

# International Women's Day and the Rights of Women in Islam

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*As-salámu 'alaikum wa rahmatul láhi wa barakátuh!"*

*"A-úthu billáhi minash shaytánir rajeem. Bismilláhir rahmánir raheem.*

*Al hamdu lillahi nahmaduhu wanasta'eenahu, wanastagh-firuhu, wanatoobu ilayhi, wana'oothu Billaahi min shuroori an-fusinaa, wamin sayyi aati a'maalinaa.*

*May- Yahdillahu fa huwal muhtad, wa may- yudlill falan tajidaa lahu waliyan murshida. Wa ash-hadu an Laa ilaaha ill-Alláh, wahdahoo laa shareeka lah, wa ash-hadu anna Muhammadan 'abduhoo warasooluh"*

**In the Name of Allah, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate.**

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In today's khutbah, I would like to talk to you about women in Islam and their rights as 8th March was International Women's Day and therefore a perfect time to contemplate what Islam dictates about woman. There is no discrimination between males and females in the Qur'an. Male and females have equal responsibility before the orders of Allah (SWT). In the Qur'an, Allah (SWT) says the following in Suratun Nisa verse 124:

*"If any do deeds of righteousness, – be they male or female – and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them."*

According to Islam, the superiority among people in the eyes of the creator is related to their level of *taqwa*.

Islam is filled with many *mu'minahs* who completed their *taqwa* of Allah. One of these women was Aasiyah, the wife of Fir'own. Her emaan in Allah thrived under the shadow of someone who said, "I am your Lord, Most High!" When news reached Fir'own of his wife's emaan, he tortured her terribly and ordered his guards to do the same. They took her out in the scalding noon heat, tied her hands and feet, and tortured her perpetually. Her emaan was so great and without an inch of doubt that she uttered these words in prayer:

*"My Lord, build for me a home with you in Paradise, save me from Fir'own and his deeds, and save me from these people."* (At-Tahreem 66/11).

It was narrated that when she said this, the sky opened for her and she saw her home in Paradise and smiled. The guards watched in astonishment as she smiled being tortured. Frustrated Fir'own ordered his guards to crush her to death. But before she was murdered, Allah took her soul and she became an example for all believing men and women till the end of time

In Suratul Ahzab verse 35, Allah The Almighty says:

*"For Muslim men and women, - for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in Charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah's praise, - for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward."*

No differential treatment of males and females has been prescribed in the Qur'an. Islam, fourteen centuries ago, made women equally accountable to God in glorifying and worshipping Him – setting no limits on women's moral progress. Also, Islam established that women were equal to men as they have come from the same substance.

In the Qur'an, in the first verse of the chapter entitled "Nisa" meaning 'Women' Allah SWT says,

*"O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it its mate and from them both have spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty towards Allah in Whom you claim (your rights) of one another, and towards the wombs (that bore you). Lo! Allah has been a Watcher over you."* (4:1)

Since men and women both came from the same essence, they are equal as human beings. Neither gender can be superior because it would be a contradiction of equality.

The Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (SAW) (Hadith or Sunnah) have laid out the rights and duties for women as well as for men. The prophet Muhammad (SAW) was particularly sensitive to the needs of women and advised the people to also be kind to them.

The Prophet (SAW) said: "The most perfect believers are the best in conduct. And the best of you are those who are best to their wives"

Prophet Muhammad, (SAW) would allocate a specific day of the week to teach the women. Women would come up to him in the street, and even in his home to ask him questions about the deen. At the Eid salah, after addressing the men, he would take Bilal and go to the women's section and address the women. A Muslim woman has the right to choose her husband and keeps her name after marriage. A Muslim woman's testimony is valid in legal disputes.

The Prophet (SAW) said: "Seeking knowledge is a mandate for every Muslim (male and female)." This includes knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith as well as other knowledge. Men and women both have the capacity for learning and understanding.

The Muslim woman has the privilege to earn money, the right to own property, to enter into legal contracts and to 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.

*The Qur'an states: "And in no wise covet those things in which Allah hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others; to men is allotted what they earn, and to women, what they earn; but ask Allah of His bounty, for Allah hath full knowledge of all things."* (4:32).

A woman has the right to inherit from her relatives as the Qur'an states: "For men there is a share in what parents and relatives leave, and for women there is a share

*of what parents and relatives leave, whether it be little or much – an ordained share.” (4:7)*

The Caliph Omer said *“In the pre-Islamic time, we did not attach any worth to women. When the Qur’an started speaking about women, we realised that they have rights like us.”*

Let us consider into what context this message of compassion and mercy was introduced. Pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula and indeed most of the other civilisations were displaying mercy and compassion possibly in the lowest sense. The one who had the power also had all the rights. We may still witness similar behaviour in the present day within the so called civilised world. However in the past the powerless were oppressed and this meant especially the women, children, slaves, orphans and foreigners.

The Mercy that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) introduced literally saved women and ended the discrimination they suffered. Women were elevated to the same level as men in the eyes of law, ethics and when it came to worship. Women are judged equally as men when they commit a crime and have the same rights when they are a victim of crime.

Let me narrate to you one part from Khutbatul Wedaa which was the farewell speech of Rasulullah (SAW), delivered to all mankind and listened to by more than 120,000 Muslims at the time. When Rasulullah (SAW) stood on the plain of Arafat and gave his farewell speech, he said;

*“O People, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you. Remember that you have taken them as your wives only under Allah’s trust and with His permission. If they abide by your right then to them belongs the right to be fed and clothed in kindness. Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers. And it is your right that they do not make friends with any one of whom you do not approve, as well as never to be unchaste. Their right is that you should treat them well in the matter of food and clothing.”*

History dictates that in Europe, in the very same year and time that Islam was saying this, the rest of the world were arguing whether a woman was a human or an animal!

There is much more that can be said however to conclude today’s sermon I shall leave you with the advice of our Prophet (SAW) to every woman;

*“If the woman prays her five (salah), fasts her month (of Ramadan), protects herself (from committing zina), and co-operates with her husband, it will be said to her, that from any door you wish, enter Paradise!”*