

Women After Islam

Islam brought a new lease of life to women. Islam elevated the status of women to great heights: so high that she stood shoulder to shoulder with man. Like men, their rights were also well defined and Islamic Courts supported them to achieve these rights. Islam granted women the right to ownership. They now owned the amount of their Mehr. They could engage in trade and have their own properties. They were also given the right to inherit the property of the deceased father and husband.

With the advent of Islam came the verse from the Quran condemning those who practiced female infanticide: When news is brought to one of them, of (the birth of) a female (child), his face darkens, and he is filled with inward grief! With shame does he hide himself from his people, because of the bad news he has had! Ah! What an evil (choice) they decide on. (16:58-59)

The Holy Quran makes no distinction between man and woman as regards to the fundamental human rights. Here we may specifically state that: Woman, like man, is the possessor of free personality, and enjoys equality with man, in respect of:

Her spiritual and moral status: The Quran says: "Unto men the benefit of what they earn (of virtue) and unto women the benefit of what they earn (of virtue) (i.e., in matters of spiritual grace both, man and woman, enjoy equal status and are independent of one another)" (4:32)

Her economic rights: The Quran says: "Unto the men (of a family) belongs a share of that which parents and near kindred leave, and unto the women a share of that which the parents and near kindred leave, whether it be little or much #150; a legal share." (4:7)

Her legal rights: The Quran says: "And they (women) have rights similar to those (of men) over them, according to what is equitable." (2:228)

Islam ensured a dignified life to the fair sex, which was hitherto treated in an unfair manner. Woman became the mistress of the household. Man was not allowed to beat or manhandle them nor deprive them of their share in the property. The Holy Quran declared: "A mother should not be made to suffer because of her child, nor he to whom the child is born (be made to suffer) because of his child (because both are equal before the law)." (2:233).

Almighty Allah commanded man to behave well. "O Believers! It is not lawful for you to be heir of the women forcibly, and prevent them not with this design that you may take away part of what you had given them as dower except in this shape that they commit an act of flagrant, indecency and treat them fairly; then if you dislike them, it is likelihood that you may dislike a thing and wherein Allah has placed much good." (4: 19)

It is necessary to establish the Quranic viewpoint with respect to the concepts of Duty and Right.

The Quranic moral code is based on the emphasis on obligation not duty in contrast to the emphasis on right. Now, the implications of the emphasis respectively on duty and right are: Right is a right against someone. Duty is a duty towards someone. Right means that someone owes something to us. For, when we say: it is our right, it means that someone has to perform a duty to us. On the contrary, when we say: it is our duty, it means that someone has a right against us.

Islam has granted to the husband a senior position in the functioning of the household and appointed him as the commander so that he could get through any crisis with the help of wisdom and initiative given to him by Almighty Allah. Islam has prescribed certain obligations that a husband has to fulfill in the interest of his wife. Simultaneously, Islam has enjoined upon the wives to appreciate their duties towards their husbands. This is a give-and-take business. Both man and woman are closely connected with each others rights and duties.