



# Philosophy of Being Woman

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## **Writer's Note**

Years ago, in a conference on human rights, the writer presented a paper entailing a comparative discussion of women's rights in Islam and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This paper was later published in the form of a book and was greatly received by readers.

In later years, however, some questions were raised concerning women's civil rights in Islam. These questions mainly pertained to women's philosophical status and place in the Islamic worldview and even in a purely philosophical worldview.

In fact, in spite of the several feministic discussions and debates apparently on topics related to the philosophical support of women, the empty place of a scientific and philosophical study of women's natural and social status was strongly felt. This

was because the above discussions were highly unscientific and digressive, and, as a result, many of the related questions remained unanswered.

Accordingly, the writer decided to write a short treatise on a philosophical view of women's status in creation following a comparative approach and based on Islamic principles and ideas. This could function as an introduction to the study and discussion of women's rights prior to examining their legal rights and problems.

This book consists of two parts. The first part is a treatise entitled *The Philosophy of Being a Woman*, and the second is an article entitled *Women's Rights*. The writer believes that a preliminary and necessary condition for having a scientific understanding of their rights and various problems is to know women themselves. This is an unprecedented endeavor, and, considering the uprising and threatening waves of the outburst of human emotions and prejudices, the writer does not really think that it would be an easy task to accomplish. However, he firmly believes that if women know themselves thoroughly, the humankind will have a better life in future.



*The Philosophy  
of Being a Woman*

## **Introduction**

**N**owadays, the discussion of woman and her place, identity, and functions has become very common and even turned into a means of gaining reputation. Some women have entered this discussion following a feministic approach, and some men, perhaps in order to attract the attention of this big group, have even gone to extremes in this regard and said or written some words that are at times very far from the reality. Some other people have also judged this issue erroneously and unfairly with their eyes closed to the existing facts.

Such differences in views of woman, which reveal her unknown nature and ambiguous reality, have turned the study of woman into a social or even scientific issue. However, unlike the studies conducted and the books and papers written in this regard, her true nature still remains a mystery.

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The existing ambiguities concerning this topic and its being a universal and living problem are due to two reasons: first, knowing human beings, whether men or women, is an essentially difficult or even impossible undertaking. That is why some thinkers consider human beings to be unknowable existents. They believe that our knowledge of woman is even less than our knowledge of man. This is because women enjoy various characteristics that turn them into complicated phenomena and make knowing them very difficult.

Second, the methodology that we employ in this regard is also flawed. The various methods followed to know woman and the different views followed to judge her make the reality of the issue even more complicated. In other words, no specific theoretical or empirical method has been introduced for a scientific study of this topic, and researchers have mainly contented themselves with a series of related slogans, complaints, and quotations. Nevertheless, like any other scientific study, research on this topic requires an appropriate methodology.

In order to gain some scientific knowledge of woman, we should study her analytically from two natural and social dimensions. In doing so, we must study her as a natural phenomenon, along with her physical and psychological characteristics and the functions and duties that have been defined for her in natural laws. At the same time, through a sociological analysis of men and women, we can attain a true



perception of woman's true place, value, and position as a social phenomenon.

The scientific solution to the problem of woman depends on correct and close-to-reality knowledge of both men and women. As long as this knowledge is not the center of discussions, our study of this issue will not be fruitful.

We believe that one of the other ways of knowing woman is to resort to heavenly religions. We can trust the definitions of human beings, including woman, that have been provided in religious texts, provided that they have remained intact and unclouded by the personal ideas and interpretations of the representatives of those religions. In this way, we can discover the natural place and social position of woman through the lines of such texts.

Unfortunately, except for Islam and the text of the Holy Qur'an, no other religion or religious text has remained immune against the distortions and misinterpretations of its advocates. A short glance at the wrong and bitter views of other religions concerning woman can clearly reveal the distortions of the major religious principles and the strong influence of ancient Greek, Roman, and vernacular cultures and traditions on them.

A historical-analytic study reveals that, apart from Islam and its heavenly book, the Holy Qur'an, which has remained intact over time, other religions have been distorted and the ideas of their clergymen have replaced their original principles. As a result, their views of woman's station and

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rights have declined and returned to periods abounding in ignorance and having no sign of civilization.

Before entering the discussion of woman and evaluating her by the scales of “nature” and “society”, we will first refer to some of the pessimism and wrong ideas concerning her in other religions. Here, we will merely deal with the related points in Christianity and Judaism because Western critiques have only dealt with the ideas and theories of these two religions about woman.

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# **Chapter I**

## **Women in Christianity and Judaism**

*I*n the Jews' heavenly book, the Torah, woman has always been looked down on and humiliated. For example, we read there that a father has the right to sell his daughter like a slave and she does not have the right to disobey his decision (Exodus, verse 7). According to this rule, the daughter (or a female) is an object or property and has no human value and grace.

In another place in the Torah, we read, "Eve (woman) was born from Adam's (man's) rib" (Genesis), and thus woman must always obey man. Men's ownership of women originates in this very self-made claim concerning creation. This very distorted claim, whose original form is unknown to us, has been interpreted in different ways by Christian and Jewish scholars, including Paul, the founder of Christianity. In his letter to Corinthians (11: 8-9), he writes, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man."

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In Judaism, Eve deceived Adam in the Garden of Eden into committing the sin of eating the forbidden fruit and caused his expulsion. Therefore, woman must always be punished as a permanent guilty species until eternity. According to the Torah (Genesis, 3: 6, 7, and 16), woman must be punished to the end of her life to compensate for Eve's crime, resulting in her husband's expulsion from the Garden of Heaven. A part of her punishment is her becoming pregnant and enduring labor. This part of the Torah considers a woman's most important privilege over men (which is preserving human generation) to be her punishment and pictures her as an eternal sinful being. Such a judgment is a historical cruelty to women, and, has, unfortunately, turned into a cultural concept in the course of time and affected men's behavior to women.

Evidently, such a judgment about women cannot be a divine message. As we will mention later, the Holy Qur'an, which is obviously a heavenly book, says that the forbidden fruit was eaten by both Adam and Eve and does not accuse merely Eve of this crime.

Unfortunately, most branches of Christianity follow this very Jewish view of woman found in the Torah. They have even intensified it by introducing some of the harsh and misogynistic aspects of Roman culture into it. As a result, the Church Fathers, in spite of the way Jesus himself talked to and treated women, speak quite unfairly and pessimistically about women. For example, we can quote Augustine who says that

woman is not a human being; rather, she is a receptacle for the reproduction of men's species. Some of the other early leaders of Christianity, such as Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, and even Thomas Aquinas, had a very low opinion of woman. They considered her responsible for all the pains and hardships from which human beings suffer (due to the Fall of Man). Thomas Aquinas also said, "Woman shoulders the load of the sin of humanity."<sup>1</sup>

Some of the above ideas are taken from the Torah and some of them from the religious texts of Christianity. For example, it is written in the Book of Ecclesiastes (7, 26-28):

I found more bitter than death the woman who is a trap, whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters; one who pleases God escapes her, but the sinner is taken by her. See, this is what I found, says the Teacher, adding one thing to another to find the sum, which my mind has sought repeatedly, but I have not found. One man among a thousand I found, but a woman among all these I have not found.

In the eyes of Christian Fathers, a woman in comparison to man is like a servant in comparison to God. In Paul's Epistle to the Galatians it is written, "Wives, submit to

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<sup>1</sup>. Tertullian introduces woman as the gate of Hell. Augustine says the woman is an animal. John Chrysostom says, "A woman's beauty is the greatest sin against God. Keep away from her as you keep away from fire."

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your husbands as to the Lord.”<sup>2</sup> In the Epistle to the Ephesians, it is also written, “For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church” (5: 22–23).

These very wrong interpretations in Judaism and Christianity led to the development of a great number of false views concerning women’s character and created numerous problems for them in the course of history. Nevertheless, the truth remained hidden to all until the dawn of Islam. It was because of the above interpretations and views that the modernists of the early years of the Renaissance Period in Europe and feminists of the recent centuries started writing several books against religions and disseminating the idea that woman’s freedom and enjoying her true rights lie in abandoning religions. In fact, by referring to the text of the Torah and the books written by church authorities, they introduced God and religions as woman’s main enemies. However, if they had known about the Qur’an and Islam, they would have understood that it was, essentially, the prophets, true religions, and particularly Islam that taught women’s rights (and, basically human rights and values) to people and warned men against treating women with cruelty and mischief. In fact, Islam has recognized a supreme station for woman in society.

The historical realities (that are kept secret in the West) indicate that certain issues such human beings’ natural rights,

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<sup>2</sup>. As another example, we can refer to a bishop’s words in the church assembly of Macon. He addresses all the members and wonders if women have souls! Or, another bishop asks whether women are human beings!

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woman's rights, and other important judicial branches (such as international law and rights of minority groups) were parts of the legacy of Spanish Muslim that was transmitted to the priests and Christians who had won the war. Later they translated Muslims' works into Latin and, during the Crusades, imitated them in terms of knowledge, philosophy, and ethics and made some adaptations from their works. European civilization was formed under their influence in the 11<sup>th</sup> Christian century and after that.

The translation of Muslim books on philosophy, law, and other sciences (mathematics, natural sciences, medicine, and astronomy), a major part of which had been obtained from Spain's important cultural cities such as Cordoba, Toledo, Seville, and the like by Christians who had invaded Andalusia, were translated into Latin. In this way a great evolution occurred in the scientific and social thought of the Roman (Western European) Church, and some philosophers such as Albert and Thomas Aquinas, who completely followed Muslim philosophers such as the Iranian thinker, Ibn Sīnā, and the Spanish scholar, Ibn Rushd, came into being. The books they taught had been written by Iranian Muslim philosophers and became the basis for the discoveries made in Europe later. Concerning judicial issues, certain topics such as human beings' natural rights and women's rights and character which originated in the Qur'an and stood in total opposition to the views of the Church became the focus of attention.

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With the transfer of Islamic civilization to Europe, certain topics that were new to the Church at that time, such as human rights and freedom, equality of men and women in humanity and grace, and freedom of speech and expression of ideas became popular among the priests and philosophers in monasteries and cathedrals. However, since all the translated books were in Latin, none of the ordinary people understood them, and thus the ideas and theories put forward in them did not become popular among the laity.

The European Renaissance was the natural outcome of the legacy of Spanish Muslims, the achievement of the Crusades, and was, to a great extent, rooted in the capture of Byzantine (today's Turkey) by Muslims (the Ottomans). In this period, the realities about the human rights and the character of women entered the social domain, and contemporary intellectuals wrote some books on such topics.

After the temporary capture of Vienna (in Austria in 1529) and that of Istanbul (in Turkey in 1453 AH) and due to the Christians' contacts with Muslims and the translation of their books into European languages, the Turkish Ottoman Muslims exercised a very powerful influence over European science and civilization. In fact, they became the origin of a philosophical revolution and created a new period in Europe.

Luther (d.1546) in Germany and Calvin (d.1572) in France rose against the dogmatism of the Roman Church. Hobbes (d.1679), Francis Bacon (d.1626), John Locke (d.1704),



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and Mill unveiled priests' mistakes in their political and social philosophy and explained concepts such as human's natural rights, freedom, and women's rights to people.

Some writers such as Voltaire (d.1778),<sup>3</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau (d.1778), Montesquieu (d.1755), and the writers of the *Encyclopedia* (18<sup>th</sup> century) opposed the Church and even Christianity, and wrote books on human rights and freedom, women's rights, and their equality with men. Due to their defense of such issues, a number of ideas were expressed under the flag of feminism. We can still see the traces of such ideas in some societies.

As mentioned before, these European intellectuals' defense of Islam was neither rooted in hidden inspirations nor in their superhuman ingenuity. Rather, it originated in the Europeans' familiarity with Islamic culture and civilization and their translation of Muslim books between 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries. This was done in spite of the great efforts made to conceal this historical reality from the eyes of Europeans.

Moreover, the spread of Islamic culture and civilization by neighboring Muslim countries ruled by the Ottoman government from the 15<sup>th</sup> until the 18<sup>th</sup> century played a significant role in this regard.

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<sup>3</sup>. Voltaire openly attacked Jesus Christ and Christianity and admired and defended Islam. For example, in his *The Complete Works of Voltaire* he writes, "Christians impose their religions upon others with the help of sword and fire. Oh, God, if only all European nations followed the method of Muslim Turks" (vol. 11, p. 207). For more information, refer to *Islam in Voltaire's View*, Dr. Jawād Hadīfī.

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The dignity of human beings, including both men and women, human rights, and woman's rights were new topics in 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. However, they were known to Muslims since the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD (that is, since the time of the descent of the Qur'an and the rise of Islam). Nevertheless, it took Western society more than one thousand years to learn about these certain Islamic facts through the writings of European intellectuals.

Apart from this social factor, which caused a number of great social and political changes in Europe, there was another factor that played a major role in this regard: the French Revolution. This led to the transformation of feudalism (which depended on land ownership) to the bourgeoisie (focusing on capitalism and middle-class property ownership).

Some members of this bourgeois minority who were Jewish turned into the pillars of the French revolution and caused the downfall of masters and land owners, such as the Pope and priests, from the peak of power, wealth, and authority.

In the aftermath of the French social and political revolution, which affected Europe, the subservient and almost low-class members of the feudal system came to power. The rich Jews developed some organizations for themselves, moved ahead with the wave of revolution, and became the origin of profound influences in Europe including the following:

- Founding and taking control of several huge factories, industrial and commercial centers, banks, insurance

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companies, as well as benefiting from the services of a new social class called workers or the former farmers working under feudalists and land owners.

- Disseminating disbelief and quitting the church, adopting laity and secular life, and personalizing religion, which was a highly significant pillar in feudalism.
- Reviving the Roman, Greek, and Jewish cultures, denying absolute ethical principles, and spreading the idea of relativity in ethics.
- Disseminating the separation of religion and politics and preventing the church and priests from interfering with political and social affairs.
- Spreading immorality; uncivilized freedom, and women's nudity and weakening the constitution of family in the name of women's freedom.
- Using women as a vast work force in order to have obedient and cheap workers.
- Weakening the foundations of family and disseminating free relations between men and women and even homosexuality and corruption.

With the rise of this group, a new culture came to the fore, and we can say that the present form of Western culture is, in a way, the product of their attempts.

In this new culture, women had apparently been freed, were not considered the property or slaves of men, attained

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sexual freedom instead of their natural rights, started working freely in order to earn money, and achieved independence. However, in reality they suffered from a kind of hidden but new kind of group slavery in the production and service centers of capitalists (who had replaced the masters and feudalists).

The important point that we should remind here is that in the Enlightenment Period, in spite of the efforts made by theoreticians such as John Locke and Mill and the books they wrote in opposition to the Church's misogynous culture and on human rights and women's rights, freedom, and equality with men, the remains of the old Roman and Greek cultures and the ethnic traditions of certain European races did not allow people to enjoy equality in terms of social and other human rights, and did not view women worthy of having true freedom and independence. However, when Islam talks about human rights, it takes every single member of humanity into consideration and does not allow any kind of segregation.

For example, when John Locke, the English theoretician (1632-1706) talks about freedom and human rights, he does not have all people in mind. Rather, he means Europeans (or even only English people) and excludes women, slaves, African people, and Native Americans.<sup>4</sup> He even referred to them as the scum that have absolutely no rights in

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<sup>4</sup>. Locke himself worked at the English colonial office and made great profits selling slaves.

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human society and are owned by Europeans and must obey them.

He apparently believes in certain natural human rights and equality of all people; however, the point is that he always paid special attention to specific social classes, aristocrats and the middle class (the so-called bourgeois).<sup>5</sup> A little scrutiny reveals that by human, he meant men rather than women. If he admired a woman, she must have certainly belonged to a specific social class. This was the very culture or tradition of ancient Greece and Rome.

Such thoughts and philosophical bases are still dominant all over the present West. All the Ku-Klux-Klans of the United States and the anti-Eastern and anti-colored people racists, consciously or unconsciously, follow such thought and culture, which originate in the Jewish racist tradition and Roman culture.

In all these historical cultures, whether Greek, Roman, Jewish, or Christian, woman is nothing but a tool for the man's enjoyment and for serving him. She lacks the right to independent ownership even if she inherits the property or earns it through hard work. Even nowadays, in spite of the apparent changes and given titles, women are still wanted for the satisfaction of men's desires and whims or for working in offices and factories. Even, a woman's family name, which is

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<sup>5</sup>. Bourgeois means one who lives in a city (burg). It was a social class between the workers and property owners who were allowed to live in cities.

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an important part of her identity, still depends on her husband's, and if she marries for a second time, she has to change her family name. This is because her identity depends on his and, of course, on his enjoyment and sexual satisfaction.

The rise of women's reactive schools and movements, such as feminism, in the West is to some extent natural. This is because even today women are still owned by men, and their situation has not changed much. Thus feminism was a natural movement against this ancient European-American culture. Due to their long experience and close familiarity with this dominant culture, women coming from the lower classes of the society started writing in order to heal their wounds. However, nothing remains of their efforts but some words on the paper. The Western woman will never find a cure for her problems unless she learns about Islam and Islamic culture.

Unfortunately, this movement, i.e. the movement for the revival of women's rights in Europe and the West, did not remain immune from the abusive hidden policies of anti-human groups. Such theoretical and philosophical reactions originated in a kind of secret and hidden politics that gradually spread its roots all over the West. It was not before long that it was revealed that such activities were a part of secret Zionist and Talmudian projects and fed on the related protocols and the manifests of their secret organizations. By discriminating against women and abusing their frustration with men, they lead half of the society to enmity against married life, pessimism

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towards the family constitution, and, as a result, to homosexuality, corruption, prostitution, and free relationships with men. In this way, they spread sexual corruption in the world. In fact, world Zionism considers this as a prerequisite for its absolute dominance over the world and its economic and political development.

More than four centuries have passed since the Renaissance and Modernism of Europe and the relative intellectualism of its people, and there is still vast propaganda for women's rights in the world. However, the view of Westerners, both men and women, concerning women and their true place and value in the world is a defective one and does not introduce them as they really are and does not speak of their true rights.

For instance, one of the women who strictly defended their character and rights in Europe, Simone de Beauvoir, sometimes called a philosopher and even the founder of feminism in Europe, believes that the ideal character and situation for a woman is what existed in the communist system of the ex-Soviet Union! Everybody knows that at that time a woman was a slave-worker who was kept away from family relations. She was just a tool for the satisfaction of men's sexual desires and had to earn her own money. In the words of the feminists, she lived to work and give enjoyment to men.

In her book, *The Second Sex*, while attacking the Church and Christianity, she presents a new scheme in which a woman enjoying dignity and true rights is assumed to be one

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who can work in the society like men and not under their supervision. Here, she can provide for herself, and nothing can stop her from prostitution and even homosexuality! The world she portrays is nothing but a purely corrupt and material world. However, this writer does not talk about woman's old age, when she has no beauty and freshness and has to die in loneliness in the gutter.

This is the peak of the European movement of intellectual and philosopher women in introducing women's rights and status. Clearly, this wrong perception will not go anywhere, and today women are still commercial goods and the slaves of capitalists. They are who they were before or even worse. This is because before this so-called Women's Liberation Movement, girls had, at least, some security beside their parents in their families or beside their husbands and children.

Another woman studying women's problems in the field of psychology believes that the problem is their nostalgia for being a man and, in her words, the complex of emasculation and not having organs similar to those of men.<sup>6</sup> She says that the only solution to this problem (although impossible) is to remove these physical differences. These pseudo-scientific myths and superficial theories that are vastly disseminated and popularized are rooted in nothing but Freudian theory. They merely lead to limiting women's characters and problems to

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<sup>6</sup>. Karen Horney, *Psychology of Women*.



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sexual, anatomical, and bodily issues and do not help to untie the entangled knot of their problems.

Such supports and defenses that are worse than attacks, on the one hand, the sign of the non-Muslims' weakness in finding the right path and helping women to recognize and attain their true place in the world. On the other hand, as confessed by some Western and European authorities, they reveal that the hands of extremist Zionists and Jews are at work here to deprive women of learning about their rightful place in the world. For centuries they have led the Western civilization and directed its social development. Their policies and philosophies have never succeeded in saving women from their medieval status and have, rather, deprived them of their piety and welfare and left them alone in a dangerous situation.

The above points present a brief summary of what is said about women in the West, in general, and in European society, in particular. They not only show that the ideas of anti-woman groups were wrong and rooted in a lack of knowledge of woman's nature, characteristics, and talents, but also indicate that even those women who have defended their own kind in a period which is considered the most complete of all periods have not been able to accomplish this task correctly. This is because this group of women deals with the problem following an approach that is rooted in the traditional cultures of the newly civilized European societies and sometimes in their crude and childish pride.

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Women's greatest mistake in solving their problems has been mistaking the same cultural act which has caused their problems for the solution. In other words, women's problem with men's authority was their physical power that subdued women. However, unaware of other concomitants and tools of authority that exist in them, women looked for physical and economical power to escape men's control. They believed that if they attain power they can be independent and free. Thus they tried to prove that a woman's brain is equal to or bigger than those of men in size, and that a woman can also play a role in economical, political, and social affairs. However, they were ignorant of the fact that the criterion for evaluating a woman's power and value is not muscular strength, wealth, or the ability to rationalize. Rather, the lack of these factors might sometimes lead to power. This is a very important point in solving women's problems.

Some believed that if a woman does not accept becoming pregnant and a mother, forgets her delicate feminine emotions, attains physical strength and wealth, and wants the man for herself rather than vice versa, she will reach the level of man and obtain her true rights and place.

Such efforts made by European women did help to solve their problems in society but, rather, led to the rise of more obstacles before them. As a result, a **third sex** which was void of the advantages of both men and women was born.

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The instrumental view of women in the West has gone beyond sexual abuse and looks at women as an economical and political means. In addition to being paid less than men for the jobs that they do, women's sexual attractions are being used for promoting commercial products, marketing, and making more money by companies and factories. It seems as if women are only good for sexual purposes, and all the beauty and delicacies with which God has created them are merely for granting enjoyment to men and nothing else.

In order to solve women's problems, we have to totally change our view of them and cast a new look at them while trying to learn about their true identity and status in the world.

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## **A New Outlook**

We believe that there is only one solution to women's historical problem, and that is a return to the natural laws and the desires that nature has put in human beings. This is because whenever man lives in harmony with nature and does not swim against the torrent, he can live in peace and comfort and attain his rights. Nevertheless, when he does the opposite, he has to lead a difficult life and experience failure.

Men and women are the two natural phenomena and children of kind Mother Nature. In order to find the path to welfare and prosperity and, possibly, attain one's ignored rights,

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one must know **human beings**. This knowledge depends on knowing the natural essence of both men and women and the demands that nature makes on them.

After coming to know the status of men and women in **nature**, it is necessary to define human society and study their place there without closing our eyes to nature and its principles. Even human societies are natural phenomena and the creations of human natures and social instincts. The changes, motions, dynamism of human societies (as they are discussed in sociology), history, and the philosophy of history must be considered a group of those very natural laws.

If we wish to have an accurate knowledge of women and study related problems, we have to view the issue from two angles and deal with the problem in two fields: women in nature and women in society.

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## Chapter 2

### **Women in Nature**

When the field of study is limited to nature and the researcher merely tries to clarify woman's status there, the first step is to refer to the most important natural laws, values, and principles. In this way, we will be able to discover and compare woman's place at different levels of natural values with the laws of nature and nature itself, and, in this way, learn about the extent of woman's value and her known and unknown roles in nature.

If we follow this approach and study all natural laws and principles, we can conclude that the most important natural law is nothing but the '**survival of species**'. This is a point that is easily understood by everyone.

The circle of life in animate beings is based on the '**survival of generations**', and this law is practically the most important and basic of all natural laws. In fact, it is the law underlying God's creation of the world. Otherwise, the circle of being, whether in humans or in other living things, would come to a bitter end and the human species and other animate beings would be annihilated one after the other. A study of the life of

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living existents, from insects to more complete ones, reveals how, on the basis of their instincts (which are considered animate beings' hardware) and unconsciously, they try almost all their lives to survive, reproduce, and create a new generation to continue living in this world after them. They truly insist on and are serious about protecting their own species in the world.

Although observing the law of preserving the generation and reproduction is apparently necessary for both the male and female of each species, when it comes to human beings, the greatest responsibility is on woman's shoulders. She is the center of reproducing, feeding, and protecting the generation. She plays the major role in the formation of the zygote and bearing the difficulties of pregnancy. Here, she is like farm land that is harvested by the man. Clearly, the land plays a greater role in this partnership.

A short scrutiny of the above conclusion will lead us to two natural principles: 1) woman has a central role in the field of nature and shoulders the crucial and basic responsibility for preserving humanity; 2) woman's most important duty is to become a mother, give birth to children, bring them up, and protect their health. Other duties are outside the domain of her natural ones.

God has set the principles of nature in a way that each existent must perform a natural and universal duty. To aid the existent in this task, He has provided it with all the necessary tools, facilities, and emotions. For example, if we pay attention to woman's physical and emotional structures, we see that all of her inward and outward features have been created in a way to

aid her in performing this mission and duty in the best possible way and with the highest degree of motivation and enthusiasm.

