

# Allegations against Muslim women



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Imprisoned inside the veil and oppressed within a purely patriarchal society, **inheriting half the share of her brother**, accused of being an **omen in this world, and in the hereafter she ends up in the hellfire**. Not only this, but even **her God is male** like all **His prophets and Caliphs!** She can't even be an **Imam at the mosque.'**





## Is God a He?

The Divine books of the three major religions of the world: Judaism, Christianity and Islam were originally revealed to the relevant prophets (peace be upon them) in Semitic languages which share several grammatical features, one of which is that they use a masculine–feminine system of gender.

They assign gender to nouns, adjectives, pronouns, and verbs. This means that a speaker of the Arabic language, for example, will have to use a different form of a verb depending on whether he or she is speaking to a male or a female. Similarly, they will use masculine or feminine for objects, body parts, plants, and everything else, whether they are animate or inanimate nouns, and even for abstract words such as justice, freedom, oppression etc.

Meanwhile the neuter gender is used across most European and other languages.

In Arabic, Allah is always mentioned in a masculine form, this however, does not mean that He is a male. He is neither male, nor a female, rather He is far above human perception and comprehension.

Thus, God Almighty has no gender. While He created living beings as male and female for the sake of reproduction, Allah the Almighty stresses in the Holy Qur'an the fact that the existence of pairs (male and female) is specific to His creation only:

‘He is the Maker of the heavens and the earth. He has made for you pairs of your own selves, and of the cattle also He has made pairs. He multiplies you therein. There is nothing whatever like unto Him; and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.’ (42:12)



As for the masculine gender in the Arabic language, it can be used in a general sense, which may be specific to males alone or may mean both males and females. So, when we say for example, صحابيات رسول الله ﷺ it means we are speaking about the female companions of the Holy Prophet (sa), while when we say صحابة رسول الله ﷺ , then this might mean only the male sahaba or both the male and female sahaba altogether.

Furthermore, in the Arabic language, if the conversation is about something that cannot be described as masculine or feminine, then it is reported as masculine.

So, the basic rule of the Arabic language is to use the masculine form. This is the linguistic method the Arabs from ancient times have used since before Islam, so there is no justification in accusing Islam of misogyny. Arabs use the masculine if speech includes both genders. An example of this is the following hadith:

"He who observes fasting during the month of Ramadan with Faith while seeking its reward from Allah, will have his past sins forgiven." [Bukhari and Muslim].

So, despite the usage of the masculine form, this hadith addresses both Muslim men and women.

Thus, describing the word 'Allah' in the masculine form does not diminish the feminine gender, rather it is a linguistic necessity.





However, as Muslims, without delving into the language and its rules, we address God Almighty in the masculine form because He Himself has spoken in the Holy Qur'an and in all His divine books about Himself in the masculine form. For example, God Almighty says:

'And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in accordance with the requirements of wisdom; and the day He says, 'Be', it will be. His word is the truth, and His will be the kingdom on the day when the trumpet will be blown. He is the Knower of the unseen and the seen. And He is the Wise, the All-Aware.' (6:74)

Moreover, God Almighty has also denied the angels male or female gender, but He speaks about them in a masculine form throughout the Holy Qur'an:

'And they describe the angels, who are the servants of the Gracious God, as females. Did they witness their creation? Then their testimony will be recorded, and they will be questioned' (43:20)

Thus, it is necessary to understand that there is no masculine linguistic tendency used consciously against women, if this was the case, we would find all words expressing evil to be feminine. However, in reality, many positive expressions are feminine in the Arabic language such as "paradise," "guidance," "mercy," "integrity," and "wisdom". On the other hand, many negative words such as "deviation," "lying," "forgery," "delusion," "falsehood," and "corruption," and above all "Satan" and "Iblis", are masculine and they have been addressed in the Holy Qur'an and other divine books in a masculine form, so why does no one object to their masculinity?!!

**So, if Islam is not misogynistic why can't a woman be sent as a Prophet, elected as Caliph or even appointed as an Imam?**



Gender equality is what Islam presented 1400 years ago; the Holy Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes the spiritual equality of men and women. Women can attain all the spiritual heights that men can attain. Throughout the Holy Qur'an, believing men and women have been addressed equally. The commandments are equal for both, and the rewards for both are equal too:

“But whoso does good works, whether male or female, and is a believer, such shall enter Heaven, and shall not be wronged even *as much as* the little hollow in the back of a date-stone” (4:125)

Spiritual commandments apply equally to men and women and the way to excel in spirituality is the same for men and women.

Women also have the same political and social rights that men do. For example, both men and women are entitled to a suitable inheritance from their parents and near relatives.

Islam is a champion of equality for women. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an that man and woman were created from a single soul. Islam gives the same rights to women as men.

However, Islam does distinguish between the different responsibilities of men and of women, and this is according to the laws of nature.





As for women's rights, Islam in fact granted women many valuable rights 1400 years ago that women in the West did not obtain until little more than a century ago. These include the right to divorce, inheritance and education, as well as the rights to vote, to rule and to preach her religion.

