

Bismillah-ir-Rahman-ir Raheem

Muslim Women also Have Right to Claim their Rights

Muslim women of European descent, who were previously Christians, will be the main drivers who will fight for the rights of other Muslim women. This has already started to happen in Europe. It is an accepted fact that all women of this age are effectively outspoken and believe and strive for their fundamental rights.

Although the Holy Qur'an gave those rights to women more than 1,400 years ago, with the various ordinances in the Holy Qur'an being permanently intact, the western world has nevertheless brought about a certain awakening in women that they have rights to claim their fundamental rights. Rather sadly, Muslim women, who have been Muslims all along, are frequently and unfairly suppressed by elements within their own Muslim communities and prevented Muslim women from taking up their fundamental rights, which the Holy Qur'an as expressly prescribed to them more than 1,400 years ago.

Sometimes both Muslim men and Muslim women do not fully fathom and appreciate the knowledge-depth of the Holy Qur'an as the greatest reference work on the daily living patterns of people; and that includes fundamental rights already enshrined in the marvellous Holy Qur'an.

Women include Muslim women, regardless of sect and ethnic origins.

Allah informs humanity in the Holy Qur'an that He creates in pairs and both genders are equal, at HQ53: 44-45 – *“And that He it is Who causes death and gives life: And that He creates pairs, the male and the female: From the small life-germ when it is adapted.”*

It should be noted that creating in pairs means they are made of the same formula in terms of the flesh and body functions and in their spiritual souls. The main differences are in the reproductive organs, which are well known and need no further elaboration. This gender difference is also to bring about compassion in mankind and indisputably evidenced in the Holy Qur'an at HQ30:21 as – *“And of His signs is this, that He created mates for you from yourselves that you might find quiet of mind in them, and He put between you love and compassion. Surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.”*

Love and compassion are not the sole purpose of creating people in pairs but the need to spread humanity widely; and in so doing, having greater numbers of people who will appreciate the absolute greatness of Allah and worship Him and Him only: that is the sole purpose of creating humanity.

The Holy Qur'an states at HQ4:1 as *“O people, keep your duty to your Lord, Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind), and spread from these two many men and women. And keep your duty to Allah, by Whom you demand one of another (your rights), and (to) the ties of relationship. Surely Allah is ever a Watcher over you.”*

Of course, the objectives of creation of humanity is not limited to just husband and wife as pairs, but for mankind to worship Allah only and to spread the same ethics downstream to their future generations. The future generations are also expected to worship Allah only. The Holy Qur'an states at HQ16:72 as *“And Allah has made wives for you from among*

yourselves, and has given you sons and daughters from your wives, and has provided you with good things. Will they then believe in falsehood and deny the favour of Allah?"

The Western Roman Empire fell in 476AD. Before Christianity reached central Europe in 380AD, and which largely came about with the Roman occupation of Europe, much of Christianity was localised in the Middle East and mainly amongst those of Hebrew origins. That is a historical fact, as the parents of Jesus Christ were Jews from the tribes of Judah and Levi (Mary, mother of Jesus was of priestly descent). The twelve disciples were Jews and all their relatives were also Jews. It was not until St Paul came about, and he reengineered Christianity into its present format. It must be noted that St Paul also restructured and edited the Bible, which Christianity took up for exponential spread and growth throughout Europe. The nine Crusades¹ are evidences of the seriousness to which the western world took to their faith.

From a material as well as a spiritual point of view, Islam recognises the position of woman to be same as that of man. Islam places men and women on a balanced platform². Good works bring the same reward, whether to a male or to a female. This is also evidenced in the Holy Qur'an at HQ40:39-40, *"O my people, this life of the world is but a (passing) enjoyment, and the Hereafter, that is the abode to settle. Whoever does evil, he is requited only with the like of it; and whoever does good, whether male or female, and he is a believer, these shall enter the Garden, to be given therein sustenance without measure."*

From historical points of view, going back at least 2,000 years, the roles of men and women in society were divided in their main activity groups: for men as soldiers and farm husbandry; for women it was simply all aspects of domestic duties. Both genders are expected to earn a decent and honest living, as common principle amongst all communities throughout the world. The only restriction on the acquisition of wealth was that it must not be acquired by unlawful means, such as theft, fraud, gambling or prostitution, etc. It was not until 1781 with invention of the steam engine, and which revolutionised almost all industries, that women also began to feature as factory workers in England and other Western countries.

