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UMME KALSOOM MALIK SA  
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# WOMEN RIGHTS IN ISLAM VS WESTERN PERSPECTIVE OF FEMINISM

ARAB → Source - Dr. Haseeb Ahmad 2016

NEWS  
story WOMEN'S PLACE IN SO-CALLED GLORIOUS CIVILIZATIONS  
PRIOR TO ISLAM

If we examine the place given to women prior to Islam in some of the so-called glorious civilization, we can identify the disrespect and immoral values linked to those women. For instance, in Greek mythology a woman, Pandora, was thought to be all 'Evil'. In the second civilization the Roman one, a philosopher named Seneca, reprimanded Romans about the degenerating family system. A sport named "Floralia" promoted sexually immoral atmosphere. When it came to Christianity, Chrysostom says: "Woman is an unavoidable evil, a delicious calamity and an attractive trouble." Aristotle declared: "The female state is a deformity." A Roman Catholic, Aquinas, believed: "A female is a misbegotten male." Nietzsche, a German philosopher, opines: "Woman is a source of folly, unreason."

Prior to ISLAM in Arabia, there was no fair sex position. Girls were buried alive, as soon as they were born. A man could marry, abandon, remarry, divorce as many women as he wanted. (Islam restricted the no. of wives to four, divorce though permissible, isn't encouraged)

## ISLAM'S ROLE IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

→ ISLAM, liberated woman in all respects. Provisions for empowerment of women in the Islamic system of life were laid:

1. **Freedom**: Girls are as free to receive education as boys are.

"It is obligatory for every man and woman to receive Education." (Hadith) (Nabwi)

"You must seek knowledge from birth till death." (Hadith) (P.B.U.H)

Other than Education Girls were given a right to choose for their spouse, and it was considered legal if a girl dislikes her husband who is cruel, unjust or impotent, to take "Khula". A widow or divorcee, is allowed to "remarry" if she wishes.

In Islam, it is preferred for a woman to stay at home and build her home with care and good upbringing of her children, BUT if she is facing a financial insecurity from her husband, she is allowed to go out and earn money, within the limitations of Shariah. During the time of Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H), there were women traders and there were instances when women participated in wars to supply water or to nurse the wounded. At present, thousands of Muslim women work in hospitals, banks, schools, colleges and many other working places.

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2. **Equality**: There is no gender discrimination in Islam.

"And whoever does righteous good deeds - male or female - and is a true believer in the Oneness of Allah, such will enter paradise and not the least injustice, even to the size of a Nagisa, will be done to them" (Quran, 4:124)

The position of man is to safeguard and strengthen the institution of the family, and to provide food, shelter and other needs to all family members and woman is the queen of that family, who will be responsible for her children and home's peace and happiness.

Women are equal to men in all civil and criminal acts of judiciary.

"One who has two daughters and no son, and spends his life in their proper upbringing and education will be closest to me in Heaven." (Hadith, P.B.U.H)

3. **Security**: The security of woman in Islam is very important.

She is not inferior to a male. Parents are motivated to nurture girls. The responsibility is to provide bread and meat to girls and women lies with the male guardian in case of journey or long distance.

"You should feed her when you eat, and clothe her when you yourselves put on cloths. And in case of a temporary boycott due to strained relations, it should be limited to the four walls of your house. (Hadith - e - Nabawi)

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## 4. Economic empowerment

Women receive money in the form of bride price (mahr). She gets bread or meat from either her father or her husband. She has a lawful share in property.

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

## 5. Dignity

In contrast to Christian idea that woman is the source of evil and she opened the door to Satan, Islam believes that Satan simultaneously seduced both Adam and Eve. The mother's place is higher than father's.

"Heaven lies under the mother's feet" (P.B.U.H)

Woman is the ruler / Queen of her husband's establishment. The veil is only a protective device to shield her from mischievous staring eyes. When women are asked to wear veil, men are ordered to lower their gaze.

"And tell the believing women to reduce (some) of their vision" (The Quran, 24:31)

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Thus Islam gives dignity, respect, protection and appropriate place to women.

## TODAY'S WESTERN PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Source - amnesty.org - "Women's Rights are Human Rights!"

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century people began to ask for Right of Women to vote. In 1893 New Zealand became the first country to give women the right to vote on a national level. This movement grew to spread all around the world.

Today women's suffrage is a right under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979)

However, despite these developments there are still many places around the world where it is very difficult for women to exercise this right. For e.g. Syria, where women have been effectively, cut off from political engagement, including the ongoing peace process.

In Argentina, Amnesty International has campaigned alongside human rights defenders to change the country's strict abortion laws. and same practices for women's right in Ireland, Poland and South Korea.

In Burkina Faso, Amnesty International has supported women and girls in their fight against forced marriage, which affects a large no. of girls in rural areas.

In Jordan, Amnesty International has urged for female liberty in lives, choices and legal actions.

# CONCLUSION

If we compare the struggles going on in western countries for women's right, Islam as a deen has provided already these rights to Muslim women 1400's years ago. The right for a freedom in marriage that Burkina Faso is facing, Islam has already liberated women out of this compulsion of forced marriage. If we look at the <sup>western</sup> campaigns asking <sup>women's</sup> our liberty in politics and finances, Islam already has allowed women to earn respectfully if she is facing financial crisis. Take the example of Hazrat Khadija (R.A) who was a great Trader at the time of Prophet (P.B.U.H) and also women were practicing for their participation in wars. Islam is a complete code of life for every gender, person, <sup>caste</sup> animal slave and country. We can find its example in the last sermon of Holy Prophet P.B.U.H, that ~~excludes~~ <sup>abolishes</sup> out all the discrimination.

"There is no discrimination of Arabi over Ajmi and Ajmi over Arabi, All are equal to Allah and the only merit of discrimination is Taqwa (righteous deeds and noble actions)."