

The History of Discrimination Against Women Before Islam

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In The Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

From a review of the history of former civilisations and a research in historical periods before the advent of Islam, it becomes abundantly clear that the liberating religion of Islam was followed by regeneration of women's rights in that dark period. For more information, we will take a look at the history of discrimination and injustice done to women in the territories of Sasanian Empire in Iran, Roman Empire, Europe and Arabian Peninsula

Before the appearance of Islam, a terrible situation of abuse of women's rights prevailed over Iranian and Roman empires and also in Arabia. These matters will be described and discussed according to historical evidences and instances.

[The Abuse Of Women's Rights During Sasanian's Dynasty](#)

A study of Zoroastrian historical documents such as books like "*Matigan Hezardastan*", "*Vandidad*" and "*Andarzhaye Azarbad Mehrsepandan*", dominant during the Sasanian reign of Iran, it becomes clear that the women's natural rights were terribly violated by the religionists and the governments of that time.

As an example, women were considered personal properties of men and had the same price as a slave which was about 2000 silver coins. For further information, please look up the entry of "slave and slavery" in the book of "*Iranica Encyclopaedia*".

In the book, "*Bondhesh*", it is mentioned that:

"Ormazed (it means Ahooramazda) was unable to find any creature for procreation and therefore, he, selected the woman"

On the basis of this book, women do not have any possibility of reaching Ahooramazda (God) like men¹.

Also, during that time, when a girl got to the age of nine years, she was required to marry a person that others had chosen for her and if she did not accept the choice, she faced the death penalty².

According to what is mentioned in "*Matigan Hezardastan*" men could sell their wives to others if they so desired.

In light of what is stated above, it becomes clear that the condition of women in the Sasanian period was repressive, discriminative and full of injustice because of tyrant governors and deviant religious men. Women's rights were terribly suppressed and ignored.

The Abuse Of Women's Rights In The Western Civilization

The western world at the time of the appearance of Islam was dominated by Judaism and Christianity and women's condition of those societies were affected by these two religions.

Now let us look at some examples from the view point of these religions toward women

The Jews and Christians of the world believe in the Old Testament and New Testament (Torah and Bible) and have always been under the influences of their instructions. "Genesis" from Bible, has emphasized frankly to patriarchy and women have been introduced as those who must suffer and are to be controlled by men forever.

Here, we refer to the exact verses: In "Genesis" Chapter 3 Verse 16, where it says:

"To the woman he said: I shall greatly increase the pain of your pregnancy and in birth, you will bring forth children and your craving will be for your husband and he will dominate you."

According to the above mentioned verse in Old Testament, God gave two punishments to the women:

A: The labour pain in childbirth.

B: Domination of women by men (patriarchy).

And these two penalties are because of Eve's mistake that she ate the forbidden fruit!!

Moreover it is concluded from the above that not only the woman is not equal to man, but also she is subordinate and dependent on man and created from one of the man's ribs. With this regard, the human being was created in a form of man (Adam) and, the woman was created afterwards from one of his parts...

The reference text is as follows:

"Hence Jehovah God had a deep sleep fall upon the man, and while he was sleeping, he took one of his ribs and then closed up the flesh over its place. And Jehovah God proceeded to build the rib that he had taken from the man into a woman and to bring her to the man." (Holy Scriptures, Genesis, 2:21–22)

The Condition Of Women In Arabia

The dark period before appearance of Islam in Arabia, is even called by the Arabian people as the period of ignorance. The people of that period believed woman as a cause of indignity and embarrassment and whenever they were told that their wives had given birth to daughters, they became ashamed and remorseful. Therefore, many of them buried their baby daughters alive which was extremely brutal and savage.

Holy Quran, in The “Folding Up” chapter, refers to these horrible and awful crimes of the Arabs in the period of ignorance and questioned them why were those innocent and faultless daughters killed and buried alive? The text of mentioned verses is as follows:

The Folding Up

Sura Al-Takwir – 81 The Folding Up

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

[81:0] In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

إِذَا الشَّمْسُ كُوِّرَتْ

[81:1] When the sun (with its spacious light) is folded up.

وَإِذَا النُّجُومُ انْكَدَرَتْ

[81:2] When the stars fall, losing their luster.

وَإِذَا الْجِبَالُ سُيِّرَتْ

[81:3] When the mountains vanish (like a mirage).

وَإِذَا الْعِشَارُ عُطِّلَتْ

[81:4] *When the she-camels, ten month with young, are left untended.*

وَإِذَا الْوُحُوشُ حُشِرَتْ

[81:5] *When the wild beasts are herded together (in human habitations).*

وَإِذَا الْبِحَارُ سُجِّرَتْ

[81:6] *When the oceans boil over with a swell.*

وَإِذَا النُّفُوسُ زُوِّجَتْ

[81:7] *When the souls are sorted out, (being joined, like with like).*

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ

[81:8] *When the female (infant), buried alive is questioned-*

بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ

[81:9] *For what crime was she killed?*

- [1.](#) For further explanation, refer to "Bondhash" by Mehrdad Bahar, part 6.
- [2.](#) Refer to "Sasanian Kingdom", translated by Murtaza Saghab- Far, pages 173-175.

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