Industries, which were located in urban areas, needed more manpower and there were not sufficient men around. Women were found to be ably suited to carry out light duties in various factories, such as spinning mules, power looms and garments. Yet women were denied their other fundamental rights as individuals, by the very group, what is today known as the modern Westerners³.

The Holy Qur'an says that God has made man and woman to excel each other in certain aspects. The man excels the woman in constitution and physique, which is capable of bearing greater hardships and facing greater dangers than the physique of a woman.⁴

¹ There were nine Crusades from 1095 to 1291. These were united cross-border Christian allied forces, which were especially organised by the Pope (Pope Urban II in Vatican) to restore Christianity in all those countries, which were conquered by Muslims. The Byzantine Empire was of particular concern to Christians. There were four major and five minor crusades.

² The Holy Qur'an is in its entirety a balanced platform of balanced equality in terms of masculine terminologies and feminine terminologies and their mentions.

³ The Westerners today claim to be champions of women's rights, when on the contrary, the Holy Qur'an had already bestowed fundamental rights to women.

⁴ Thousands of years ago, men had certain limited rigorous involvements as pheasants, soldiers, blacksmiths, etc, which required robust physique in handling heavy implements and weaponry. The most widely common

On the other hand, the woman excels man in the qualities of love, affection, motherhood and all matters associated with housekeeping and minding families. The same specialisation by gender is also seen in all animals.

It is now necessary to revisit the spread of Christianity from Europe to almost every part of the world. European missionaries comprised both men and women. They visited almost every country on this planet in their endeavours to spread Christianity, taking advantage of various explorers from Europe to other newly discovered countries. The Christian missionaries' visits were not men only, but they took along their spouses, so that the women of the host communities were given equal attention and the host communities appreciated that the new faith brought to them was for all peoples and not just men. The Christian missionaries' womenfolk were just as well informed and very knowledgeable in all matters of their particular faiths. Most women are more confident amongst other women. All women know this as fact.

Anecdotally, part of the success of Christianity throughout the world has been the success of involving women, who equally stood by their husbands in proselytising for Christianity⁵.

Rather regretfully, whilst many of our Muslim women are just as much educated and knowledgeable on all matters of Islam, but in many countries our Muslim women are simply not given the liberty to assist in spreading Islam. There are many other communities throughout the world, whose women are more receptive to listening to other women. That becomes their comfort zone.

It is important that Muslim women take advantage of such situations and earn blessings. The Holy Qur'an states at HQ9:71-72 as *"And the believers, men and women, are friends one of another. They enjoin good and forbid evil and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, and obey Allah and His Messenger. As for these, Allah will have mercy on them. Surely Allah is Mighty, Wise. Allah has promised to the believers, men and women, Gardens, wherein flow rivers, to abide therein, and goodly dwellings in Gardens of perpetual abode. And greatest of all is Allah's goodly pleasure. That is the grand achievement."*

Muslim women must not be prevented to take up propagation of Islam.

The rewards to humanity have already been prescribed in the Holy Qur'an and Muslim women must be aware of the promises in the Holy Qur'an, which states at HQ16:96-98 as *"What is with you passes away and what is with Allah is enduring. And We shall certainly give to those who are patient their reward for the best of what they did. Whoever does good, whether male or female, and is a believer, We shall certainly make him live a good life, and We shall certainly give them their reward for the best of what they did. So when thou recitest the Quran, seek refuge in Allah from the accursed devil."*

When it comes to apportioning property of whatsoever description, between sons and daughters, or between men and women, the Holy Qur'an reminds the exploratory reader

denominator for all these activities was blacksmiths. Women on the other hand were widely preoccupied in their housewife and motherly roles in bringing up families. Notwithstanding these divisions of labour or occupations, the Holy Qur'an gives both men and women equal rights.

