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Status and Rights of Women in Islam and Christianity: A Comparative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

According to the Quran, God views men and women as spiritually equal. Both are guaranteed the same rewards for their conduct and share comparable religious requirements. Taqwa, or piety, is a key idea, and righteousness is independent of gender. Women are free to select who they marry and, in some situations, can file for divorce. When a woman marries, the idea of a "dowry," or mahr, is handed to her as her own property. Although females often receive half of what male relatives receive, women have the right to inherit. Women are not dependent on their husbands or male relatives to own, purchase, or sell property. Women are entitled to employment, education, and participation in public life. Islamic history is replete with notable female intellectuals, entrepreneurs, and leaders. For both men and women, modesty in attire and conduct is valued; the hijab is one way that this idea is expressed. Early Islam gave women a number of privileges, including the opportunity to inherit, legal status, and the capacity to engage in commerce, which were progressive for the period. Men and women are spiritually equal according to some New Testament passages, such as Galatians 3:28, which states, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, nor male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Jesus is shown as having disciples among women, some of whom—like Mary Magdalene—had significant roles in the early Christian society. Christian societies have historically treated women's legal rights in very different ways. Women's legal rights were restricted during the Middle Ages, but they started to increase in the modern era. Women enjoy equal legal rights in contemporary nations with a predominance of Christians with regard to property, marriage, and divorce. Traditionally, women's roles have revolved around the church and the family. However, views on women's roles have evolved, especially in Protestant denominations where



women can be ordained as priests and ministers. Different Christian denominations have quite different views on women; some, like the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, still solely employ men as clergy. Historical and cultural settings have shaped Christianity's views on women. Early Christian women participated actively in church affairs and even held positions of leadership, but with time, this was limited. In cultures with a Christian majority, there were notable campaigns for women's rights and gender equality during the 19th and 20th centuries. Depending on regional traditions and cultural interpretations, women's rights and roles differ greatly. Many countries with a majority of Muslims are engaged in heated debates over issues including women's access to political involvement, work opportunities, and education. Some Muslim academics and activists are pushing hard for changes that reflect what they believe to be the genuine spirit of the Quran and Hadith regarding women's rights. There is a big problem with women's roles in church leadership, and different denominations have different policies. The goal of feminist theology is to advance gender equality by reinterpreting church traditions and the Bible. In conclusion, the core texts of both religions acknowledge the spiritual equality of men and women, but their interpretations and practices of women's rights and roles have been shaped by differing historical and cultural settings.

Keywords: *Islam, Christen, Status, Quran, Sunnah, and women's rights, Bible*

Introduction

The women's rights movement is not a recent development nor was it initiated in a specific social group. It has been documented to happen all throughout the world for ages. Though there may not be any historical records of it, it could have begun with the creation of the first woman, Hawah (pbuh), following the creation of the father of humanity, Adam (pbuh). Following the Second World War, in 1948, the United Nations Organisation made a clear declaration of women's and men's equality of rights. In 1870, the French Women's Movement Association was established. On the other hand, since the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) time over 14,000 years ago, women's rights have been explicitly recognised in Islam. Social progress has brought about substantial changes in women's lives; in every country in the globe, women now expect to live longer than men (WHO, 2014). However, there are still a lot of situations where women are not treated equally, such as in the workplace, in healthcare, or in the educational system. Research proving this include the following ones: Women in India experience intimate partner violence (IPV) against them at a rate that is faster than that of men; they also hold junior positions, make less money, and quit their jobs more frequently. By 2015, it is predicted that only 16 countries worldwide will have lower rates of maternal death. In Bangladesh, for example, married women's income is set by

their husbands and sometimes by their mothers-in-law. Numerous other countries also have high rates of forced marriage, sexual harassment, and domestic abuse against women.

