

Noor, Ex-Hindu, UK (part 2 of 2)

Description: Noor explains how Islam has raised her status as a woman.

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In these days of so called "society of equal rights", you are expected to have a boyfriend (or you're weird!) and to not be a virgin. So this is a form of oppression even though some women do not realize it. When I came to Islam, it was obvious that I had finally found permanent security. A religion, a belief that was so complete and clear in every aspect of life. Many people have a misconception that Islam is an oppressive religion, where women are covered from head to toe and are not allowed any freedom or rights. In fact, women in Islam are given more rights, and have been for the past 1400 years compared to the only-recently rights given to non-Muslim women in some western and some other societies. But there are, even now, societies where women are still oppressed, as I mentioned earlier in relation to Hindu women.

Muslim women have the right to inheritance. They have the right to run their own trade and business. They have the full right to ownership, property, disposal over their wealth to which the husband has no right. They have the right to education, a right to refuse marriage as long as this refusal is according to reasonable and justifiable grounds. The Quran itself, which is the Word of God, contains many verses commanding men to be kind to their wives and stressing the rights of women. Islam gives the right set of rules, because they are NOT made by men, but made by God; hence it is a perfect religion.

Quite often Muslim women are asked why they are covered from head to toe and are told that this is oppression - it is not. In Islam, marriage is an important part of life, the making of the society. Therefore, a woman should not go around showing herself to everybody, only for her husband. Even the man is not allowed to show certain parts of his body to none but his wife. In addition, God has commanded Muslim women to cover themselves for their modesty:

"O Prophet! Tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks (veils) over their bodies (when outdoors). That is most convenient that they could be known as such (i.e. decent and chaste) and not molested." (Quran 33:59)

If we look around at any other society, we find that in the majority of cases, women are attacked and molested because of how they are dressed. Another point I'd like to comment on is that the rules and regulation laid down in Islam by God do not apply just to women but to men also. There is no intermingling and free-running between men and women for the benefit of both. Whatever God commands is right, wholesome, pure and beneficial to mankind; there is no doubt about that. A verse in the Quran explains this concept clearly:

"Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and protect their private parts (i.e. from indecency, illegal sexual acts, etc.); that will make for greater purity for them. And God is well aware of what they do. And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and protect their private parts (from indecency, illegal sexual intercourse, etc.); and that they should not display their beauty and ornaments..." (Quran 24:31)

When I put on my hijab (veil), I was really happy to do it. In fact, I really want to do it. When I put on the hijab, I felt a great sense of satisfaction and happiness: satisfied that I had obeyed God's command, and happy with the good and blessings that come with it. I have felt secure and protected. In fact people respect me more for it. I could really see the difference in behavior towards me.

Finally, I'd like to say that I had accepted Islam not blindly, or under any compulsion. In the Quran itself there is a verse which says

"...Let there be no compulsion in religion..." (Quran 2:256)

I accepted Islam with conviction. I have seen, been there, done that, and seen both sides of the story. I know and have experienced what the other side is like, and I know that I have done the right thing. Islam does not oppress women, but rather Islam liberates them and gives them the respect they deserve. Islam is the religion God has chosen for the whole of mankind. Those who accept it are truly liberated from the chains and shackles of mankind, whose ruling and legislating necessitates nothing but the oppression of one group by another and the exploitation and oppression of one sex by the other. This is not the case of Islam which truly liberated women and gave them an individuality not given by any other authority.

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