

As a legal entity, her marriage is not possible without her consent, and where a genuine case is present she can even divorce her husband. Imam Malik has recorded in his book "Al-Muwatta" that a certain widow named Khansa was given by her father in marriage. She disapproved of that and went to the Messenger of God (Allah) and he revoked the marriage. On another occasion a virgin came to the Prophet (pbuh) and mentioned that her father had married her against her will, so the Prophet allowed her to exercise her choice, (Abu Dawud). The wife of Thabit bin Qais came to God's (Allah's) Messenger (pbuh) and said, "O God's (Allah's) Messenger! I do not blame Thabit for any defects in his character or his religion, but I cannot endure to live with him." On that God's (Allah's) Messenger (pbuh) asked her, "Will you return his garden (he had given to her as a marriage gift) to him?" She said, "Yes." And he separated them. (Bukhari).

The Muslim women were equal partners with men in all spheres of life. The most important function of the Muslim community as described in the Qur'an is "enjoining good and prohibiting evil" in which women stand side by side with men: "The believers, men and women, are protectors, on of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey God (Allah) and His Messenger. On them God (Allah) pour His mercy: for God (Allah) is exalted in power, wise. God (Allah) hath promised to believers - men and women - Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein, and beautiful mansions in Gardens of everlasting bliss."

(Qur'an 9:71-72)

At the conclusion of the treaty of Hudaibiyah, the Prophet asked his companions to abandon their state of ihram, shave their heads and sacrifice their animals. They were so distraught by seemingly humiliating terms of the treaty that none of them moved. In anger, the Prophet went to his tent and told his wife Umm Salamah of what happened. She advised him to go out and shave his head and sacrifice his animal, for if he did so, his companions will surely follow him. And this is what happened.

A Muslim woman, Umm Hani, gave protection to one of the idolaters. The Prophet approved of it and said, "We give protection to whom you (Umm Hani) have given protection."

Knowledge, which is the basis of all progress and advancement, is compulsory on all Muslim men and women. So when a lady asked the Prophet (pbuh), "Messenger of God (Allah), men have monopoly of all of what you say. Appoint for us a day on which you may teach us of what God (Allah) has taught you," he appointed a time and place for them separately and he would go and teach them.

Aishah occupied a unique position in the history of Islam not because she was a wife of the Prophet, but because she is one of the greatest teachers that Islam ever produced. In the new Islamic community women were so active and well informed that an old woman corrected Caliph Omar when he wanted to limit the amount of dowry. Omar was pleased and said "The lady in right and Omar is wrong."



# STATUS OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

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For women, Islam is a special blessing; and the Prophet (peace be upon him) of Islam is indeed the greatest single benefactor of womenfolk. In Arabia, before the advent of Islam, the birth of a female child was regarded as a great misfortune and a shame, and cruel fathers buried them alive; *"And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide"* (Qur'an 16:58-59). Islam made this primal injustice a case for the highest court when on the Day of Judgment *"And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked, For what sin she was killed"* (Qur'an 81:8-9)

"Prior to Islam," Write the authors of Cultural Atlas is Islam, a woman was regarded by her parents as a threat to family honor and hence worthy of burial alive at infancy. As an adult, she was a sex object that could be bought, sold and inherited. From this position of inferiority and legal incapacity, Islam raised women to a position of influence and prestige in family and society" Islam gave this oppressed section of humanity, as it did to all other classes and groups, her legitimate place in life. In a world where women were no more than objects of sexual gratification for men, and at a time when the religious circles argued over whether or not women were human, with a soul of her own, Islam proclaimed, *"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female."* (Qur'an 49:13)

*O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.* (Qur'an 4:1)

Men and women are of the same family, and as such have similar rights and duties, and their Lord promises: *"Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female"* (Qur'an 3:195)

Islam removed some of the false notions about women, It for instance refuted the idea that Eve tempted Adam to

disobey God (Allah), and thus caused his downfall. God (Allah) tells us explicitly in the Qur'an that they both disobeyed. He negates the idea that the woman is a source of evil. God (Allah) in the Qur'an mentions some of the women with great respect, e.g., The wives of Adam, Abraham, the mothers of Moses and Jesus (peace be upon them all). Some of them (Mary and Sarah, for instance) were visited by angels who talked to them. This clearly puts women on a pedestal of personal and social respectability they never enjoyed before.

Islamic civilization rests on two cardinal principles. One, belief in God (Allah), and the knowledge that He is the Lord and Creator of all humans. All humans are equal and have similar rights and obligations as servants of God (Allah). Second, all humans, men and women, are created from a single person, or from a single pair of male and female. In other words they are children of the same parents, members of one family, and have similar rights and duties. If the first principle represents God (Allah) - man bond, the second stand for blood ties or man's relationship with his fellow men and women. Emphasizing its importance, the Prophet (pbuh) said: "The word Ar-rahm (womb) derives its name from Ar-Rahman (i.e., The Gracious One, one of the names of God (Allah), and God (Allah) said: I will keep good relations with the one who keeps good relations with you, (womb, i.e., kith and kin) and sever relations with him who will sever relations with you" (Bukhari). The woman (or Ar-Rahm, womb) thus occupies a pivotal position in human society.

Islam elevated the position of women in society and treated them on equal footing with men, and in some cases especially mothers were given and even higher status. Thus when a man asked the Prophet (pbuh) "Who is most entitled to be treated with the best companionship by me?" The Prophet (pbuh) said "Your mother." The man asked, "Who is next?" The Prophet (pbuh) said; "Your mother." Again the man asked, "Who is next?" The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Your mother." The man asked for a fourth time, "Who is next?" The Prophet (pbuh) said: "Your father." (Bukhari). On another occasion when a man came to the Prophet (pbuh) and expressed the desire to join a military expedition, the Prophet (pbuh) asked him if he had a mother, when he replied that he had, the Prophet (pbuh) told him, Stay with her, for Paradise is at her feet." (Ahman Nasa'i, and Al-Baihaqi)

In the transformed society to have a daughter was no longer a stigma or a matter of shame, but a source of perpetual blessing and a means of winning God's (Allah's) pleasure. The Prophet (pbuh) said: "If anyone cares for three daughters, disciplines them, marries them and is kind to them, he will go to Paradise." (Abu Dawud)

Islam gave women and independent identity and declared that their moral and spiritual gains depended solely on their own performance. Like man, a woman's failure or success rests on her own beliefs, attitude, behavior and conduct. She is responsible being in her own right and carries the burden of her moral and spiritual obligations. The Prophet said: "Everyone of you is a guardian and responsible for what is in his or her custody, The ruler is a guardian of his subjects and responsible for them, a husband is a guardian of his family and is responsible for it, a wife is a guardian of her husband's household and is responsible for it." (Bukhari)

In the Qur'an, women are presented as the role model for believers as well as non-believers. In Sura Al-Tahrim we read:

*Allah presents an example of those who disbelieved: the wife of Noah and the wife of Lot. They were under two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them, so those prophets did not avail them from Allah at all, and it was said, "Enter the Fire with those who enter." And Allah presents an example of those who believed: the wife of Pharaoh, when she said, "My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise and save me from Pharaoh and his deeds and save me from the wrongdoing people.", And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of 'Imran, who guarded her chastity, so We blew into [her garment] through Our angel, and she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was of the devoutly obedient.* (Qur'an 66:10-12)

To enable both men and women to achieve their full potential, Islam provides a social framework and seeks to establish a healthy moral atmosphere. In Islam, a woman regardless of her marital status is fully capable of owning, buying, selling and inheritance.

*"For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much - an obligatory share."* (Qur'an 4:7)