⁵ Many Christian schools throughout the world, especially in remote locations, have been named after women, who were either missionaries themselves or were spouses of very successful missionaries. Women were largely involved in setting up and running orphanages, which later delivered them the bonus of more Christians. Hence it cannot be denied that those Christian women, who were given their fundamental rights, applied their rights to their best advantages.

that both men and women have equal rights in those regards. The Holy Qur'an states at HQ4:7 as *"For men is a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, and for women a share of what the parents and the near relatives leave, whether it be little or much — an appointed share."*

Whilst the above rights are given as ordinances in the Holy Qur'an, they also come with a balanced warning and not to exceed the limits. This is stated in the Holy Qur'an at HQ4:32-33 as *"And covet not that by which Allah has made some of you excel others. For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn. And ask Allah of His grace. Surely Allah is ever Knower of all things. And to everyone We have appointed heirs of that which parents and near relatives leave. And as to those with whom your right hands have ratified agreements, give them their due. Surely Allah is ever Witness over all things."*

The regular life patterns of both men and women in terms of their faith practices, obedience, humbleness, prescribed self-control and behaviour in communities are equal for both men and women. The Holy Qur'an states most explicitly at HQ33:35-36 as *"Surely the men who submit and the women who submit, and the believing men and the believing women, and the obeying men and the obeying women, and the truthful men and the truthful women, and the patient men and the patient women, and the humble men and the humble women, and the charitable men and the charitable women, and the fasting men and the fasting women, and the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard, and the men who remember Allah much and women who remember — Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a mighty reward. And it behoves not a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided an affair, to exercise a choice in their matter. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he surely strays off to manifest error."*

In addition, the Holy Qur'an also clarifies without any doubt that men have an additional responsibility to be maintainers of women, which cannot be denied. Men must protect women. Women on the other hand are required to be obedient, honest and likewise fair with their husbands. This is clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an at HQ4:34-35 as *"Men are the maintainers of women, with what Allah has made some of them to excel others and with what they spend out of their wealth. So the good women are obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded. And (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the beds and chastise them. So if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Surely Allah is ever Exalted, Great. And if you fear a breach between the two, appoint an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people. If they both desire agreement, Allah will effect harmony between them. Surely Allah is ever Knowing, Aware."*

It should be noted with serious concerns that some extremist Muslim groups have not only pressured their women and girls into total isolation, but they have also been orchestrating other Muslim community leaders to do the same. There are many examples in many countries; and perhaps listing them all would consume lots of writing space and induce boredom in reading them all. Classical examples are women and girls forced to wear *burqa* both inside and outside their homes and, which largely denies them seeking external professional employment⁶. Other examples are denial of women and girls to go out

⁶ The wearing of burqa is not a specific injunction in the Holy Qur'an. The permitted requirement for women is show of full-face from forehead to chin, both hands up to wrists and both feet up to the ankles. The Holy Qur'an states most delicately at two places with specifics. They are:

shopping to select and purchase private and personal things, such as underclothes and cosmetics. These women are compelled in sending out their servants to do such things for them. So sad!

The end effect of all these poorly-informed backwardness by fewer Muslim communities in proportion to the 2.3 billion Muslims throughout the world is that all Muslim women are viewed with suspicion; as concealing themselves away from all mainstream communities.

Hence it is imperative, that Muslims adhere to the injunction in the Holy Qur'an at HQ3:103 as *"And from among you there should be a party who invite to good and enjoin the right and forbid the wrong. And these are they who are successful."*

This article encourages the reader to gently but positively allow women and girls to have those fundamental rights, which the Holy Qur'an has so marvellously and in such exacting and concise words, given women and girls their enshrined rights more than 1,400 years ago.

HQ24:31 *"And say to the believing women that they lower their gaze and restrain their sexual passions and do not display their adornment except what appears thereof. And let them wear their head-coverings over their bosoms. And they should not display their adornment except to their husbands or their fathers, or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons, or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers, or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their women, or those whom their right hands possess, or guileless male servants, or the children who know not women's nakedness. And let them not strike their feet so that the adornment that they hide may be known. And turn to Allah all, O believers, so that you may be successful."*

HQ24:58 *"O you who believe, let those whom your right hands possess and those of you who have not attained to puberty ask permission of you three times: Before the morning prayer, and when you put off your clothes for the heat of noon, and after the prayer of night. These are three times of privacy for you; besides these it is no sin for you nor for them — some of you go round about (waiting) upon others. Thus does Allah make clear to you the messages. And Allah is Knowing, Wise."*