

MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT MUSLIM WOMEN



There is a widely held misconception that Muslim women are considered inferior to men, they are oppressed because of the way they dress and are denied basic rights. In fact, Islam has granted women rights covering all areas of their lives over fourteen hundred years ago, such as the right to inherit; trade, invest, work, seek financial gain; own, buy and sell assets; seek knowledge and education. In comparison to the West, which awarded women only some of these rights in recent decades.

In the words of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him): "Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim," irrespective of age, gender or colour. The most basic right of a woman in Islam is the knowledge and recognition that she never has to ask, demand or fight for those rights that have been granted to her by Allah (God) Himself.

Allah (God) says in the Qur'aan: "O mankind! Be dutiful to your Lord, Who created you from a single soul (Adam), and from him (Adam) He created his wife (Eve), and from them both He created many men and women. And fear Allah (God) through Whom you demand your mutual (rights), and (do not cut the relations of) the wombs (kinship). Surely, Allah (God) is a constant Watcher over you." [Qur'aan 4:1]

Prior to the revelation of the Qur'aan, women in Arabia and beyond were treated as slaves and were denied their independence and rights. In some Western countries, women were considered as evil or as witches and companions of the devil. The birth of a daughter in a family was a source of humiliation, and the practice of killing baby girls was widespread. The Qur'aan warned people of being held accountable on the Day of Judgment for such a heinous practice.

An entire chapter of the Qur'aan is dedicated to the mention of women. Many verses refer to the treatment and rights of women, such as: "O You who believe! You are forbidden to inherit women against their will, and you should not treat them with harshness" [Qur'aan 4:19]

Mothers are held in such high esteem in Islam as they endure nine months of pregnancy and, in most cases, two years of suckling. The Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) companion Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him), reported that a person said: "Allah's Messenger (pbuh) who amongst people is most deserving of my good treatment? He replied: Your mother. He asked: "Then who?" Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) answered: "Again it is your mother." The man questioned: "Then who?" Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) retorted: "Again it is your mother." The man asked again: "Then who?" Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) replied: "Then your father." (Sahih Muslim)

Similarly, men in their role as fathers, brothers and husbands have a duty to care for women. This includes being financially responsible for them; providing them with food, clothing and shelter; support their education; and protecting them from harm.

