

Islamia

الإسلامية

EVERY FRIDAY

Islam and women rights

A perfect way of life, designed by the creator of this universe, Islam, has clearly spelled out rights and responsibilities of every individual and every section of society. The advent of Islam was like a breath of fresh air for women in 7th century Arabia who had few if any rights. Islam presented women as an integral and respected part of the family. In fact, the notion of gender equality was pioneered by Islam. Prior to Islam, some women were bought and sold openly. They could not inherit property or even choose a husband.

Even their right to live was in question as many Arabs used to bury their young girls alive out of "embarrassment." In the Quran, it is said that on Judgment Day buried girls will rise from their graves, asking why they were killed?

"And when the female (infant) buried alive (as the pagan Arabs used to do) shall be questioned. For what sin she was killed?" QS At-Takwir/81: 8,9)

Islam recognises that men and women are physically different, yet spiritually they enjoy absolute equality before God. Allah (SWT) grants women inheritance, property, social and marriage rights, including the right to reject the terms of a proposal and to initiate divorce. Allah (SWT) mentioned women along with men in al-Quran, which is a clear manifestation of the gender equality in Islam.

"Allah has got ready forgiveness and tremendous rewards for the Muslim men and women; the believing men and women; the devout men and women; the truthful men and women; the patiently suffering men and women; the humble men

and women; the almsgiving men and women; the fasting men and women, the men and women who guard their chastity; and the men and women who are exceedingly mindful of Allah." (QS Al-Ahzab/33:35)

One Surah in Al-Quran is called the "Women," another is named "Maryam" after the mother of Jesus (PBUH). Women's rights are explicitly stated in the al-Quran. Allah (SWT) clearly forbids men from doing injustice to their wives.

"O you, who believe! it is not lawful for you that you should take women as heritage against (their) will, and do not straiten them in order that you may take part of what you have given them, unless they are guilty of manifest indecency, and treat them kindly; then if you hate them, it may be that you dislike a thing while Allah has placed abundant good in it. (QS Nisa/4: 19)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) frequently advised men to treat their wives and daughters well. "You have rights over your women," he is reported to have said, "and your women have rights over you."

Narrated by AbuHurayrah: Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said: a believing man should not hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her characteristics, he will be pleased with another. (Muslim Book 8, Number 3469)

A Muslim woman is respected by society as a mother, a daughter, a wife and a sister. Prophet Muhammad once remarked that, "Heaven lies at the feet of mothers." As the father of four daughters in a society that prized sons, he told other fathers that, if their daughters spoke well of



Participants attending at the women in business focus group. Picture: BT/ Zamri Zainal

them on the Day of Judgment, they would enter paradise.

It was the result of al-Quran's clear directions and Prophet (PBUH)'s teachings that women were granted all their rights during the era of the four Righteous Caliphs of Islam.

Even today, some Islamic legal systems ensure the protection of women's rights in Muslim countries. However, one can argue that status of women in many Muslim societies is not satisfactory. Yet it is clear from the

teachings of al-Quran and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that this situation is not due to flaws in Islamic laws. The problems presently faced by Muslim women are generally similar to those faced by women from all backgrounds, worldwide- oppressive cultural practices, poverty, illiteracy, political repression, patriarchy, and more.

It is therefore necessary that proper measures be taken in Muslim countries to empower women according to the teachings of Islam.

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