

# MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT ISLAM

## TREATMENT OF WOMEN

The image of the typical Muslim woman wearing the veil and forced to stay home and forbidden to drive is all too common in most peoples thoughts. Although some Muslim countries may have laws that oppress women, this should not be seen as coming from Islam. Many of these countries do not rule by any kind of Shariah( Islamic Law) and introduce their own cultural standpoint on the issue of gender equity.

Islam on the other hand gives men and women different roles and equity between the two is laid down in the Quran and the example of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Islam sees a woman, whether single or married, as an individual in her own right, with the right to own and dispose of her earnings. A marriage gift is given by the groom to the bride for her own personal use and she keeps her own family name rather than taking her husband's. Both men and women are expected to dress in a way which is modest and dignified. The Messenger of God (peace be upon him) said: 'The most perfect of faith amongst believers is he who is best in manner and kindest to his wife.'

Violence of any kind towards women and forcing them against their will for anything is not allowed. A Muslim marriage is a simple, legal agreement in which either partner is free to include conditions. Marriage customs thus vary widely from country to country. Divorce is not common, although it is acceptable as a last resort. According to Islam, a Muslim girl cannot be forced to marry against her will.

In Islam there is absolutely no difference between men and women as far as their relationship to Allah is concerned, as both are promised the same reward for good conduct and the same punishment for evil conduct.

***'And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women' (2:226)***

The Quran, in addressing the believers, often uses the expression, 'believing men and women' to emphasise the equality of men and women in regard to their respective duties, rights, virtues and merits.

## TREATMENT OF NON-MUSLIMS

Islam is a universal religion and it claims no originality for its core principles. Rather it is a continuity of revelation Says the Quran:

***"We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and to what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, And in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, And the Prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction Between one another among them, and to God do we bow our will (in Islam) (3:84)***

Islam is a faith that is based on persuasion rather than compulsion. The Qur'an states;

***"Let there be no compulsion in religion." (Al-Baqarah; 2:256).***

Thus the Muslim is taught to be tolerant towards others. Indeed, the Qur'an not only prohibits compulsion in religion, but it prohibits aggression as well, although it allows defence:

***"Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but commit no aggression; for Allah loves not transgressors." (Al-Baqarah; 2:190)***

In addition, we find that within this broad rule of dealing with non Muslims "the People of the Book" is a special term accorded to Jews and Christians in the Qur'an.

***... Of the People of the Book are a portion that stand (for the right), they rehearse the signs of God and all night long, and they prostrate themselves in adoration. They believe in God and the Last Day; they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong; and they hasten (in emulation) in (all) good works. They are in the ranks of the righteous. [Qur'an 3:113-114]***

***...and nearest among them in love to the Believers wilt thou find those who say, "We are Christians": because amongst these are men devoted to learning and men who have renounced the world, and they are not arrogant.(5:82)***

Furthermore, Islam exhorts its followers to resolve differences through debate and discussion, and not through sheer force. Islam also rejects the culture of enmity, violence and terrorism and of aggression against human beings. Indeed safeguarding of human life is one of the fundamentals principles of Islam, and it considers an attack on a human person as an act on humanity as a whole. Thus in Islam peace is the rule, rather than the exception.

***"Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best...(16:125)***

The Qur'an is full of instructions and advice how Muslims are to treat the non-Muslims. The teachings of the Prophet is a practical aspect for the application of the Qur'anic teachings. Our beloved Prophet treated non-Muslims in the best way. It is reported that Jews in Madina had a synagogue and a school by the name of Bait Al-Midras. He preserved it and at the same time he protected them.

The Prophet honoured the Christians of Najran who visited Him in his mosque. He allowed them to pray their own way in His mosque, while the Muslims prayed with him the Islamic way. Our Prophet even left the nomination and appointment of bishops and priests to the Christian community themselves. He also delegated a Christian person to be his ambassador to the Negus, the then King of Ethiopia.

