

# RIGHTS OF MANKIND IN ISLAM

## Women in Islam

Islam was revealed at a time when many people throughout the world denied the humanity of women. Whether seen as sub-human or not, women were still considered a thing created for the humble service of men.

Islam returned the rights to women that had been eroded away by a decadent society. The woman's dignity and humanity were restored, making her status equal to man. Female infanticide was outlawed and rights were given to women in regards to inheritance which did not exist previously. Among other things, women now had the right to have personal possessions and therefore have their own money and wealth (with no obligation to spend upon their families), the right to agree to marriage (her consent is obligatory), and then keep her maiden name after marriage. They now had the right to divorce, to education, to vote; the rights are many and put women not only on an equal pedestal, but elevated their status above that of men in many circumstances:

Abu Hurayrah related that a man came to the Prophet Mohammad and asked, "O Messenger of Allah, which person of all the people is best entitled to kind treatment and good companionship from me?" He answered, "Your mother." The man asked, "And then?" He said, "Your mother." "And after her?" He said, "Your mother." "And after her?" The Prophet said, "Your father." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Many rights were only furnished to women recently in the West; a clear example of this is where the right to own property, the right to execute her own will and the right to divorce

only came into law in the 19th Century. Further, due to cultural misguidance seen in some societies outside of the Muslim world, the birth of a daughter is still viewed as a burden. Female infanticide is still common through abortion, therefore leaving a large disparity between the numbers of men and women within those communities.

The Islamic view on the status of women can be summarised in the following verse of the Qur'an:

*"Their Lord responded to them: 'I never fail to reward any worker among you for any work you do, be you male or female, you are equal to one another...'" (Qur'an 3, 195)*

## The Rights of Children in Islam

In much of the world before Islam, there was a great deal of mistreatment, the worst of which was infanticide; the killing of children soon after birth. This was practiced for fear of destitution, as sacrifices to false gods, or for preventing social disgrace with the birth of a daughter.

The Qur'an rejected all inhumane treatment and gave children many rights; the rights to be fed, clothed and protected, the right to enjoy love and affection from their parents, the right to equal treatment between the siblings, the right to education and the right to adequate inheritance.

*"...Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you. [He commands] that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them..." (Qur'an 6, 151)*

Furthermore, the mind of the child must be nurtured, and education is vital in this respect. The heart of a child must be filled with faith, the child's mind entertained with proper guidance, knowledge and wisdom, and morals and good character are integral to the child's development.

*"Fear Allah and treat your children [small or grown] fairly [with equal justice]."* (Bukhari and Muslim)

## Human Rights in Islam and Ethnic Minorities

Islam gave to mankind an ideal code of human rights 1400 years ago. These rights aim at conferring honour and dignity on mankind and eliminating exploitation, oppression and injustice. These were summarised in the Final Sermon of Prophet Mohammad, considered the first human rights declaration. These rights exist for all communities, whether Muslim or not, the male and the female, those living in peace or in war; their rights are guaranteed by Allah.

*"..All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action..." (Excerpt from the Final Sermon)*

Human rights in Islam are firmly rooted in the belief that Allah, and Allah alone, is the Law Giver and the source of all human rights. Due to their divine origin, no ruler, government, assembly or authority can curtail or violate in any way the human rights conferred by Allah, nor can they be surrendered.

These rights are also evident when it comes to non-Muslims living in Muslim society. The Prophet Mohammad used to visit the sick people in Al-Madina; Jews as well as Muslims. Hospitals admitted and treated people irrelevant of their religion or social status. In the governmental level, Christians and Jews reached prominent positions of authority. When a Jewish funeral procession passed by the Prophet, he stood up as a sign of respect. Christians and Jews were admitted to Muslim schools, colleges and universities and some were given boarding at the expense of the State. During the Spanish Inquisition the Muslim World was a safe haven for the Jews, who were like the Muslims fleeing Spanish persecution, after prospering and living in harmony in Muslim Spain for over 700 years.

*"Whoever kills an innocent soul, who has not taken a life or brought destruction to society, is as if has killed the entire humanity; and whoever saves an innocent soul is as if he has saved the entire humanity."* (Qur'an 5, 32)

