

# Are Muslim women oppressed?

هل المرأة المسلمة مظلومة؟

[ English – إنجليزي ]

2011 - 1432

IslamHouse.com

Among the many topics of interest to non-Muslims, the status of Muslim women and the theme of their rights -- or rather, the perceived lack of them -- seems to be foremost. The media's portrayal of Muslim women, usually outlining their "oppression and mystery" seems to contribute to this negative perception.

The main reason for this is that people often fail to distinguish between culture and religion -- two things that are completely different. In fact, Islam condemns oppression of any kind whether it is towards a woman or humankind in general.

The Quran is the sacred book by which Muslims live. This book was revealed 1400 years ago to a man named Muhammad --peace be upon him--, who would later become the Prophet -- peace be upon him-. Fourteen centuries have passed and this book has not been changed since, not one letter has been altered.

In chapter 33, entitled Soorah Al-Ahzaab (The Clans), verse 59 Allaah The Exalted Almighty Says (what means): "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the woman of the believers to bring down over themselves (part) of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known (as free respectable women) and not be abused. And ever is Allaah Forgiving and Merciful." [Quran 33:59] This verse shows that Islam makes wearing a Hijaab necessary. Hijaab is the word used for covering, not only the headscarves (as some people may think) but also wearing loose clothes that are not too bright.

Sometimes, people see covered Muslim women and they think of this as oppression. This is wrong. A Muslim woman is not oppressed, in fact, she is liberated. This is because she is no longer valued for something material, such as her good looks or the shape of her body. She compels others to judge her for her intelligence, kindness, honesty and personality. Therefore, people judge her for who she actually is.

When Muslim women cover their hair and wear loose clothes, they are obeying the orders of their Lord to be modest, not cultural or social mores. In fact, Christian nuns cover their hair out of modesty, yet no one considers them "oppressed". By following the command of Allaah, Muslim women are doing the exact same thing.

The lives of the people who responded to the Quran have changed drastically. It had a tremendous impact on so many people, especially women, since this was the first time that the souls of man and women were declared equal -- with the same obligations as well as the same rewards.

For the first time in history, women were granted economic independence in Islam. The money they bring in to marriage is theirs as well as the money they earn. In Islam, women are allowed to choose their own husbands and in extreme cases, ask for divorce. A woman

has the right to be educated, contrary to what the contemporary world might think. The responsibility is that of the person who is raising her.

Islam is a religion that holds women in high regard. Long ago, when baby boys were born, they brought great joy to the family. The birth of a girl was greeted with considerably less joy and enthusiasm. Sometimes, girls were hated so much that they were buried alive. Islam has always been against this irrational discrimination against girls and female infanticide.

The Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu `alayhi wasallam, said: "[Seeking knowledge is mandatory for every Muslim \(male and female\).](#)" Men and women both have the capacity for learning and understanding. Since it is also their obligation to promote good behavior and condemn bad behavior in all spheres of life, Muslim women must acquire the appropriate education to perform this duty in accordance with their own natural talents and interests.

While maintenance of their homes, providing support to the husband and bearing, raising and teaching children are among the first and very highly regarded roles for a woman, if she has the skills to work outside the home for the good of the community, she may do so. However, this is allowed only as long as her family obligations are met and as long as she complies with the Islamic code of dress and conduct, with no intermingling with men in the workplace.

Islam recognizes and fosters the natural differences between men and women despite their equality. Some types of work are more suitable for men and other types for women. This differentiation in no way diminishes the effort or benefit of one gender over the other. God will reward both genders equally for the value of their work, though it may not necessarily be within the same sphere of activity.

The two great roles a woman plays in life are that of a wife and a mother. The Prophet – peace be upon him-, once said to a group of Companions:

Concerning motherhood, the Prophet Muhammad, sallallaahu `alayhi wasallam, said: "[Heaven lies under the feet of mothers.](#)" This implies that the success of a society can be traced to the mothers who raised it. The first and greatest influence on a person comes from the sense of security, affection and training received from the mother. Therefore, a woman having children must be educated and conscientious in order to be a skillful parent.

[A man came to the Prophet, sallallaahu `alayhi wasallam, and asked: "Who among my kinfolk is worthy of my good companionship?" The Prophet –peace be upon him-, replied: "Your mother" three times before saying: "Your father."](#) This indicates the impact that a mother has in a person's life. So women are highly honored in this great religion.

Islam is a religion that treats women fairly. The Muslim woman was given a role, duties and rights 1400 years ago that most women do not enjoy even today in the West. These rights

are from God and are designed to maintain a balance in society; what may seem "unjust" or "missing" in one place is compensated for or explained in another place.

From: Al-Jumu'ah Vol. 14

"The best among you are those who are the best to their wives." This shows that Islam highly encourages treating the wives well. They should be shown love, respect and care. To foster the love and security that comes with marriage, Muslim wives have various rights. The first of the wife's rights is to receive dowry, a gift from the husband, which is part of the marriage contract and required for the legality of the marriage.

The second right of a wife is maintenance. Despite any wealth she may have, her husband is obligated to provide her with food, shelter and clothing. He is not forced, however, to spend beyond his capability and his wife is not entitled to make unreasonable demands.