A woman's physical structure, including her reproduction system, which goes from her brain down to her knees and includes different organs, nerves, and a part of her cerebrum, her height, width of shoulders, flexibility of muscles, and pelvis, has been designed so that she can comfortably perform duties such as nursing children and live her normal life. Exactly for the same reasons, she should not become involved in difficult tasks such as fighting and doing jobs requiring a powerful body and muscles. Of course, it is possible for women to do such chores and harsh jobs, but they are difficult for them and not at all in harmony with their spirits.

A woman's psychological structure is also delicate and sensitive like her body. On the one hand, she loves to have children<sup>13</sup> and can attract men towards herself by using her charms. Moreover, by arousing the instinct that God has placed in men for this very purpose, she can make him help in reproduction and satisfy her natural needs. On the other hand, in spite of all the difficulties of pregnancy and childbirth, she welcomes them wholeheartedly and takes delight in feeding babies and nursing and taking care of them.

These features show a woman's role in the field of nature and reveal how God has placed all the necessary tools and prerequisites for the survival of humanity in women by the hand of nature. Here, men are one of the required tools for the correct implementation of this task. Therefore, unlike what is

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<sup>13</sup>. The childish interest of girls in playing with dolls is a sign of this instinct.

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commonly believed, the heroes of the field of nature are women rather than men. This is because they hold the main key of nature, i.e. the survival and preservation of generations, and men play only a secondary role, i.e. helping women in providing the prerequisites, forming the zygote, and protecting the family.

It is due to this very role that we learn about women's value in nature and the world. The reason is that the real value of everything depends on the importance of its role, the natural need for it, and the dangers resulting from its absence.

However, why should such a great value remain hidden in the course of history even to women themselves? Why has no other religion, school, or ideology apart from Islam shown its importance and introduced it? An attempt to weaken women might be one of the reasons. The other is their great number and 50 percent presence in all societies. In the economic sense of the word, the wide offer of something or its abundance lowers its value for superficial people. Great presence of things and people decreases their value and turns them into normal and even cheap things and individuals.

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## Chapter 3

### **Women in Society**

When one leaves the field of nature and enters the field of human societies, one's view of woman and her situation in comparison to man changes. In this view, man occupies woman's social place; however, this situation and man's centrality in society is almost formal and superficial. The reasons for such a change of view are as follow:

First, the criteria for "value" are, to some extent, changed here. This is because the problems, obligations, and needs in a society mainly arise from its security and the guarding of the lives of its individuals rather than merely preserving the generations. Nowadays, we can see that the principle of reproduction and maintenance of generation is not taken into consideration very much. Most of the basic needs of societies in the order of importance include: security and defending one's country, politics and proper government of the society, economics and providing for humans' basic needs, employment and obtaining the vital resources for survival.

**Security:** Any society looks at itself as a living body and understands that maintaining life and providing for the welfare and health of its members depends on the life and

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health of the whole society and all of its members. This living body, i.e. society, requires, after air and food, safety in order to maintain its welfare, which directly depends on its security.

The establishment of security naturally requires the services of some members of society that are physically powerful and can defend others and fight in wars. They should also have strong nerves and souls, be courageous, and not fear danger and dealing with physical and psychological difficulties. Such characteristics are usually seen in men, and we rarely witness them in women.

This very prominent role of men in society has granted them a high social value in the course of human history. For this reason, in the early human communities, in which wars, attacks, and defense were the normal tasks of the tribes, ethnic groups, and even cities of the same land, men attained a superior position in the societies and turned into their centers. In fact, their social roles had brought them high social value.

Due to their psychological and physical weaknesses and little ability for fighting and enduring danger, women were considered second-class members of society. In some cultures, they were considered beings of low or even no value (due to the possibility of their being captured by the enemy and dishonoring their tribe) and thus humiliated or tortured. We will later evaluate such ideas and societies and discuss whether if men are responsible for protecting social security, women are responsible for protecting the generations and preventing the annihilation of societies. Therefore, both enjoy equal value and

serve the whole humanity according to a kind of natural division of tasks.

**Government and the administration of society:**

Another reason for man's superiority and centrality in society is his ability to control and maintain general order. Apparently, government, which, in the real sense of the word, means the correct administration of the society and providing and programming for people's welfare and security, depends to a great extent on the abilities that were mentioned in the part on security and defending the society. In this regard, we can refer to powerful nerves, controlled emotions, and a powerful will, which are usually seen in men rather than women. History has rarely witnessed the rule of powerful women.

Such priority and strength of men in government, politics, and the command of military forces have always been among the reasons leading to their authority in society and dominance over women.

**Economics:** In the history of mankind, the provision of food for the family and earning money has usually been the man's responsibility. In recent centuries, in spite of women's entry into the field of employment, they are still men who play the major role in providing for the family.

In the past, certain difficult tasks such as hunting, making dangerous and long journeys, and working in mines, jungles, and mountains required a powerful body, iron-like nerves, and strong will-power. Nowadays, too, the administration of economic affairs, particularly on a large scale, demands

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certain features that are usually witnessed in men. Women's jobs in different fields of works, such as economy or production, are of specific, simple, and second degree types.

As mentioned above, all societies grant a higher value and place to the men due to their significant role in maintaining the security of the country, defending it, and administrating social and economic affairs. Women themselves also acknowledge such a priority, depend on men, and expect them to perform these duties.

History tells us that women have not only accepted the apparent dominance of men over themselves but also instinctively find it pleasant. Nevertheless, we might say that one of the reasons for men's authority is women's financial dependence on them. However, even in cases where women do not have any financial needs, we can still see that they voluntarily find men qualified for leadership and accept their dominance. Of course, as mentioned before, by men's authority and leadership, we do not mean women's subordination and degradation. This is another topic that requires an independent discussion.

Shouldering the heavy responsibility of providing for his wife and family is a virtue for a man. He accepts it with honor. However, as emphasized in social and religious principles, this does not grant him the right to inhuman dominance over his wife. For example, in Islam, this is a pledge that the man makes in return for woman's critical role in the family; nevertheless, this does not make her indebted to him.

The second reason for man's central role in human societies and his high social status in comparison to woman is his specific psychological and physical characteristics, which makes her need and depend on him. In this regard, we can refer to the following reasons: 1) woman's bodily and muscular weakness and dependence on the man for doing difficult jobs, defending her and ensuring her security, 2) her being afraid of danger and accidents, 3) the man's greater rational and logical authority and greater power in solving the problems of living in society, 4) woman's financial dependence on the man in most peoples and families, and 5) women's instinctive need to rely on men and yield to his leadership and management. Accordingly, even women themselves grant a higher social value to men and officially recognize their apparent dominance.

In a scientific analysis of the issue, man's centrality in the society does not mean that woman is valueless and of a low status in society. However, most people, erroneously, consider these characteristics of women to be signs of their inferiority and men's superiority in the society.

The above two reasons and their subordinate ones have always led to men's dominance and women's subordination in both civilized and pre-civilized societies. For example, the leader of the family, the master of the tribe, and the ruler of the country is almost always a man.

We can also add a third reason to the above, i.e. the instinct for dominance and ruling in men in particular, and males, in general. In the natural structure of human beings and

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some other animals, the male always dominates the female due to his psychological and physical power and superiority. For instance, we see that from the very early years of childhood boys use their physical power to dominate girls of their own age. This natural principle is also seen in families and societies in later years, during adolescence.

Such a natural and instinctive dominance is modified and limited to a great extent in religious (Islamic) and legal systems. On the other hand, women naturally take pride in men's physical and psychological power and even feel that they need it. Women do not favor weak, obedient, and mild men, and we can even say that they hate them. A woman likes a man who can dominate her without hurting her or playing with her soul and character.

The sexual relations between a husband and wife and the quality of their bodily contact also reveals women's acceptance of dominance. It is emphasized again that women consider this situation, i.e. men's psychological and physical dominance over them to be useful for their security and life. This is because in a secret womanly view, men are the symbols of their own power and grace, as well as a means or weapon for securing the family and their honor. The more powerful this weapon, the more the benefits. That is why women easily surrender to men's authority and endure the problems and difficulties of carrying these heavy but useful weapons.

Considering these natural characteristics of men and women, the law, too, has sometimes asked women to follow men so that the foundations of family are more firmly established.

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In a short study of the reasons for men's central role in the society, we will cast a second look at the second reason (women's psychological features and their related weaknesses), which has apparently lowered their status in the society and caused their downfall from the first place in nature. Here, we will inquire into women's psychological characteristics – which are usually interpreted as their weaknesses and the reasons for blaming them – and see that they are, in fact, signs of power, and a lot of different occulted abilities and strengths are hidden behind them. They are indeed the reasons that make women dominant over men.

In spite of what appears at first sight and common assumptions, a kind of agreed upon dominance of the man is to the woman's good and not in contrast with her superiority in the field of nature. Rather, we can say with certainty that man's authority and leadership in society is, in fact, a guarantee for the successful accomplishment of woman's natural mission – preserving the human species – and not the sign of her decline in society. As well as her central role and supreme position in nature, she also has her own place in society beside man and does not turn into a low existent there just because of what

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some people call weakness. This is a point that all women should primarily learn about and believe in.

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### **1. Physical Weakness**

Unlike what most people assume, women are not physically weaker than men. Rather, it is the form and power of their muscles that make them appear weaker than men; otherwise, they are no different from men in their other organs.

The concept of women's weakness is one of the common mistakes that came to Europe as the legacy of the early Jews, Greeks, and Romans and is still spoken of everywhere. The claim that women are the weaker sex originates in the historical view of man-orientedness.

Evidently, when men are considered the criteria for evaluation, women's strengths and weaknesses are also determined in comparison to them. Since men are physically more powerful than women, the criterion for strength will be muscular and bodily power, which is normally greater in men than in women. As a result, on the basis of this illogical measure, women are considered weak and men strong. However, if the criterion for power is the ability to do the given tasks in the best way possible, our judgment of strength and weakness will be different.

As the power of an athlete lies in his muscles, the power of a philosopher lies in his reasoning; the power of a lawyer or judge lies in his judicial inferences; the power of an



army commander lies in his military plans; and the power of a speaker lies in his speech. Thus we must seek where the power of a woman lies. In other words, one's power is not always judged in terms of one's muscles, because a physically strong man might be nothing more than a toy or tool in the hands of some men or women who enjoy a greater power of administration, thought, and management. There are several examples of women who have been physically weak but more powerful than men in such respects. As experience shows, in reality, men have usually obeyed women rather than vice versa. However, superficially it appears to be the opposite.

When comparing more delicate and bigger man-made machines and objects with each other, the observer should be careful not to be deceived by appearances and assume that a big machine is always more powerful than a delicate one. This is because delicacy is not the opposite of power. In other words, one should not mistake delicacy for weakness because, sometimes, it is technically more sensitive, accurate, and powerful.

Women's psychological and physical delicacy, which is mistakenly considered their weakness, is one of their tools necessary for the performance of their vital role in nature. The relative delicacy and weakness of their bodies and muscles originates in divine wisdom and art of making. This is because He has not given them anything more than what they need to perform their main tasks. It is at this point that we can find out about the role that nature has given to them. She has not, in fact, demanded them to do what is beyond their capabilities.

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God has always observed the principle of economy and eliminating redundancies in the creation of existents. According to a natural principle, women do not require powerful muscles to perform their natural duties and main mission, and men are responsible for providing them with security and welfare. God has given women the powers, organs, and specific physical and psychological features that they need. They are also more immune against diseases and can bear them better.

Women are responsible for the survival of human species and preserving the generations. They do not need strong and muscular bodies to give birth to children and take care of them. Thus, according to natural laws, women do not need to have bigger and stronger bodies.<sup>15</sup> This is not a defect and, rather, shows their perfection. In other words, women's relative muscular weakness in comparison to men is to their advantage. That is why God has appointed men to protect and support them and do the difficult jobs. Naturally, women are exempt from such tasks and do not have to shoulder laborious responsibilities.

In return and by the hand of nature, God has granted men strong bodies and mental strengths in proportion to their natural and social duties to provide for their families, secure their safety, support them, and help women in doing their important tasks.

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<sup>15</sup>. Of course, a woman can gain physical strength if she wishes to. That is, it is not forbidden for her to strengthen her body, but she does not need to do so.

If, under improper ethical and family conditions (which might even have been created by his wife), a man harms his wife physically or psychologically (through the use of physical or verbal violence), it will be an exceptional, abnormal, and unnatural phenomenon. In fact, it must be considered a kind of disease that has plagued the relationship between the husband and wife. This is because men's greater physical and psychological power is not intended to be misused in order to abuse the family. Rather, he has been given this privilege in order to defend his wife and children against harmful factors or enemies in the best way possible. As mentioned before, defending the woman is the man's task, and that is why the necessary power in this regard has been given to him.

Fighting, defending, providing for food, and earning money by hard work outside the home requires strong hands and indefatigable nerves and a less sensitive heart. The above duties are called *Qawāmmiyat* in the Qur'an. The man is the woman's *Qawwām* (support). That is, the woman should undertake all the responsibilities related to life, childbirth, and child-rearing. According to Islamic laws, even doing the housework is not obligatory for women. The heavy burden of taking care of the family is upon men's shoulders. As Iranian women say, men are the pillars of the tent of the family.

Women have always posed the question of why men must be stronger than them, and, in a Qur'anic sense, why should men be a support for women rather than vice versa? This question results from ignorance of the natural and divine secrets. Even if God had created men and women equal in terms

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of strength, since women have their specific duties, and men's support is vital for them, He would have put women's share of power in **trust** with men, so that they would have spent it on protecting their wives and children. That is why Islam defends women strongly against men's betrayal and cruelty. This is because men's physical power must be used to the advantage of women rather than their disadvantage. In fact, the latter is a crime and worthy of punishment. Strength cannot be the man's sole honor because many animals are stronger than him. A man's honor is his responsibility of supporting his family, and this grants him a high value.

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Some people believe that women's muscular weakness is the reason for men's dominance and authority over them and say that it indicates women's pure subordination to men. As mentioned before, there is no necessary concomitance between pure dominance and bodily strength. Defining dominance in terms of greater physical power is not a complete definition because it does not include the other types of dominance in the field of human life. It is a definition based on specific animal instincts and cannot be considered an all-inclusive one.

Related examples, such as the authority of kings over their servants (dominance of power), commanders' authority over their soldiers (dominance of discipline and order), and the authority of managers of big workshops and factories over their workers (dominance of capital) reveal that authority is not measured in terms of physical power. Wealth, weapons, and

other material, or even spiritual, tools can lead to the dominance of physically weak people over physically powerful ones. This is specific to mankind and not seen in other animate beings. Therefore, in order to learn about the real referents of authority in the field of humanity, we require a more profound study of the issue. In this way, human beings' authority-related problems, including those of women, can be solved.

Apparently, power, wealth, thoughts, and even ethnic and political supports are tools of dominance. However, the story is different concerning the relationship between the man and woman. The reason is that the man's physical power, his ability to protect woman, his financial power (if he has it), and the woman's sexual and psychological need of the man's power of thinking, administration, and policies for the management of family life can turn into some tools in his hands to dominate the woman and make her follow his orders. Nevertheless, through a careful study, we can discover that woman, too, has certain tools for dominating man. If we look at the issue from another perspective, man is feeble before woman and can be dominated by her. These two types of parallel dominance finally reach a kind of balance and, as a result, peace and quiet spread in families and societies.

In the light of His justice, God has created man and woman in such a manner that they can live together under equal and fair conditions. As it appears from the Qur'an and other Islamic texts, God created man and woman from the same soul or spirit. They are like an apple that has been divided into two equal parts, each completing the other. According to Divine

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justice, neither can purely dominate the other. Rather, each is given certain abilities and talents to compromise with the other and establish a fair relationship.

If man and woman were two independent units, it would be necessary for the world and human society to be divided into two different parts, one for men and one for women. However, in reality, a couple, consisting of a man and a woman, is a human unit. The differences between their talents and characteristics does not signify their separation from each other. Rather, they show that the purposes behind creation have been completely achieved. In other words, a share of the purpose of creation has been given to the man and another to the woman.

If man has been given bodily strength, woman has been equipped with weapons which not only protect her but also take her to the summit of power. Of course, this will come true provided that she knows about the gifts that have been bestowed upon her and uses them in the right place and way.

## **2. Emotional Weakness**

Normally, women fear danger more than men. Therefore, they hate war and perilous situations. Their nerves are more sensitive and fragile than those of men, and that is why they easily lose their self-control when facing danger and start crying or screaming. Sometimes, they even faint.

Men usually view the above points as signs of women's weakness of character and disability. Even during childhood,

when playing boys do not like such womanly characteristics in girls of the same age. Therefore, they consider them to be weak and improper playmates and do not give them important roles in their games.

Likewise, when they grow into adults, some superficial people consider such apparent signs of weakness in women to be indicative of their low status in comparison to men and their authority and superiority over women. This childish feeling remains with boys until they grow into men and affects their judgment. Such unwise confrontations between boys and girls unconsciously create complexes in them and make them believe that girls have been created inferior to and weaker than boys. Obviously, such a masculine judgment in this regard is an unscientific and crude one and rooted in ignorance of the truth and the secret of God-given and innate differences.

Therefore, like their physical features, women's emotions are also one of their other strengths. This is because they do not allow men to fight them and, on the contrary, make them feel responsible for protecting, helping and supporting them. It is an honor for a man to be asked by a woman to help her in dangerous and difficult situations.

God has placed certain emotions in women due to His Wisdom and the perfect logic of creation. The appearance of the so-called weaknesses in women follows their natural duty and role in nature, i.e. the heavenly responsibility of reproduction and preserving the generation.

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In order to accomplish her tasks, woman should be more sensitive than man when dealing with enemies, danger, and natural and unnatural harms. Like security detectors, the higher their sensitivity and the sharper their sensors are, the sooner they feel danger and prevent it. With their delicate nerves, women do not take many risks and, as a result, do not have to confront danger as much as men do. This is necessary for women's critical role in taking care of children.

If we set human beings' natural sensitivity as the criterion, the equation will change and women will be considered more powerful than men. The reason is that sensitivity is one of the positive aspects of a system. However, in the law of creation, the criteria are different and are determined on the basis of the differences in roles and functions. In society, the man has the duty to defend and support his family, and thus extreme sensitivity, which is called fear – and is considered a privilege for women – is a shortcoming and weakness for men.<sup>16</sup> The essential perfection of men or women lies in what nature has left in trust with them, and in the role that they are required to play. As the saying goes, we expect the lion to attack and the deer to run away.

## **3. Dominance of Emotions over Rationality**

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<sup>16</sup> It is written in a *hadīth* that bravery and generosity are perfections for men and defects for women.



One of women's other characteristics that is usually considered to be a reason for their weakness and inferiority and even leads to men's dominance and authority in the society and family is that their emotions and feelings usually overcome their wisdom and rationality. This is rarely seen in men. In spite of having the necessary tools for rationalization, women usually allow their emotions to dominate their wisdom and intellect. That is why they are accused of being weak in rationalization. Having a delicate heart and tender emotions underlie women's tendency to love and be kind and, at the same time, hate violence, harm, and enmity. They try to love others and be loved by them.

Unlike the general belief and popular and unscientific ideas, these emotions are not absurd and have been created in women for a reason. Thus they cannot be viewed as weakness for this group of people. On the contrary, according to the Divine Wisdom and the philosophy of the creation of humanity, these emotions and feelings help women to set the pulse of social and individual life, to remove tension from the body of the family or society, to help spread calmness everywhere, and to turn war and conflicts into peace and friendship. It is with this very tool that women can show their art and talent in taming men's restless souls.

A comforting and loving role in the family and society is of great importance; however, it is often taken for granted. If women were also warlike, quarrelsome, and lacking in feelings of love and kindness, the family and, thus, the whole of human

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society would turn into a battlefield. With the disappearance of love and kindness the life of the whole of humanity would turn into a hell and, after a while, be annihilated altogether.

The woman's kindness and comforting soul, whether she is a wife or a mother, is what transforms a man's rough and adventurous nature into one abounding in the love of his wife, children, relatives and other people. God has placed such a talent and ability as a blessing in women's nature and the Holy Qur'an has also introduced them as the center of calmness and peace.<sup>17</sup> A woman's collection of emotions is a fortress that can create a secret connection between a husband and wife and make them be kind to each other. A man's natural and emotional need of a woman's love and kindness is immeasurable. It is, in fact, one of the tools that decreases feelings of selfishness and dominance in cruel and oppressive men and turns them into obedient, calm, kind, and useful people.

Men guarantee the safety of society and the family, while women provide for the psychological and spiritual comfort and security of men, the family, and society. Moreover, they use their emotions to better accomplish the duty of motherhood, the training of their children, and the bearing of the difficulties of pregnancy and labor. Men do not need such

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<sup>17</sup>. Chapter *al-Room*: verse 21: "*And of his signs is this: He created for you helpmates from yourselves that you might find rest in them, and he ordained between you love and mercy...*"

tender feelings because they prevent the optimal performance of their social tasks.

Through nature, God has granted the important task of preservation of generation to women and placed in them all the necessary tools and prerequisites to carry out this mission in the best way possible. Since they enjoy such tender feelings and a high level of sensitivity (technically, since their sensors are extremely subtle and powerful), God has equipped them with other systems that decrease the life-threatening dangers of this extremely great sensitivity. In this regard, we can refer to some reactions such as screaming and crying, which are necessary for women and prevent the destruction and impairment of their emotional systems. Therefore, these states and reactions, which are apparently rooted in weakness, are created on the basis of the Divine Wisdom and have a logic behind them. In fact, they must be viewed as their useful sensitivities rather than weak points and defects.

Another point which is hidden beyond these so-called weaknesses is women's talent for attracting, hunting and taming men. Their skillful – and sometimes even natural and unconscious – use of these natural features and talents that are placed in women, apparently in the form of weaknesses, will bring every man to his knees. Thus it is better to call the use of them the pretension to weakness. This is an instinctive feature of women and is used to prepare men to do difficult tasks voluntarily.

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With His Wisdom and Knowledge, God has not given these apparently weak sensitivities to woman out of cruelty. Rather, they are intended to be used as tools to make her look more attractive to man. In this way, she can tame and dominate him. That is why she sometimes uses her weaknesses to attract man's attention and hunt him.

Woman's emotional expressions and tears are in most cases more useful than physical power to break and subdue man because resorting to strength cannot impress his beliefs and thoughts – and his so-called heart. However, the expression of womanly emotions, such as crying or feminine behavior, is among woman's tools for overpowering man and cannot be easily taken for granted.

Physical strength and a coarse voice are not always signs of authority and power. Almighty God has created two types of dominance: the first is physical, and the second is spiritual and emotional. The latter is much more effective than the former. Tamers of wild animals are well-aware that in order to dominate them, the best policy is to be kind rather than cruel to them.

God has granted woman the power to dominate emotionally. However, she should be aware of this divine talent, gift, and inner strength and learn when and where to use it. She should also learn about her role and place in the family – and, as a result, in the whole of society – and not show her weakness by imitating the man's physical or verbal

(in the form of swearing or giving irrational answers) power. She should try not to lose her superior place and status of being a woman, i.e. establishing order and peace in the family and society and controlling the stability of others' characters and conduct.

#### **4. Material and Psychological Needs**

Some people believe that one of the reasons for woman's subordination to the man is her need for him. As mentioned before, this is a superficial, defective, and biased view of the issue. This is because they ignore man's need of woman. In the light of His justice, God has created both men and women in a way that they need each other equally so that they can manage their family and social affairs side by side with each other's help.

The most important of all these needs is sexual desire which is sometimes, erroneously, called the "maternal role" and viewed as a sign of woman's weakness, inferiority, and neediness. Sexual desire is a feeling shared by both men and women. Here, in practice, a man's need for a woman is apparently greater than the other way round. Moreover, a woman does not need to be a mother, and not being one does not decrease her value and dignity. Rather, it grants her superiority and power and increases her social value.

In order to raise his children and supervise the affairs of his house, family, property, and wealth, and even to maintain his social status, a man needs a woman. This woman, who is a

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member of at least half of the population, plays her role in society as a wife, mother, manager of the house, and sometimes protector of her husband's social credence and position.

The existence of sexual desire in the man naturally makes him need the woman, and, as a result, the constitution of the family will be consolidated; the generation will survive; and the society will be protected better. Such a desire even leads the man to give a greater value to the woman and recognize her rights officially. In a sense, the man's sexual needs make him follow the "*de jure*" diplomacy.

Provided that she is clever enough and refrains from disclosing her moral weaknesses, she can sometimes bring the man under her control in her married life by benefiting from this natural instinct. Unfortunately, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century some people, in the name of feminism, under the pretext of supporting women, and based on the claim that a woman's sexual attraction and desire cause her decline and degradation and deprive her of her rights, invited her to keep away from men and try lesbianism.

Perhaps such false protectors of women were not aware that abandoning a correct relationship with men will not only degrade women and decrease their credence but also result in certain physical and psychological damage to them. This absurd idea, which is supported and publicized by Zionists, destroys even the extremely low culture and value of women in Western societies (in which women are only needed to satisfy men's

sexual desires) and disrupts human society. This portrays a dark perspective and future for women.

Having healthy and natural sexual relations is useful, and even necessary, for women from a hygienic and medical point of view. Likewise, quitting them are equally harmful both for men and women, particularly, if they are replaced by the unnatural and noxious act of homosexuality. If the false enjoyment of this act is not taken into consideration, it will do a lot of physical, spiritual, and mental harm to people. Such disadvantages might lead to mania or mental diseases and nervous breakdowns.