However, in an increasingly deflated economy, women are assuming new roles, such as that of the breadwinner, in addition to their primary responsibilities as wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters of a family. In actuality, men and women both have rights and obligations; rather than competing or subjugating one another, they should help one another in order to advance society. Therefore, in contrast to so-called women's rights groups or feminism, this study seeks to investigate how women, who are men's companions, attain their prescribed status and granted rights under Islamic law. It is also intended to delineate the obligations and prospects that women bear, as prescribed by Islamic law. The fundamental literary sources are the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the sayings and lessons of the Prophet (Ahadith), and customs. Academics with knowledge in the relevant topic contribute to these primary literary sources.

Methodology

This research is grounded in non-empirical, library-based studies. Muslims see the revealed knowledge as the main source of knowledge since they hold that the Creator alone knows the ultimate truth. Because of this, the Holy Qur'an, the traditions (Sunnah) and sayings (Ahadith) of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), who received the Qur'an as a revelation from Allah (SWT), are the main sources of knowledge when talking about women's rights in Islam. The four texts referred to as "Sunan-An-Nasa, At-tirmidhi, Sahih Muslim, and Al-Bukhari" are analysed in light of hadith, with an emphasis on the challenges faced by women. The study is enhanced by the expertise of scholars in related fields. The findings are categorised according to the authors' perspectives on the subject matter and include topics like the nature of human creations, the roles that Muslim women play in Islam as spouses, mothers, sisters, and daughters; their rights in terms of work, education, politics, and the economy; women's duties; and certain often misinterpreted features of Islam, such as polygamy and Muslim women's attire.

Nature Of Creations

The Qur'an says that since men and women share the same source, they are spiritually equal. The words "made his mate of like nature" ¹and "fear your Guardian Lord, Who created you from a single person" ²are found in the Quran. "He has made for you pairs from among yourselves" (16:72). Many verses in the Qur'an, such as 22:5 and 23:12–14, are thought to signify the same thing. The Quran is addressed to both men and women, with the intention of imparting wisdom to the entire human race.

Allah (SWT) made both men and women with distinct yet complementary natures; men are meant to be means of approach, love, and solicitation, while women are meant to be sources of attraction and affection. This is among the intelligent designs and plans of the universe. Women are more naturally sympathetic and have a stronger sense of compassion, which is sensed everywhere. The greatest value at this time is the selflessness that accompanies compassion since it shows genuine sincerity and asks nothing in return. A mother's willingness to give her life in order to protect her offspring from harm is a testament to the strength of character and honesty possessed by women. Thus, every civilised country now recognises women's equality with men as a fundamental human right.

Status Of Women In Islam

According to the Qur'anic revelations, in the seventh century, women were awarded and acknowledged as having equal rights with men., and they were appointed as vicegerents of Allah (SWT) on earth. Women were given distinct tasks and obligations based on their status as daughters, wives, and mothers within the family unit as well as as citizens of the state and society. Accordingly, the position of women will be covered in this paper based on their roles as daughters, wives, mothers, and sisters within the family.

WOMAN AS A WIFE:

In terms of finding the ideal mate, women's welfare begins prior to marriage. "If a suitor comes to you whose faith and conduct you are satisfied with, marry him your daughter," the Prophet remarked. If you don't, there will be severe corruption and suffering on Earth. Allah (SWT) bestows upon women the unique abilities that males are not able to have, such as the ability to become pregnant, give birth, and nurse their offspring. With the exception of the first man, Prophet Adam (pbuh), who was created directly by Allah (SWT), all men in the universe are descended from their mothers. It also appears that the word "women" is made out of the letters "w" and "o" before the word "men." The only things that can bring peace to a family are love, respect, and understanding between husband and wife. The Qur'an 4:19 states that "if ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah (SWT) brings about a great deal of good." This implies that the individual you consider inferior to you can, in reality, be superior to you in the Creator's sight. As an alternative, your patience can yield the desired outcome. It implies that even in her moments of weakness, a husband should try to understand and forgive his wife.

