

Epilogue

After a year of questioning, pondering, and writing, I begin to sit and reflect. It amazes me still, with all the information I have gathered, discussed, explained, and understood, that the rights and disposition of women in Islam is astounding and seemingly limitless. The most poignant right being that I, as a woman, in my creation and relation toward Allah, stand equally to a man, and, in some cases, can be given more admiration than that of a man.

The human make-up of a woman is not inferior to that of a man. We are equal. I do not take lightly to this point; it just confirms the justice of God. In keeping with the justice of God, Allah never intended for the systematic laws of testifying to be discriminatory or the distribution of inheritance as preferential treatment for men.

Although some people may interpret or perceive these issues to be the case, or as a means to continually undermine and misrepresent the true status of Muslim women; nonetheless, when the laws are detailed, defined, and administered properly, then the principle theory of the laws are justified.

Islam does not grant women unconventional rights; it prompts society to recognize the universal message that women are born with and entitled to receive inalienable humanistic rights and opportunities. Among the three major monotheistic religions, Islam is the only religion that divinely acknowledges women as an integral being in life.

Muslim women have full control to ethically map and pursue their own aspirations, destinations, and lifestyles. Islam, 1400 years ago, constituted advancement for women long before the women's right movement of the 1800's in the West.

However, the biggest enemy facing women in Islam is ignorance about Islam itself. Muslim women must educate themselves about their religion. They should deeply meditate, consciously question, and if needed, insist upon their God given rights.

Muslim women should be informed of their rights and choices. Even more so, men (husbands, fathers, and sons) should be informed of their rights and obligations toward women (mothers, wives, and

daughters). Knowing what our Islamic rights are in relation to each other, and to ourselves, would better enable us to meet our expectant obligations and behavior.

Some Muslim women, when they marry, are uninformed of their rights. Some Muslim marriages are contracted without women ever knowing what are their rights. Although the husband inherently holds the right of divorce, Muslim women must also be aware that, as a wife, they have a say in the matter.

A Muslim woman, when she marries, can specify in her marriage contract certain matters that are important to her, such as continuing her formal education or working in her field of study, among other things. Islam has given Muslim women the opportunity to accept, change, or decline any conditions, provided the couple mutually agrees and the conditions do not violate the Qur'an.

It is the spirit of humankind to strive for individual freedom of the self, without encroaching on the security of society, and to be undaunted and unhindered by the limitations of others seeking to impose their desires of unwanted control whether he be a man or a woman. Not a single person wants to be controlled by another.

Islam has embarked on new territory, the West. Muslim women in America are becoming more visible. The question that remains is whether Islamic ideology and rulings will be compatible to non-Muslim American women. Muslim scholars must consider this carefully when making rulings regarding women.

Most rulings regarding women should not be sequestered for certain societies or for certain countries. The laws will eventually reach everyone, and they will reflect their images on women who practice Islam around the world.

I invite non-practicing born Muslim women to rediscover the essence of their Islamic heritage. I encourage women who are in search of the truth, Muslims and non-Muslims, to question and inquire for themselves about women's rights in Islam.

Too often, culture and tradition have disguised Islam with painted blemishes and images of its true intention. Islam, when studied with a rational, impartial mind, becomes a religion with firm and unequivocal values, both for men and women.

Fatma Saleh

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