## **5. Motherhood**

In the field of feminism, some of the women's so-called supporters make some false complaints about their social degradation and say that motherhood is one of the reasons for this. Thus they invite women to pursue a masculine life and abandon their natural duties in this regard.

Such a perception of the above role is extremely superficial and the given conclusion is biased. Motherhood is so important in the structure of creation that most human powers and instincts can be considered as its prerequisites. A woman's beauty, her physical and spiritual delicacy, men's sexual desires and strong motivation for paying attention to women, and women's use of tens of different natural and artificial methods in order to attract the opposite sex makes men gravitate to them

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either consciously or unconsciously and encourages them to share in the process of childbirth. All of this is at the service of an important goal, i.e. production of later generations (from pregnancy to childbirth and child-rearing). This proves the importance of motherhood and its natural, social, and human value.

A woman's sexual attraction, on the one hand, and her role of motherhood, on the other, are two powerful natural and social factors that attract men and give her place and status in the family and society formal recognition. Whenever this status is well-recognized, maintained and used by clever women, it has enabled them to reach high levels in society and even bring men under their control. On the contrary, whenever women have lacked the necessary intelligence and knowledge for maintaining their status, they have turned into sexual slaves and a means for the temporary satisfaction of men's desires and whims. Or, at best, they have turned into child-making machines. The decline from such a divine status is nobody's fault, but that of a group of women who have not made optimal use of their God-given gifts and talents and fallen into the trap of friendly-looking propaganda of the enemies of humanity, including those of women, or been captured by their own sexual desires.

Motherhood and having the children of a man who needs and loves children, in most cases, brings a kind of authority and honor for woman and makes her husband dedicated to serving her and his family more than ever before.



Some women, because they are unaware of their status or because of other women's malice and bad teaching, view the responsibilities of motherhood as a compulsory job, hard labor, or the like. Now the question is, 'why do they not make the opposite judgment?' 'Why do they not consider men as slaves who, in spite of their coarse voice and harsh behavior and spirit, stay at the service of their wives and families like captives, endure thousands of hardships, pains, and humiliations in order to provide for their comfort and welfare?'

## **6. A Sex-Oriented View of Woman**

Sometimes, in addition to women's outward weakness, which is viewed as a sign of their imperfection, the sex-oriented and whimsical approach to women introduces them as a means for satisfying men's sexual desires. This by itself is considered a kind of weakness and the cause of their degradation and inferiority in the society. This is one of the big mistakes of some European societies and, as mentioned before, has been emphasized in Jewish and Christian religious literature.

Men and women are the two sides of a natural principle, i.e. the responsibility to produce and preserve the human generation. They complete each other and their copulation is based on the "principle of duality and matrimony in nature" and in creation. Accordingly, except for God (Who, based on rational and philosophical arguments, is one), all material creatures must complete the process of creation with a

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kind of duality and live in matrimony. God has placed the instinct for sexual desire in the nature of all animals so that they go towards the opposite sex automatically and, in this way, the purpose of the nature is obtained through a bilateral relation between them.

However, ever since early times, women have been recognized as the objects of sexual desire and men's satisfaction in human societies. This erroneous point of view claims that men are the sole purpose of creation and, like other God-given gifts in nature, women have been created to give them (sexual) pleasure.

The above is a primitive, common-place, and far from natural principle to which religions and some philosophical schools have referred. As mentioned before, according to the law of nature, women are mainly responsible for raising children and protecting the human generation from destruction and annihilation. In order to help a woman to accomplish this task in the best possible way, a man must do certain tasks including having sexual intercourse with his wife, helping to raise the children, and providing for everything that his family needs.

The necessary psychological and physical tools are placed in women and men, respectively, to perform this task. If we do not say that women are more in need of men in order to satisfy their sexual desires, we must, at least, say that they are equal in terms of this specific instinct, and each plays the role of water in extinguishing the fire in the other. Here, the man has

no superiority over woman and has the same share in this relationship.

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In order to illustrate the logical and natural relationship between men and women and their mutual need of each other which leads to a kind of contract and agreement (marriage), we can cite the following example: imagine a workshop or factory that specializes in producing a certain kind of product but cannot produce its raw materials. At the same time imagine another factory that specializes in producing the raw materials for the first factory and delivers them to that place. Both of them require each other and if one of them refuses to comply with the terms of the contract or contradicts them, the other one will suffer a loss. In fact, their cooperation and shared production is to the advantage of both of them.

Each needs the other, and the need of the producing workshop of the deliverer of the raw materials is not a defect or sign of its weakness. The opposite also holds true. That is, the need of the latter for a buyer for the production of the product is not a defect.

The relationship between a husband and a wife is based on a mutual need beyond which a great purpose – survival of humanity – lies. God has placed an instinct in the two sexes' natures to drive them to each other in order to have physical and spiritual pleasures. In fact, they need each other in a logical manner.

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Thus a woman gives as much sexual pleasure to a man as he gives to her. Even, according to some religious texts, 90% of the pleasure in the intercourse is for women and only 10% for men. There are also some ill-effects in this process for men.

However, the common view in this regard introduces woman as an inferior and lonely creature who is nothing but a means for voluptuousness and sexual pleasures and has failed to perceive the natural and scientific dimensions of this issue for two reasons: the first is her physical characteristics, such as her skin and the way she moves, and the other is her ingenuity in hiding her sexual desires and whimsical looking at men. The latter is rooted in a kind of pride and refusal and becomes manifest in pretending not to need men and keeping away from them. These two feelings, along with men's tendency for power and authority, have turned women into sources of sexual pleasure and men's only means of enjoyment. We can even say that they are considered the only womanly roles and their other values have been forgotten.

The other reason in this regard is women's irrational pretensions in all periods, particularly in the present century, that take the form of nudity and presenting their bodies as a commercial product for men's short term consumption.

This phenomenon which was started by Western women and publicized by anti-human movements and schools defined two roles for women: 1) the woman is a means of satisfying the man's sexual desires; 2) the woman is cheap labor. Unfortunately, following this social phenomenon, which

later turned into a habit and culture, women signed the document of their slavery unknowingly. In this way, they went back centuries, i.e. to the pre-historic uncivilized world and did not understand that they hold a higher place in creation. This is because they are the main pole of the nature and one of the two basic pillars of the human society. Moreover, they have various dimensions only one of which is the sexual one, which, of course, exists in both men and women. However, from the time women tried to introduce themselves as symbols and centers of sexual desire through their individual and social behavior, their other values were forgotten, and they were introduced as a means for the satisfaction of men's passions and lust. As a result, from all that God-given glory, nothing remained for woman and she declined into a doll for men's short-term pleasure.

Strangely enough, the women who introduce themselves as the symbol of sex by revealing their bodies and arousing men intend to prove that this is their most conspicuous characteristic. In this way, they ignore their other capabilities, values, and important responsibilities (which are no less than ruling a country in terms of importance) in nature and society and remain at the level of a sexual tool for men. The interesting point is that these men themselves sometimes complain about women's low social status!

Like women, men also have a sexual dimension and role; however, we see that, by recognizing and attaching importance to their social role, they conceal the sexual one in

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practice and always try to introduce themselves as people with other various significant social responsibilities. What is the reason for the fact that in non-religious societies men are not recognized as symbols of sexual desire while women are? Is it not just because women themselves have been guilty in the process of the degradation of their social rank?

In order to keep away from becoming the focus of lust and desire in society, in addition to religious (Islamic) laws and principles, women have access to certain talents and instincts. Women inherently pretend that they do not need men and take no heed of them (we can see this in Eastern women more than in Western women). This instinct, while being one of nature's beautiful tricks for attracting men more towards women, raising women's value in their eyes, and preventing their impotence, functions to prevent women's identity from unidimensionality, protect their social status, and guard other feminine values in the society.

One of the philosophies behind women's covering themselves (or *hijāb*) is to protect women's social status and honor and safeguard them against becoming prey to sexual harassment and other threats. Women's nudity in Western or westernized countries is publicized with the purpose of attracting men. However, it has sometimes had some opposite consequences and led to men's impotence and heedlessness of women. As a result, women's need for men has increased and, in spite of a rise in the supply, there has been a fall in the demand. That is why in Western societies a woman has a lower

status in comparison to that in Eastern and, particularly, in Muslim societies. Moreover, there are fewer cases of marriage and forming a family in the West than in the East.

In the shelter of her *hijāb* and proper clothing, a woman can conceal her sexual characteristics and dimensions to a great extent in society. In this way, in normal social evaluations, her other personal dimensions and important roles (social, scientific, political, etc.) are revealed more clearly.

Like men, a woman must be an official member of an office, a respectable citizen in a formal or informal environment, an influential and learned person in a scientific and cultural center, a political person in a political environment, and, in sum, an efficient, active, and dignified person in any possible area. She should behave in a way that her sexual attraction, which is a part of her private family life, does not catch others' eyes and is forgotten.

When a woman wears *hijāb* (covers most of her body), she is not a tool in men's hands or a product for their consumption. As a result, she insures herself against threats to her life and honor, prevents men's arousal when encountering them, and does not share in their wrong-doings or make them involve in inappropriate acts or commit any crime. In this way, she guarantees her own safety and helps to the establishment of security in the society.

Nowadays, by disseminating their destructive culture, the hidden hands of the enemies of humanity all over the world and, particularly, in the West, pretend that the necessary

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condition for the equality of men and women is that women should do whatever men do. For example, they should remove their *hijāb*, forget about their chastity, and break the fortress of their continence. This is the first step for driving women astray and making them deviate from the road of nature and fall from their true status.

The equality of men and women in their social rights does not necessitate, and is not concomitant, with their becoming naked or even working in factories. Rather, it lies in a woman's concealing her strong sexual attractions and desires in society and outside the family. In this way, like a man, she will have sexual security, and society will have enough time to officially recognize her character and respect her significant natural and social roles, far from her sexual characteristics.

When dealing with the problem of the two sexes, Islam and other religions have always tried to establish a rational system as the norm so that both of them can accomplish their tasks, perform their roles, and respect each other's God-given values and gifts.

A woman's *hijāb* is one of the proper and rational divine traditions that has been established to encourage people to recognize all of her values rather than merely her sexual characteristics.

Controlling a woman's sexual attractions, particularly her beautiful and seductive physical structure, at the level of the society (and not in her private life with her husband) is one of the wise and rational principles that can function efficiently for



protecting public order in every community. This is because women's sexual manifestations are not only totally to the disadvantage of their true characters, but also cause disorder, endanger social health, weaken the constitution of the family, threaten children's psychological health, and even cause an increase in the rate of crime and murder.

An analysis of the terrible statistics concerning the level of crimes and murder, the unstable bases of families, the ever-increasing number of illegitimate children, and the bitter and destructive impacts of this phenomenon on future generations in the so-called civilized and developed Western countries reveals to a great extent the dangerous and ill effects of sexual freedom and women's nudity or half-nakedness.

One of the most important problems of today's woman is her wandering between two opposite poles and having doubts concerning which to follow. One of these poles consists of religion, ethics, social and human order, which invite women to refuse to transgress taboos and selling the guard of her character (covering herself by wearing *hijāb*). They also encourage her to high-mindedness and magnanimity of taste.

The other pole that follows its own advantages (and possibly the spread of corruption among human beings) and has various names and masks uses women's nakedness and impiety as a tool to collect money and draw huge benefits. The advocates of this pole view women as a beautiful object or commodity, as well as a commercial product.

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One of these poles is the women's friend and the other is her enemy. It is the woman herself who should decide which to choose provided that she has the power to make the right judgment.

Woman is the much-loved and honored creature of God and, as the saying goes, "the art of creation". God wishes for her, as a human being, to have grace, honor, reverence, and prosperity. Accordingly, He has prohibited anything or any act that blocks her access to them. It is a great mistake and childish idea for women to assume that God has been unkind to them by setting certain restrictions for them such as wearing *hijāb*! One who believes in this idea is as foolish as a jeweler who views the security recommendations of the police enmity to him or all the jewelers and wishes to leave his goods unprotected in his shop at night and go home.

A woman's means of prosperity and true happiness (her physical, spiritual, and behavioral advantages or her sexual attractions), which can give order to her life, are threatened by those thieves who want to rob her of her character and use it easily for their own or other men's temporary pleasure. They also intend to use her for commercial purposes and to obtain more benefits. That is why Islam and various philosophies have arrived at the conclusion that, due to the specific features with which they have been created and are the means to their happiness and well-being, women have to be more careful about themselves than men. In fact, they must make a fortress around

this invaluable treasure and do not allow the eyes and hands of the enemies and violators of chastity endanger their security.

In almost all human cultures, there have been people or even objects that have been kept away from being met or touched by ordinary people and respected greatly. In the sociology of religions, they are called “taboos”. The elders of tribes and the religious leaders and prophets of divine religions enjoyed the same privileges and were referents for taboos. It is important to emphasize that in the culture of divine religions, woman enjoys the station of a taboo. That is why she is called “*haram*” in Arabic. This name is only given to holy places. Like other taboos, no one, except for people who have the right to do so, has the right to touch or watch a woman.

In its sociological sense of the word, a “taboo” is a thing or person who enjoys a kind of sacredness and respect, and ordinary people are forbidden to have contact with it. Otherwise, they have sinned and, thus, will be punished by unseen forces and rejected by others. Taboos have always existed in this sense in all religions, cultures, and lands.

In a religious culture, the woman has such a station, i.e. unlike what is nowadays considered a kind of advanced culture in the West, she enjoys spiritual sacredness, and there are certain rules for touching and shaking hands with her. If these rules are not observed, the order of society will be disrupted.

Woman herself, due to her not being a lifeless and indecisive person and enjoying all human rights and values, is to take this respectable station into consideration and does not

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remove her covering. She must also observe certain rules, principles, and limits when having physical contact with others. She must not shake hands with men or have any bodily contact with them so that her honor and public order are secured. This limitation is worth the resulting social discipline, honor, respect, and values. In fact, they make the possible difficulties and pains of wearing *hijāb* easy to endure for women.

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The points discussed in the part on women's status in society prove that, in spite of the so-called weaknesses in women that come to mind in comparison to men and function as excuses for feminist propaganda, they have some talents and capabilities which, if used properly and consciously, can help them learn about their social status and value and true God-given place. In this way, they will look at themselves as one of the main pillars of the society, as well as the center of nature.

As mentioned before, with the natural abilities and tools that have been placed in her in the form of various emotions, in spite of her outward weakness, woman can even influence man's physical strength. If she fails to do so, it is because of her own weakness and does not indicate nature's cruelty. In fact, as the natural and essential rights of men and women are equal, so are their authority and power, provided that we do not limit them to physical strength.

Historical evidence also indicates that women have sometimes managed to become the real rulers of their houses,

families, or even countries. In such cases, their husbands, despite their outward strengths and social position, have obeyed their wives' will and decisions. Even in normal life, in which men are apparently violent or cruel, women's secret but final and true dominance and superiority are still perceivable.

Woman's true weakness and the main reason of her fall from a high level of honor, glory, and grace, which (according to the text of the Holy Qur'an) God has granted to her does not originate in men's cruelty and society's abuse of them. Rather, it lies in her taking no heed of her true place and unfamiliarity with the "philosophy of woman".

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## **Chapter 4**

### **Islam and Women**

*A* study of different cultures, traditions, religions, and their views of men, as well as a purely scientific analysis of the woman in the fields of nature and society, which has, for the first time, been presented in this treatise, reveals that, as a religion, culture, tradition, and ideology, Islam has a comprehensive view of woman. This view is based on her natural and essential rights, begins with the principles of the genesis of human beings (the story of eating the forbidden fruit), and then continues with explaining all the stages of the woman's life, whether from a natural and social aspect or from a legal and philosophical one. In what follows, we will cast a look at the above mentioned issues from an Islamic point of view:

#### **1. Principle of the Creation of Woman**

The first point concerns the principles of woman's creation beside the man (Adam and Eve). Unlike the Torah and

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other Jewish texts, the Qur'an maintains that woman and man have been created from a single substance or common soul that God has breathed into their bodies. However, the difference is that He first created the man and then the woman. This succession is not a temporal one; rather, it refers to a kind of relationship, pursuance, and copulating (*al-A'raf* chapter: verse 189; *al-Zumar* chapter: verse 6; *al-An'am* chapter: verse 98)

The word "pair" (*zøj*) is frequently used in the Qur'an to show that a man is incomplete without a woman, and that they are inseparable from each other. In more precise terms, neither a man nor a woman is the referent and true instance of a human being without the other. This is because each lacks certain spiritual elements that exist in the other. In sum, they are equal to each other.

The incorrect and distorted interpretation of the story of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib in the Torah has led the Jewish and Christian clergy to view women as lower than men and deprive them of many of their human rights.<sup>21</sup>

This view also affected the cultures of Christian, Jewish, Greek, and Roman peoples. The two Christian and Roman cultures coincided in the Catholic branch of Christianity and created a false view against women. They went so far as introducing remaining single or abandoning married life as one of the ways of keeping away from evil and its temptations.

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<sup>21</sup>. In the interpretation of Qur'anic verses, the People of the Prophets' House (*Shi'i* Imāms) have said, "Could God not create Eve from something other than Adam's chest rib? When Adam was created, he saw the woman beside himself and asked who the creature that resembled him was. Then the revelation came, 'She is Eve, my other creature and your wife'."



The religious interpretations of women's place and honor, whether positive or negative, influence to a great extent social opinions and behaviors and even cultures. Islam has done women a great service to in this regard and voted for their superior status in nature and law.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, unlike earlier religions and ideas, Islam views men and women to be equal in humanity and their essential rights. According to Islamic principles, woman, like a man, has certain obligations and must obey the law. In return, she has certain rights that are divided into three categories: human rights, common civil rights, and the rights arising from the division of labor (which we will refer to later).

For human beings, having obligations is more important than having rights. This is because it is the sign of spiritual maturity, talent, intellect, the ability to distinguish between the good and evil, and free will. None of these virtues exists in animals, the young and insane; therefore, according to religious principles and the law, although they enjoy certain rights, the latter do not have to observe the law and follow the existing principles.

## **2. The First Sin**

As mentioned before, according to the Old Testament or the Torah, Adam and Eve lived a good life in Paradise; however, when Eve was deceived by evil and ate the forbidden

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fruit, she forced Adam to do the same. As a result of her sin, Adam was also expelled from the heaven (*Genesis*, 3: 16).

According to historical-religious Jewish texts, Christian and Jewish religious men consider woman as the first and principal sinful creature and believe that she must pay the penalty for this sin and be blamed and humiliated until the end of her life.

Nevertheless, the Qur'an does not prefer either Adam over Eve or Eve over Adam. Rather, it says, "*But Satan caused them to deflect there from and expelled them from the (happy) state in which they were, and we said: Fall down, one of you the foe unto the other! There shall be for you on earth a habitation and a provision for a time.*" (*al-Baqarah* chapter: verse 35-36)

Even in the following verse ("*Then Adam received from his Lord words (of revelation), and He relented toward him...*"), He says that Adam repented and not both of them. Here, we can infer that the main culprit was Adam. This point has also been emphasized in Persian literature.

According to these verses and the general view of the Qur'an and Islamic *Sunna* of woman, she is neither the main culprit nor has to be punished in this world. Pregnancy and child labor bring honor to women but motherhood is the cause of their holiness. The man requires the woman in order to have children and raise them. He does his best to provide for his wife's welfare and comfort in life. According to Islamic law, a woman's sole duty at home is to satisfy her husband's sexual desires, become pregnant, and raise children. She does not have to do any other thing at home, whether easy or difficult, and

thus a Muslim woman does all the household chores voluntarily and without any religious or legal obligation. Islam has also removed heavy social responsibilities such as military service, fighting, and *jihād* from women's shoulders.

### 3. Woman's Social Rights

Woman has a valueless social role in the Roman and Greek cultures and the Christian and Jewish ideologies. In contrast, in Islam she has an important role in society and enjoys the same rights as men in the field of politics. She can have her basic rights realized and elect the members of the government. For example, the first time in the history that women obtained the right to determine their own future was in the Holy Prophet's time. At that time, the Prophet (pbuh), according to the order of the Qur'an (*al-Mumtahinah* chapter: verse 12), allowed women to vote for the leader of the Islamic government (known as *bey'at* or swear to allegiance). In another place (*al-Tawbah* chapter: verse 71), the order has also again been given to the Prophet (pbuh) to grant the right to vote to women and familiarize them with the new civil laws and penal codes of the government so that they do not commit any criminal acts and, as a result, do not receive a punishment. The above points reveal the equality of men and women in their fundamental and civil rights. Like their obligations, women's right to vote and her other rights are separate from those of men, and this shows their originality and independence in the

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society.<sup>22</sup> As we will discuss later, exactly like a man, a woman is responsible for her acts and obligations before God and society. She is independent in performing this responsibility and her character is valid and officially recognized.

One of the signs of human beings' social rights is their social responsibility. In Islamic law, men and women are equal in terms of their social duties. According to Islamic law, "all people are responsible before each other (like a shepherd before his flock)."<sup>23</sup> There is no difference between men and women in this regard. Therefore, women are responsible for the prevention of social diversion and corruption not only among themselves but also among men. Today, Muslim women perform this duty naturally in society.

One of the other common social rights and obligations of men and women is their responsibility for social inspection or, in the Qur'anic sense, the law of "bid good and prohibit doing evil". In other words, they should encourage people to behave correctly and warn them in a friendly manner against doing wrong deeds and breaking the law.<sup>24</sup> According to this law, both men and women, enjoy "*wilāyah*", i.e. the legal right to stand against social diversion, suppression of moral values, and even the political mistakes of government people and bid or prohibit. As we know, these two acts are something other than demand and plead. They require a kind of official right according to which women have legal authority over others,

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<sup>22</sup>. A woman has certain obligations in her married life and must act in coordination with her husband when making joint decisions in family life.

<sup>23</sup>. An Islamic *hadīth*.

<sup>24</sup>. *al-Tawbah* chapter: verse 71.

whether men or women, in order to guide them. God has granted this fundamental right to them, and as we know, a fundamental right cannot be negated by means of normal laws. This indicates that women are qualified and have the necessary talents and prerequisites to enjoy this right.

This law and the previous one reveal the warp and woof of the human society from the viewpoint of Islam. Here, both men and women, without one being superior to the other, build this human structure and perform their specific roles in creating an honorable and healthy society and protecting its values. This reveals woman's high character and equality with man.

Woman's peripheral roles and tasks, such as doing the housework, taking care of children, and the like, can never tarnish or decrease her real value and social status. By no means are they the signs of her inferiority to men. Likewise, doing low-level jobs can never harm men's main rights and human character.

#### **4. Woman's Essential Dignity**

The issue of "human dignity" has no philosophical place in the common law of the world. Nevertheless, it has been explained in form of a fundamental philosophical principle in Islam (and in the Qur'an). The Western schools of thought that claim to have dealt with this topic cannot offer any natural and essential cause for it, and thus what they say remains merely at the level of an unfounded claim. Although Europe became

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familiar with this issue after the rise of Islam and after the conquest of the Muslim Spain, it never tried to find its natural roots.

However, Islam believes that human beings enjoy essential and innate dignity because, according to the text of the Holy Qur'an, they are God's vicegerents and successors on earth. They are responsible for His other creatures, and, evidently, enjoy more dignity and grace than other earthly creatures and are superior to them. The sublime position of being God's successor brings grace and honor by itself. God has given this as an essential gift to human beings along with their existence.

This dignity is equally shared by men and women and no one can deprive either of them (for example, the woman) from it by force or deception. It is the human being himself or herself who can lose this dignity by committing sins, i.e. breaking the laws of nature (which God has sent to them in the name of religions). The criterion for this dignity before God is "piety". This issue has been explicitly emphasized the Qur'an.<sup>25</sup> The important point here is that, like men, women also enjoy the position of divine vicegerency on earth and essential dignity. There is no higher station for human kind than this, and as we see, there is no difference between the two sexes in this regard. Rather, we might even say that a pious woman enjoys more grace and dignity than a pious man and holds a higher place than him.

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<sup>25</sup>. *al-Hujarat* chapter: verse 13.

Islam is the only religion that openly and unlike all misogynistic traditions introduces woman as man's equal in humanity and defines her social and familial positions in plain terms. It also limited to a great extent their duties in the social division of labor and, due to their natural important role – which is called “motherhood” in practice, granted them a high place in the social domain. At the same time, it released them from a great number of tasks and duties that were more compatible with men's natural powers and talents. However, this does not mean that their essential or social degree and status is lower than those of men. The denial of such masculine duties to women can even, in a sense, be considered an extra credit for them. As we can see, God has set certain superiorities for women; for example, He says in the Qur'an, “*Make them superior to yourself.*”<sup>26</sup> The Holy Prophet (pbuh) says, “Paradise is under the feet of mothers” and recommends fathers to be kinder to their daughters.

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We cannot decide, based on the social division of tasks, which duties are more suitable for women, and which difficult social tasks have been removed from their shoulders. Likewise, we cannot claim that household chores (doing the housework) should specifically be done by women.<sup>27</sup> In Islam, woman does

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<sup>26</sup>. *al-Room* chapter: verse 23.