The status of women in Islam further can be seen under the heading, women and their dignity in marriage and divorce.

Woman As A Mother:

Harmony within a family can only be achieved when a husband and wife have mutual respect, love, and understanding. The Qur'an, verse 4, says, "if ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah (SWT) brings about a great deal of good." This implies that the individual you consider inferior to you can, in reality, be superior to you in the Creator's sight. As an alternative, your patience can yield the desired outcome. It suggests that a husband ought to make an effort to comprehend and pardon his wife, especially during her weak periods.

Women As Daughters And Sisters:

The Arabian Peninsula was shrouded in ignorance when the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) received revelations from the Holy Qur'an. Sons were preferred above daughters at that time, and girls were buried alive. Women were also viewed as trash, sex objects, or as livestock. The Prophet forbade the killing of female infants, declaring in Volume 8, Book 73, No. 6, " You are not permitted to bury your daughters alive by Allah (SWT). The Qur'an also prohibits the killing of female infants, stating in 81:8–9, "bury it in the dust? When the female (baby) buried alive, is questioned - for what offence she was killed? What a wicked decision they make. (16:59). The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) forbade all of these actions and attitudes towards women, warning them of the consequences in the hereafter.

In addition, benefits related to treating daughters kindly are promised. The Prophet declared, " These daughters will protect whoever looks after them and shows them kindness from the (Hell) Fire." "Whoever has three daughters, or three sisters, or two daughters, or two sisters, and he keeps good company with them and fears Allah (SWT) regarding them, then Paradise is for him," according to Al-Bukhari ³

Rights Of Women In Islam

It is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an that "women have rights similar to those of men."⁴ In his farewell speech, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) emphasised the comparable idea that " "Those who are the best to their wives are the best among you," and "You have rights over your wives, and they have rights over you."⁵ Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) significantly raised women's standing and dignity. His first tenet was to instill "a respect for women." In order to close the gap between Islamic doctrine and Muslim practice, women must have equal rights in the areas of marriage, education, politics, employment, and the economy.

The Dignity of Women in Marriage and Divorce

Islam says that "marriage is half of faith (imman)" (At-tirmidhi), promoting marriage and the importance of bolstering families. The family is an essential

social structure that allows for the continuation of human generations. It also gives its members love, social, emotional, and financial stability. Marriage is required "because it prevents one from slinging (evil glances) and keeps one from immorality; those who cannot afford it should dedicate themselves to fasting as a means of controlling sexual desire" ⁶if it is within one's financial means. It becomes sense to draw the conclusion that inappropriate moral judgements and unchecked impulses are linked to sexual abuse and violence against women.

Islam prohibits forced marriage and grants women the freedom to select the mate of their choice. The prophet Muhammad (pbuh) forewarned on multiple occasions that the intended marriage could not, in accordance with shari'a, occur or be recognised as legitimate without the previous agreement of the woman whose hand was sought in marriage. The proposal, acceptance, and dowry that the woman must receive from her husband are the three required requirements for Islamic marriage, and it is evident that these regulations are in the advantage of the women. In addition, each partner in a marriage is accountable for their own roles, and nobody is better than the other. According to the verses "You may dwell in tranquilly with them, and has put love and mercy between your hearts" ⁷and "They are your garments, and ye are their garments" ⁸it is the mutual contract between men and women so that they may discover love, mercy, and peace.

Islamic law generally forbids divorce. Chapter 1: 3422 of Sunan An-nasa, Volume 4, states that a waiting period (iddat) of three months must pass before a divorce can be finalised. Couples may decide to make apologies during this period, but they must keep in mind that even in the event of a divorce, they should "separate with kindness" ⁹and not "take them back to injure them, or to take undue advantage."

