

# Women in Islam: A Historical and Philosophical Interpretation

\*Mohasina Khatun

Research Scholar, Dept. of Philosophy, Vidyasagar University

## ABSTRACT

The status of Islamic women changes in various Muslim nations, which decipher Islamic law and religion in an unexpected way, particularly concerning their attitude toward women. The greater parts of these Islamic nations have explicit convictions about women and have limitations concerning them. Sexual orientation of Islamic women have their cause in the development of the Islamic religion like the early expansion of many different religions and how the sex generalizations of women shaped alongside the improvement of these religions. This paper depicts the meaning of being a Muslim and the convention of the Qur'an originated from the revelations to Muhammad, last prophet around 610 C.E. The present status of women in Islamic nations is portrayed alongside the strengthened dialogs and discussions concerning women, directly occurring. In a few states, laws and bills were passed to enhance status of women however some have just been disavowed, in different nations new limitations have been proposed. By and large, Islamic women and women's gatherings are proceeding with the battle for their rights.

**Keywords:** *Early Islam, Islamic Women, Rights, Veil, Equality*

## Article Publication

Published Online: 17-Jan-2021

## \*Author's Correspondence

**Mohasina Khatun**

Research Scholar, Dept. of Philosophy,  
Vidyasagar University

✉ [mohasinakhatun01\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:mohasinakhatun01[at]gmail.com)

© 2021The Authors. Published by *Research Review Journals*

This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>)

From 3000 B.C.-A.D. 1100, man's view of himself as superior in all ways to women soon became enshrined in the law and custom of the world's earliest civilizations, those of the Near East. Women became a chattel first of her father, then of her husband, then of her son. (Reay Tannahil, 1982)

The status of women in Islam is one of the critical subjects and dominant topics in the cutting edge period, which theologians have been considering. In many cultures of the world, women are victims of socio-cultural suppression. Women in pre-Islamic Arabia lived in misery and were victims of culturally approved discrimination, dehumanization and social deprivation. In Islamic history, the period before the advent of Prophet Muhammad is called the *Jahiliyya* period, which is interpreted as the period of ignorance. The *Jahiliyya* Arabs had a custom of burying their female children alive. As Islam spreads, the distinctive nations and their societies may decipher Islamic religion and law in an unexpected way, particularly with respect to their demeanours toward women. This has made the image of the Islamic woman a mind boggling one. These incorporate the essential Islamic rituals and laws, diverse Islamic factions frequently with various understandings of how these rituals and laws are translated and did, just as political structure in every one of these nations.

The word Islam means 'submission' or 'surrender' (Adams, 1965). The doctrine of Islam came from the teachings of Muhammad has few 'alterations or accumulations'. (Noss, 1984, p. 698) The essential things of Islam set down in the Qur'an are inside the span of nearly everybody. The lifestyle endorsed depends on exercise that will guarantee his salvation. He isn't requested to concur yet to submit. Hence, one who submits turns into a Muslim. When one expresses that he is a Muslim that means he has acknowledged to God. Islam, at the outset, was a test to different gatherings in the Arabian Peninsula, principally the uncovered and monotheistic religions of the Christians and Jews whom they battled significant fights. All things considered, the power of Islam and its lucidity offered extraordinary fascination in the individuals who upheld and embraced it as the third uncovered monotheistic religion after Judaism and Christianity.

Muhammad experienced childhood in crumbling conditions after the death of his parents at the age of 6 years and his initial experience began to shape his outlooks toward poor people. With the growing time Muhammad came to understand social imbalances,

abuse of youngsters and women, and female infanticide and disturbed these problems (Carroll, 1983). Muhammad started working to manage a caravan for a rich widow, Khadija. She appreciated his business capacity and became enamoured with him and married although she was 15 years older than Muhammad. It was said that Khadija impacted his attitude toward the social issues of the time and liberated Muhammad from work to pursue his contemplations about social issues. In 610 C.E., when Muhammad was around 40 years of age, was in a time of profound pressure, worried that there would be an emergency in Arab society, Muhammad entered a cave a short distance from Mecca to fast, meditate and pray for its people.

