

Afghanistan: The Orderly Coexistence of Men and Women is an Islamic Duty and not a Secular Right!

Afghanistan has been known for decades as a country where women have no rights and suffer oppression. To this day, America and the Western countries claim that they are trying to liberate the Afghan women through Gender Equality and the call for Women's Rights. However, as a consequence of their actions and policies, women did not gain true empowerment, for one of the fallouts of the Western secular agenda was the rise of a family crisis in the country. For example, the divorce rate is rising across Afghanistan in cities and rural areas alike. National statistics are hard to come by, but in a sign of the upward trend, the Legal Aid Grant Facility (LAGF) says it has handled a 12 percent increase in divorce cases across Afghanistan over a period of three years. The United Nations Population Division reported that Afghanistan's fertility rate in 1997 was 7.64. This was the highest rate over the past 55 years. However, according to the Central Intelligence Agency, the fertility rate in 2017 was 5.12. An advocacy group campaigning for promoting women's rights in Afghanistan says violence against women is also on the rise in the country. According to the Central Statistics Organization, 46% of women aged 15-49 years have experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of their partners in the last 12 months.

Afghan women are encouraged by various organizations, such as the UN, UNICEF, Women's Empowerment Programs and many others, to catch up with Western values and rights, especially personal liberal freedoms and gender equality, as they claim that the Afghan traditions and religion oppress them. But are these secular rights and norms actually a solution for the Muslim women in Afghanistan? Allah (swt) says, **﴿وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾** **“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought.” [30:21]**

Allah (swt) has created the man and the woman for each other as partners and companions and has placed between them love, security and peace. He has designated the man as a guardian, provider and decision-maker of the family, and he has imposed on the woman the responsibility of being the primary care-taker of her children and the management of the domestic chores. The main responsibility of a man as the guardian of the household is ensuring that he deals with his wife and children with justice. And an important duty of the women is the obedience to her husband. The roles and the rights of the husband and wife complement each other and they both seek to live in this Dunya in a manner that pleases Allah (swt).

Western secular ideology seeks to impose 'Equality' in roles and duties of males and females and, hence, sees them as dedicated to the same tasks. According to this viewpoint, they both need to be family providers and care-takers of the household and the children. They are not obligated to each other and it is promoted that everyone should enjoy their rights and their freedom. The result of today's struggle for equality, feminism, women's rights, and liberal freedoms in Western countries is reduced marital rates, increased divorce rates, extramarital relationships, increased childlessness, homosexuality and much more. This is by no means a harmonious existence of the man and woman, but rather an eternal fight for the attainment of equality which can never be achieved because men and women are not created the same. Allah (swt) says, **﴿وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبْنَ وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْهُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ﴾** **“And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of His bounty. Indeed Allah is ever, of all things, Knowing.” [4:32]**

It is clear that chaos arises from disorder, so there must be regulation which creates order within family life and society. Thus, Allah (swt) has created an arrangement for the productive cooperation of men and women, which ensures they coexist in an organized and harmonious way in the family unit and society in general. Western ideology leaves the gender balance to

compromise and equality, which leads to chaos and disorder of the division of tasks. No one is really clear in this system what he or she has to do, what tasks he or she should shoulder, and what duties are good for him or her to create harmony in family life. Simultaneously, the secular society falsely advocates that gender equality is the key to success, which in reality opens the door to disharmony and catastrophes. Allah (swt) says, ﴿هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ﴾ **“...They (your wives, O men) are a garment for you and you (men) are a garment for them...”** [2:187]

Islam requires the man as well as the woman to support and provide each other with care. They should observe the Islamic standard in all matters of life and help each other to pass the test of this Dunya. The Capitalist values, however, teach people to put their own benefit first and never renounce their rights. Thus, the man and the woman live only on the basis of "give and take". This individualistic approach to marriage creates an unstable marital bond because as soon as one's spouse does not deliver on the self-centered expectations that one has of them, the divorce button is often pressed.

Allah (swt) says, ﴿وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ﴾ **“The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give Zakah and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those - Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.”** [9:71]

The most important aim for a Muslim, man or woman, is the Pleasure of Allah (swt). It's not about proving to each other who has the last word and who is right. The adaptation of the values and norms of secularists brings no progress or success for the Muslims in this Dunya or the Akhira.

Thus, the Ummah in Afghanistan has to think carefully about which system to use as the basis for the effective cooperation and harmonious coexistence of the man and woman in marriage, family life, and society. Whether it's the non-Islamic Afghan traditions or Western gender equality, neither of these two can bring peace and harmony in marriage, family life and the entire social life of men and women. The only order of life that is able to regulate the complicated relationship between men and women is the Islamic ideology because its laws are from the Creator, the All-Knowing, the All-Aware. Furthermore, because in Islam men and women will be rewarded from Allah (swt) for the harmony and fulfilment of the Islamic regulations in their private life and in society, the Muslim, whether male or female, who has the correct consciousness of their Creator in their lives, inevitably strives for this.

Therefore, the Caliphate upon the method of the Prophethood must be established because this is the only state which implements all the laws of Islam comprehensively to create a true Islamic society governed in its entirety by the Islamic system, including the Islamic social and family laws. Only then can we completely free ourselves from the secular values and norms that only bring disaster to the family structure and mankind overall. Allah (swt) says, ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ﴾ **“O you who believe! Ward off from yourselves and your families a Fire (Hell) whose fuel is men and stones.”** [66:6]

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