<sup>27</sup>. Working in the house has a vaster meaning and is mainly used in the sense of taking a greater moral and spiritual care of the husband and children and preparing them for performing their social duties, protecting their

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not have to work in the house, but she has been asked to marry (preferably in a friendly manner), have children and, in her married life, look at everything that is directly related to these two moral and natural duties (giving a positive response to sexual relationships with her husband and taking care of her children and, particularly, her babies) as necessary obligations.

According to her natural and social duty, the woman is responsible for giving birth to children and protecting them. However, she has never been forbidden any social work and partnership with men in political and governmental affairs which do not interfere with her main responsibilities, unless she considers them to be heavy jobs or obstacles to her natural and religious duties. A woman's working in society means accepting a kind of extra work. However, if it endangers her mental and sometimes physical health, it is not usually to her good and advantage. Of course, if she can dispense with her peace and comfort, there is no problem with her having a job. From an Islamic point of view, there is no defect in the woman that makes her incapable of doing social jobs and tasks.

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## 5. Heaven and the Hereafter

In some Jewish and Christian texts, woman is not considered worthy of heaven and her good deeds are said not to be taken into consideration in the Hereafter. In contrast to such

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mental security and peace, and the like in the home. This is called "taking care of a husband in the best way possible" in *hadith*.



decrees of the clergymen of other religions and the oppressive culture of Arabs in the Period of Ignorance, the Qur'an says in several places, "*Whoever does good deeds, whether male or female, and he (she) is a believer, such will enter paradise.*"<sup>28</sup>

Being qualified to enter Heaven is the highest honor and privilege for human beings among all other creatures. According to the Qur'anic verses and the Prophet's *Sunna*, not only such holy women as Lady Fāṭima Zahra (as) (the Prophet's honorable daughter) and the Blessed Virgin (as) but also all faithful and pious women have a sublime place there, exactly in the same way that faithful men do. This is another reason for the equality of men and women, and men's official privileges and responsibilities in the society cannot contradict it.

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The issues discussed so far represent Islam's view of women in terms of their creation, status, and essential dignity in a brief comparison to those of other cultures, Judaism, and Christianity in this regard. Evidently, the short explanations provided above cannot present a comprehensive discussion of what Islam offers on this topic. However, it might be useful as an introduction to the issues in the field of philosophy of women in Islam.

The Islamic philosophical view of women is the foundation of women's rights in Islam. The Qur'an introduces Islam as a religion in harmony with nature (*fiṭrat*). That is,

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<sup>28</sup>. *al-Nisa* chapter: verse 124; *al-Ahzab* chapter: verse 35.

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Islamic laws conform to natural laws and are rooted in them. Therefore, all Muslims should bring their lives into harmony with its nature and principles. Woman's rights in Islam can be viewed as rights that nature has determined for her considering her physical and mental structures. Her spiritual and bodily characteristics necessitate the devising of a series of specific rights (different from those of men), and Islam has taken this important point into account. Unfortunately, women themselves have an incomplete knowledge of such critical differences and are only aware of the existence of some outward physical or spiritual differences between men and themselves.

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*Women's Rights*

**A Comparison of Women's Human and Civil  
Laws in Islam and in the Universal Declaration of  
Human Rights**



## Introduction

*I*n order to begin a comparative study of women's human rights in Islam and in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is first necessary to cast a glance, however short, at the history of human rights and the development of related laws.

The writer believes that the first founders of human general laws were the prophets and heavenly religions. In fact, all the human efforts to introduce or revive these rights during the previous centuries have been, consciously or unconsciously, rooted in the religious cultures inherited from past times.

In the some-thousand year history of human culture and civilization, similar efforts have been made mainly by kings and rulers of the time with motives which are neither very sublime nor human. As a result of such activities, in addition to the specification of the rights of the social elite, some laws were also designated for the public, and some references were made to human rights.

The first efforts in this regard have been attributed to Hammurabi, the ruler of Babylon, in about 1700 BC. Some others believe that the Charter of Human Rights declared by the Cyrus the Great, the king of Iran and conqueror of Babylon,

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who granted freedom to Jews and other nations about 15 centuries later, was the first manifesto of human rights.

History also records in this regard some less important attempts by other political and academic figures of the world. For example, we can refer to some activities in Greece and Rome which were mainly limited to lectures and writings in academies and not very useful to humanity.

The last effort made in this regard was the manifesto that the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed to the world on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1948 called the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. The authorities of this organization believed that they had presented the latest achievements of human beings in order to maintain and support the essential and original rights of all individuals.

Here, it is necessary to refer to two fundamental flaws. First, the main historical roots of this declaration, either deliberately or due to ignorance, have been neglected and the undeniable effects of Islamic culture on it have not been taken into consideration.

Of course, we can refer to several political, economic, and cultural factors underlying the French Revolution, the English Glorious Revolution, and other movements in the world. Some of them include the cruelty and injustice of rulers in the Middle Ages, the dictatorship of churchmen, extreme poverty in society, cruel social classifications, and tens of other similar issues. However, the first sparks of knowledge and the principiality of human identity originated in the original

teachings of heavenly religions and, particularly, in the brilliant and dynamic Islamic culture. The influence of this culture can be clearly seen in the thoughts of philosophers, jurists, and even rulers of the world, and it has frequently turned into a source of inspiration for revolutions and formulation of justice-spreading laws to the advantage of the majority of people in various societies.

It is not very difficult to demonstrate the existence of such a cultural relation; however, it requires some necessary and independent studies. This issue has also been explicitly and implicitly confirmed in the works of some Western scholars themselves. Here, we will suffice to a statement from Dozi, the Dutch Orientalist (in *Histoire des Musulmans d’Espagne* or *History of the Muslims of Spain*) saying, “The slogan of ‘Liberty – Equality – Fraternity’, in the French Revolution has been borrowed from Andalusian Muslims.”

A study of the history of the West, from the time of Charlemagne until recent centuries, clearly reveals the impact of Islamic culture on modern European culture. Some scholars such as Thomas Aquinas, who had taken the main principles of his knowledge and philosophy from the Islamic East, can also be seen among them. Therefore, it is likely that European jurists and social philosophers such as Rousseau, Voltaire, and Montesquieu had been influenced by the Islamic manifesto of human rights, which after about 2 centuries led to the adopting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations Organization.

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It is also worth knowing that Hammurabi's Charter was also devised about 200 years after the mission of Ibrāhīm Khalīl (as) (Abraham) and the spread of the heavenly culture of human rights and human freedom of that prominent prophet. Therefore, it is very unlikely that Hammurabi had not been influenced by Islamic culture in developing his law code.

### **Defects of the Worldview Dominating the Declaration of the United Nations**

The second point concerns the basic defects of this clamorous declaration and the worldview dominating it. There are some weak points in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared by the United Nations. They originate in the weak insight and defective worldview of its devisers.

The first shortcoming of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights pertains to its form. In fact, it is nothing more than a manifesto and merely contains some pieces of advice and words of wisdom. It has no sanction and does not even specify any clear commitments for governments and rulers in order to put its content into practice.

Another great problem of this declaration which arises from its nature and substance and testifies to the weak insight dominating it is that the concept of "human being" as used therein lacks the necessary universality and inclusiveness in the culture and worldview of its devisers. It is rooted in a culture that has always excluded a group of people from the circle of humanity. As we know, Western thought, which is derived from



Greek and Roman culture, is based on racial discrimination and the superiority of some races over others.

In ancient Greece, they believed that no one except Athenians, or perhaps other Greeks, was a perfect man. They called strangers and, particularly, slaves, barbarians, or savage people. That is why their successors, i.e. Romans, named their civil law “Jus-Gentium” or the human rights. Plato, who was the chief of all divine philosophers not only in Greece but also in the West, said, “I thank God for my having been born a Greek, not a non-Greek, a free man not a slave, and a man not a woman.” This very philosophical basis turned into Nazism or the originality of Anglo-Saxon race or white people’s priority over colored ones later, which has led to an unending line of massacres in history.

The idea of dividing human beings into different classes has a long history and no civilization or school of thought, except heavenly religions, has denied it. If any school or ideology ever removes the common classifications of its time on the surface, it will replace them with another one that is once again based on discrimination.

For example, in Hammurabi’s time, people were divided into three groups of aristocracy, middle class, and the third class. Similar classes also existed in various forms in Egypt, China, the Far East, India, ancient Iran, Greece, and Rome. We can even witness the impacts of Egyptian and Roman cultures in this regard on the religious ideas of Jews and Christians.

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Zionist Jewish scholars always introduced their own people as the chosen and superior ones and others as inhuman existents who had been created in order to serve the Jewish race.<sup>19</sup> Christian scholars, instead of trying to remove such discriminations, were influenced by their ideas and believed that non-Christians were deprived of many rights.

It has been said about Saint Ambrose (340-397), the religious leader of Christianity, who is believed by some to be the founder of Western International Law, that he did not consider non-Christians a part of human society and maintained that divine human rights exclusively belong to Christians. The same idea has also been attributed to other religious leaders such as Saint Augustine.<sup>20</sup>

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Another important problem of this Declaration is its use of a limited concept of freedom and slavery. The Declaration can be summed up in two terms: human respect – human freedom.

However, the above two concepts have been imprisoned in a petty framework and under a low roof. They lack the glory and depth with which human respect and freedom have been defined in the Qur'an. This problem of the declaration of human freedom, which has been devised by a group of human beings, either originates in the weak perception

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<sup>19</sup>. Muḥammed Khalīfah al-Tunī, *al-Khatar al-Yahudi*, p. 56.

<sup>20</sup>. Saḡdar, *General International Law*, vol. 1, pp. 126-127.

of the creators of such concepts or in the very specific European culture that has been derived from the racist Greek and Roman law.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Article of the Declaration talks about slavery: “No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.” Here, it limits the concept to buying and selling human beings. On the other hand, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (as), defines the concept of slavery in Islam by the following short but glorious sentence: “Do not be a servant to anyone since God has created you a free person.”<sup>21</sup> When we compare the former concept with the latter or the one presented in *al-Tawba* chapter: verse 31, “*They take their priests and their anchorites to be their lords in derogation of Allah...*”, we see that according to the Declaration, blindfolded and irrational obedience to priests and Christian monks is equal with worship and servitude to God. Clearly, Islam greatly despises this attitude and such an understanding of the concepts of slavery and freedom.

The meaning of freedom in the eye of the United Nations is that no one must be a slave to another; however, Islam does not see freedom merely in negating apparent slavery. Rather, it believes that one is free provided that his soul, body, thought, and intellect are free, and no one can imprison them.

According to the freeborn literary man, George Gordache,

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<sup>21</sup>. *Nahj al-balagheh*.

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The freedom that is referred to in the language and words of Imām ‘Ali (the expressive language of Islam) is what creates civilizations and human revolutions and plants the seeds of philanthropy and trustworthy relationships among people ... In view of Imām ‘Ali (and Islam), freedom is the basis of other human rights.

According to Islam, slavery is also equal to being a prisoner to one’s low and animal instincts, accepting the humility of serving oppressors and dastardly people and being captured by love of wealth and position, gluttony, and womanizing, however strong and powerful the person appears on the surface.

In Western culture, freedom means not being owned by others. Therefore, Western countries and organizations, including the United Nations, do not recognize mass slavery, which capitalist and communist exploiters have supported at all times, and which shows its face in different ways sometimes in factories, sometimes in farms, and sometimes at war fronts, as slavery in the real sense of the word. Neither do they believe that capturing the countries and lands of the people who are not capable of protecting their own benefits, having political and economical expansionist desires, making weak people do forced labor, and looting their wealth and property is against any ideology advocating human freedom.

Therefore, the United Nations, on the basis of its limited insight, allows powerful governments to take “custody” of other groups of people without their consent. This

organization completely supports this behavior, which is a kind of enslaving others.

Economic dominance and enslaving millions of people collectively in “monopolized industries” and huge industrial farmlands for very low payment is one of the main policies of some of the governments that are members of the United Nations. The interesting point is that the Declaration of Human Rights has been signed by these very governments.

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Here is the right place to compare this kind of freedom with what Islam presents and develop an idea of what kind of freedom it advocates for human beings, and how it rejects and despises forced labor and human oppression.

One day, one of Imam Ali’s governors wrote to him, “It has been suggested to me to force people to work in order to repair the subterranean canal ... This will benefit the people themselves and their land...” The Imam (as) answered, “No one can be forced to work unless he gives his consent to do so. Moreover, anyone who works must be paid ...”<sup>22</sup>

In response to his political opponents who intended to take a journey to join Ma’awiya (his enemy), he gave them permission to go wherever they wished. In doing so, he ignored his friends’ warning against this decision. This was because he feared depriving someone of his freedom. When Imām ‘Ali’s

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<sup>22</sup>. *Imam Ali (as) and World Peace*, S.M. Khamenei, pp. 46-48.

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opponents asked him if he allowed them not to take the oath of allegiance to him, he replied nicely that they were free to take it or not.<sup>23</sup>

The respect for humanity and its place in Islam are very different from those in the Western culture and in the eye of the United Nations. In the latter, human respect is a superficial issue that pertains to his body and appearance. In their view, human being is nothing more than an organic body of an animal species. He is an existent that can reproduce, speak, carry loads, etc. This very insight has allowed them not to consider the massacre of millions of people all over the world, from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Korea to Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Palestine, the Lebanon, Nicaragua, Chile, and hundreds of other places, as disrespect to human being's station in the world. Likewise, mass murder of people with atomic, hydrogen, neutron, and chemical bombs, other war crimes which are encouraged by the superpowers, denying people's rights to their ancestral lands, and usurping their property and national wealth are not considered as any damage or harm to human honor and nobility.

Western culture is a mixture of so-called scientific philosophies and ideas each of which serves to diminish man's position and respect to the lowest possible level. According to Darwinism, human beings are descendants of the ape family; according to Freudism, he is a collection of whimsical emotions; according to Marxism, he is an existent captured by

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<sup>23</sup>. *Ibid.*

the tools of production and the automatic process of economics and lives following the inevitable process of history and nature without having any control or knowledge of himself. (Therefore, according to the politicians of Western countries, human beings are machines made of organic rather than metal substance. They merely have their own specific needs and nothing more.) Another Western view maintains that human beings have been created to gradually sacrifice themselves in modern temples; i.e. economic and commercial centers, and before terrestrial idols and gods, i.e. capitalists, superpowers, and the rich and cruel. What is defined in Western economic liberalism as a human being is an unnecessary leftover of nature which is useless and purposeless and lacks respect and honor. He must breathe for some time and then rush to the world of non-existence, since his creation – and perhaps the basis of the creation of the world – is absurd and purposeless. This idea is advocated by nihilism. Another theory indicates that he is a fox-like being who must spend his short life, like Machiavelli, with deception, lies, and betrayal in order to seize food or position.

This is the human being that Western culture, the very universal and all-inclusive culture of those who claim to be civilized and save humanity, introduces. Those who claim to be the people's saviors try to protect the freedom, respect, and rights of this very human being and, every once in a while, present a charter to the world in order to acknowledge his rights. However, the question is, "can we expect such an anti-

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human culture to devise a correct, perfect, and real declaration of human rights?”

The basic and substantial shortcomings of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and lack of a correct insight in its devisers or the authorities of the United Nations and the centers that protect human rights all over the world have resulted in the failure of this declaration and the big organization that supports it to grant human beings' rights to them. Sometimes, they even turn into some tools that deprive them of their true rights. As we can see, every now and then, the Security Council, with the help of the “Veto” rights of the five powerful and invasive member countries, turns into an instrument in order to consolidate the dominance of oppressors based on the law of power.

It is an undisputed principle that without a correct knowledge of human and true belief in his<sup>24</sup> honor and position, it is impossible to designate and clarify the human rights, much less to defend and protect it.

## **Human Beings in the Islamic Worldview**

Islam, which originated in revelation and the commandments of nature and intertwined with human being's primordial nature and essence, is the first founder and messenger of humans' true rights. It presented the most perfect declaration of human right to the people of the world 14

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<sup>24</sup>. The pronoun “he” is used throughout the text for stylistic reasons and does not imply the inferiority or superiority of either sex. In Persian the third person singular pronoun does not indicate gender.



centuries before that of the United Nations. It has also granted the highest position and spiritual status, both in words and in practice, to human beings in the world. In what follows, we will shortly discuss this issue.

Islam introduces humanity as the “caliph” and vicegerent of God. Clearly, the vicegerency of God will never be given to a low, weak, or incompetent person. This position reveals the glory of human beings’ status in the world in the most sublime way. From among these very human beings arose the prophets – the most amazing and greatest of all spiritual phenomena in the world.

In addition to this practical honor, the Holy Qur’an clearly and formally grants the specific divine honor and grace to human beings: “*We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of our creation.*” (*al-Isra* chapter: verse 70). In another place, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) refers to human individuals as the family of God. We also read in a *Nabawī* (related to prophethood) *hadīth*, “All people belong to the family of God, and the most favorite of them is one who benefits the other members most of all.” “*Nās*”, as used in this *hadīth* and in the Qur’an, is the most comprehensive term embracing all human beings, both Muslims and non-Muslims, from all races, of any color, with any religion, and speaking any language.

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Undoubtedly, a school that views man as the vicegerent of God and a member of his family grants him great rights and a sublime status in the world. One of the manifestations of Islam's respect for human beings and their place is its attitude towards cruelty and oppression. It not only considers them to be great insults to man's dignity and does not tolerate them, but also forbids "*Inzilām*" or tolerating cruelty (which Christianity and some ethical schools consider to result in perfection and reward) to the oppressed and views suffering as an offence to man's status.

Another manifestation of this issue is the principiality of truth or the principle of having a favorable opinion of free human, for which Islam has presented some laws. It is emphasized in administrative and tax laws that judgment should be based on the truth of people's words. Tax officers and alms collectors must accept their claims and denials. It is firmly forbidden in Islam to resort to force to obtain the government's demands or press claims from people. In other words, in doing so officers cannot resort to violence, keep people standing for a long time, or sell a debtor's property to obtain the claim because it is against man's honor.

Imām 'Ali (as) gives some invaluable advice in an order to one of his tax collectors in this regard.<sup>25</sup>

Concerning freedom, which is the most sublime manifestation of man's honorable place, Islam views man's freedom in its most perfect sense, i.e. the freedom of spirit,

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<sup>25</sup>. *Nahjolbalagheh*, letter 51.

body, thought, and the intellect. According to Islam, man deserves freedom, which is an essential mode of human being; therefore, in the Islamic worldview, human beings are respectable and free irrespective of their identity, race, color, language, and land.

Human beings enjoy freedom of opinion in Islam more than in any other culture. No one can be forced to give up his religion and accept Islam. According to the Qur'an, "*Let there be no compulsion in religion...*" (*al-Baqarah* chapter: verse 256). This is because everything is clear here, and if human beings are not left free to choose their way, they have been disrespected and deprived of their freedom.

Human beings are free to go wherever they want and stay wherever they desire. As mentioned before, the Commander of the Faithful allowed the people of his time to do everything they wished freely – even to go to Ma'awiya's court and plot against the Imam himself.

Human beings have the right to other kinds of freedom as long as they do not damage the Islamic system of government and individual and social interests. This is because the freedom of other people must also be respected and their rights must necessarily be observed. The principle of the negation of damage is one of the other certain social and legal Islamic principles. It states that no one's freedom can be threatened by that of others.

The above principle and the other principles and laws related to human rights in Islam originate in its realistic

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worldview and the divine ideology dominating it. The realism embedded in Islam and its worldview, rules, and principles lie in its having been sent from the Creator of the world to humanity. They can only be created by One Who can say: “*It was We Who created man, and We know what dark suggestions his soul makes to him: for We are nearer to him than (his) jugular vein.*” (*Qaf* chapter: verse 16).

It is on the basis of this very argument (that the Creator of all Knows His creatures and their needs better than anyone else) that we believe that the most perfect declaration of human rights for all, including men and women, black and white, rich and poor, in the east, west, north and south, ..., has been devised by Islam and not the United Nations.

In practice, lack of a real knowledge of human being in other cultures, societies, and civilizations has resulted in no one’s being able to take an effective step for reviving and protecting the human rights during the last 4000 years, i.e. from the time of Hammurabi until the modern age. The defective perception and knowledge of these supporters of humanity (the United Nations Organization) concerning the best ways to defend human beings might have even led to the development of some new problems for them.

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# **Chapter I**

## **Women in the Western Worldview**

*A* study of the weaknesses and shortcomings of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of the Human Rights can clearly reveal its inability in reviving and maintaining women's rights. Apart from the limited and unrealistic worldview underlying this Declaration (which has led to its failure in protecting human rights), a more defective and imperfect insight dominates Western culture and thoughts and, thus, the above Declaration.

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In the Western worldview, philosophy, and thoughts, whether religious or non-religious, women are more deprived and oppressed than men. For a long time, it considered woman a low, impious, and wicked existent who was the cause of disaster. In spite of the present propagandas and apparent respect for women and official recognition of their rights in the

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present century, there are still some traces of this thought in Western culture.

In what follows, we will present a summary of the main ideas in Western philosophy and religious ideology concerning woman in the past:

- Woman is a parasite. The divine gifts are only for man.
- Woman has merely been created for man (rather than vice versa or both for each other).
- Woman is a mean and impious existent.
- Man has honor but woman lacks it.
- Woman is evil. She is the origin of sins and the source of wickedness.
- Woman has no access to paradise.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, the above wrong and cruel ideas are not limited to the West. There are some unreal and unjust beliefs about women in all cultures and even philosophies and religions of the world. It is merely Islam (and other heavenly religions, apart from the distortions and changes made to them) that has come into the field with an opposing insight and defends woman's human identity.

In order to prove this point, we should first cast a glance at a short history of the ideas and customs concerning women and their rights in the past centuries of the great civilizations of the world (China, India, Iran, Greece, and

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<sup>33</sup>. *System of Women's Rights in Islam*, Murtaḍa Muṭahharī, pp. 115 onwards.

Rome) and refer to some of the statements that have been collected by other writers in this regard.

Women had a low social status in China. An aristocratic Chinese woman wrote about the women of her time in her notes as follows: "We women have the lowest social status and do the lowest kinds of job." A line in a Chinese song says: "In the world there is nothing lower and cheaper than a woman." In ancient China, a woman did not have the right to eat food in front of her husband, and girls did not inherit from their fathers.

In India, women were known as servants and slave-maids. A wife had to call her husband master or lord, and it was forbidden for her to call him by his name. It is written in Indian myths: "Women are as wicked as falsehood."

In ancient Iran, woman usually had no social and economic independence; her situation was different in the Ashkanid and Sassanid periods. Although a woman in ancient Iran enjoyed more privileges than those in other civilizations, except for favorite ones, other women lived like workers and servants. At that time, woman was basically deprived of the right to vote and express her ideas and wishes and lived like a slave.

In ancient Greece, women lacked social identity and played no role in the construction of the brilliant civilization of that golden age. She was kept hidden in the house in one period and sold as a means of pleasing men in another. One of the Greek historians wrote: "A woman's name, like herself must be

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imprisoned in the house.” Demosthenes, the well-known Greek orator once said: “We want capricious women for pleasure ... and our wives for legitimate children.”

In Greece, women could be sold or given as gifts to others. Demosthenes’ mother had been donated by her father to one of his friends. It is also said that Socrates had lent his wife to Alcibiades, who was an orator, too. According to the customs of that time, an old man had to find a young man to sleep with his young wife; however, a woman was not allowed to have an affair without her husband’s permission; otherwise, she would be sentenced to death.<sup>34</sup>

In Rome, women were bought and sold like slaves. They had no right to possess anything, socialize with others, or live according to their own free will. Fathers or husbands could sell their daughters and wives, lend or rent them out, or kill them.

Obviously, woman’s status in that civilization, whose brilliance still dazzles the eyes of Western and westernized people, and which is the founder and mother of Western law and the countries that it dominates, was extremely humiliating. It goes without saying that she played no role in determining her destiny.

In some Jewish and Christian point of views which are based on distorted forms of their prophets’ decrees, woman was portrayed as she was in other ideologies in other countries. For

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<sup>34</sup>. al-Bahī al-Khalī: *al-Islam wal mar’at al-mu’aşirah*, p. 10 onwards, H. Şadr, *Woman’s Rights in Islam*, p. 90.



example, some Jews believed that a father had the right to sell his underage daughter.

Christian priests believed that woman was the agent and manifestation of evil and the cause of corruption and prostitution. For a long time, they even conducted some research in their educational centers on the following issues: Should woman be permitted to worship God as men do? Can woman enter heaven? Is woman a human being with an eternal soul or mortal matter lacking a disengaged spirit?<sup>35</sup>

In Christianity, due to the spread of the culture of hatred for woman and her worthlessness, remaining single and, sometimes, emasculation were encouraged. The followers of such ideas believed that marriage was a trap set for leading people to hell.

Before the rise of Islam, woman had the same position and status for Arabs that she had for other nations. In fact, when great and ancient civilizations view woman as discussed above, we cannot expect a high opinion from a primitive desert-dwelling nation.

The half-barbarian pre-Islamic Arabs considered women as slaves and hated having daughters because they were incapable of fighting, collecting spoils, and doing difficult jobs. Their faces turned black with fury when they heard that their newborn baby was a girl. In some tribes, they even buried their baby girls immediately after they were born. In some of these

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<sup>35</sup>. *Woman's Strategy in Islam*, p. 15.