One night Muhammad woke to find himself overpowered by a devastating presence, which squeezed him tightly until he heard the first words of a new Arab's scripture pouring from his lips. (Noss, 1956, p. 692)

This was the beginning of the Qur'an as revealed to him. Muhammad kept on having revelations yet trusted just to Khadija and her uncle Waraqa ibn Nawfal, a Christian. Both upheld his conviction and were sure that these revelations and dreams came straightforwardly from God. Muhammad's better half turned into his first proselyte and later came to be known as the main mother of the devoted. It was just in 612 C.E. that Muhammad felt that he could begin to lecture about his revelations and step by step began to assemble changes over. Muhammad's underlying proselytes incorporated a significant number of women, originated from the poorer clans who were despondent about the social imbalances. Muhammad likewise addressed a basic message; it wasn't right to gather wealth however great to share this wealth and build up a general public that would regard the frail and helpless.

Say Allah is One  
The Eternal God  
He Begot None,  
None was he Begotten  
None is Equal to Him (Al- Ikhlas, 112:1-4).

During the following 21 years the Qur'an was step by step revealed to Muhammad, surah by surah and chapter by chapter when there was a network emergency or inquiries concerning genuine issues. "News of this extraordinary 'super-tribe' spread, and though at the outset nobody thought it had a chance of survival" (Armstrong, 2002, p. 14), it was demonstrate a motivation to the general people of the Arabian Peninsula. An ever increasing number of clans and tribes began to pursue Muhammad and convert to this new monotheistic religion. Muhammad was considered 'The Prophet.' Many of the new devotees were changed over through the sheer excellence of the Qur'an rousing them to change their entire lifestyle. The new order would come to be called,

Islam; a man or a woman who had made this submission of their entire being to Allah and his demand that human beings behave to one another with justice, equity and compassion. (Armstrong, 2002, p. 5)

In this way, Islam came into existence as the third revealed monotheistic religions after Judaism and Christianity. A strong enmity developed between these two groups and Muhammad's supporters had to leave their old innate gatherings in Mecca and later, few heavenly war was held in the reason for their God, Allah, Muhammad and his new Islamite's were revolutionary enough to vanquish the Meccans by 630 C.E. Mecca was totally prevailed and Muhammad at that point began the custom of the journey to the sacred city of Mecca. This turned into a point of reference for all customs and still endures today. Muhammad and the new Islamic religion had come to rule over nearly the whole Arabian Peninsula along with Northern Africa.

Polytheism, Judaism and the Christianity faith in the Trinity are denied and the Qur'an states that "there shall be no coercion in matters of faith" (Armstrong, 2002, p. 10) and additionally "commands Muslims to respect the beliefs of Jews and Christians" (Armstrong, 2002, p. 10). They are known as 'Ahl-al-Kitah' typically depicted as the "People of the Book" however in an increasingly exact translation would be "people of an earlier revelation" (Armstrong, 2002, p. 10). The plan of worship includes the Five Pillars of Islam and portrays the demands made of all disciples of Islam. These demands are as per the following, for example, initially, The Creed: There is no God yet Allah. Besides, The Ritual Prayer: It is currently said five times each day. Thirdly, Almsgiving: A sort of tithe for poor people and wiped out and for different purposes. Fourthly, fasting which means total forbearance from nourishment or drink and sex from dawn to nightfall amid the long stretch of Ramadan. In conclusion, Pilgrimage to Mecca: This is compulsory for any adherent once amid his lifetime on the off chance that he can attempt it.

