

Gender Equality



Gender Equality in Relationship Duty and Responsibility

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To Islam and the Qur'an, woman is equal to man in terms of duty responsibility and responsiveness to the guidance set for them by God. Women constitute practically one half of the society and she plays a crucial role within it.

In ancient societies in Europe, Asia and the Middle East, women were considered inferior to men. Superstition, speculation and other forms of perverted thinking fostered this unreasonable approach.

Women in Arabia, like their sisters elsewhere in much of the old world, were not allowed to inherit property, deleted a word were deleted a word second class citizens and widowed and divorced women were not permitted to remarry. In certain tribes female infanticide

was practiced. The Holy Qur'an made a reference to this criminal habit:

And when the female infant was asked for what reason was she killed Qur'an, 81:80

It was not until the advent of Islam, in the early 600 CE, when women were recognized as an equal partner to men. Her status and role in family and society became dignified and her rights in inheritance, marriage and divorce were established. Islam teaches that:

Women shall with justice have rights similar to those exercised against them, although men have a degree (in responsibility) above women. Qur'an, 2:228

Islam allowed women the right to inherit, to keep their own earnings, and the right to accept marriage and to request a divorce. Women have the right to inherit wealth and property and to establish and engage in business. If men and women are given the rights to education, then no women can be held back.

Islam justly gave the women an equal dignity to that of the men: what the Qur'an tells you and what the society imposes on you are two different things. What applies to men applies to women in religion, in duty and in relationships and non duty issues.

Men are responsible for women because of what they earn. Whatever a man possesses is hers and whatever she possesses is hers as well. A woman can be a doctor or a lawyer. Islam does not limit her role in society. Prophet Muhammad said:

Women are the partners of men. -Abu Dawud, Sunan, 1/61

In honoring woman, the Qur'an named several chapters after them. For example, one of the longest chapters in the Qur'an is called al-Nisa' (The Women) or "in defense of women," as [Shaykh Ahmad Kuftaro](#) pointed out. This chapter relates many subjects regarding women's affairs and rights.

Another chapter in the Qur'an is named al Mujadilah, or "the woman with plea." or in defense of women. In this chapter, Allah narrates the story of a woman who came to Prophet Muhammad complaining of her husband and argued her case to the Prophet until a revelation in her behalf was revealed, changing the ruling of the Prophet in her favor.

There is yet another chapter in the Qur'an named "Mary," after the virgin Mary, mother of Jesus. The implications of the titles of these chapters combined with their teachings constitute a giant step in the revolution of liberation for women.

Men shall have a share of what their parents and kinsmen leave; women shall have a share of what their parents and kinsmen leave; whether it be little or much, it is legally theirs. Qur'an, 4:7

Prophet Muhammad said:

Only a man of noble character will honor women and only a low, vile man will dishonor them. - Kanz al-Ummal, 16/371

The best among you is he who is best to his family. For my family, I am the best of all of you. -Ibn Majah, Sunan 1/636

Islam recognizes mothers to be a vital element in bringing about a healthy society. Because of their role in home education and up bringing of children, mothers hold greater respect and honor than fathers. A man came to Prophet Muhammad and asked him:

"Oh Messenger of God, who rightfully deserves the best treatment from me? 'Your mother,' replied the Prophet. 'Who is next?' asked the man. 'Your mother,' said the Prophet. 'Who comes next?' the man asked again. 'Your mother,' replied the Prophet. 'Who is after that? insisted the man. 'Your father,' said the Prophet.'" -Al Bukhari, 10/329

Prophet Muhammad also said:

Heaven lies beneath the feet of a mother. -Al Suyuti 1/536

Those who are serving mothers as well, truly deserve Paradise. Muslims believe obedience of mothers or parents is a duty. This philosophy is rule number one in raising children with character. God in the holy Qur'an commands the obedience of parents.

We have enjoined on man respect and kindness to his parents: In pain did his mother bear him and in pain did she give him birth. Qur'an, 46:15

The constant of the family is the mother. She is the conveyer of the tradition, the one who educates. She is the nurturer, the educator, the bulwark, the framework of the family. Her role is even more important than that of the father. Islam teaches that a woman has the right to divorce her husband just as a man has the right to divorce his wife. However, Islam teaches that divorce is not liked by God. Prophet Muhammad said:

The most hated of the lawful deeds is divorce.

In Islamic communities women have risen to the highest government ranks. Ummu Salamah, Prophet Muhammad's wife, advised the Prophet in important political and legislative matters. In the Treaty of Hudaybiyah, for example, the Prophet acted upon her advice in making the treaty a reality. Mrs. Benazir Bhutto was the Prime Minister of Pakistan. Mrs. Megawati Sukarnoputri is the 5th President of Indonesia. Bangla Desh had as its Prime Minister, Mrs. Hasina Wajid. The second Vice-President of Iran is Ibtikhar Ma'soumi.

Islam teaches that the family is a social unit and like all things in life, it requires management and supervision. Islam gave this responsibility to the man. The choice of making the man responsible for the well being of the family is based on his physical ability of management and livelihood support, not on "superiority" because he is a man. God said:

Women shall with justice have rights similar to those exercised against them, although men have a degree (in responsibility) above women. Allah is mighty and wise. Qur'an, 2:228

Just like a pilot is responsible before the law for the safety of the airplane, the man is given the responsibility of his family before God. Otherwise, both parents mutually share the management of the family, just like the pilot and co-pilot managing the aircraft in the air. Also, it takes oxygen and hydrogen to make a particle of water but neither of the elements is superior to the other. The two elements only complement one another.