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Arab families, when a woman's husband died, she belonged to the eldest son of that family.

In a *hadīth* from 'Ayshah, the Holy Prophet's wife, it has been narrated that among the Arabs of the Age of Ignorance, apart from the normal form of marriage, there were two other types of marriage. In one of them, the husband lent his wife to another man and kept away from her. In another one, a group consisting of less than 10 men married one woman, and the resulting child belonged to only one of them. This is the very view that diminished woman's status to that of a slave or a commodity. The Holy Qur'an has referred to some of these ideas in different places and criticized them.

The above was a short summary of the ideas of various nations of woman in the pre- and post-Islamic periods. Unfortunately, in spite of the development of different societies and civilizations, the revival of scientific and philosophical life (Renaissance) in Europe, and vast economic and social advancements all over the world, the traces of these primitive and beastly ideas can still be seen in various cultures.

A comparative and historical study of woman's rights and the related social opinions reveals various stages. Considering the process of their development, researchers have divided them into three general periods:

**A.** In the first period, they viewed woman as a commodity which could be bought, sold, rented, and owned; she was meant to work, serve men, give birth to children, watch man's offspring and property, carry loads like tamed animals,

and work. In most cases, she did not have the right to be with her husband and eat with him. Her husband even had the right to kill or torture her.

**B.** In the second period, due to the influence of heavenly religions on the culture dominating the Age of Ignorance, human social groups were civilized to some extent. As a result, woman was not considered a commodity anymore and was, rather, accepted as a human existent and of the same species with men. However, the civil and legal relationship between them was still of the slave-owner type. Here, woman was still sold and bought by man, given as gifts to friends, left in trust with other men, rented, or lent. She had to work for man and satisfy his sexual needs and provide for him. She had no free choice, could not inherit anything, and lacked financial independence. She could not own anything, and everything in the house she lived in belonged to the male members of the family. After the death of her husband, everything went to his father or brothers.

‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī wrote in one of his works that, in 586 AD, after a lot of discussions and research, the Religious Assembly of France arrived at the following conclusion: “Woman is a human being, but she has been created to serve man.” Moreover, until about 100 years ago, woman was not considered a member of human society.<sup>36</sup>

**C.** The third period started with the rise of Islam. Here, woman is equal to man in terms of the role she plays in

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<sup>36</sup>. *Ibid.*

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protecting the continuity of the generation, her share of social and individual growth, her responsibilities and obligations before God, society, and family. She also enjoys equal rights with men concerning education, ownership, financial independence, and other social and political rights. The minor differences between them in the Islamic worldview and law are rooted in their specific characteristics and the duties each may accomplish better than the other.

It is emphasized that the above classification does not portray the reality perfectly and lacks the necessary explanations concerning the changes made in women's rights and their origins.

The writer believes that the development of women's rights in the West has left four periods or stages behind and just started the fifth one. These five periods include the following:

The first is the period of barbarism or half-civilized human. Here, woman was considered an object rather than a human due to her physical fitness, lack of training, and lack of culture and knowledge.

The second is the period of ancient civilization. In this period woman was viewed as a human being; however, she was known as the lower sex and had the duty to serve men as a slave-maid.

In this period, not only did she belong to man, but also her life and death depended on him. Without relying on and believing in the imaginary classification provided by historical materialism, we are of the opinion that the second period

corresponds mainly to the feudal period of ownership of huge pieces of land. Therefore, with the annihilation of that system and its move towards capitalism, which is known as bourgeoisie, another period started and women's rights changed in form.

The third stage of the development of women's rights enters a revolutionary period during which she is, to some extent, freed from the fetters of men and family. With the disintegration of the feudal aristocratic culture and its particular formal and ceremonial customs and traditions, women felt that they had been freed from slavery and could sometimes enter political and economic domains. As a result, a breeze of freedom apparently touched their hidden faces.

The above period, which started after the Renaissance and the French Revolution, led to the Industrial Revolution in the West and marked the period of the growth and maturity of political and economic liberalism and capitalism. It was a deceptive period which did not take women anywhere further than where they had stood in the previous two periods. Rather, it embellished them with a false glaze of independence and freedom and covered the ugly face of their slavery with a beautiful mask. At this time, she was absorbed by the job market and started working out of the house alongside with men. With the relative financial independence that she obtained, woman managed to provide for herself. Girls left their families and extended families changed into small families (or the so-called nuclear families). Following this, female attractions and,

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along with them, woman's status and character came to the service of economy and, sometimes, politics. The relationships between man and woman became free, and humanity gradually moved back towards its primitive corrupt nature and barbarism. Sexual freedom and, perhaps, immorality were secretly encouraged and facilitated by ruling powers and governments. Artificial attractions, such as make-up, clothes, fashion, and material possessions, surrounded woman and imprisoned her. In this period, the foundation of the family, which enjoyed some sacredness previously, lost its value and became shaky. As a result, ethics and original emotions were replaced by pleasure and profiteering.

Here, women lost the little honor they had in the aristocratic feudal system and, in the real sense of the word, turned into luxurious commodities that could be bought, sold, rented, and lent. The only difference between the woman of this period and that of previous ones was that she was surrounded by a halo of deceptive slogans concerning human rights and a beautiful rainbow of the propaganda for woman's freedom and her release from the prison of old traditions and placed in a stage play representing a modern, mechanical life.

A comparative study of the political phenomena of this period reveals that there was a secret movement beyond the fall of feudalism and annihilation of its aristocratic limits and its change into an apparently free system after the Revolution. The leaders of this new system were freemasons and international Jewish Zionists. Their protégés abused the ripe conditions in

different ways with the motto of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” (and the like) – which is still used under the pretext of defending human rights – in order to spread and encourage the culture of sexual corruption, economic chaos, and resistance to discipline (possibly with the help of the press, motion pictures, and other media). Woman is considered a major instrument in achieving these purposes, and she is the first victim of such acts.

What woman lost through this liberalism was much more than what she gained: she lost her honor and true character. Of course, some advanced rules in favor of women were written and approved, and some groups of women, while maintaining their relative honor, succeeded in attaining some achievements in scientific and technical fields and stood in the line of professors, inventors, leaders of suffragette movements, and politicians. Nevertheless, a general analysis of woman’s situation indicates that she lost her true role in the society and, as a result, the real value of being a woman (i.e. being the center of natural society). What remained of her was a neutral and metamorphosed existent who was neither a man nor a woman; an existent who is called “the third sex” in the West.

The fourth period is the one in which woman is living now. It is the era of reviewing woman’s undesirable situation and inquiring into her true human rights rather than producing a handful of absurd and useless sentences. It is the period of the failure of the experiences accumulated during the centuries of the so-called Renaissance and the stage of freedom and return to

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humanity's primordial nature and natural laws. We can observe the beginning of this period among western intellectuals, as well.

The West and the world following it, in their last effort to learn about the true place of woman and, basically, human rights in the general sense of the word, will finally turn to Islam. However, it is imperative that we present it correctly and introduce women's rights and the true rights of the whole humanity in Islam in a practical and scientific manner in order to satisfy their thirst in the best possible way.

The fifth period will begin when the life-giving Islamic principles dominate the world. It is only in the light of Islamic laws that we can claim that human beings and, particularly, women can obtain their true and natural place. We will see this period in a future so near that our eyes can catch sight of its promising rays and lights.

A comparison of the development of women's rights in the West with that in Islamic societies indicates that this process and its stages in the East have been much more complicated than those in the West. With the Industrial Revolution in Europe, some changes appeared in European cultures, systems, and social constitutions, yet their old and new cultures were of the same nature and born in the same society and land. However, with the oppressive attacks of European industrial civilization and ancient European and Greek bourgeois culture to Islamic countries, their long-standing, local, and Islamic



culture was greatly damaged, and a lot of their useful achievement was ravaged.

Considering the above differences and historical and social background, we can divide the process of the development of women's rights and their social opinions into the following periods:

**First Period:** Here, primitive, low-civilized societies viewed woman as an object that could be owned by man.

**Second Period:** This was the time of great landowners, kings, independent rulers, and tribal chiefs. During this period, woman belonged to man like a slave.

**Third Period:** At this time, Islam appeared, revived woman's perfect human rights, and paved the way for her reaching the peak of honor and respect.

**Fourth Period:** During this period, under the pressure of national and traditional cultures, there was a return to the customs and beliefs of the Age of Ignorance in Muslim countries. Under the influence of new royal systems and tribal and feudal governments, women were treated again according to the traditional principles of the Age of Ignorance. In fact, there was a return to the norms of the second period.

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**Fifth Period:** At this time, Western culture attacked Muslim countries and had a destructive impact upon their local pagan-Islamic culture. As a result, a number of cultural dualities arose. The following contradictions affected the social psychology of these societies and, ultimately, resulted in woman's self-estrangement.

**Sixth Period:** We are now at the threshold of the period heralding the second rise of Islam: an original and revolutionary Islam, untainted with previous distortions and decorations, establishing the true and natural rights of women.

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## **Chapter 2**

### **Women in the Islamic Worldview**

**T**he Islamic worldview and idea of woman and her human rights created a magnificent and huge revolution in the world. This is because by presenting this worldview, Islam threw all humiliating ideas and absurd and pagan worldviews and introduced a new model of social relations with woman to all people.

If church-related insights introduced woman as a parasite created from man's left rib, and man as a different and chosen creature, Islam explicitly announced that man and woman are the same in nature and creation and both have been created from "a single soul", i.e. a unique existence.

The Holy Qur'an replied clearly to all pagan ideas and, particularly, academic theories of Christianity in verse 1 of *al-Nisa* chapter: "*O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women ...*" In this way, it nullified all the absurd ideas and thoughts of the people of the world.

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If we pay more attention to this Qur’anic verse, we will learn about more realities. Here, first, readers are addressed with the world “*nās*”, which includes both men and women equally. This shows that in the eyes of Almighty God, men and women are the same and equal in terms of their human characteristics and essential value.

Second, the verse invites both men and women to “piety”, obedience, and worship. This shows women’s potential for spiritual development and attaining the highest levels of human perfection on equal terms with men. It also proves woman’s growth and wisdom, which are necessary conditions for religious obligations and worship.

Third, both man and woman have been created from a single soul (which is the common origin of these two sexes). Like a member of the body of humanity, woman completes the existence of man and is not just a branch of his existence. As we read in a *hadīth* from the Holy Prophet (pbuh), “Women have been born together with men.” This shows the equality of man and woman in honor and dignity.

We can take Islam’s concept of women into account from four different angles: 1) Islam’s general view of women, 2) Islam’s view of mothers, 3) Islam’s view of wives, 4) Islam’s view of daughters.

### **1) Islam’s General View of Woman**

A great number of verses in the Qur'an and *hadīths* from the Prophet (pbuh) are related to this issue. However, since it is not possible to present all of them here, we will content ourselves with the following:

### A. The Qur'an's View of Woman

Verse 35 in *al-Ahzab* chapter 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.*

Accordingly, woman and man are both Muslims and faithful. They have an equal right and complete freedom to choose their religion; both enjoy growth of thought; and both are the same in terms of their true character. They are also equal in worshipping God and personal prayer, which are the most sublime of all human activities. They are the same in truthfulness and patience and their fight to defend their ideas and *jihād*, which are the brightest of all human social dimensions. Woman is no different from man in paying alms, piety, submission to God, and invoking His Name, which are among the main stages of practical worship or mystic wayfaring. It is also emphasized that, when rewarding them for

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these emanations of the sublime human spirit, God never discriminates between man and woman.

In another verse, it is written, *“Our Lord! Grant us what Thou didst promise unto us through Thine messengers, and save us from shame on the Day of Judgment: For Thou never breakest Thy promise.”* (*al-e-Imran* chapter: verse 194). Here, God addresses man and woman in equal terms, as in other places, and promises them great rewards for their good acts and *jihād* irrespective of their sex.

In verse 23 of *al-Mulk* chapter, we read, *“Say: “It is He Who has created you (and made you grow), and made for you the faculties of hearing, seeing, feeling and understanding: little thanks it is ye give.”* In other words, men and women enjoy equally *“fo’ād”* (human hidden perceptions, and, as ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī says, the intellect). Still, in another verse we read, *“And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge; for every act of hearing, or of seeing or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).”* (*al-Isra’* chapter: verse 36). God considers the owner of this system of perception and recognition, whether a man or a woman, as a responsible human being. Evidently, responsibility derives from authority and competency. In the above verse, no distinction has been made between men and women concerning their authority and, as a result, their responsibility and power of perception.

Moreover, according to verse 71 in *al-Tawba* chapter, *“The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe*

*regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is Exalted in power, Wise.*” This means that male and female believers equally enjoy the right of “*wilāyat nizārat*” or the authority to supervise or investigate each other’s actions. In its sociological sense, it means “social inquiry”. According to this right, every individual can supervise the good and bad acts of other individuals so that the general principles and criteria of Islamic society are not violated or ignored.

In addition, man and woman are equally asked to say their prayers (the most sublime kind of worship and the best way to connect to the Beloved). Both are also obliged to pay the alms tax (which indicates their financial independence) and obey God and the Prophet (pbuh) (which shows their being the official members of the political and administrative community in Islamic society). As mentioned before, men and women equally benefit from God’s blessing.

In verse 20 of *al-A‘raf* chapter, in order that Adam and Eve do not touch the forbidden tree, God uses the same order to prevent them from doing so: “*Then began Satan to whisper suggestions to them, bringing openly before their minds all their shame that was hidden from them (before): he said: ‘lest ye should become angels or such beings as live for ever’.*”

Unlike the idea of the church as to woman’s being the cause of man’s deception, this verse stipulates: “*Your Lord only forbade you this tree.*” This shows that both of them are equally guilty of violating God’s order, and that Eve must not shoulder

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Adam's sin. This joint obligation and reproach is a sign of their equal status in the eyes of God and their sameness in terms of intellect and perception.

There are several sentences in many places in the Qur'an addressing readers with "*You who have brought faith*", which is not limited to one sex and includes both man and woman.

Moreover, there are many indications in the Qur'an showing that Heaven and worldly and otherworldly gifts are created as much for woman as they have been for man.

Unlike what Christianity preaches, woman is not the origin of sin and wickedness by essence. Rather, she can be the symbol of piety and servitude to God like the women that have been referred to in the Qur'an as great and holy figures, such as the Virgin Mary, Moses' mother, the Lady Fāṭima Zahrā, Khadījah, and other women of the early years of Islam.

In the Qur'an, it is also written that some women, such as the mothers of Moses and Jesus Christ, were honored by receiving revelations from God. In this way, women are glorified in the best way possible.

In his magnum opus, *System of Woman's Rights in Islam*, Murtaḍā Muṭahharī has discussed this issue thoroughly and said:

No man, except for the Holy Prophet (pubh) and Imām 'Alī (as), enjoys the high status of Lady Fāṭima Zahrā. She is superior to her offspring, who are Imams, and to all the Prophets, except the Seal of Prophets. In the journey from people to Truth,



Islam sees no difference between man and woman. However, it sees a difference there in “the journey from the Truth to people”. Here, it says that men can bear the responsibility for prophethood better than women.<sup>40</sup>

According to Muṭahharī, one of the humiliating theories about women was the one advocating the necessity of celibacy and abandoning the tradition of marriage, which was disseminated by the Church. The authorities of the Church considered kindness to women as one of the “greatest ethical corruptions” and encouraged keeping away from women and marriage.

Islam stood against this pagan theory firmly and encouraged and even ordered people to get married. It is written in *hadīth* that the Prophet (pubh) is proud of the children who are the fruit of matrimony.

Islam not only views marriage as one of the factors that protect the foundations of religion and says, “Whoever marries has maintained half of his religion”, but also considers it the peak of human perfection and a prophetic conduct. According to the Holy Prophet (pbuh), “One of the features of prophets is loving women.” In another famous *hadīth* from the Prophet (pubh), we read, “I like three things in your world: perfume, woman, and prayer.”

Islam is strictly against celibacy and reproaches single people in all traditions. In the culture of many ancient nations, children merely belonged to the father and the mother was only

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<sup>40</sup>. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *System of Woman's Rights in Islam*, p. 118.

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considered a channel through whom they were born. However, by means of a sentence in verse 1 in *al-Nisa* chapter, "... and from them twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women...", the Qur'an announced that children belong equally to both parents.

### B. *Hadīth's* View of Woman

Considering the explicit verses of the Qur'an concerning the revival of women's rights and the revolutionary movement of Islam in order to return her true character to her, there was no need for the Prophet (pubh) and his descendants to emphasize this point again. However, there are still several rules about introducing woman's place in society and her rights in Islamic traditions. Unfortunately, we cannot refer to all of them here. In order to gain more information in this regard, interested readers are referred to the list of books on *Shi'i* and *Sunnite hadīths*. In what follows, we will refer to a few *hadīths*:

1. There are some traditions that explicitly introduce woman as bearing certain responsibilities in society. Such responsibilities show her social status, roles, potential for management, and authority and competence for doing demanding and difficult jobs.

2. There are many traditions that emphasize the necessity of treating women kindly. They directly forbid ill-treating them and recommend respecting their feelings due to the delicacy of their souls and emotions. We read in a prophetic

*hadīth*, “Gabriel recommended women [so much] that I assumed it is forbidden to divorce them.”

3. The way the Holy Prophet (pbuh) treated women, respected them, and assigned important social responsibilities to them reveals the subtle practical character of women in Islam. One of the emanations of their social value and honor was their mission to nurse and take care of wounded soldiers in the early days of Islam in Prophet Muḥammed’s time. This point has been emphasized in various traditions. It is written in books of *hadīth* that women returned the wounded and the martyrs to the city and treated injured soldiers behind the line of battle or in the frontline. In fact, Islam set the principle for women’s working as nurses, particularly, during wartime, centuries before the new-money and clamorous West, which claims to be the founder of the field of nursing.

Another emanation of women’s social character in the Prophet’s view is his consultations with them. The late jurisprudent, Rashīd Miṣri, writes in this regard:

Because of the *Ḥudaibīyyah* treaty, according to which the Holy Prophet (pbuh) had to change his mind about going on Hajj and return to Medina from behind the gates of Mecca, he had faced a lot of disagreements and opposition on the part of believers and Muslims. The issue had, in fact, occupied his mind to a great extent. No one could help him in this regard except his wife Umm Salamah. She advised the Prophet (pbuh) to offer a sacrifice, shave his head (*halq*), cut his nails (*Taqṣīr*), change his pilgrim garment, pack his

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luggage, and return to Medina without giving an order to his companions.

This happened in spite of the fact that the people of that time in the East and the West, and even the scholars and thinkers of ancient world believed that woman's mental powers were weak and, therefore, they did not take her ideas into consideration. This view is also shared by some of the thinkers and scientists of modern times.

4. There are some traditions that instruct men to greet women and their wives first. This order was issued in a traditional and pagan society in which woman lacked a human identity and existence. When we see that even in our contemporary society most men do not consider woman even worthy of being greeted, we understand how amazing and revolutionary this custom was at that time. It was, in fact, accepted and found a firm place in Islamic culture because Islam appeals to human beings' primordial nature and penetrates their hearts.

A *hadīth* transmitted by Imām Sādiq (as) states that the Prophet Moḥammed (pbuh) and the Commander of the Faithful (as) forestalled women in greeting them. In another *hadīth*, men are not only directly ordered to greet their wives, but also they are referred to as "man's soul and spirit",<sup>41</sup> which indicates the internal unity of man and woman.

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<sup>41</sup>. *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, Hajj, p. 211.

## 2) Islam's View of Mothers

Becoming a mother is one of the subtle and valuable manifestations of being a woman. This position is of relative respect in all cultures, both civilized and uncivilized. The role of motherhood, which holds the thread for the continuity of societies and enjoys a supreme value in nature and history, enjoys the highest level of glory and magnificence in Islam's view.

In the Holy Qur'an, respecting parents and being kind to them is the same as obeying God, worshipping Him, and believing in His Oneness. In some of its verses, gratitude for parents is the same as gratitude for divine gifts: *"And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), "Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal."* (Luqman chapter: verse 14). Here, the difficulty and importance of the responsibility of motherhood is referred to as the reason for the necessity for expressing this gratitude.

A series of successive *hadīths* emphasize mothers' more important place in comparison to that of fathers and promise more rewards to those who obey their mothers and are kind to them. In another *hadīth*, we read that Heaven is under the feet of Mothers.

## 3) Islam's View of Wives

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One of the stages of woman's social life pertains to her becoming a wife. This begins with matrimony and reaches its perfection by her motherhood and performing other important roles in the family and society. Unfortunately, in the course of history, woman has suffered the highest level of cruelty and ugliest form of slavery during this period.

In the Holy Qur'an, the most explicit and decisive verses concerning family rights are related to wives. In this regard, we can refer to, for example, "...*They are your garments and ye are their garments ...*" (*al-Baqarah* chapter: verse 187) and "... *And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable ...*" (*al-Baqarah* chapter: verse 228). They express couples' rights, their mutual need of each other, and their spiritual unity in the best possible way.

The following verses are on predicting disagreements and conflicts among husbands and wives and preventing woman's rights being taken away or ignored:

"... *If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good.*" (*al-Nisa* chapter: verse 19).

"*If a wife fears cruelty or desertion on her husband's part, there is no blame on them if they arrange an amicable settlement between themselves; and such settlement is best; even though men's souls are swayed by greed. But if ye do good and practice self-restraint, Allah is well-acquainted with all that ye do.*" (*al-Nisa* chapter: verse 128).

*“If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation ...”* (al-Nisa chapter: verse 35).

*“Let the man of means spend according to his means: and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him ...”* (al-Talaq chapter: verse 7).

The following verses are related to cases in which the disagreements have ended in divorce. Here, too, the Qur’an recommends respect, compromise, and good behavior.

*“... and turn them not out of their houses, nor shall they (themselves) leave, except in case they are guilty of some open lewdness, those are limits set by Allah ...”* (al-Talaq chapter: verse 1)

*“Thus when they fulfill their term appointed, either take them back on equitable terms or part with them on equitable terms ...”* (al-Talaq chapter: verse 2)

*“Let the women live (in ‘iddat) in the same style as ye live, according to your means: Annoy them not, so as to restrict them. And if they carry (life in their wombs), then spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their burden: and if they suckle your (offspring), give them their recompense: and take mutual counsel together, according to what is just and reasonable. And if ye find yourselves in difficulties, let another woman suckle (the child) on the (father’s) behalf.”* (al-Talaq chapter: verse 6)

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“When they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you if they dispose of themselves in a just and reasonable manner ...” (*al-Baqarah* chapter: verse 234)

In another place, by using the phrase “... but do some good act for your souls beforehand ...” (*al-Baqarah* chapter: verse 223), the Holy Qur’an orders man to give the priority to his wife in enjoying the pleasures and fruits of life and not to humiliate her or view her as a slave and mark of dishonor.

There are several traditions and *hadīths* which recommend that men should respect their wives. As mentioned before, the Holy Prophet said, “Gabriel recommended wives so much that I thought it was forbidden to divorce them.” There are some other *hadīths* in this regards, for example, in *Wasa’il al-Shi’a* and *Bahār al-anwār*.<sup>42 & 43</sup>

It has also been quoted from the Commander of the Faithful (as), “Do not impose on woman any responsibility that is beyond her capacity because woman is like a flower not a fierce warrior ...”<sup>44</sup>

Islam has emphasized observing woman’s rights so much that it gives her the right to receive some money for the job she does in the house from her husband and even for breast-feeding her baby. It is explicitly written in *Shi’i* traditions that man must buy early fruit for woman and make her happy by giving her gifts. Man is also recommended to work harder in

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<sup>42</sup>. *Wasa’il al-Shi’a*, vol. 2, part 86, p. 21.

<sup>43</sup>. *Bahār al-anwār*, vol. 16, p. 296.

<sup>44</sup>. *Nahj al-balagheh*, letter 31.



order to gain more and, as a result, provide more welfare for his wife and family.

#### **4) Islam's View of Daughters**

Islam's view of woman's conduct and character and its emphasis on her emotional need of more kindness and attention, having patience with her mistakes, and treating her weaknesses cautiously are too general to be restricted to mothers or wives. Therefore, Islam obliges men to treat their daughters as they treat their wives.

One of the reasons for woman's lack of self-confidence in all societies is the dominant and, sometimes, cruel behavior of fathers and brothers or their so-called superiors during their childhood.

In order for woman to have an appropriate spirit for living an equal life with man and not to feel low, humiliated, or deprived (this is other than her being humble, not confronting her husband, and being kind to him), Islam has ordered fathers to treat their daughters better than their sons in the family. It also recommends them to take side with daughters when there is a disagreement or conflict among their children. Unlike the common custom of Arab society and the civilized world of Iran and Rome of that time, Islam demanded fathers to value their daughters more so that equality would be established among their children, and they would not grow into subservient slave-maids under the cruel dominance of their brothers. As a result, their talents, souls, and thoughts would flourish and grow.

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The Holy Prophet (pbuh), who broke the traditions of the Age of Ignorance and founded the above human customs, was so kind and respectful to his daughter, Lady Fāṭima (as), when she was still at home that some of his wives became jealous of her.