Women in pre-Islamic Arabia lived in misery and were victims of culturally approved discrimination, dehumanization and social deprivation. Before Islam, most hitched women held blood connection with their clan. Under the new religion, the matriarchal framework was abrogated alongside polyandry. Female infanticide was restricted. Women were currently constrained by their husbands and by their husbands' families; however initially, this was not inflexibly implemented. Muhammad had for some time been worried

about the treatment of women, particularly of widows. Muhammad supplanted polyandry with polygamy means the act of having two spouses came during the war when many Muslims were executed against Mecca and their widows were left isolated, men were permitted to take up to four spouses, furnished that they treat each with thorough justice. Muhammad knew about ceremonies of the Christians and the Jews and disliked the act of abstinence in Christianity. And in spite of the fact that he didn't see women's monthly cycle as unclean nor did he consider menstrual blood as dirtying as in Judaism, he ordered women not to pray amid this time and kept their attendance at the Mosque.

Therefore, Modesty is the basic principle of Islam which implies certain life-style decorum for both men and women. Women should not display their Zeenah means beauty or charms; they should draw their Khimar (veils) over their bosoms and should display their charms or beauty only to their husbands, fathers, and sons. Also, women should not strike their feet so as to draw attention to their hidden Zeenah. Their importance is to monitor his or her modesty and lower one's look to stay pure and enhanced by ones dress. The reason for covering oneself is to be perceived as a decent woman and not troubled. The Qur'an isn't generally express about the type of one's dress with the exception of women who are told to cover their bosoms and put on external articles of clothing in order to evade provocation. The standards for men are less complex; they should bring down their look and cover themselves from their naval to their knees.

Despite the fact that Muhammad was sympathetic, thoughtful and affectionate to women, at no time amid his life or thereafter women were regarded as fit the bill to hold amazing positions in the new religion. In her broad compositions, Smith (1985) has brought up issues about the genuine meaning of Islam for women and felt that there was no really convincing evidence to help the way that the expansion of Islam and the social upheaval that pursued the open doors for women that were not available in pre-Islamic Arabia. These practices were directed with little rearrangement after the passing of the Muhammad and considered as affirmation of the predominant attitude of men in which women were not suited to play an effective role in broad daylight life or to serve in any capacity as pioneers in their locale, at that time, women demonstrated an eagerness to submit to these restrictions and acknowledged these confinements as a major aspect of the divine revelation to Muhammad.

According to Armstrong, emancipation of women was an extraordinary issue for Muhammad, Qur'an shows a twofold standard with respect to sexual orientation, for example- the laws of inheritance demonstrate that a woman can just get one portion of what her siblings get, on the grounds that they have to accommodate another family which consider a woman as just half valuable as that of a man. Thus, when Muhammad built up rights for women the extraordinary thought that a woman could acquire or notwithstanding something or even had a job was astonishing. Armstrong tries to defend by contrasting Islamic social structure towards women with the present times by saying "we are still campaigning for equal rights for women" (Armstrong, 2002, p. 191). Some are vibe that wearing the shroud was an image of an unacceptable value system which spoils women. The woman's role in Muslim social orders has been influenced by different laws and cultures in various nations notwithstanding the social, monetary, and financial components incorporating increment in modern and innovative advancement and urbanization in social orders which were really rural and agronomy based have both positive and negative influence on the status of women in the Muslim society i.e., state health system brought down infant and maternal mortality and expanded life expectancy accordingly, , especially among women in poor and rural societies in the world.

Although educational schemes have been available to address far reaching absence of education, women have not yet profited by this to indistinguishable degree from have men. Then again, teaching of women from favoured classes has given these women a more extensive selection of options and a changed view of their role in the public eye as women and the exclusion and isolation of women at their home has not confirmed useful in many poor nations. Muslims cannot bear to restrict women to work and help bolster the family. Women's confinement in their homes has come to be seen as a world class foundation appropriate for more eminent society. Many Muslims have come to see their very own institutions and religious principles are deficient as to following the West and in the meantime expanded disappointment because of the limited opportunities in their nation. Then again, "Muslims feel that they have lost touch with their own Islamic identity and tradition" (Al-Naim, 2002) and want to come back to increasingly strict Islamic philosophy. A second factor is simply the change mindfulness or self-awareness among women in Muslim nations and the demand for women's rights. Pal (2002) has portrayed two simultaneous developments in a few Islamic nations: (1) the State making anti-women laws for the sake of Sharia (Muslim Law); (2) expressive and influential women's developments in the particular nations are battling against such laws.

