

# **Khutba**

English

Friday 11.02.11

## **Women's Liberation through Islam**

The women's liberation movement was not begun by women, but was revealed by God in the seventh century to Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh).

The Qur'an and the Traditions of the Prophet (Hadith or Sunnah) are the sources from which every Muslim woman derives her rights and duties

Today people think that women are liberated in the West and that the women's liberation movement began in the 20th century. Actually, the women's liberation movement was not begun by women, but was revealed by God in the seventh century to Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh).

### **Human Rights**

Islam, fourteen centuries ago, made women equally accountable to God in glorifying and worshipping Him – setting no limits on her moral progress. Also, Islam established a woman's equality in her humanity with men. In the Qur'an, in the first verse of the chapter entitled "Women," God says, "O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it its mate and from them both have spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty towards Allah in Whom you claim (your rights) of one another, and towards the wombs (that bore you). Lo! Allah has been a Watcher over you." (4:1)

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

### **Civil Rights**

In Islam, a woman has the basic freedom of choice and expression based on recognition of her individual personality. Women are encouraged in Islam to contribute their opinions and ideas. There are many traditions of the Prophet (Pbuh) which indicate women would pose questions directly to him and offer their opinions concerning religion, economics and social matters. A Muslim woman has the right to choose her husband and keeps her name after marriage. A Muslim woman's testimony is valid in legal disputes.

### **Social Rights**

The Prophet (Pbuh) said: "Seeking knowledge is a mandate for every Muslim (male and female)." This includes knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith as well as other knowledge. Men and women both have the capacity for learning and understanding. Since it is also their obligation to promote good behavior and condemn bad behavior in all spheres of life, Muslim women must acquire the appropriate education to perform this duty in accordance with their own natural talents and interests.

While maintenance of a home, providing support to her husband, and bearing, raising and teaching of children are among the first and very highly regarded roles for a woman, if she has the skills to work outside the home for the good of the community, she may do so as long as her family obligations are met. Islam recognises and fosters the natural differences between men and women despite their equality. Some types of work are more suitable for men and other types for women. This in no way diminishes either's effort nor its benefit. God will reward both sexes equally for the value of their work, though it may not necessarily be the same activity.

Concerning motherhood, the Prophet (Pbuh) said: "Heaven lies under the feet of mothers." This

implies that the success of a society can be traced to the mothers that raised it. The first and greatest influence on a person comes from the sense of security, affection, and training received from the mother. Therefore, a woman having children must be educated and conscientious in order to be a skillful parent.

### **Political Rights**

A right given to Muslim women by God, 1400 years ago is the right to vote. On any public matter, a woman may voice her opinion and participate in politics. It is stated in the Qur'an (60:12), that Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) is told that when the believing women come to him and swear their allegiance to Islam, he must accept their oath. This established the right of women to select their leader and publicly declare so. Finally, Islam does not forbid a woman from holding important positions in government. Abdur-Rahman Ibn Auf consulted many women before he recommended Uthman Ibn Affan (RA) to be the Caliph.

### **Economic Rights**

The Qur'an states: "By the creation of the male and female; Verily, (the ends) ye strive for are diverse." (92:3-4). In these verses, God declares that He created men and women to be different, with unique roles, functions and skills. As in a society, where there is a division of labour, so too in a family, each member has different responsibilities. Generally, Islam upholds that women are entrusted with the nurturing role, and men, with the guardian role. Therefore, women are given the right of financial support. The Qur'an states:

"Men are the maintainers of women because Allah has made some of them to excel others and because they spend of their wealth (for the support of women)." (4:34).

This guardianship and greater financial responsibility is given to men, requires that they provide women with not only monetary support but also physical protection and kind and respectful treatment.

God tells us, men are guardians over women and are afforded the leadership in the family. His responsibility for obeying God extends to guiding his family to obey God at all times. A wife's rights also extend beyond material needs. She has the right to kind treatment. The Prophet (Pbuh) said: "The most perfect believers are the best in conduct. And the best of you are those who are best to their wives."

The Muslim woman has the privilege to earn money, the right to own property, to enter into legal contracts and to manage all of her assets in any way she pleases. She can run her own business and no one has any claim on her earnings including her husband. The Qur'an states: "And in no wise covet those things in which Allah hath bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others; to men is allotted what they earn, and to women, what they earn; but ask Allah of His bounty, for Allah hath full knowledge of all things." (4:32). A woman inherits from her relatives. The Qur'an states: "For men there is a share in what parents and relatives leave, and for women there is a share of what parents and relatives leave, whether it be little or much – an ordained share." (4:7)

### **Rights of a Wife**

The Qur'an states: "And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves that you may live in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between you; Verily, in that are signs for people who reflect." (30:21). Marriage is therefore not just a physical or emotional necessity, but in fact, a sign from God! It is a relationship of mutual rights and obligations based on divine guidance. God created men and women with complimentary natures, and in the Qur'an, He laid out a system of laws to support harmonious interaction between the sexes.

To foster the love and security that comes with marriage, Muslim wives have various rights. The first of the wife's rights is to receive mahr, a gift from the husband which is part of the marriage contract and required for the legality of the marriage.

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

"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. Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him." (65:7).

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### **Duties of a Wife**

With rights come responsibilities. Therefore, wives have certain obligations to their husbands. The Qur'an states: "The good women in the absence of their husbands guard their rights as Allah has enjoined upon them to be guarded." (4:34). A wife is to keep her husband's secrets and protect their marital privacy. Issues of intimacy or faults of his that would dishonour him, are not to be shared by the wife, just as he is expected to guard her honour.

A wife must also guard her husband's property. She must safeguard his home and possessions, to the best of her ability, from theft or damage. She should manage the household affairs wisely so as to prevent loss or waste.

A Muslim woman must cooperate and coordinate with her husband. There cannot, however, be cooperation with a man who is disobedient to God. A husband also should not take advantage of his wife, but be considerate of her needs and happiness.

The Muslim woman was given a role, duties and rights 1400 years ago that most women do not enjoy today, even in the West. These are from God and are designed to keep balance in society. What may seem unjust or missing in one place is compensated for or explained in another place. Islam is a complete way of life.