There are some traditions narrating the attempts of Mohammed (pbuh) and the Imāms (as) to teach their companions and people not to prefer their sons to their daughters and to show girls' advantages over boys. For example, a tradition refers to the story of Moses and the religious man who accompanied him on a journey. Here, when the man killed a boy on their way, Moses was surprised and asked the man why he did it. He said in response, "So we desired that their Lord would give them in exchange (a son) better in purity (of conduct) and closer in affection."<sup>45</sup> However, instead of a boy, God gave them a daughter from whom 70 prophets descended.

In another *hadīth* we read, Yaḥyā Ibn Zakarīyā wrote in a letter to Imām Hādī (as), "I am going to be a father. Pray to God to grant us a boy." The Imām wrote back, "Perhaps a girl is better than a boy."

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<sup>45</sup>. *al-Kahf* chapter: verse 81.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Another Glance at Women in the Islamic Worldview**

*I*n order to gain a more analytical familiarity with Islam's concept of woman, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that Islam views man and woman from two angles: the "anthropoid" and "human" dimensions. The sexes are the same in terms of the former but not in terms of the latter, which represents their human natures and characteristics. Of course, the existing differences complete their essences and benefit them.

**A. Anthropoid dimension:** Men and women are equally human, i.e. both are qualified for God's vicegerency. They are not different from each other in determining their own fate and future, choosing good or evil, adopting a way of life the might lead to happiness or misery, and undergoing spiritual development.

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Moreover, both are equally subjects of divine obligation and responsible before God. Wherever human beings are addressed, ordered, or forbidden to do something, they have been addressed as “you people”, implying that men and women are equal.

They are also the same in terms of the position and grace that they can attain, unless one tries to be more pious than the other. In this regard, we can refer to verse 13 in *al-Hujarat* chapter stating, “... *Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you...*”, whether that person is a woman or a man. It also emphasizes that both men and women must pursue piety.

Both are the same in terms of having faith in God and accepting the Prophet’s invitation to swear allegiance to him or his legatee. In other words, men and women make a pledge with the Imām or leader of the time to follow and obey him. Like a man, woman is free to choose her religion and does not have to follow anyone in making her choice.

Men and women are equal in terms of freedom, which is necessary for being a human being and is a part of their identity and essence. Both are born free and, except for God and His obligatory principles, which they accept to obey according to their own free will and absolute consent, no one and nothing can limit their God-given and legal freedom. They are indeed

responsible for the consequences of their own acts: “*Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds.*”<sup>52</sup>

Like a man, woman can use her legal rights. She is equal with men before the law and can use her right to live, protect her social character, and benefit from divine gifts: “*And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable...*”<sup>53</sup> Both men and women have been created in order to traverse their journey of development towards God. Through worship and prayer, which is the very absolute submission before God, and traversing the right path, i.e. following religious principles (the closest way to happiness), they will reach the station of “divine example”. We read in the holy *hadīth*: “My servant, obey me so that I make you like Myself.” Women and men are also the same in terms of the reward or punishment they receive or their place in Heaven or Hell. We read in verse 97 in *al-Nahl* chapter as follows: “*Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has Faith, verily, to him will We give a new Life, a life that is good and pure and We will bestow on such their reward according to the best of their actions.*”

As a result, we can say that there is complete equality between man and woman regarding their anthropoid dimension.

**B. Human dimension:** Men and women are both perfect referents for humanity; however, considering the necessity of dividing jobs and responsibilities, organizing their

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<sup>52</sup>. *al-Muddaththir* chapter: verse 38.

<sup>53</sup>. *al-Baqarah* chapter: verse 228.

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natural functions, which is one of the basic purposes of creation, and observing their specific types of expertise and unique duties, there are certain differences between them. According to Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, although these differences negate their similarity in nature and divine legislation, they do not contradict their equality in terms of humanity and human rights.

According to the explicit text of the Holy Qur'an, man and woman have been created from a common essence and soul. Woman is a part of the "soul" from which man has been created. It is emphasized in a prophetic *hadīth* that women are twins with men. Nevertheless, this common origin does not indicate their natural unity; rather, it shows their distinction from each other; a distinction that creates their primordial duties and specific internal features.

The great natural difference between man and woman is due to their specific characteristics in terms of nature, body, nerves, and spirit. Therefore, both sexes complete each other, and each has a strong natural, physical, and spiritual need of the other for his/her own perfection.

Unfortunately, such welcome natural differences (according to which the laws in relation to woman must be changed from their current violent forms into ones that are more appropriate to her delicate nature) are not taken into account by any of the existing social and legal schools and approaches in the world except Islam. The legal and philosophical theory of woman in Islam is the first true manifesto and declaration of woman's freedom. As we will discuss later, all the existing

differences between the rights of men and women in Islam, which have been exaggerated, criticized, and harshly attacked by its enemies, originate in this very realistic Islamic view, which is to the advantage of both men and women and provides individual and social welfare for whole of humanity.

Therefore, as we will see later, unlike the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which has granted the same rights to both men and women, in addition to some common human rights, Islam has granted women some specific and first-rate rights of which men are deprived.

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## **Chapter 4**

### **Natural Differences between Men and Women**

**M**en and women are different from each other in nature (biologically and psychologically) and their place in society and social groups (sociologically and in their social psychology). The range of such natural and social differences is much vaster than that of a simple physical difference. According to Alexis Carl, there is a sign of one's sex in each and every cell of his or her body.

As mentioned before, these great differences originate in the purposes of creation and nature. The absence of each aspect of such differences will cause disruption in the necessary and optimal order and balance of nature and cause men or women to deviate from the path of unity, friendship, and even go towards the path of profiteering, selfishness, and defensiveness.

Concerning the process of legislation and correct administration of human social affairs, these differences should also be taken into consideration by legislators and be the origin of certain differences in the law without resulting in discrimination against either sex or disrespecting either of them.

Lack of attention to this point has sometimes resulted in the oppression of women and violating and suppressing their rights.

The existing differences between men and women can be generally divided into physical and spiritual ones.

## **A. Physical Differences**

Scientists have expressed the differences between the sexes by means of various expressions and phrases. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī writes in his *System of Women's Rights in Islam* as follows:

Man is, on average, of a bigger size, taller, and more violent, while woman has a smaller body and is shorter and more delicate. Man's voice is coarse but woman's is gentle; woman's physical growth is faster than man's, while man's grows more muscular than woman, and his physical power is more than hers. Woman matures sooner than man and has more resistance against illnesses than him. However, she loses her ability to reproduce before man. Baby-girls start speaking sooner than baby-boys. Man's brain is, on average, bigger than that of woman's, but, considering the proportion of brain-size to body-size, woman's brain is bigger than man's. Man's lungs have a greater volume and his heartbeats are less than woman's. Meanwhile, man's nerves are more powerful, and he feels less fear. He fights danger more easily and is capable of doing hard work. Due to her monthly menstrual period, woman has some natural bleeding that leads to physical weakness and psychological tiredness. Moreover, woman might spend a long time of her

life being pregnant or feeding her children (these very physical characteristics naturally necessitate it for woman to rest by staying at home and giving up the tiring out-of-the-house jobs).<sup>56</sup>

## B. Psychological Differences

Men and women have some basic psychological differences. Man is typically coarse, quarrelsome, warlike, adventurous, authoritative, and interested in commanding, whereas woman typically keeps away from violence, fighting, and danger and tends to conform and compromise. She loves being a mother and having children of her own and is interested in housework, taking care of family internal affairs, and looking after her husband and children.

Man manifests love by self-restraint and protecting his wife and children, but woman shows it by giving and self-sacrifice, particularly, for her husband, children, and family. Man is sexually an invader and hunter (because the protection of generation and increasing one's offspring necessitates the existence of this feeling in man, like a farmer who requires more land in order to increase his crop). However, woman is evasive, secretive, and manipulative (in order to have enough time to make the best choice). Man's nature demands polygamy, while woman's nature demands monogamy. She is satisfied with one husband who has been correctly chosen in

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<sup>56</sup>. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *System of Woman's rights in Islam*, p. 173.

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order to help her in having children and helping her protect and take care of them.

Chastity is in the essence of woman. In order for nature to achieve its purposes, woman has been ornamented with the jewel of piety and love of *hijab*. This guarantees woman's grace and attraction.

Woman becomes mentally and emotionally mature sooner than man, and her early perfection proves her readiness to enter society and form a family. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī writes in this regard as follows:

Man is more interested than woman in sport, hunting, and tasks that require a lot of action. He likes fighting and challenge, while woman likes peace and pleasant relationships. She avoids violence, and that is why the level of suicide is lower for women than men. Man is also more violent than woman in his style of committing suicide. Woman is more passionate than man; she becomes excited faster and is easily influenced by her own feelings.

Woman is interested in ornaments, jewelry, beauty, and make-up, which is not the case with man. She is also more unstable than man in terms of her feelings. She is more cautious, religious, easily frightened, talkative, and formal than man. Her feelings are motherly even when she is just a child, and she is more interested in the family than man.

Woman cannot compete with man when dealing with inferential sciences and arid rational problems; however, she is

no less than him when dealing with artistic works, talent-related sciences, and statistics. Man is a better secret keeper than woman and can hide his sadness more skillfully. Therefore, he suffers more from psychological diseases due to keeping things to himself. Woman has a more tender heart and cries and even faints more easily than man.

Man is more passionate than loving, while it is the opposite for woman. He wants to own woman herself, but she wants to capture his heart rather than him himself. Man wants to take woman, but woman wants to be taken by man. Woman expects courage from man, while he expects beauty and charm from her. Woman can control her lust better than man; however, when she is at the peak of pleasure, she finds it more difficult than him to give it up.

Concerning the basic differences between men and women, an American researcher says:

Like two stars, man and woman move in two different orbits. They can understand and complete each other; however, they can never be one with each other. That is why they can fall in love with each other, live with each other, and do not get tired of each other.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>. Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, *System of Woman's Rights in Islam*, p. 177.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Sociological Differences between Men and Women**

Since physical and psychological differences lead to various social functions in human beings and separate the roles of man and woman from each other in society and family, they naturally create some differences between the two sexes from a sociological point of view. In this way, the purposes of creation of such differences between them are fulfilled, and the optimal order and process of the human world which are based on those purposes continue their way.

Lack of each of these differences in society and in either man or woman relatively disrupts the above order and creates a kind of chaos and disorder in individuals and their surrounding environment.

Woman's particular functions in society include:

1. Establishing an atmosphere of peace, friendship, and compassion in society and family<sup>60</sup>
2. Giving birth to children<sup>61</sup>
3. Supporting man and helping him to show his manly emotions
4. Transferring culture and language to children and training them
5. Taking care of the feelings of children, particularly, girls
6. Assisting man in his particular social and financial tasks
7. Organizing the internal affairs of the family (establishing discipline and order in the family)
8. Creating loving atmosphere in family and society, and decreasing the level of harshness, violence, and other masculine behavior at home

A sociological study of the specific duties and functions of man and woman leads us to an important point called the "social role". The circle of life, its motion, and development of society consists of these very roles and their

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<sup>60</sup>. *"And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect."* al-Room chapter: verse 21.

<sup>61</sup>. *"... in travail upon travail did his mother bear him ..."*, Luqman chapter: verse 14, *"... In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth ..."*, al-Ahqaf chapter: verse 15.



correct accomplishment. Basically, history is created by them and their dynamism and continuity.

Woman's social role is determined based on her physical-psychological features and specific functions. The latter are vital, life-giving, and productive and only limited to woman.

Unfortunately, in the course of history, either deliberately or due to ignorance, woman's particular functions and important roles have not been studied scientifically, or they have been considered as unimportant issues that are there simply because, like the sunrise and sunset or rain and snow, they have to be there.

Since woman has always been available and provided service when required, the consequences of her absence have never been experienced in any society. Therefore, she has never been able to achieve her real value and place in any society, even in the civilized world of today. It is now useful to refer to "social value" and its relation to social role.

In the sociological sense of the word, social value is a status and position that each individual gains due to his or her characteristics, usefulness, and effects on ongoing social processes (or, basically, his or her good or bad effects on the society).

Religious, military, or political leaders, physicians, teachers, and even inventors and artists have always enjoyed a higher social value than other members of society. They are

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people who themselves recognize such values. Of course, public opinion and thought also play their roles in this regard. In an Islamic society, values enjoy principality and are derived from Islam and primordial nature far from any contract.

Woman obtains her true social value as a result of her social unity with man, forming a family, performing her social roles, and attaining her particular social status. It is emphasized that her social roles are essential and vital and among the most fundamental tasks and pillars in society.

Woman's value, like her objective and undeniable roles, has always been denied, ignored, or forgotten due to ignorance, her lack of intellectual maturity, man's polygamous and dominant nature, lack of observing religious, particularly, Islamic rules, and under the heavy shadow of human destructive instincts. However, it is possible to revive it through a just reconsideration and profound and scientific analysis and propounding it in the field of the ideas and theories of individuals, particularly, those of women themselves, in society. Islam has followed the same process concerning enlightenment in various communities.

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## **Chapter 6**

### **Women's Social Role**

**W**oman's basic and life-giving roles, which are the results of her specific functions, are as follows:

#### **1. Protecting the Generation**

Woman's role in the continuity of human generation and preventing the annihilation of humanity is completely clear. Here, the writer would like to draw the attention of readers to this unique role of woman in the world of nature and domain of human society.<sup>64</sup> If we merely consider this one task for woman, we will be able to perceive her effect on nature as the most important pillar of humanity's existence.

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<sup>64</sup>. According to Will Durant, woman's specific task is protecting the survival of species, while man's specific task is serving his wife and children and defending them.

## 2. Taking Care of Children

Looking after children from the time of their birth until the end of their infancy and after that is one of the most important factors that guarantees the survival of children and the continuity of human generation. This holy and critical role is called “motherhood”. It has always been the responsibility of woman and is united with her flesh and bone and every aspect of her existence.

## 3. Comforting Man

As we saw in chapter *al-Room*: verse 21, “*And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them ...*,” woman is responsible for giving peace and comfort to man. In other verses, we read that the kind and tranquilizing cradle of night grants peace and quiet to all human beings.

Woman naturally brings comfort for her husband and family. However, this will be the case only when her ignorance, weakness, evil nature, or lack of good training or her husband’s ill-behavior does not distort her true nature.

## 4. Emotionalizing the Environment

It is emphasized in the above verse that by creating woman, God also created “friendship”, “affection”, and “compassion”. In other words, He paved the way for filling the family and social environments with beautiful emotions.

According to the Holy Qur'an, woman is the messenger of love, forgiveness, and conformity. If she is absent in society and human groups, violence and enmity will fill the space, and life will become difficult and unbearable.

The desirable combination of this characteristic of woman with man's fluctuating and aggressive instincts creates a pleasant environment for her, her husband, and other people to live in and socialize with each other. In fact, by benefiting from man's logic and particular characteristics, woman prevents the dominance of her emotions over her intellect.

If in a family or society, instead of spreading love, extinguishing the fire of disagreements and conflicts, and creating a healthy and emotional atmosphere, woman herself causes quarrels and violent encounters, it means that she has given up her true nature or lost it. Thus she must try to be healed and regain her main character.

## **5. Strengthening Man's Spirit**

The presence of woman awakens the sense of responsibility in man and provokes some hidden spiritual features such as courage, generosity, and perseverance in him. These characteristics have only been placed in man's nature in order to persuade him to use them for the protection and support of his family. After getting married and starting a family, a great number of men change so noticeably that all the people around them understand immediately.

## **6. Transferring Culture and Language**

In a family environment, woman is the most perfect means of transferring the language and culture to her children. Evidently, the culture of each society is one of the factors that determines its identity and guarantees its independence.

A great part of the culture of the society – if not all of it – is naturally transferred to the child by the mother. This is an important social function that demands the performance of some organization and complicated programs. However, woman accomplishes this duty smoothly in a bed of emotional and training relations. If woman herself has been trained in the supreme Islamic culture, she will easily distinguish between pagan customs and traditions and good ones and stop the penetration of wrong ideas into her offspring's mind.

## **7. Training Children and their Emotions**

The main context of a human's soul is the collection of his emotions, which, in turn, comprise his character, and in which all human behavior originates. The training and perfection of these emotions is the subject matter of ethics, which has always been the center of attention of Islam, other religions, and spiritual philosophies. The essential value of each person and others' judgment of him depends on these very behaviors that rise out of human being's internal characteristics.

A great number of human emotions require training, growth, maturity, and purification. Some of this training has to

be done by people themselves in the course of their spiritual development in life. A primary and major part of this process must be pursued during childhood and under the supervision of parents, particularly, the mother. Otherwise, when they grow up, the resulting destructive and ominous effects will sometimes lead to the annihilation of these emotions. Therefore, a crowd of mentally sick individuals with anti-human and anti-social features will flood society.

The mother's lap is the child's first school. In this school, not only are the spoken language and norms of behavior taught, but also the foundations of child's mental and spiritual structure are laid. Here, the primary formation of child's character begins. Even in later stages of his growth, the training a mother offers greatly dominates the one provided by school and society or the one provided by the father or teacher and can decrease or increase their influence.

Children learn their first life-lessons from their mother through merely looking at her. The impact of a mother's training – the most important type of which is indirect training carried out through children's voluntary imitation of their mother or their inevitable suggestibility or internal vulnerability to various influences – is greater on girls than boys. As the saying goes, girls always take after their mothers. If we imagine the future role of these girls (motherhood), we will clearly perceive the increasing influence of mothers on the construction or destruction of individuals (which will spread all over society).

Obviously, mothers who are ill-trained themselves will have some destructive effects on their children and, as a result, on society through the training they provide. Consequently, they damage the human community to a great extent.

## **8. Contributing to the Organization of the Family**

In our view, the “organization” of family is different from the “constitution” of family and what sociologists conceive of it. Some researchers in the field of sociology believe that each family constitution is a social organization.

We believe that “the family constitution”, like many other social constitutions, is a natural and self-subsistent unit. It is established in line with the rules of nature and not according to social will and decisions. However, every organization follows an arbitrary order and discipline and voluntary operations. Moreover, all the principles of management must be observed there, and planning, administration, supervision, leadership, and timely remedial activities are the necessary conditions for its survival.

In order for a constitution to turn into an organization, an executive and transfer program is necessary. A family can be considered an organization only when it fulfills the necessary conditions and is managed according to a specific system and model. This happens merely in families that observe the principles of an Islamic model or a particular school or law in the administration of related affairs.



Therefore, if in a normal family (which exists in the form of a “constitution” in every corner of the world), woman does not perform the role of an administrator, she must do it in a legal and *Shar‘i* (Islamic) family. She must certainly be the organizer and manager of this society and observe the principles of management, which is a necessary condition for every “organization” in the execution of the plans determined by religion (or law) in the family. This is one of the roles of a typical woman in the Islamic society.

In order to accomplish this supreme task, woman requires not only strong will and powerful management skills but also a rich background in Islamic culture, a correct social, individual, and ethical insight, a *tawhīdī* (theistic) worldview, and realism.

## **9. Cooperation with Man**

According to correct insight and considering the philosophy of creation, woman is responsible for supporting man in the battlefield of society with her careful, logical, and emotionally-inclined behavior and her particular delicacy and subtlety. She is the best person who can encourage man to do his tasks inside and outside the house in the best possible way. She sends him to work like a bullet that has been shot towards its target and plants a great spiritual power, happiness, and iron-like will-power in his mind and body. Based on an evaluation of the positive and negative effects of a man outside the house, for example in his job environment and in public places, and the

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estimation of the geometric progression of the impacts of his dealings and confrontations with others (which sometimes change the destiny of a society or country), one can perceive the depth of this vital role of woman. In other words, this will not only give us a clear picture of woman's direct cooperation with man in dealing with his affairs and problems but also clarify her indirect role in the betterment or destruction of society.

A great number of distinguished men, leaders, political figures, scientists, artists, poets, writers, commanders, and kings have obtained their supreme position in the light of the spiritual training and mental cooperation and contribution provided by woman. No one can deny the roles Khadījah and Lady Fā'ima Zahrā (as) played in the Holy Prophet's life. We can even say that without their contributions, perhaps Islam would have never grown as it has, and thus history would have followed some other courses of development.

On the other hand, a woman's bad temper or heedlessness of man's roles and functions outside the house might sometimes have some bad effects on him and turn him into an evil man. As a result, some mischievous and dangerous men will step into society and become the source of wicked acts, corruption, and destruction. Moreover, an inappropriate behavior on woman's part might hinder man's efficiency in his job and prevent him from performing his duties in society.

Woman also cooperates with man in taking care of family's financial affairs. Some women work in and out of the house in order to earn some money to help the economy of the

family, and some others help to increase the income of the family or decrease the expenses by economizing and protecting man's property.

Doing the housework is one of woman's other material-spiritual roles. When man's only companion in his time of loneliness and the mother of his beloved children begins to take care of house chores, she turns into a servant, cook, laundress, nanny, social worker, and guard of the house and man's wealth without asking for any money in return for the work she does and the difficulties she bears in accomplishing all these tasks. Hardly ever does she object to doing all these works alone and give them up.

Doing the housework has deep roots in woman. Although Islam has appointed man to provide for woman's welfare, it is an unbearable mental and spiritual torture for woman to give up housework, and even if she does it, she cannot continue it for a long time. According to a *hadīth*, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) told his daughter Lady Fāṭima (as) and his son-in-law, 'Ali Ibn Abī Ṭālib (as), "The responsibility for house affairs is on woman's shoulders up to the door of the house and on man's shoulders on the other side of the door."

## **10. Calming Man's Instincts**

God has placed restless and uprising instincts in man in proportion to his functions and the tasks nature expects him to do. The only person who can calm him down and respond to his instincts is woman. That is why we can say that woman's nature

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is “constructive”. One of the constructive features of woman is responding to man’s restless sexual desires. Through this instinct, the function of which is not only different in man and woman but also opposite in their existence, God has guaranteed the continuity and survival of generation in all existents.

Any harm to this instinct or its malfunction due to human beings’ intentions and acts disrupts the natural order of the relationships between man and woman. Consequently, a lot of material and spiritual damage arise in society in the form of corruption, moral deviation, prostitution, psychological complexes, and incurable physical or mental diseases.

Woman is not merely a means of satisfying man’s sensual desires. Rather, by combining sexual instincts with womanly emotions and her delicate soul and beautiful behavior and conduct she can be a life-giving source of inspiration for man and cast the subtle shadow of a pleasant peace on both herself and her husband. In this way, she will also benefit the advantages of a peaceful life and refresh her body and soul.

The downfall of a woman to the lowest level of her natural and social role lies in her viewing herself as a means of satisfying man’s lustful needs, devoting all her energy to beautifying herself in order to provoke men and enjoy momentary pleasures, and sufficing to performing the role of a female animal.

A woman’s beautifying herself for other than her husband, revealing her body and hair to other men, arousing them sexually, and finding sexual pleasure out of her family

results in woman's metamorphosis, forgetting her true roles and functions, and turning into a "female" existent who bears no similarity to an honorable woman of high human character.

## **11. Moving towards Perfection and Development**

Perfection is a fixed rule of the nature of the world. Human beings also obey this general rule due to their primordial nature. They inevitably follow the path leading to physical and material perfection. However, in terms of humanity and in order to reach the height of growth of character and perception, to develop a supreme insight regarding the world around them, themselves, and God (which is technically called worldview and ideology and is the final result of religious principles), and obtain ultimate human perfection, i.e. the station of proximity to God (technically called spiritual wayfaring toward God), they need strong will power. If they wish to gain this perfection, they need to try continuously and persistently; nature and their primordial nature can only facilitate the process of this development for them.

Physical perfection means leaving childhood and youth behind and reaching a natural equilibrium. It is a kind of animal and vegetative perfection. Nevertheless, spiritual perfection means people's growth in terms of humanity. In order to attain it, one must go through the first stage of life, i.e. animal life, and then follow the later endless stages by means of will-power, programming, and effort (or *jihād*).

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Going through such spiritual stages, which comprise a human's spiritual perfection, in family life is only possible through the cooperation and assistance of a wife. Having an improper wife who is lacking in understanding and purpose will always block man's way towards achieving his goals and, like a heavy weight tied to his foot, prevent him from a continuous and beneficial movement towards perfection.

It is at this point that the role of woman in helping her husband to traverse this spiritual path and accelerating his process of development or hindering or blocking it becomes clear. According to S'adi, "A bad woman in the house of a good man can make his life like hell for him."

## **12. Creating History**

As mentioned before, woman's continuous presence among human beings has turned her into a cheap and unimportant existent that exists in abundance and downgraded her social role. People believe that a woman's job is limited to satisfying man's sexual needs, giving birth to his children and bringing them up, doing the housework, and serving her husband. Woman herself has always believed in this idea as well. Some women consider themselves as men's companions in their times of loneliness. Some of them also view themselves as men's servants, and in some societies they even see themselves as their husbands' property and nothing more. Here, the other roles of woman, including her role in nature and

history, have remained hidden to all except the leaders of humanity, i.e. prophets and their descendants.

Based on a short but accurate calculation, we can say that, apart from her role in the continuity and survival of generation and training of children, as well as her effects on her husband in all social changes and evolutions, woman has another important role, namely, “creating history”.