In Saudi Arabia women are totally secured and wear the hijab or veil and work nearby men and many are remarkably educated and have professions in psychology, medicine, or other disciplines, and don't take a gander at this mandatory covering contrarily however feel that they accomplish what Western women do. They feel that though they don't have the same number of rights regardless they manage vague issues from Western women, juggling vocations and families. One late report in regards to the health and safety of shroud wearing Saudi women indicated them to be at complex threat for respiratory illness than non-cover wearing women. This investigation was done on 710 Saudi women at a clinic in Saudi Arabia. The degree of this issue isn't yet known however maybe will

have an impact other than having women change their cover all the more as often as possible (Ahmad, 2001). Earlier Saudi law not permitted women to drive but very recently they permit women to drive after many request made by the human rights activists for the withdrawal of this law.

In different nations still, further occasions of humiliating rights of women are occurring day and night. In 2000, Pakistan offered a dynamic law to ensure the human rights and freedom of women however was verified by the federal Sharia court. The court guided the President to correct the law “so as to bring the provisions into conformity with the injunctions of Islam”. (Pal, 2002) A to somewhat diverse situation is occurring in Turkey where Sharia Law is banned, women are battling for the directly to wear a head scarf and women have been banned from colleges and universities since they decline to relinquish their head scarfs and government workers have been terminated, downgraded, or transferred for a similar reason. Women are banned from wearing head scarfs in photos for driver’s licenses. Along these lines, in this nation,

The modest head scarf has become the object of one of Turkey’s most divisive struggles as the country seeks to join the European Union and the globalized economy. The conflict leaves the country straining to balance greater democratic freedom with preserving a secular state in a region of expanding Islamic influence. (Moore, 2000)

To conclude, we can say that the battle for and against women’s rights in Islamic nations continues till date. Although very recently, few Arabian countries gave the women right to vote and take part in government but remain many women’s rights unfulfilled till date. As the turmoil in the Middle East go on in the midst of fear mongering, military activity, political instability and with the expanding impact of Islamic fundamentalists all through the world versus Western interests, the conclusive status of Islamic women stays to be resolved.

## References

- [1]. Adams, C. J. (1965). *A Readers Guide to the Great Religions*, New York: The Free Press.
- [2]. Ahmad, E. F. E. M. (2001). Veil-wearing Saudi Women at Higher of Risk of Respiratory Disease. *Journal of Asthma*, 38, 423– 426.
- [3]. *Al- Qur’an*. English trans. by M. H. Shakir. Iran: Ansarriyan Publications.
- [4]. An-Naim, A. (2002). The Islamic Counter-Reformation, *New Perspectives Quarterly*, 19(1), 1–6.
- [5]. Armstrong, K. (2002). *Islam*, New York: Random House.
- [6]. Carroll, T. F. (1983). *Women, Religion, and Development in the Third World*, New York: Praeger.
- [7]. Moore, M. (2000). *The Problems of Turkey Rest on Women’s Heads*, USA: Washington Post Foreign Service.
- [8]. Noss, J. B., & Noss, D. S. (1984). *Man’s religions*. New York: Macmillan.
- [9]. Pal, R. M. (2000). *Womens Movement in Islamic Countries*. PUCL Bulletin.
- [10]. Smith, J. I. (1985). Women, religion and Social Change in Early Islam. In Y. Y. Haddad and E. B. Findly (Eds.), *Women, Religion and Social Change*, pp. 19–36. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- [11]. Tannahill, R. (1982). *Sex in history*. New York: Stein and Day.