The second Caliph, Umar Ibn Al-Khattab, treated the Christians in Palestine in the best way. He even declined to pray inside the Church so that Muslims will not take it over. The key of the Church is still in the hands of the Muslims since then. Some Muslims took a piece of land from a Jew and constructed a mosque. Umar ordered the demolition of the mosque and the restoration of the land to the Jew. Umar ordered the punishment of the son of the governor of Egypt (Arm' Ibn Al-'Aass) for the sake of a copt child.

Non-Muslims were given the citizenship of the Muslim State and the right to vote, but exempted from being drafted in the Army.

Christians and Jews lived side by side with Muslims for centuries without being disturbed. They flourished during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. They held high positions in administration, finance, religions, executive councils, and jurisprudence. They were given autonomy in their personal and family laws. Jews and Christians were given positions of advisers in the Cabinet of the Caliph himself during the Abbasid period.

Crusaders, after their crimes and atrocities, were defeated by Salahuddin. However, he treated their leaders with great respect.

Listen to what Thomas Arnold said in his book, "Call to Islam."

*We have never heard about any attempt to compel non-Muslim parties to adopt Islam or about any organised persecution aiming at exterminating Christianity. If the Caliphs had chosen one of these plans, they would have wiped out Christianity as easily as what happened to Islam during the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella in Spain; by the same method which Louis XIV followed to make Protestantism a creed whose followers were to be sentenced to death; or with the same ease of keeping the Jews away from Britain for a period of 350 years.*

Listen to what Adam Metzifi said in his book, "The Islamic Civilisation."

*The existence of the Christians among the Muslims was the reason for the appearance of the principle of tolerance for which the new reformers called. There was a need for co-existence and harmony that should prevail in all countries. This caused from the very beginning kind of tolerance which was not known in Europe in the Middle Ages. The result of that tolerance was the birth of the science of Comparative Religion.*

Let us hear what George Bernard Shaw had said about Islam:

*Europe shall declare the Islamic creed innocent of what men of Europe of the middle Ages accused it of in evil tales. The religion of Muhammad shall be the system on which the basis of the world peace and happiness shall be established. The solution of the world problems will depend on its philosophy. Many of my compatriots and other Europeans follow the principles of Islam. Therefore, I can prophesy that the European Islamic era is undoubtedly very near.*

## **LOVE, COMPASSION & KINDNESS IN THE QURAN**

### **A SAMPLE OF SELECTED VERSES**

***And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect (30:21)***

***Say: "If ye do love Allah, follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins; for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (3:31)***

***Nor can Goodness and Evil be equal. Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate! (41:34)***

***It is He Who creates from the very beginning, and He can restore (life). And He is the Oft-Forgiving, full of Loving-Kindness, (85 13-14)***

***And (moreover) He hath put affection between their hearts: not if thou hadst spent all that is in the earth, couldst thou have produced that affection, but Allah hath done it: for He is Exalted in might, Wise. (8:63)***

***The Believers are but a single Brotherhood: so make peace and reconciliation between your two (contending) brothers; and fear Allah, that ye may receive Mercy (49:10)***

***Those who spend (freely), whether in prosperity, or in adversity; who restrain anger, and pardon (all) men; for Allah loves those who do good (3:134)***

***Repel evil with that which is best: We are well-acquainted with the things they say (23:96)***

***Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; but turn away from the ignorant. (7:199)***

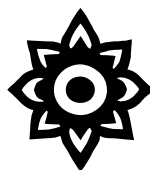
***Serve Allah, and join not any partners with Him; and do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need, neighbours who are near neighbours who are strangers, the companion by your side, the way farer (ye meet) and what your right hands possess: for Allah loveth not the arrogant, the vainglorious. (4:36)***

***'It may be that Allah will grant love (and friendship) between you and those whom ye (now) hold as enemies. For Allah has power (over all things); and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.***

***Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for [your] Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loves those who are just.' (60:7-8)***

***"...If Allah had so willed. He would have made you a single People, but His Plan is to test you in what He has given you. So strive as in a race in all virtues. The return of you all is to Allah; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which you dispute." (5:51)***

***...Let them forgive and overlook. Do you not wish that God should forgive you? For God is Off-Forgiving, Most Merciful. (24:22)***



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