Woman is the “mother of history”. This is because history is nothing but the continuous and conjunctive motion of human societies and the collection of ascending and descending curves of positive or negative human phenomena. If there were no societies, history would be meaningless, and if individuals or families – which are the foundations of social structure – did not exist, there would be no society. Neither would exist any of the amazing phenomena and events that we witness everyday around us.

No role is more important than giving birth to human beings, who are the main focus of history, and the training of people (including their children or husbands) who are leaders of societies and makers of history.

We can see the influence of mothers on every single line of the pictures of the lives of all prophets, leaders, scientists, thinkers, and those who have served humanity. However, those men who have been disgraces on the face of humanity and blackened the pages of history have been born to wicked mothers who have been their sources of inspiration and motivation for their evil acts.

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Here, we can clearly recognize the roles that good and bad mothers can perform in the creation of history. Apart from mothers who have been the center of social and historical movements and changed its course, there have at times been some women who have shown more efficiency and competency than their male contemporaries.

However, like most children, history itself has never appreciated the immense benevolence, perseverance, and servitude offered by mothers as it should. Unfortunately, after centuries of the life of history, woman is still the same person who was sitting like a slave beside the cradle of history and whispered the song of love for her child.

What was discussed above was a summary of woman's roles which originate in her natural, physical-psychological differences from man. It is the collection of these social roles of woman that provides a criterion for the evaluation of her character and the distinction of her rights and tasks in society from those of man in the eyes of legislators. A thorough perception and study of these roles can ultimately invalidate the blindly formulated general theory of the equality of men and women, which is the most hurriedly devised and crudest doctrine proposed to support woman's rights.

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## **Chapter 7**

### **The Relation between Law and Worldview**

**O** bviously, considering the realistic, accurate, and scientific worldview of Islam and its specific approach to woman and the various dimensions of the human constitution, which we divided into “anthropological and human dimensions”, the fundamental differences between men and women and their separation from each other in many respects, and their particular and distinct existences in psychological and sociological terms, we cannot expect them to perform the same functions. Woman cannot be sent to wars and fields of violence and bloodshed or required to do difficult jobs. Neither can one forget her delicacy and fragile nature in the course of events or ignore the words of the Holy Prophet (pbuh) stating: “Be calm; treat glass with delicacy” or those of Imām ‘Ali (as) stating: “Woman is like a flower; she is not a hero.” This is because it is one of woman’s true human rights to have her subtle spirit

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taken into consideration. If this right is not observed, it will result in cruelty to woman and leading her towards pain and corruption. Consequently, she will fail to perform her individual and social tasks appropriately and, as a result, society will be directly damaged.

Hurting woman and depriving her of her true rights creates confusion, nervous problems, mental disorders, and violence in society and leads to separation, divorce, and corruption of children in family. In this way, prostitution, murder, drug addiction, and perversion spread among people. Certainly, this undesirable destiny will deny their human rights to them.

The most important basis of legislation is a thorough knowledge of the nature and psychology of those people for whom the law is written. Law represents the exterior of various issues and is always based on biological, psychological, and sociological factors. In other words, it is based on an objective and real worldview. If we do not observe this fact, law will be impractical and imperfect and create disorder in practice. The main reason for many of the present chaotic situations in societies and violating human-related laws is lack of this very essential pillar, i.e. paying the attention necessary to objective knowledge and the reality of the objects and phenomena for which law is enacted.

Islam has observed all the natural and intrinsic characteristics of man and woman in an accurate designation of their rights and responsibilities. If there is a little difference between the rights of man and woman, it is merely due to their

substantial differences, which are beyond their apparent physiological differences. Ignoring these natural distinctions and acknowledging similar rights for both of them will not help woman and will, rather, damage her more than anybody else.

The equality of man and woman in their anthropological dimension is reflected in Islamic principles. According to them, they are equal in terms of many of their rights without one of them being superior to the other. However, their distinctive features concerning their human dimension have led to some differences in terms of their responsibilities and tasks.

It is also necessary to emphasize that in spite of the differences in some of their rights and lack of apparent similarity between them, man and woman are, on the whole, the same regarding their rights and status. In fact, genetic and divine justice has given them an equal share of everything.

Islamic law (which is called *Shar‘*) symbolizes and reflects the true roles of man and woman and their natural characteristics and functions. If Islamic principles are observed correctly and without any discrimination against anyone and in the form of a single system, the differences that are claimed to exist between the rights of man and woman will not cause any worries or problems.

The existence of differences in the appearance or responsibilities of the components of a system do not basically indicate that some of them are discriminated against or subject to cruelty. This happens when the parts are misplaced, and

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when the responsibilities assigned to them are beyond their capabilities.

The amazing conformity between law and man's nature in Islam and its principles, particularly, the ones related to woman (and her relations with man and the entire human society) is rooted in the primordial nature, laws, and traditions of creation. This is the very magnificent revolution that Islam has created in human rights, in general, and woman's rights, in particular. Such a close relation between Islam, on the one hand, and primordial nature (*fiṭrat*) and reality, on the other, is a guarantee for the survival of this divine religion and its conquering the whole world. Most of the rules of this world are devised hurriedly, superficially, and irrespective of natural laws and die out like dim candles in the storm of events.

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## **Chapter 8**

### **Women's Rights in Islam**

*A*fter a review of Islam's worldview of human beings, particularly, its view of women, it is worth casting a glance, although list-like, on woman's rights in the Islamic legal system.

Women's rights in Islam can be divided into two parts: 1) general rights, i.e. those that they share equally with men, 2) particular rights, i.e. those that are exclusively devised for women and are considered a privilege for them in comparison to men.

In addition to their rights, women have some specific duties and responsibilities. Therefore, we can also refer to them as "men's particular rights".

#### **Part I. General Rights**

General rights are the ones that men and women share as equal human beings. As mentioned before, women have

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always been deprived of a part of their human rights in the course of history. Islam created a storm through its social and cultural revolution, destroyed the ignorance and paganism of its time, and, for the first time, granted all of women's true rights to them. This divine religion accomplished this task 14 centuries before the United Nations talked about the equality of men and women on paper in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The equality between men and women is a dominant principle in Islam. In other words, because both of them are human beings, there cannot be any difference between them and the "principle of equality" must govern their relationships, unless they decide to make some exceptions to this rule in order to benefit from them. This is a very important principle because it grants women's rights to them and officially recognizes them.

Islam returned to women the financial, social, political, judicial, and other rights which, according to traditions, customs, and social customs, had always belonged exclusively to men in history. As a result, it reestablished an equality and balance that had been disrupted previously. Here, we will refer to some of the most important of these rights and, then, deal with women's particular rights.

### **A. Financial Rights**

The main financial rights that Islam, unlike the traditions of the Age of Ignorance dominating the society of that

time, granted to women included the rights of ownership and inheritance.

### **1) Right of Ownership**

For a very long time in the history of mankind women had no right to ownership and was, rather, viewed as the property of men. In rare cases in which a woman was known as an owner, she had no right to enjoy the benefits of her possessions or make changes to them. Even until recent decades, it was forbidden for women in Europe to own property or, at least, use its benefits for themselves. In some cases, immediately after marriage, she lost the right to the possession of some part of her wealth and property to her husband. Even today, woman cannot have complete ownership of her property in some societies.

In spite of the dominant ideas of the age in which Islam appeared, it officially recognized woman's independence in possessing and benefiting from her property and wealth and acknowledged that woman is equal to man in this regard. Islamic principles declared woman's absolute right to own what she earns and achieves by the following verse: "...*To men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn...*" (*al-Nisa* chapter: verse 32). In this way, neither her husband nor any other man can consider himself the owner or shareholder of what she owns. Khadijah, the gracious wife of the Holy Prophet (pbuh), had great wealth. She used it for business purposes and

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freely spent it on the dissemination and spread of Islam among people.

After centuries of cruelty to woman and denying her independence to her, the West returned her financial independence to her only when it intended to benefit from a cheap work force to the advantage of capitalists. That is why, simultaneously with their financial freedom, she was enslaved in masses in factories, workshops, and markets. On the other hand, they also harmed her by creating a rebellious spirit in her against her husband, family and father and used her independence as a means to destroy her.

By announcing woman's financial independence, Islam did not provoke her to rebel against her husband and family. Rather, it consolidated the bases of family constitution more than ever.

### **2) Right of Inheritance**

Inheritance is a part of woman's right of ownership. In the laws of many countries and civilizations, particularly in the period of the rise of Islam, woman was deprived of the inheritance right, and no one even talked about it. It remained a common tradition even until centuries later. For example, in Scandinavia and some other European countries girls could not



inherit anything before the Crusades and penetration of Islam into Europe.<sup>66</sup>

Islam broke this custom of the Age of Ignorance and granted the right of inheritance to woman like man. In most cases, her share of legacy is half of that of man. There is also a philosophy behind this difference and discrimination. According to ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī, half of man’s share will naturally be spent on woman’s expenses and maintenance and returned to her.

There is a verse in the Qur’an concerning woman’s right of inheritance: *“From what is left by parents and those nearest related there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large, – a determinate share.”* (*al-Nisa* chapter: verse 7). Here, woman is introduced as being qualified to inherit like a man and as an independent person. This verse was sent at a time when in the Arab society of that period and even in other contemporary nations, woman neither could be an heiress nor had the right of ownership.

## **B. Political Rights**

Political rights are the most important of all human rights because by them people can play a role in determining their own political, social, and economic future and destiny. In this way, they can determine the form and structure of their

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<sup>66</sup>. Hassan Ṣadr, *Woman’s Rights in Islam*, p. 33.

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government and play a role in the process of legislating and enforcing laws. They can demand the desirable administration of all affairs and prevent the deviation of the leaders and administrators of the country from the right path. The most important political rights that are commonly shared by man and woman, and that Islam has returned to woman (and, in this way, placed her beside man) include the right to vote in elections, the right to participate in gatherings and meetings, the right to fight in wars and defend her country, and the right to take part in diplomacy and sign political treaties.

**1. *Bey'at* or the right to vote in elections:** 14 centuries ago, when woman sometimes was not even considered a human being, when having a daughter was a mark of dishonor and humiliation, and when woman was treated like a servant and slave-maid, Islam acknowledged her political independence and responsibility and allowed her to choose her own way herself, determine her own future, and take the oath of allegiance to the Prophet (pbuh) in order to choose the leader and policy of her society and country.

In Islam, *Bey'at* is another manifestation of individual's right to choose. In the Qur'an it is written,

*O Prophet! When believing women come to thee to take the oath of fealty to thee, that they will not associate in worship any other thing whatever with Allah, that they will not steal, that they will not commit adultery (or fornication), that they will not kill their children, that they will not utter slander,*

*intentionally forging falsehood, and that they will not disobey thee in any just matter,- then do thou receive their fealty, and pray to Allah for the forgiveness (of their sins): for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (al-Mumtahinah chapter: verse 12).*

**2. The right to take part in Friday Prayer and other gatherings:** The right to attend political or religious gatherings is one of the clear manifestations of woman's political independence and obtaining her fundamental rights.

By granting woman the permission to attend gatherings (except those that lead to corruption or damage their respect and honor), Islam has made her an equal to man so that she can preach sermons or deliver lectures, teach people, and even lead other women.

The vast and active participation of intellectual, brave, and God-believing Iranian women in political gatherings and meetings, street demonstrations and protests, and Friday Prayers, whether before the Islamic Revolution (in order to fight against the royal system) or after that (in order to support the system that replaced it), can testify to the political and social independence of women in Islam. This is in contrast to the slanders against Muslim women that present them as men's slaves or being deprived of their fundamental rights.

**3. Fight and defense:** Fighting is one of the ways to defend individual or social independence, freedom, and authority. It is one of the political rights of all people in society.

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Women have the right to take part in offensive and defensive wars in order to defend their countries, ideas, and character and fight as much as their nature and capabilities allow them. Sometimes, it is even an obligation for them to do so.

Women's active participation in the activities carried out behind the frontline is one of the innovations of Islam. Previously, they were not permitted to take an active part in such situations and work independently; however, after the rise of Islam and in the time of the Prophet (pbuh), women willingly participated in wars in order to help men obtain the purposes for which they were fighting. Of course, there are some old myths in this regard as to women's or slave-maid's going to war in order to please commanders and sirdars. Nevertheless, they are irrelevant to our discussion here.

### **4. The right of protective covenant and tenancy:**

This is a kind of political treaty and one of women's true rights. According to Islamic principles, all Muslims, provided that the other necessary conditions are met, have the right to promise to provide political, social, and life security in the name of the Islamic government to any one who demands political asylum or safety. The government also has the obligation to agree to his acceptance of protective covenant and sign it. It is written in a prophetic *hadīth*: "The least of all believers can also provide protection..."

This great and critical right, which is, in fact, the right to represent the government and ministry of the Islamic regime

was given to women in the early days of the rise of Islam, too. It is written in *hadīth*, “Any commitment made by a woman to other people on behalf of the Islamic government is legal and valid.” When Mecca was conquered, Umm Hānī, Imām ‘Alī’s sister, gave asylum to one of the idolaters of Mecca, and the Prophet (pbuh) authorized this act.

According to one of Arab writers,<sup>67</sup> this indicates the highest level of Islam’s trust in woman and her political competence and efficiency. It also reveals her sublime place in society. Such an appraisal of woman’s status has never been shown by any other religion or ideology.

### **C. Family Rights**

Islam has granted woman the right to choose her husband, which is a sign of her independent and free character, and of which she has always been deprived in the course of history. The significance of this freedom, which is enjoyed by both sides of marriage, in the subsistence and survival of family and the importance of this social unit are known to everyone.

According to Islamic law, woman has the right to refuse to marry anyone whom she dislikes, and no one can impose the contrary on her. If the woman marries against her free will and consent, the marriage is invalid. However, there is an exception: in the case of a virgin, as long as it is not against

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<sup>67</sup>. al-Bahī al-Khulī, *al-Islam wal mar’at al-mu’asīrah*, p. 29.

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his daughter's good interests, it is the consent of her father that is important in authorizing the marriage. This is like a veto right for fathers. It is granted to them so that they use it to protect their daughters' benefits and safeguard against the abuse of girls' lack of experience, youth, and naivety by men. It can also prevent girls' losing their capital easily due to men's deceptive acts.

In marriage, in addition to woman's consent, the *ijāb* (offer) right is given to woman. That is, in a recital she is the one who makes offers and directs the whole process. Man is the one who "accepts" and "takes" the offer and is, in fact, a customer. This shows the vast domain of woman's freedom and choice.

In Islam, the responsibility for marriage, which is a happy event, is given to woman, and the responsibility for divorce, which is an ominous and destructive event, requires strong logic, and cannot be weighed by means of the scales of emotions, is given to man.

Before the rise of Islam, girls married when their fathers decided, and they had no right to object at all. Sometimes, two men even married each other's daughters. In jurisprudence books, this is called *shigār nikāh* (exchange of daughters) and is forbidden in Islam.

The Holy Prophet (pbuh) himself was the best example of a father respecting his daughter's freedom of choice in marriage. The story of Imām 'Ali's calling on Lady Fātima

Zahrā (as) and asking for the Prophet's permission to marry her is very famous in this regard.

Some believe that a father's interference with his virgin daughter's marriage violates her independence, and, as a result, criticize Islam on this ground. However, the necessity of a father's permission for his daughter's marriage does not indicate the girl's lack of independence and understanding or immaturity; otherwise, he would not have granted her independence to take control of her possessions or property. On the other hand, a woman who is not a virgin does not require her father's consent to get married.

The father's relative and limited interference concerning a virgin's marriage is exercised in order to protect and support inexperienced girls in marriage, prevent their failure in married life, and safeguard against their falling into the trap of a good-looking but deceptive and unqualified man.

## **D. Judicial Rights**

Some of the most important of human being's rights are the ones subcategorized under judicial laws. They include the right to make a complaint officially, go to judicial centers (even against the will of her husband or father or against them), attend law courts, demand a specific sentence, such as retaliation or financial penalty, give testimony in the court, etc.

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Here, there is no difference between men and women in Islam, and their enjoying equal rights to man is considered a revolution in the history of women's rights in the world.

### **E. Social Rights**

In addition to the rights mentioned above, women enjoy some other rights including the rights to enjoin the good and forbid of wrong, participate in social services, do business or other kinds of job, gain education in various fields of knowledge, technology, and art, do social and *Shar'i* obligations such as going on Hajj pilgrimage, and attend religious, political, and similar gatherings. Previously, women were completely deprived of these rights; however, in rare cases, they were granted merely to the wives of aristocrats or kings.

Islam has made woman an equal and partner to man in their social rights and privileges, provided that no harm is done to her specific duties and social and natural commitments to her husband and children, and she does not lose her art of being a woman.

## **Part II. Woman's Particular Rights**

Considering woman's natural and social characteristics, Islam has devised a series of specific rights for her in addition



to the ones she commonly shares with man (general laws). Along these particular rights, it has also specified a series of particular duties (as we will refer to later) for her. These duties are also explicitly mentioned in the Qu’ran in addition to her rights.

Woman’s particular rights can be classified either as they were in the previous part or into two categories: financial and spiritual rights.

## **A. Financial Rights**

### **1. Nuptial gift**

One of a woman’s rights is to claim her nuptial gift. According to Islamic law, it is a financial commitment for a married man. Even if it is not written in the marriage document, he is responsible to pay or give it to his wife if she claims it. We read in the Qur’an: “*And give the women (on marriage) their dower as a free gift ...*” (*al-Nisa* chapter: verse 4).

From an Islamic point of view, a nuptial gift is the best present that a man can give to his wife in order to show his loyalty and kindness.

In the Age of Ignorance, it was a custom to pay some money as the bride-price (or the price of parents’ services to their daughter) to the girl’s father. It was assumed that the husband bought the girl with that money from the father and owned her like a commodity.

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This pagan tradition and thought led to a wrong legal relation between husband and wife the result of which was woman's permanent captivity and disrespect to her. In Islam, the nuptial gift is based on certain issues, as follows:

- a. Woman's character and independence rather than her price that must be paid to her parents.
- b. Woman's grace and honor. This is because the nuptial gift, as the name suggests, is a gift, and a gift is usually given to an important person, to loved ones, and to people one greatly respects.
- c. Woman's financial independence and considering her as a qualified person to take control of wealth.
- d. The relation between husband and wife. This relation is something beyond a simple bargain, and love and affection play great roles in its development. Woman does not become a part of man's property through the payment of the nuptial gift; however, her heart must be captured by man. The word "*naḥlat*" in the Qur'an refers to this point in a very subtle way.<sup>68</sup>

## 2. Maintenance

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<sup>68</sup>. *Tuhf al-'uqūl*, p. 330.

Maintenance is one of woman's other specific rights and one of man's duties. It includes paying for woman's general and normal expenses such as food, clothing, accommodation, and other necessities of her individual life to an acceptable and average level.

In addition to his duty to provide for the necessary and basic needs of woman, according to the explicit decree of Islam, man is recommended to work more in order to gain more and provide more welfare for his wife and family. Thus it is praiseworthy if man does not stop at necessary needs and tries to increase his income. This issue has even been considered an obligation in a *hadīth* from Imām Rezā (as).<sup>69</sup>

## **B. Spiritual Rights**

### **1. Good behavior**

Ethically speaking, good behavior is required for both man and woman. Rationally, observing this principle is necessary for a stable family and the desirable spiritual and mental development of both man and woman. However, Islamic law views it as one of man's specific duties and woman's specific rights. This is the case provided that woman herself is interested in being treated nicely and provides the necessary

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<sup>69</sup>. Seyyed Reza Paknejad, *Marriage: A School for Human Making*, vol. 1, p. 194

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conditions for man and helps him to maintain his good behavior. In other words, she should not, consciously or unconsciously, do something that makes this duty too difficult for her husband to accomplish. Otherwise, life will become unbearable and bitter for both of them.

Treating woman kindly is not only limited to wives. Rather, parents are ordered to behave well to their daughters. The Qur'an and *hadīth* seriously forbid any kind of ill-treatment of woman and imposing pressure on her. Violating this rule will sometimes lead to punishment, as well.

In a prophetic *hadīth*, the Holy Prophet (pbuh) said, "My brother Gabriel recommended women so much that I thought I could not blame them in the least." In another *hadīth*, it is written that there is a sublime station in Heaven that only three types of people can attain: a just ruler, one who has been kind to woman, and one who has been patient with woman's weak points. There are a lot of other Islamic traditions and *hadīth* in this regard, which, due to brevity of time and place, we cannot unfortunately narrate here.

According to Islamic principles, it is an obligation for man to treat woman nicely and kindly even if it is impossible for him to continue his life with her and has to divorce her.

The Holy Qur'an calls this specific right of woman "setting free kindly" and has explicitly referred to it in several places including *al-Baqarah* chapter: verses 229-231 and *al-Ahzab* chapter: verse 49. In other words, when man is not able

to take care of woman, he must set her free. This freedom must be granted to her in the form of kindness and leave a good memory in her mind. He cannot have any financial demands for this separation. Nor is he allowed to harm or torture her.

## **2. Right of welfare and service**

One of man's duties in Islam is to provide for woman's welfare. In fact, she does not have to do the housework and serve man at home. However, no woman, by nature, likes to give up housework, and we can even say that she cannot even bear giving it up or be forbidden to do it. There is no psychological torture for woman greater than being prevented from working in her house and using her own ideas and taste in taking care of household affairs.

By working at home, woman proves her identity and control over the house and serves man automatically. No man is usually deprived of woman's work and service at home. However, announcing the right that woman is exempt from doing the housework in the eyes of the law is a unique evolution in human rights and an unprecedented revolution in history in order to break the false tradition of having women play the roles of servants and slave-maids at home.

By passing this law, Islam demonstrated that not only does woman have her own specific rights, but also man must observe the rule of equality between the sexes and be just to her. It also acknowledged that woman is the lady and the

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favorite of the house who should sit like a princess and have her husband serve her so that she can perform her duties in peace and quiet and calmly. A husband must look at his wife as a heavenly gift that has been bestowed upon him rather than a load-carrying animal, slave-maid, or obedient servant whose duty is to work and try to provide for his welfare and pleasure. Nevertheless, with her behavior and conduct, woman must prove that she deserves this glory and respect.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which represents the peak of the efforts of Western thinkers and politicians to obtain people's human rights, supports woman only during her pregnancy and motherhood (25<sup>th</sup> article: paragraph 2). In no other place of this international declaration and treaty and its enclosed civil and political rights document has woman been referred to as an existent that deserves to be supported. This demonstrates the points that were previously mentioned in the part of woman's place in Western culture.

In the part that it claims to have granted woman's human rights to her, this declaration presents a blind plan of equality, which refers to the absolute sameness of the rights of both sexes. In this way, it has, in fact, ignored and destroyed woman's particular and political rights.

In the 23<sup>rd</sup> article of the 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph and the 25<sup>th</sup> article of the 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph of this declaration, the greatest favor done to woman as a member of man's family is to give the responsibility for her financial support to man. This is the same

right that is granted to domestic animals by their owners. Paying for woman's expenses and maintenance demonstrates neither her perfection nor her weakness. Rather, it leads to other principles.

However, in the Islamic charter, woman is essentially recognized as an existent with a subtle and delicate spirit whom man must know as she really is and not as he wants her to be. He must also treat her with great kindness and respect. From an Islamic point of view, woman is like a flower that has to be treated with extreme care. According to Imām 'Ali (as), man should beware to deal with her gently, because she is as fragile as glass. She is not a servant and worker at home; however due to her constructive nature, she bears the responsibility for household chores single-handedly.

### **3. Right of bed fellowship**

One of the other rights of woman that must be observed by man is that he is not allowed to give up his sexual relationship with her. If he has more than one wife, he is under the obligation of "*mubiyat*", i.e. he cannot leave her alone at home at night and must stay with her (the related principles are given in jurisprudence books).

Bed fellowship is one of the purposes of matrimony. Thus if man takes "*I'ila*", i.e. swears not to have sex with his wife in order to annoy her, Islam orders courts either to make him break his oath and pay "*kaffāreh*", which is a kind of

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monetary penalty, or to divorce her. If he suffers from a defect that does not allow him to have sexual intercourse, his wife can nullify the marriage contract.

According to Islamic principles, man has no right to ignore woman's right to this obligation even if his reason is his great involvement in worship and piety. The Holy Prophet (pbuh) told someone who had given up his sexual relationship with woman in order to have ascetic practice and worship God, "Your wife has some rights in this regard."

One of the rights that woman enjoys in case her husband has more than one wife is an equal right of companionship in bed fellowship and the necessary justice that should be done to all wives (jurisprudents agree with the essence of the problem but disagree in some of its minor aspects).

## **Part III. Woman's Particular Duties**

Rights and duties are concomitant with each other; hence, in return for her general and particular rights in relation to man, she has also some obligations and duties (which are considered man's particular rights). The most important of these duties are as follows:

### **1. Compliance**

*Tamkīn* or compliance means wife's obedience to husband and asking for his permission to leave the house or to



do anything that might harm his specific rights. Contrary to the common belief, the law does not oblige woman to obey her husband blindly, although it is considered extremely desirable and, ultimately, leads to the good of woman.

Considering man's nature, his sexual needs, and the features of this natural need (both physical and psychological) – which are qualitatively different from those of woman, the right to condescension is a natural one and violating it, which is referred to as “*nashūz*” (disobedience), is followed by legal punishment. If a woman disobeys man, he can refuse to do some of his financial duties in return.

