

# Imam Khomeini's Views on Womanhood

Continuously throughout history, the group of the deprived (*mustazafin*) were trampled under the bloody boots of bullies of history. Women, throughout this history, have always been a part of this group of the deprived. The system of the oppressors and bullies was the main factor for the chaos (in the society) and the main cause for the difficulties and problems of women and other individuals of the society.

Women throughout history had been faced with great difficulties, problems and calamities. These always weighed heavily upon her shoulders. Throughout history all of the super-powers and arrogant imperialists had tried to keep women down to be used for their own purposes and in the process, they destroyed all of her existing values. They used her as a force to consume useless material and cultural products of the capitalistic system. They put all of their emphasis upon physical values, beauty and sex. They distanced her from high values, faith, *taqwa* (guarding herself against evil) and courage.

By establishing this base, they were able to paralyze the feelings of men who make up half of the society. He became oriented toward sex, beauty and lust and away from the basic political, cultural and social problems of poverty and oppression. In this way the totality of a society came under the domination of exploitation and colonialism.

After the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, the loudspeakers of the foreigners and their worshippers spread such rumors and continue to spread them - that the Islamic rule puts all of the achievements of civilization and culture behind itself and returns to 1400 years ago.

Women can counter the effects of these loudspeakers by being socially, politically and culturally active. The views of Imam Khomeini on women, to be presented here, will help to clarify and enlighten whosoever chooses to listen.

## Imam Khomeini's Conference in Paris

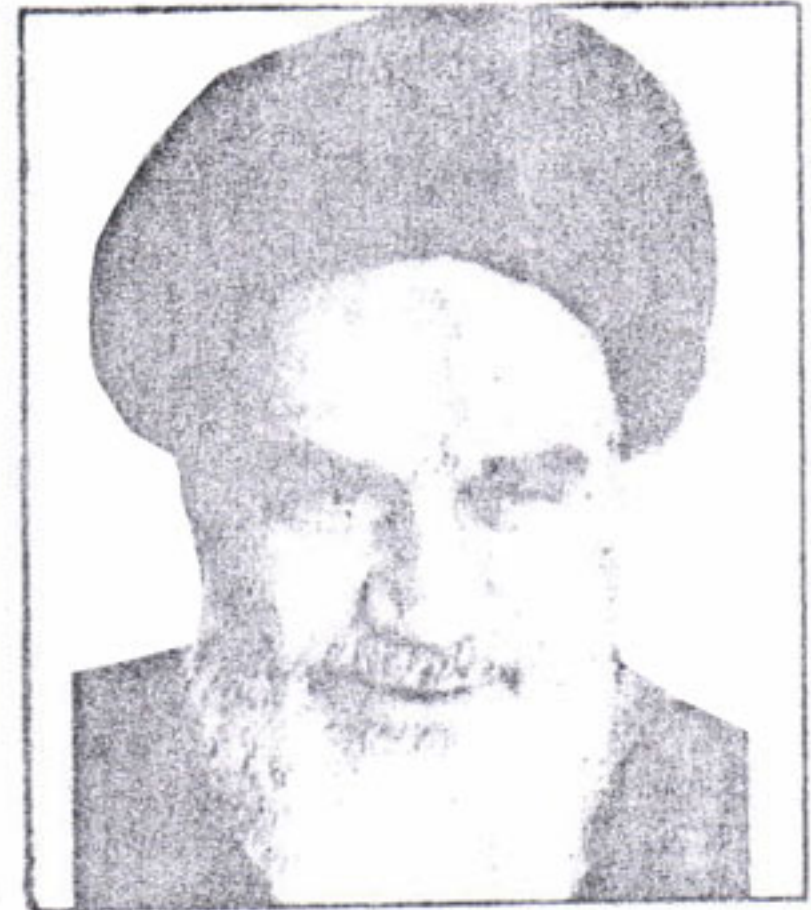
"The women are a people who give their youth and then are honored (by their martyrdom), a woman who endows her child and then says, "I am

honored that I was able to serve Islam this way".

"When the Prophet (ﷺ) left this world, he had nothing, in spite of the fact that it (Islam) was second in extent (it had spread its rule throughout the East and it had reached the borders of present-day Europe), and (he was) a ruler who during his lifetime only had one animal skin. (It was during those times that) those two, that man and woman, Hadrat Amir (Ali, peace be upon him) and Fatima (peace be upon her) slept upon it. In the daytime, they used it to feed the camels with it. You frighten these people about Islam?? You say that if Islamic rule comes, they will keep women in their rooms and prevent them from studying and until the end (of their life) they have to stay in their rooms?? Women, at the beginning of Islam, went to war where most of them stayed for the duration, treating the wounded." (November 8, 1979.)

"These words are wrong. These things that they say abroad, these are all so that, God forbid, one day some of our young people might fall into the error of thinking that, God forbid, it (Islam) is like this; God forbid Islam should come and close the doors on women and lock them up so that they can no longer leave their home.

"Islam wants men and women to grow, Islam saved women from what they were in the age of ignorance. Islam has served women to such a point that God knows, it has not served men. You know what women were in the age of ignorance and what they have become with Islam. Now they are making them worse than in the Age of Ignorance. In those days, women were (completely) disregarded (and considered to be unimportant) but now he (the Shah) says, 'women must be fascinating, women must be ...', I don't know, like this or that, words which counteract the dignity of women. He (the Shah) believes that women should be like this - this kind of a mis-interpretation. It should not be this way. Islam wants women to perform all the basic tasks that men perform, not that women become something that pulls the hearts of men and they mix with men, with young people. Islam wants to prevent this. Islam wants to



preserve the respect and honor of women. It wants to give personality to women so that she comes out of her present abject state.

