

Women Before Islam

In the first instance, we will see what the condition of women in Arabia was before the advent of Islam.

In those days, women were treated like slaves or property. Their personal consent concerning anything related to their well-being was considered unimportant and unnecessary to such an extent 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 not own property and were not allowed to inherit. In times of war, women were treated as part of the loot. Simply put, their plight was unspeakable.

Furthermore, the birth of a daughter in a family was not an occasion for rejoicing, but was regarded with humiliation. The practice of killing female children was rampant. The pagan Arabs used to bury alive their daughters with the fear that these girls will grow up and will get married to some men who will be called their sons-in-law.

After the death of the father, the sons used to share his wives among themselves as they shared their father's property. After the death of the husband, the widow was kicked out of the house and was forced to live in a small hut, which was unventilated and dark, for one year. She was not permitted to leave the hut, nor was she allowed to take bath or change clothes. After one year, she was allowed to come out of the hut. People threw the camel dung into her lap and asked her to rub her body against the body of an animal. Then she was forced to go round the village in the same dirty attire, throwing the camel dung on her right and her left. This was the indication that she has completed her Iddat (waiting period).

In India, the Hindu woman was the most suppressed creature. She was born to serve her men folk ? her father and brother before marriage, and husband and father-in-law and husband's brothers after the marriage. She was forced to worship her husband. After the death of her husband she had no right to live and was forced to be burnt alive at the pyre of her husband. This inhuman custom was called the Sati. If she had no issue from her husband, she was forced to lie with her husband's brothers to get pregnant. This practice was called "Niyoga".

Outside Arabia, conditions for women were no better. In Egypt and all European countries in the Dark Ages, women were treated worse than slaves. They were not regarded as human beings but as sort of sub-species between humans and animals.