Furthermore, by fulfilling her domestic duties, this is sufficient for the Muslim woman to gain that paradise which has been described as being placed under her feet as a mother. She does not need to toil or be drained in the labour market in order to contribute to the expenses of living. However, if she chooses to work, then this is a legitimate right for her too, and her husband does not have the right to take any of her money. Not only this, but he must provide for her as well as their children. Thus, what a woman decides to do with her money remains for her to decide, be it what she earned from work, obtained as a gift or as inheritance. If she voluntarily contributes to the household expenses, then it is a mere favour from her.

However, when the advent of the liberator of women, Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) brought Muslim women numerous rights, they did not sit passively. Rather, they progressed in all fields of science, medicine, nursing, and religion among other domains.



**Hadhrat Ayesha<sup>ra</sup>**, who used to teach matters of faith to men and women. She was a scholar, interpreter of the Holy Qur'an and narrator of the sayings of the Prophet<sup>sa</sup> who himself said: 'learn half of your faith from Ayesha'. Ayesha<sup>ra</sup> was also a jurist and had expertise in medicine, poetry, and history.

There are many other examples of the excellence of Muslim women in various fields. Mariam al-Asturlabi was a brilliant scientist and astronomer of the 10th-century. She was likewise a renowned maker of astrolabes and helped to further navigation and timekeeping techniques.

**Fatima al-Fihri**: she was a scholar who founded the oldest existing, continually operating and first degree-awarding educational institution in the world, the University of Al-Quaraouiyine in Fes, Morocco. This University is credited with producing many distinguished thinkers and scientists both Muslim and Non-Muslim. It remains open to this day, producing graduates in religious and scientific branches of knowledge.

**Ash-Shifaa' Al-'Adawiyyah**, who taught women reading, writing and calligraphy. She practised medicine so skilfully that she was called Ash-Shifaa' meaning 'the healer'. The second caliph of Islam, Hadrat Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) appointed her a *bazar* inspector in Madina – the equivalent to a Trade secretary nowadays.





So, does a Muslim woman need to prove her equality with a man by leading him in prayer? Or to be a Prophet or Khalifa? something which has nothing to do with Islamic teachings? However, in Islam, the mosque is a space for both men and women, and it plays an important role in the spiritual and social life of them both. Men and women should pray in separate halls, and where this is not possible, women should pray behind men. During worship, one should focus on Allah and should not be distracted by anything else, and the postures during prayer in Islam make it sensible for men and women to pray separately so that everyone can stay focused on Allah alone. And this is the purpose of prayer.

**As for Prophethood or Khilafat**, women are the mothers of the Prophets and Khulafaa who raised them as role models, and if one looks at the life histories of prophets, and khulafaa, it is clear that the responsibilities of delivering the message, leading the believers in trials and tribulations, and handling other matters would have been hard for females especially when they have the responsibility of raising the families. Moreover, women in Islam can't pray all days like men, so the Prophet, Khalifa and Imam should be the one who is available all times for discharging the religious duties and have the strength to bear this huge responsibility. But we should not forget that the knowledge given to the Holy Prophet<sup>(sa)</sup> was transmitted mostly through his wives because they were the closest observants of his character and life.



**Now again, if Islam is so in favour of women's equality, why does it give her half the share of what her brother gets in inheritance?**

In fact, it must be stressed that the Holy Qur'an does not state that the ratio of 2:1 applies to all instances of inheritance; it applies only to the case of children. So, in this case, the male child inherits double the portion as compared to the female. However, when parents (Father and Mother) inherit from a deceased child, each of them receives an equal share which is one sixth.

Because of time constraints I will only mention the following:

- 1- in 10 cases a woman gets an equal share of inheritance to a man.
- 2- in 10 other cases a woman has a bigger share of inheritance than a man.
- 3- in 10 other cases a woman gets the full inheritance.
- 4- in 4 cases a woman will get half the share.

An example: A woman died leaving behind her husband, daughter, father, mother and a brother. Her husband will get  $\frac{1}{4}$  (one quarter) while the daughter will get  $\frac{1}{2}$ . The father and mother each will have  $\frac{1}{6}$ th. The brother will not get anything.





So here:

- **One female (the mother) inherited the same share as a male (the father)**
- **One female (the daughter) inherited double a male's portion (her father/husband of the deceased)**
- **A Female inherited a share, while one male, that is, the brother of the deceased, got nothing.**

Thus, a woman may receive her inheritance from her husband, children or parents. Prior to marriage, her expenses are taken care of by her parents. After her marriage, her husband and in-laws take care of her expenses. If her husband dies, the in-laws must take special care of her for at least an additional year after the demise of her husband.

All these provisions are in addition to the provisions she is already being provided through the receipt of *haq mehr*, and her rightful inheritance share from her husband's estate. This is all as well as her own sources of income through employment, business, etc. Furthermore, Islam considers this wealth of the woman as part of her personal assets and it is not required for her to spend it on her family.



