriage, and her name is to be kept after marriage. A Muslim woman’s testimony is valid in legal disputes. In fact, where women are more familiar, their evidence is conclusive.

Social Rights

The Prophet said:

“Seeking knowledge is a mandate for every Muslim (male and female).” (At-Tirmidhi)

This includes knowledge of the Quran and the Hadeeth as well as other types of knowledge. Men and women both have the capacity for learning and understanding. Since it is also their obligation to promote good behavior and condemn bad behavior in all spheres of life, Muslim women must acquire the appropriate education to perform this duty in accordance with their own natural talents and interests.

While bearing, raising and teaching of children, and providing support to her husband and maintenance of a home are among the first, and very highly regarded, roles for a woman, if she has the skills to work outside the home for the good of the community, she may do, so as long as her family obligations are met.

Islam recognizes and fosters the natural differences between men and women despite their equality. Some types of work are more suitable for men and other types for women. This in no way diminishes either’s efforts or benefits. God will reward both sexes equally for the value of their work, through, it may not necessarily be the same activity.

Concerning motherhood, the Prophet said:

“Heaven lies under her feet.” (An-Nasai)

This implies that the success of a society can be traced to the mothers who raised it. The first and greatest influence on a person comes from the sense of security, affection, and training received from the mother. Therefore, a woman having children must be educated and conscientious in order to be a skillful parent.

Political Rights

A right given to Muslim women by God 1400 years ago is the right to voice her opinion on social issues. On any public matter, a woman may voice her opinion and participate in politics. Also, Islam does not forbid a woman from holding important positions in government which suit her role as a woman. Abdurrahman Ibn Awf consulted many women before he recommended Uthman Ibn Affan to be the Caliph.

Economic Rights

Islam is clear in its teachings that God created men and women to be different, with unique roles, functions and skills. As in society, where there is a division of labor, so too in a family, each member has different responsibilities. Generally, Islam upholds that women are entrusted with the nurturing role, and men, with the guardian role. Therefore, women are given the right of financial support.

The Quran states:

“Men are the maintainers of women because God has made some of them to excel others and because they spend of their wealth (for the support of women).” (Quran 4:34)

This guardianship and greater financial responsibility given to men requires that they provide women with not only monetary support but also physical protection and kind respectful treatment.

Muslim women have the privilege to earn money, the right to own property, to enter into legal contracts and to manage all of her assets in any way she pleases. She can run her own business and no one has any claim on her earnings, including her husband.

The Quran states:

“And in no wise covet those things in which God hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others; to men is allotted what they earn, and to women, what they earn; but ask God of His bounty for God hath full knowledge of all things.” (Quran 4:32)

A woman inherits from her relatives. The Quran states:

“For men there is a share in what parents and relatives leave, and for women there is a share of what parents and relatives leave, whether it be little or much – an ordained share.” (Quran 4:7)

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