

## The Role and the Rights of women in Islam.

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*“WOMEN ARE LEADERS OF OUR REVOLUTION” - Imam Khomeini (r)*

### 1. Introduction.

In the west, there is always a negative view of Islam, especially where the status of women in Islam is concerned. The status of women in society is neither a new issue nor is it a fully settled one. And where Islam is mentioned, for many the term Muslim Women prompts images of exhausted mothers chained to the stove, “Victims” suppressed in a life of indoctrination, frantic to be westernized and so on. Others will go to great lengths to explain how the Hejab (i.e. veil) is an obstacle of freedom, and clouding the mind.

Many people, in particular those who live in the west, do not have a clear idea about Muslim women and do not have sufficient knowledge in the society in accordance to Islam.

Therefore this article deals with the rights and duties of Muslim women with the aim of briefing the Islamic teachings regarding women. It also tries to identify

the role of Muslim woman in dealing with her private life and social life in accordance with the Islamic rule and eminent thoughts of Imam Khomeini. Finally, the aim of his article is to clarify this subject and make the Muslim women better understood in the non-Muslim society.

### 2. Role of men and women in Islam

Generally, the following points can be granted as some examples of the role of women and men in Islam.

- In Islam there is absolutely no difference between men and women as far as their relationship to Allah is concerned, as both are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct. Imam Khomeini stated that *“in view of human rights, there is no differentiation between men and women, since they are both human beings; so women as well as men enjoy the rights of self-determination.”*

- Before the advent of Islam, women were often treated worse than animals. The Prophet (p.b.u.h.) wanted to put an end to all cruelties to women. He showed kindness towards them, some of his exalted ahadiths state: -

“ *Fear Allah in respect of women*”.

“ *The best of you are those who behave best to their wives*”.

“ *The more civil and kind a Muslim is to his wife, the more perfect in faith he is*”.

In his speech the leader of Islamic Revolution of Iran stressed that: “ Islam salvaged women from whatever (wrongs) used to occur against women in the age of ignorance before Islam.”

- Islam regards women as the spiritual and intellectual equals of men. The main distinction it makes between them is in the physical realm based on the equitable principle of fair division of labor. For example, it encourages men to take care of hard work and laboring jobs and make them responsible for the maintenance of the family. Islam encourages women to work in managing the home and in the upbringing and training of children. A woman has the greatest importance in the task of building a healthy and prosperous society. Imam Khomeini stated that “ **the role of women is higher and more important the role of men in the society, since they are not only in the society, but also in breeding those who will be active in the society.**”

### 3. Rights of Muslim women in social, economic and political affairs.

The Muslim woman was given a role, duties and rights 1400 years ago. These are from God (Allah) and designed to keep balance in society.

#### 3.1 Muslim women and social rights.

Some of the rights given to Muslim women by Allah (swat) 1400 years ago are considered in the following sentences.

- In Islam, both men and women have the capacity for learning and understanding.
- In Islam, It is a duty to both men and women to promote good behaviors in all spheres of life,
- Islam declared women and men equal.

- In Islam a woman had the basic freedom of choice and expression based on recognition of her individual personality. Imam Khomeini even expressed that “ *women have a great role in the society and they are the symbol of fulfilling all mankind desires and wishes*”. Further he said, “ *Women are instructors of mankind*”.
- In Islam, a woman is free to choose her religion.
- In Islam, a Muslim woman chooses her husband and keeps her maiden name even after marriage.
- A Muslim woman’s testimony is valid in legal disputes. In fact in areas in which women are more familiar, their evidence is conclusive.
- The same injunctions and prohibitions of Islam equally apply to both sexes.
- Finally, Muslim women must acquire the appropriate education to perform this duty in accordance with their own natural talents and interests. So it is highly recommended by Imam Khomeini that “ *In Islamic system, women should cooperate with men in building an Islamic society*”.

#### 3.2 Muslim women and economic rights

Some of the economic and financial rights given to Muslim women by God 1400 years ago are considered in the following sentences.

- In Islam a woman is completely an independent personality. She can make any contract or bequest in her own name. Islam gave woman the right of individual independence ownership unhampered by father; husband, brother, son or anyone else.
- In Islam, a woman has right to earn money, and own property, as Imam Khomeini said that: *In an Islamic system, women enjoy the same rights as men. for instance right to education, right to employment, right to vote*”.
- In Islam a woman has a right to enter into legal contracts and can 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.

Skills instead of looks, good appearance and sexuality.

## 5.2 Types of Hejab

Islam has no fixed standard as to the style of dress or type of clothing that Muslim must wear. However, some requirements must be observed.

- The parts of the body must be covered which are mentioned in the Islamic jurisprudence.
- The clothing must be loose enough so as not to describe the contours of the woman's body. One desirable way to hide the shape of the body is to wear a cloak over other clothes. However, if the in Islam. On the other hand, in order to keep the family ties and safe guard relationship non broken and a balanced, Islam prevents any kind of free relationship between a man and a woman which brings about dishonesty, corruption and breaches the sacred institution of family and creates several problems for the society. Islam, also, believes that a woman should not be abused by a professional commercial man and businessman as an advertisement tool for purposes of economic profits via the advertisements.
- While Islam does prevent a Muslim woman from revealing her body, beauty, even her hair to the stranger man, and doe encourage her to care about her family. Husband and children in order to bring peace for the society and creates a healthy and uphold good children to the society, it does not restrict her free activities within the society. Thus it does neither order her to sit at home lonely, nor does it deprive her of taking part in public affairs. So what is normally said that a Muslim lady cannot drive a car, cannot be an economist, a scientist, politician etc is just as usual false accusations and gossips. There is a good example of Iranian women who participate in the government, organization and individual parts of the Iranian society. In this example you can apparently see that they are every where in order to concrete the structure of the society and establish a better life for t their society along side with men, step by step and shoulder to shoulder.

However, it should be noted that if some uncivilized countries still apply some harsh and severe rules over the woman it does not mean that they are doing e.g in accordance with Islam. This is really an unacceptable approach that a man in order to dominate over a woman justifies his own cruel behaviors in accordance with the divine law, eg rules of Islam or Christianity etc, knowing that he is not allowed to misinterpret the rules of divine

law for his own overwhelming. Apparently this kind of aggressive, cruel and unjust treatments of men with woman, and the massive ignorance of women's right by men which exists in societies all over the world (even in western civilized countries but in a very sophisticated manner but in hidden approaches) can be easily disregarded if women in the world increase their knowledge and awareness, know their rights, functions, responsibilities and apply their capabilities with strength with the societies in accordance within the parameters of Islam.

*"And praise be to Him the Lord of the world."*

## FOOTNOTES

*"They are your garments and you are their garments." Quran (2: 18). It should be noted that clothing provides physical protection and covers the beauty and faults of the body. Likewise, a spouse is viewed this way. Each protects the other and hides the faults and compliments the characteristics of the spouse.*

*"O Prophet., tell your wives and daughters and the believing women to draw their outer garments around them (when they go out or are among men) that is better in order that they may be known (to be Muslims) and not annoyed. (Quran 33; 59)*

*REF: Sahife-Noor, By Imam Khomeini (R.A.)*

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