**Then why it is claimed that the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> said that women are an omen in this world and that in the hereafter they end up in the hellfire?**

The hadith which mentions an abundance of women in hell has been mistranslated by people. That hadith does not mean at all that there would be more women in hell; rather, the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> said:

“I was shown hell and I saw that there was an abundance of such women who were ungrateful to their husbands.” It means that the majority of women, who were in hell due to their misdeeds, were such who were ungrateful to their husbands. Hence, this hadith firstly does not mean that there will be more women than men in hell.

Secondly, the reason why those women will be in hell has been clearly explained. They are such women who repeatedly deny the favours of God Almighty, which He bestowed upon them through their husbands.

In contrast to this, glad tidings of paradise under the feet of pious and righteous women have been given in ahadith, which has not been given about any man. Moreover, Islam has granted men and women certain rights or designated certain duties to them according to their temperaments. It has obliged the man to work and fulfil all the needs of the household and has instructed the woman to safeguard the house and the children and look after their upbringing.





As for hadith:

**"There is no evil omen; but if anything is affected by an evil omen it is a house, a horse, and a woman."**

In this Hadith the Holy Prophet (sa) did not state his own position about this matter but the belief of the people of the time before Islam. This notion is also supported by a narration of Hazrat Ayesha (ra), in which she reports that Hazrat Abu Hurayrah (ra) says that the Holy Prophet (sa) said that horses, women and a house are signs of a bad presage. According to the narration, Hazrat Ayesha (ra) became very angry at this and said that the Holy Prophet (sa) never said such a thing. Rather he had stated that the people of the time of ignorance used to consider these three things as the cause of misfortune. According to another narration, Hazrat Ayesha (ra) denied the statement of Hazrat Abu Hurayrah (ra) and said that Hazrat Abu Hurayrah (ra) only listened to the last part of the speech of the Holy Prophet (sa) but not the first part.

One of the meanings of this Hadith is that this false belief of the age of ignorance has been refuted by saying that if one's house is such that he dislikes to live in it, or one's wife is such that he dislikes her company, or if he has a horse whose ride he does not find enjoyable, then he should separate himself from these things. Similarly, it has been said that a horse that beats, a wife who is unfaithful to her husband and a house far from the Mosque where the call to prayer is not heard, are causes of misfortune.



In fact, the Holy Prophet (sa) liked these three things and praised them. He (sa) lived in a house and used a horse for various purposes. Moreover, the Holy Prophet (sa) had a very close relationship with women, for example, with his mother, wives and daughters. The Holy Prophet (sa) said that heaven is under the feet of a mother. He called a virtuous wife the most valuable benefit of the world. He stated that the righteous upbringing of a daughter is a means of entering heaven and of salvation from hell. He called the husband who treats his wife well as the best among human beings and out of all the things in the world, he expressed his love for women and perfume as provisions. Similarly, the Holy Quran described horses as an adornment for human beings. It described the expression of Hazrat Solomon's extraordinary love for horses as a cause of remembrance of God. Also, referring to the extraordinary importance of horses, the Holy Prophet (sa) said that blessings have been placed on the foreheads of horses till the day of judgment.





Hence, the fact that the Holy Quran and the Holy Prophet (sa) have declared these things to be praiseworthy proves that the interpretation of the Hadith under discussion cannot be taken in the way which makes it objectionable.

Moreover, the Promised Messiah (as) wrote in his Arabic book Noor-ul-Haq: “All effects are in the hand of Allah the Exalted, and that there is no influence or effect in the entire universe except by His command, will and desire.” That is, the pious and evil effects of everything in the world are in the hands of God Almighty and nothing can affect others, good or bad, without God’s command and will.

However, it is important to keep in mind that this should not lead to the misconception that man has nothing to do with the good or bad effects of something, and everything that happens is solely by the command of Allah. This aspect has been deeply elaborated upon in the Holy Quran, the Ahadith and in the words of the Promised Messiah (as) at different places that as the deeds of the people are performed, Allah Almighty manifests their effects accordingly.



The Promised Messiah (as) writes in this regard:

***“This is an indication that every human action is followed by a corresponding action on the part of God. For instance, when a person closes all the doors and windows of his room, his action is followed by a Divine action whereby the room becomes dark’.***

*(Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam)*





Therefore, in accordance to the teachings of the Holy Qur'an, ahadith and the words of the Promised Messiah (as) it cannot be alleged that horses, women and homes, in and of themselves, are sources of misfortune.

Let it be clear that all these common allegations hurled at Muslim women have no weight. In Western society we all have experienced the judgement of people we pass by, in our workplaces, schools, or elsewhere. However, we must be confident in our beliefs and grateful that true Islamic teachings do not oppress us, but indeed empower us! We are not imprisoned in our veils or by a patriarchy, rather we have been liberated for more than 1400 years! Many allegations have taken out of context certain elements of Islam, distorted them or ignored the nuances of the Arabic language in order to feed their false misconceptions and prejudices. May the whole world realise that Islam has granted women equal spiritual capacities to men, a wide scope of rights and a level of respect that is unmatched. Ameen.