"They want to sell women, toss her from one hand to another. Islam opposes this. Does this mean Islam opposes women? Islam has served women. History has no such precedent. Islam pulled women up from the stinking marshes and gave her character. Does this mean Islam opposes women? That is all false propagation." (November 9, 1979.)

"Look at a country, where its men and women all at one time are standing, fists clenched, shouting out, 'Strike us down; we want independence; we will not turn away (from our goal); a woman who has four children in the Behsht-i-Zahra cemetery cries out, shouts out and invites people, 'Rejoice, they have killed my child, rejoice!' The people began to cry but they rejoiced. This is something unusual that they should weep for this woman. This woman said, 'Do not cry. Celebrate.' The people did and at the same time, they wept for the calamity which had taken place.

"Women must have the same rights as men. Islam emphasizes equality between men and women. Islam has given both of them the right to decide their fate for themselves. All freedoms (in Islam) are available to them, the right to vote, the right to be chosen, the right to learn something, and also, the

right to perform all economic duties. "Islam took the hand of women and did not hand it over to the men whereas at the time when the Prophet of Islam (peace and the blessings of God be upon him and his descendants) appeared, women were counted as being nothing. Islam gave power to women. Islam placed women face to face with men and women have equality in relation to them. Of course, there are a



series of special precepts in Islam which are suitable for them but it does not mean that Islam makes distinctions between men and women.

"Both men and women are free to go to the university, they are free to vote and be voted for."

A reporter asked Imam Khomeini if women must stay at home and if outside the home, she must wear the chador (floor length covering).

Imam Khomeini answered, "I do not see the issue that way. Women must actively participate in the society. All people must have a share in rebuilding the country."

In relation to a question about sports, Imam Khomeini said, "There is nothing to prevent women from participating in sports if they preserve the precepts of the Divine Law. But photographs of them while uncovered should not be printed in the magazines."

#### Imam Khomeini's Interview with a German Journalist.

**Question:** In the future system, what will the position of women be? Must they leave the schools and return to the home? Or will it be possible for them to continue their studies?

**Answer:** These things that you have heard about women or other things these are all part of the false propagation of the Shah and his agents. They (women) are free and they are also free to seek education. They are free in other things just as men are. It is at the present time that neither are

women free nor men."

#### Imam Khomeini's Press Conference with the German Newspaper, *The Third World*.

**Question:** Shi'ism from the point of view of western countries, is presented as a conservative thought, and that the Shi'ites strongly believe that women be secluded from social life; also a return to Shi'ite principles, the tradition of which will become the basis for the rule in the same way that they existed in the Constitution (of the monarchial era) which were then illegally done away with. We have also heard that the Shi'ite way of life does not accept the Sunni way, could you please elucidate on these using Shi'ite views as your basis.

**Answer:** Shi'ism is a revolutionary school of thought and action and it is the continuation of the real Islam brought by the Prophet and because of this, Shi'ite have (throughout history) been the targets of ignoble, despotic and colonial attacks.

Not only does Shi'ism not remove women from the social scene, rather, it gives them their rightful place within the society. We accept the progress of the West but we do not accept the West's corruption which they themselves even cry out about. No.

#### Imam Khomeini's Press Conference with a Dutch Newspaper.

"Human rights make no distinction between a man and woman because both are human beings and women have the right to determine their own fate."

#### Imam Khomeini's Press Conference with the Arabic Magazine, *al-Qumi al-Arabi*.

"The Shah's prisons are filled with courageous women. In the demonstrations, our women come to the scenes of confrontation holding their young children, unafraid of tanks and machine guns, political gatherings. Women in the various cities of Iran have arisen. Their role is not small. They play a very valuable role in our struggle. The brave women throughout history come alive again. What history do you know about that has had such women? In what country?"

In many of the early interviews of Imam Khomeini in Paris, the issue of the Islamic modest dress was raised by the foreign press, Questions such as: "Will women be free to choose between the modest dress and western clothes?" "Is this type of covering not something that will stop progress and prevent women from being active in society?" "Why should there be a modest dress

for women?" were asked.

#### Imam Khomeini's Interview with Oriana Falucci

"The women who have revolted are women who wore the Islamic covering and continue to do so, not sophisticated women, who walk this way and that, uncovered, drawing a dozen men to follow them." (October 7, 1979)

"A doll that you nourish who then goes out onto the streets, did not arise against the Shah and never did anything beneficial: they do not know how to be beneficial (to society)."

"The Islamic covering is for young and reputable women." (October 7, 1979)

"Throughout my long life, I have reached this conclusion that if the modest dress did not exist, women could not work in a beneficial and useful way and neither can men. Our laws are valuable laws."

#### Imam Khomeini's Interview with Miss Elizabeth

**Question:** Can your excellency please carefully explain this concept as to whether women will be able to freely choose between the Islamic modest dress and western clothes?

**Answer:** Women are free to choose their activities, fate and, also, their covering, by following the precepts. The present experience of the activities against the regime have shown that women more than ever before have found their freedom in the covering which Islam describes.

During the time of the ignorant bully, Reza Khan, the plan was to abolish the Islamic modest dress and to transform that beloved part of the society which should build human beings into a group which will corrupt society.

You sisters who are in your own countries, should know it to be your duty to build and strengthen the country which is in chaos and has been done away with. (September 22, 1979)

"Today, women in the Islamic Republic work shoulder to shoulder with men in trying to build themselves and their country. This is the meaning of liberated men and women not that which at the time of the despotic Shah said for then freedom was in imprisonment, suffocation and torture... The victory we have is first from women then we have it from men. Our respected women were in the front ranks." (April 14, 1980).

"When the (farmers) see that responsible and respected women have come to help their brothers in the fields, their strength increases several fold." (April 7, 1980)