

ISLAMIC STUDY CIRCLE

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Rights of Women in Islam

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Rights of Women in Islam

Women in Islam have an extensive range of specific rights:

1. Spiritual/Religious
2. Intellectual
3. Social
4. Economic
5. Political

[A] These rights are bestowed by Allah Almighty, safeguarded by the infallibility of the Quran and demonstrated by the example of the Prophet (blessings of Allah and peace be upon him)

[B] These rights were granted to women 1400 years ago, without their demands and without any Liberation movement.

Rights of Women in Islam

Spiritual

1. Islam does not subscribe to the idea of original sin.
2. Women are not held responsible for Adam's first Khata (mistake)
3. Both men and women were jointly responsible, both repented and were forgiven.
4. Salah, Sawm, Zakah and Hajj are obligatory for both men and women, and they are promised the same rewards.

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Intellectual

1. Women, in Islam, have full rights to intellectual development
2. Along with men they have an obligation to seek knowledge, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said:
It is a duty for every Muslim, male and female, to seek knowledge.
3. Islam credits both women and men with the capacity for learning, understanding and teaching.
4. There is nothing in Islamic teaching that could be interpreted to mean that Muslim women have less intelligence, ability or aptitude than Muslim men.
5. According to Islamic teaching, Muslim parents are expected to attach the same importance to the education of their sons and daughters.
6. Essentially men and women have different primary roles which they will have to take on in adult life.

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Social

A — Marriage

1. Muslim women cannot be forced to marry without their personal consent or without being consulted at an early stage in the negotiations.
2. Islam encourages parents to look for a suitable partner for their children and to assist them in making a wise decision.
3. Islam emphasises that the marriage partners should see one another before making a final decision.
4. In Islam marriage means, establishing a relationship with an entire extended family. Therefore common agreements of both parents and the couple, contribute to the social cohesion of the Muslim community and eliminates the tensions and conflicts commonly found in Society.
5. The privacy of a young married couple is assured.

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Social

B — Divorce

1. Islamic teaching strongly disapproves of divorce
2. It recognises the existence of marital problems that are irreconcilable, and in such cases divorce is allowed.
3. The wife can obtain a divorce from a court even against the will of her husband.
4. A woman can also obtain the right to divorce her husband through a mutually agreed contract at the time of the marriage.
5. Divorce in Islam is a family affair, free from unwanted publicity and complicated legal procedures.

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Economic

1. One of the most fundamental rights of Muslim women is the right of independent ownership
2. This ownership is not subject to change by marriage
3. Muslim women are absolutely free to buy, sell, exchange, mortgage or lease the whole or part of their properties independently without the prior consent of their husbands.
4. The whole of a woman's private income belongs entirely to her and without her personal wish cannot be absorbed or used for general expenses related to the husband's sole responsibility (i.e. housekeeping, education of children, maintenance)
5. A Muslim woman also has the right to inherit.
6. A Muslim woman also has the right to accept employment which is compatible with her nature and dignity.
7. However her primary social role in the community is that of a wife and mother and this is regarded in Islam as sacred and vital

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Political

1. A woman has the right to vote
2. She can be nominated for various political offices
3. She is allowed to participate in public affairs
4. In Islam, many famous women have figured prominently in the affairs of state.

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Sayings of the Prophet (Blessings of Allah and peace be upon him)

1.

Paradise lies at the feet of your mother. (*Musnad Ahmed*)

2.

O People, your wives have certain rights over you and you have certain rights over them. Treat them well and be kind to them, for they are your partners and committed helpers. (*Tirmizi*)

3.

The best among you is the one who is the best towards his wife. (*Tirmizi*)

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Privileges

1. A woman is exempt from some religious duties i.e. prayers and fasting in her regular periods and at times of confinement.
2. She is exempt from attending the obligatory congregation of Fridays.
3. She is exempt from all financial liabilities.
4. As a mother she enjoys more recognition and honour.
5. She is entitled to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the son's love and care with $\frac{1}{4}$ left for the father.
6. As a wife she is entitled to demand a suitable dowry (Mahr) from her prospective husband.
7. She does not have to share with her husband the family expenses.
8. As a daughter and sister she is entitled to provision from her father or brother respectively.
9. As a wife she is entitled to complete provisions and maintenance from her husband.
10. She is free to retain, after marriage, whatever she possessed before marriage and her husband has no right to any of her belongings.

Rights of Women in Islam

Popular Western Misgivings

1. That a Muslim woman is a prisoner within the four walls of the home
2. That she is a non-person
3. That she has to live always under the domination of a man
4. That she has no rights
5. That Muslim women are slaves to their husbands

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Polygamy

1. Islam allows restricted polygamy i.e. marriage to more than one woman to a maximum of four at one time.
2. The normal Muslim practice is monogamy, i.e. one man married to one woman.
3. Polygamy is the exception. It is allowed in special circumstances. These are:
 - a) When a wife cannot bear children but the husband wants children.
 - b) If the first wife is chronically ill and is unable to carry out her marital and household duties.
 - c) It may be the solution to the problems of a society which has more women than men.
4. Polyandry, i.e. a woman having more than one husband is forbidden in Islam

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Women in Other Societies

1. During the Roman Empire, a woman was regarded as a slave.
2. The Ancient Greeks considered her a commodity to be bought and sold.
3. Early Christianity regarded women as responsible for the Fall of Adam.
4. In India, until recently, the Hindus considered their women worse than pests or serpents. A widow had to jump into the flames of her husband's funeral pyre.
5. In pre-Islamic Arabia, a woman was regarded as a cause of grief and baby girls were sometimes buried alive.
6. English women had no personal rights until 1882.
7. The earliest voting rights were given to women in the United States of America in 1869, followed by the Isle of Man in 1881.
8. The first woman M.P. to be elected to the House of Commons was in 1919.

(Source:- The Guinness Book of Records & The Encyclopaedia Britannica)