In some traditions woman's preventing man from having sex with her due to some illusions, such as the fetus's being harmed, is forbidden. Woman is also explicitly forbidden to go out of the house without her husband's permission. She is not allowed to do anything, even recommended worship or lengthening obligatory prayers, that violates man's rights.<sup>70</sup>

## **2. Chastity**

Chastity means protecting the invaluable but calamitous jewel that man has left in trust with woman. It is a mark of her feminine character. Woman is usually the trustee of man, the protector of his wealth and property, the guardian and nurse of his children, and the keeper of his honor.

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<sup>70</sup>. *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, part 83, Adab al-nikah.

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Through her chastity, which shows her essential self-restraint before other men and against the reckless attack of male human beings, which due to their sex seek for a mate in order to reproduce and increase the generation, creates a firm barrier to protect the offspring of her own man. Her duty is, indeed, to safeguard the generation that she must bring up and the honor that has been left in trust with her against harmful events and avarice of bandits and robbers of human grace.

We read in a *hadīth* from the Prophet (pbuh), “Woman is a like a taboo; she must be covered.” He also said, “Sometimes, women say unbearable things. At these times they must keep silent and be inaccessible to others. They must be asked to stay at home without their husbands.”<sup>71</sup>

Islam has made all necessary predictions and taken all precautions in different forms and manifestations in order to protect woman’s piety and chastity. It has not only forbidden “adultery” or sleeping with a man other than her husband and considered death as a punishment for it, but also forbidden using make up and jewelry for other than her husband and giving up *hijab*. She can even be taken to the court if she violates these rules. More importantly, it has even forbidden woman to cast passionate and lustful looks at men, even if they are blind.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup>. *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, part 128, Muqaddamat al-nikah.

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According to a *hadīth*, “God’s anger rises when a married woman casts a lustful look at a man other than her husband. At this time He ignores all her good acts.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>. *Ibid.*



## **Chapter 9**

### **Differences between the Rights of Men and Women**

*I*n addition to the points discussed previously, there are some differences between man and woman in Islamic civil and penal laws. The most important of these differences, which have sometimes been used as excuses by enemies of Islam to attack it by means of their propaganda and considered them as proof for the lack of recognition and negation of woman's true rights, include those pertaining to inheritance, giving testimony, blood money, divorce, and polygamy.

After an analysis of the secrets behind these differences in various scientific dimensions and based on trust in the legislative Islamic wisdom, there is no need to justify them. However, in order to clarify the issue more clearly, we will provide a brief explanation in this regard.

## A. Inheritance

In Islam there is a difference between man and woman in term of inheriting from their father. Here, man's share is twice as much as that of woman: "*Allah (thus) directs you as regards your children's (inheritance): to the male, a portion equal to that of two females ...*"<sup>74</sup>

Some people attribute this difference to discrimination against woman and lack of attention to her essential rights. Nevertheless, we must pay attention that this law descended at a time when human societies did not believe in the right of inheritance for woman at all. Second, judging the law of inheritance in terms of a simple division of benefits is wrong. In fact, the existence of superficial differences of shares in the law of inheritance in Islam, which is very complicated and based on many factors, cannot be evaluated and judged very easily.

Third, the principle of man's having a double share of inheritance does not hold true in all cases, and there are situations in which there is not any difference between their shares (for example, father and mother or the relatives of the mother). In some cases (mother's distant heirs in comparison to father's distant heirs), the mother's side is prior to the father's, and in some others, when the heiress is closer to the dead than the heir, he does not inherit anything. Apparently, the simple principles that we have in mind are not enough to help us

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<sup>74</sup>. *al-Nisa* chapter: verse 11.

understand the hidden secrets and benefits behind the various assumptions of this rule.

In his invaluable interpretation,<sup>75</sup> ‘Allāmah Ṭabāṭabā’ī writes about this difference as follows:

The result of this method of dividing inheritance between man and woman is that at the level of “ownership”, man’s share is twice as much as that of woman. However, at the level of “consumption”, she always benefits twice as much as man. This is because woman keeps her share and property for herself, whereas man must pay for woman’s maintenance. In fact, he spends half of what he inherits for woman.

The philosophy behind giving a greater share to man lies in woman’s being more emotional and man’s being more logical. The verse *“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means...”* also refers to this point. This is because “*qawwām*” is used to refer to someone who is responsible for the expenses and maintenance of another person. In Arabic, *qiyām ‘alā* means man’s having control over the expenses rather than general affairs. Since man is a logical and reasonable human being, he has a great talent for administering property and wealth.

The most comprehensive response in this regard has been given by Imām Sādiq (as): Man’s share is twice as much as that of woman since *jihād*, war,

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<sup>75</sup>. *al-Mizan*, vol. 4, p. 215.

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and defense are not obligatory for woman, and her maintenance is with man. Man must pay the nuptial gift. Moreover, in some cases it is man who must pay the blood money of the person who is killed rather than woman.

### **B. Giving Testimony**

The values of the testimony of man and woman in Islamic legal procedures are not always equal. In some cases, such as delegation, administration, divorce, revocation, blood relationship, seeing the crescent moon, etc., woman's testimony is not effective and does not demonstrate them. In cases, where the testimony of two just men is enough to prove an incident in a court, the number of female witnesses has to be four. In other words, woman's testimony is half as valid as that of man. When giving testimony for adultery (which requires four male witnesses), the testimony of man and woman together can prove the case. However, the testimony of woman alone is not enough.

This difference has created some criticisms and turned into an excuse for the claim that woman's value and rights in Islam are less than those of man. As mentioned before, a quick and simplistic judgment in such cases is a mark of lack of care and attention to the hidden secrets of creation and reveals the ignorance or ill-intentions of those who make it.

We can briefly say in response that, first, giving testimony is not a right but an obligation. One who has something to testify cannot refrain from doing so. Hiding



evidence is a crime and sin in Islam.<sup>76</sup> Hence, when requiring more witnesses in order to prove something, a lower level of obligation is imposed upon individuals. Therefore, a favor has been done in this regard to woman.

Second, as demonstrated in the philosophy of law, principles of criminology, and penal legal procedures, and as confirmed by psychologists, the way one describes the different aspects of the features of an event one has witnessed depends on whether the witness is a woman or man, emotional or restrained, child or adult. Experience shows that the testimony of sentimental and emotional people, who have naturally a more powerful imagination (which, unconsciously, makes them change some parts of the event when describing it) enjoys a lower level of truth and accuracy. Naturally, the testimony of woman, whose emotions and feelings typically dominate her reason in important cases, must be accompanied with more evidence confirming her words. In giving testimony, the essence of words and the characteristics of witnesses are not intended to be separated from each other; rather, both of them are necessary in order to present an accurate picture of the event. Nature has not granted woman the accuracy it has to man in giving testimony.

Third, if the equality of the testimony of two women with one man indicated their low value, in some cases in which man's testimony is invalid, woman's testimony had to be

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<sup>76</sup>. *al-Baqarah* chapter: verse 282.

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primarily invalid. However, in such cases the testimony of one woman proves one fourth of what is desired, whereas the testimony of a man has no judicial value.

For instance, in order to prove the right to legacy, the testimony of one man is not valid; however, a woman's testimony proves one fourth of its truth. For every woman that is added to the witnesses, one fourth of the case is proved. It will be completely proved when four women testify to its truth. This method also works when testifying that a baby has been born alive. The testimony of one man does not prove that a baby is an heir to legacy, but that of four women does. However, this rule does not indicate that man has a low status or his testimony is unimportant.

Fourth, in some cases woman's testimony is absolutely accepted, for example regarding the birth of a child, a woman's virginity, or her sexual problems. Sometimes, the testimony of even a single woman proves the truth of a case.

Fifth, the condition for accepting testimony is the justice of the witness, i.e. s/he must have the criteria for truth and trust. If the woman witness lacks honor and a respectable character, her testimony will not be acceptable. The number of required witnesses for each case is determined in relation to the nature of the witness.

Considering the different Islamic rules and principles concerning testimony, we can see that two points are taken into consideration by the judge: First, the witnesses must be certain

about their testimony. Second, the motive behind testimony must be providing true knowledge regarding the case rather than the personal benefits of the witness, escaping damage to oneself, enmity with the accused, and the servant-master or the employee-employer relationship.

Both of the above conditions show the accuracy of the judge in terms of testimony and witnesses so that the truth rather than falsity is proved. In cases where it is felt that a witness, due to the dominance of his feelings and emotions over his wisdom, ignores the truth even to a little extent and, under the influence of other problems, gives a false testimony, the judge must increase the number of witnesses.

### **C. Blood Money**

Blood money is paid to the legal guardian of one who has lost his life or been physically damaged by another person either deliberately or indeliberately. According to the law of blood money, when a Muslim woman is killed, her blood money is half of that of a Muslim man. If less than one third of her body is injured, her blood money is equal to that of a man, and if she is injured more than that, it is half of man's blood money.

Some critics maintain that it is a sign of defect in woman's rights or character and criticize Islam in this regard. Such criticisms are rooted in analyzing the Islamic penal system and the general philosophy of rules in very small and separate

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components and putting each under a magnifying glass, irrespective of the harmony that connects and governs the sum of all these component parts.

Such criticisms are unscientific and lacking in the kind of accuracy that is required in research. They can be of no help in discovering the reality or demonstrating it in an unbiased fashion.

A thorough study of the collection of Islamic laws reveals that they accept woman as a human of high character and respect and consider her to be completely equal to man in terms of her essential and human rights and characteristics. They also acknowledge that man and woman are different from each other in their social functions and features and jobs and specialty division due to their different natures.

They never criticize Islam for requiring man to protect her and pay for her maintenance and nuptial gift; there, they should not show a lot of sensitivity here and create chaos in cases where woman's rights are a little different from man's, or where a rule applies to them a little differently.

According to the law of blood money, woman is not considered an *'aqilah* (meaning one who the civil law forces to pay for blood money in case of a crime, such as murder or assault resulting in injury, that their family members or relatives have committed). This is a great financial privilege for woman, and it is possibly the reason why more blood money is paid to a man's family.

In cases where the blood money for “injury” is not more than one third of complete blood money (the money that is paid when one is killed), man and woman enjoy the same rights. However, if the philosophy behind blood money is based on woman’s defective character and low human rights, her blood money must always be half of that of man.

Some people believe that the difference between the blood money of man and woman is due to the fact that man is responsible for providing for his household and family and bears the responsibility for their maintenance and other expenses. If he is murdered, some people whose maintenance is necessary are left behind and must receive more money in compensation. This has nothing to do with man and woman’s substance; rather, it is due to the side effects of their death and its impacts on their family.

It is necessary to point out that “*dieh*” is not the price of the killed person. Rather, it is possibly the money that is paid to the remaining ones of the deceased.

## **D. Divorce**

One of the most famous criticisms advanced against Islam is why the right of divorce has been given to man and not to woman. The general response to this criticism is the same as the one given to the one related to the philosophy behind the differences between some of the rules and principles for man

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and woman. In order to provide a particular response to this criticism, we must pay attention to the following points:

First, divorce is basically an abhorrent affair. According to prophetic traditions, “Divorce is lawful, but it is the most hated of all lawful affairs.” In fact, the more limited the domain of choice in divorce, the less frequently it happens.

In order to prevent divorce and to remove all the causes and factors leading to it, Islam has taken all of its aspects and dimensions into consideration and announced them in the form of orders and prohibitions to couples. Islam’s clear orders concerning the family and social customs of life have been voiced in order to dry the roots of separation and destruction of the center of happiness of man and woman. It considers divorce merely as a “final solution for an absolutely helpless situation.”

Second, divorce usually happens when couples’ personal emotions and tendencies dominate their wisdom, and thus they treat each other unpleasantly. The strength of emotions and weakness of logic and rationality play a great role in intensifying the arguments and accelerating separation.

In order to prevent the interference of illogical and blind emotions in family affairs and separation of couples from each other, Islam maintains that logic should be the criterion for judgment so that in the sudden uproar of the emotions of the sides of matrimony no nest is ruined, and no family is destroyed. That is why it decrees that divorce decisions based on conditions and oaths are absurd and void. This is because

when he says, “I swear to divorce my wife if this or that happens (or does not happen),” or if he warns his wife, “If you do this or that, I will divorce you,” his criterion for such an act is his transient emotions rather than logic and wisdom.

It has been quoted from the Prophet (pbuh), “Divorce is never authorized in cases where man is not in a normal condition.” “A not-normal condition” has been interpreted by some jurists as anger, drunkenness, insanity, compulsion, etc. In other words, divorce must be enforced when the individual is in a normal condition and in his right mind.

Other traditions stipulate that divorce is cancelled if it has been carried out due to coercion, force, drunkenness, and anger. In a *hadīth* from Imām Ṣādiq (as) we read, “Divorce is legal only when it happens without exercising force, insisting on term and ordinance, with presence of two just witnesses, and when the wife is not having her menstrual period or is in childbirth. Otherwise, it is nullified.”<sup>77</sup>

The technical reason for such nullification is that divorce has very important consequences, and, therefore, no factor can affect the free will, or as jurists say, the intent, of the agent. In other words, divorce is correct only when the intention behind it is good, i.e. the sides decide to divorce in order to satisfy God, show their obedience to him, and take each other’s good into consideration. As mentioned before, a divorce motivated by lust and whimsical passions is cancelled.

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<sup>77</sup>. *Wasa’il al-Shi’a*, part 37, Talaq, *hadīth* 2, *Jawahir*, vol. 32, p. 11.

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Such emphasis upon intention and free will, as well as anger, emotions, momentary insanity, absent-mindedness, and the like, as factors leading to the nullification of divorce, signify the importance of the role of logic and wisdom in authorizing this abhorring lawful issue. Evidently, if the decision for divorce were to be made by woman, more divorces would occur due to emotional crises, jealousy, conflicts, competitions, etc. This is because woman is more influenced by her feelings, and factors such as anger revenge, and hatred than man. According to some statistics, about 80% of divorces in Western countries are asked for by women. In contrast, men are typically more reasonable, farsighted, and restrained than women, and if they make an emotional decision, they change their mind very soon.

Third, married life is based on heart-felt relations, attractions, and tendencies rather than purely legal, unemotional relations, violence, dominance, force, and compulsion. If woman's consent is a condition for divorce, and if man's intention is not enough (i.e. there is a contract rather than a one-sided disposition), there is a breach of promise. This is because in this case, man has to follow an obligatory life that is void of love, attraction, emotion, and kindness, although he cannot love and tolerate his wife in any way. Essentially, man's nature is such that, without a motivation or healthy body and sexual organs, he cannot perform his natural sexual duties, while woman can respond to man's desires even if she has no motivation in this regard or is unhealthy.



According to Murtaḍa Muṭahharī, there are some differences between the spirits of man and woman in dealing with each other. Man needs the woman herself (her body), but woman needs man's heart. He also maintains that the concepts of family life and even being a mother, loving her child, and other manifestations of her emotions are summarized in man's love for her, and that without this love, she will hate even her own child and house. He also adds that, considering man's aggressive and hunting behavior concerning woman, it is not a humiliation for man to keep his beloved wife in spite of her disinterested attitude and lack of love for him with the force of law, until he gradually tames her. However, it is an offense for a woman to resort to law and force to live with a man who does not love her.

That is why when a man's heart becomes empty of his wife's love, and other factors such as *Shar'i* and ethical duties, mercy, or loyalty cannot stop him, it is better for him to separate from his wife and not to have a "veto" right. In this way, her benefits will be protected and her respect observed.

Fourth, divorce is a "right" and can be transferred to others. In cases in which, despite man's weak character, the dominance of his emotions over his wisdom, and the existence of some logical barriers against having a healthy life, he does not accept to divorce his wife in order to harm her, Islam has allowed man to give power of attorney concerning divorce to woman at the time of signing the marriage contract. Therefore,

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if the conditions for divorce are realized (such as man's misbehavior and refusing to pay for woman's maintenance or do his other duties), woman can get her divorce through her power of attorney.

Moreover, two other types of divorce have been predicted in Islam: *Khol'ī* divorce and *mobarāt* divorce. In the former, a woman can ask for a divorce in the court provided that she dispenses with her nuptial gift or *mehriyyah*. In the latter case, the couple can separate from each other based on a mutual agreement.

Therefore, a little scrutiny reveals that divorce is not always determined by man, and woman can also obtain the right for divorce through legal and *Shar'ī* ways. She can do this when man steps out of the circle of piety, logic, and ethics.

Fifth, divorce usually has some financial and moral consequences for man. He has to pay his wife's *mehrīyyah*, which is an obligation. If he marries again, he has to pay for more expenses. He also has to take the custody of his children and bear the burden of the social and moral aspects of this event, which is possibly reflected in the form of reproach and blame, alone. Hence, the decision for divorce is made by a side who has to accept its harmful consequences, which is not to his good at all.

## E. Polygamy

According to Islamic laws, men can have more than one wife, while women can have only one husband. Some believe that this is a discrimination against women. Due to the scientific and social clarity of the issue, no one asks for the polygamy right for women. Nevertheless, men's right in this regard is usually criticized, and it is said that they must not be allowed to have several wives at the same time.

Woman's polygamy, as discussed in the theories of some philosophers such as Plato and in some schools such as Marxism and as existing in some societies in the past (it is said that it is common even now in some parts of Tibet) is forbidden in Islam. The reasons are as follows:

1. Having multiple husbands is against woman's primordial nature, and she herself naturally evades it. This is because, unlike man, whose nature spreads seeds like a farmer, woman is like land, which embraces the seed, maintains it, and brings it to production. Naturally, she obtains her purpose when she finds her true mate and closes the door to other men. Nevertheless, man is ambitious and aggressive by nature and goes from one flower to another like a butterfly.

2. A woman's relation with several men results in natural harmful problems (physical and psychological), such as diseases of venereal system, having disabled or deformed children, and becoming infertile. She will also suffer from some nervous problems and mental disorders.

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3. Woman is the keeper of bloodline. In the case of having multiple husbands, the bloodline, which is very important in the system of nature and greatly emphasized by Islam, will be disrupted. Here, children will not know who their father is and, as a result, will suffer many spiritual and emotional problems. They might even have psychological breakdowns and create a lot of difficulties in society.

The above reasons have put a stop to the phenomenon of woman's polygamy. Some communist countries tried to experience it under the pretext of promoting the idea of "free woman"; however, they changed their ideas and principles in this regard soon after observing its harmful consequences.

However, we can respond to the criticism of why Islam has granted the permission to man to have multiple wives by referring to the following points:

1. Polygamy is a *fiṭrī* (related to primordial nature) issue for man. It is a natural principle, and if it does not create any damages to human societies, Islam does not prohibit it. Although it might appear correct according to common customs and traditions, man's monogamy is against the law of nature.

2. Unlike what its enemies spread, Islam was not the founder of this law. It, rather, modified it from its extreme and disorderly form and set some limits for it. At the time of the rise of Islam, it was common among Arabs to keep sometimes more than ten women in the house. In the harems of the kings of China, Iran, Rome, and other civilizations of that time

sometimes hundreds of women lived together as their wives. By limiting polygamy in terms of the number of wives and specifying necessary conditions for it, Islam made a revolution in protecting the rights and honor of woman.

3. Irrespective of the naturalness of the necessity of woman's monogamy and man's polygamy, sometimes polygamy becomes a social necessity and must be predicted in law.

Although the number of women is equal to that of men, sometimes, due to reasons such as girls' early maturity, which makes them ready for marriage under the age of 15, their lower rate of death, due to their higher resistance against diseases, not taking part in wars, and doing dangerous and difficult jobs, the number of women in society becomes much more than men. If men are not legally permitted to have more than one wife, they themselves and a great number of single women are attracted to prostitution. As a result, families will be destroyed and sexual diseases will spread everywhere, and even pious and virtuous women will be infected. That is why the legal permission for men's polygamy under necessary conditions is to the advantage of society, woman, and man and not merely to the advantage of man.

4. Unlike the common belief, not all women are against polygamy. The opponents consist of women who view the second wife of their husband as their enemy and rival. Almost all the women who are chosen as a new wife agree with

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polygamy and man's second marriage is to their advantage. In other words, about half of women agree with this principle.

Woman's nature itself is not against her husband's polygamy, and there have been instances of some women who have been able to live with each other peacefully under the same roof and with the same husband while even helping and cooperating with each other.

5. A natural duty of woman is to accept the zygote, grow it in her womb, and then give birth to a baby.

Therefore, in most cases, after the formation of the fetus, she becomes uninterested in man and sometimes develops allergy-like sensitivities to him. As a result, she becomes temporarily cold to her husband. Such things do not happen to man in the long run, his natural needs and desires are always alive, and he cannot be naturally forced to forget them.

Moreover, women's menstrual period stops sexual activities sometimes for almost one third of their married life, while this does happen to man. Woman reaches the menopause at the age of 50, whereas man might feel the need for having a wife and children for many years.

6. In spite of all the above points, Islam has related polygamy, which is based on natural needs and principles, to other rules of human and social emotions and limited it to certain conditions. One of the heavy conditions for man's polygamy is his obligation to observe "justice", i.e. maintain absolute material and spiritual equality among all his wives.

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The Holy Qur'an has referred to the underlying principles of this issue in various verses, as follows:

*“If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, Marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice.”* (al-Nisa chapter: verse 3)

*“Ye are never able to be fair and just as between women, even if it is your ardent desire: But turn not away (from a woman) altogether, so as to leave her (as it were) hanging (in the air). If ye come to a friendly understanding, and practice self-restraint, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”* (al-Nisa chapter: verse 129)

A comparison of the above verses reveals that since it is practically impossible for man to maintain true justice among his wives, polygamy is not allowed to him. Such a subtlety in legislation, which embraces all natural, ethical, and social aspects of an issue, signifies the supreme wisdom of the Qur'an.

That is why some thinkers claim that Islam advocates monogamy unless certain conditions necessitate the opposite. In Islamic traditions, remarriage, even after the previous wife has left, has been forbidden. Indeed, Islam greatly blames lustful men.

\* \* \*





## **Conclusion**

### **Revival of Woman's Human Rights**

*I*n spite of all the clear laws that Islam has presented concerning woman's rights and the duties of each sex, unfortunately she has not yet attained her true place in Islamic societies and is still deprived of many of her rights.

This can also be seen in modern civilized societies which have granted some rights to their women based on the Declaration of Human Rights. Despite all the seminars and congresses that are held on this topic and all the related books and research activities, woman's status in society is still unstable.

The disorderly and unsatisfactory legal and social status of woman during the centuries after the rise of Islam and Western civil evolution has many reasons. A careful study of

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these reasons is necessary for the “revival of woman’s human rights”. Some of them are given below:

1. The first reason for not finding a solution to woman’s problem in this regard is that it has not been taken into consideration seriously. Propounding the issue of reviving woman’s rights has merely been limited to words, and it has never been put to practice.

In spite of all the slogans, cries, and uproars in the world, the problem of woman has never been a number one or front-row issue in the world. In fact, legislation organizations, parliaments, and international communities have always given the priority to problems that have been much less important but more immediate than women’s rights.

2. Another factor that has played a role in this regard is the cultural weakness of Islamic countries, which has opened the gate to the penetration of other cultures in Islamic countries, mixture of cultures, and, particularly, imitating foreign cultures. This has played a great part in preventing men and women to increase their awareness in this regard. More importantly, the exploitive culture of relying on instincts and disseminating nudity has declined woman’s status to its lowest possible level, i.e. becoming an instrument for giving short-term pleasure to man.

The rule of a wrong culture, cultural crisis, lack of culture, or following rootless cultures in societies has resulted in the suppression of women’s rights.

3. Women's negligence regarding training their rational and cognitive faculties and developing the necessary mental prerequisites has been one of the reasons behind such a backwardness. This is because, in addition to the effects of a healthy culture and its necessity, as long as women do not receive good training and do not reach the necessary mental and practical growth, they cannot have access to their true human identity.

4. The other reason behind the persistence of this problem is majority of men lack the necessary knowledge concerning their *Shar'i* and legal duties, their natural and traditional humiliating view of woman, and refusing to change it into one that is rooted in a realistic worldview and the Islamic approach to this problem. The existence of a healthy conscience in man is the most powerful administrative guarantee for the revival of woman's rights. In fact, if man does not bring faith in woman's rights and her true and sublime Islamic status, the problem will remain unresolved.

5. The most important reason of all miseries of woman and her deprivation of her true rights is her ignorance of her true identity. As long as woman does not learn about her true self and the differences between herself and man in all dimensions (whether from a sociological or psychological view, or whether in terms of the various functions and roles of either sex), she will not be able to perceive her own value and make men and the entire society perform their duties.

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Perhaps not many women accept that they do not know themselves. Nevertheless, we believe that without a reconsideration of our knowledge of woman, as Islam has introduced her, and a return to the primordial nature and customs of creation, woman will never manage to save herself from the whirlpool in which she is drowning.

6. Lack of a ruling system that can provide an optimal context for the modification and betterment of woman's rights is one of the other reasons of women's deprivation of their Islamic rights. Such a ruling system can lead to a correct enforcement of related laws in the light of its power and authority.

A fully qualified Islamic government is the only system that can obtain this purpose and accomplish its duty concerning all aspects of the issue, including legislation of related rules, modification of culture and mental enlightenment, and training and punishment of violators of woman's rights.

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