In cases of dire need, divorce is permissible; however, one must establish legal grounds. Shari'ah prohibits some types of injuries, including unjustified divorce. Muslim women are entitled to file for divorce if they have a good reason and present their case to the judge. Regarding divorce, Muslim women in Malaysia have different chances in failed marriages, according to CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women). When it comes to waiting periods and evidentiary standards, women experience more barriers than men do when attempting to exercise their right to a divorce. Furthermore, the procedures for divorce that are open to women are seen to be discriminatory in character when men practise talaq against the law. Even though Islam is a perfect religion, some Muslims defame it by their transgressions. Regarding how women are treated with regard to their rights in divorce proceedings, there is still need for improvement.

Women in Profession and Education

Every Muslim is required to pursue knowledge, and Muslim women are not restricted in their access to school or career options. Women should pursue education and knowledge equally with men since they are accountable for their acts before the creator. Women have the right to be protected from hellfire as family members by receiving the education necessary to live responsible lives. Iqrah, the first revelation of the Qur'an, asked people to read, and women have the same obligation to seek knowledge as males have from birth to death. These days, women are becoming more and more free to choose what they want to do, including work in fields that interest them and participate in other social activities. The women who are educated Muslims. As stated, " Muslims are obligated to treat everyone with dignity, compassion, and charity, including the environment and all of Allah's (SWT) creatures, the young and frail as well as the aged." Women work as doctors, nurses, chemists, physiotherapists, and other professionals in the medical and allied sectors. Islamic historical narratives state that "Rufaidah bint sa'ad" was the first woman to practice as a professional nurse because she treated patients in her tent outside the Medina mosque and trained other nurses to care for wounded warriors. Khadijah, the first person to believe in and convert to Islam, is regarded as a successful businesswoman and the wife of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). Likewise, Ayshah, the Prophet's other wife, is renowned for being a scholar and one of the primary sources of the majority of the alhadith found in Islamic literature. Throughout human history, numerous highly intellectual, well-educated, and accomplished women have made significant contributions.

Women And Religion:

In terms of faith, beliefs, and Islamic customs, there is no distinction between a man and a woman. According to Al-Bukhari ¹⁰The five pillars of Islam—belief (statement of faith), salah (prayer), hajj (trip to Mecca), zakah (almsgiving to the needy), and sawn (fasting during the month of Ramadan)—should be upheld by Muslims of both sexes. However, there are some requirements that must be met in order for women to be released from these obligations.

Women are exempt from performing the daily prayers and the required fasting when they are menstruating or recovering from childbirth. Likewise, women who are expecting or nursing may choose not to observe the required fast if it puts their health and the health of their unborn child at risk. It is not required to make up missing prayer days; rather, the days of required fasting must be made up later, either by feeding the needy or by healing them if they are unable to do so. Furthermore, women are not required to participate in Friday congregational

prayer out of compassion for them. Nonetheless, in many nations, women are acknowledged as Islamic scholars and speakers due to their expertise and abilities. It is noted that women have the same obligation as men to carry out the religious tasks outlined by Islam, with some exclusions granted due to their inherent characteristics and physiological processes.

Regardless of gender, everyone in Islam will be rewarded or punished based on their behaviour. In reference to good deeds and their reward, the Qur'an stated, "Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be male or female." 3:195 indicates that "Anyone who has faith and does good deeds of righteousness, regardless of gender, will enter Heaven." "We will bestow their reward according to the best of their actions," 4:124 states. (16:97), "To Muslim men and women who uphold their virginity, are devout, true, and patient; who are stable and patient; who are humble; who give alms; who fast; and who dedicate a significant amount of their time to remembering Allah (SWT), Forgiveness and a beautiful reward are waiting for them from Allah (SWT). "Enter the Garden, Ye and your wives, in (beauty and) rejoicing," says 33:35. (43:70), and the verses 36, 56, 35, and 36 of the Qur'an. It follows from this that one should adopt a similar strategy, which holds that anyone engaging in wicked conduct will bear the consequences; after all, "Every soul will be (held) in pledge for its deeds" ¹¹This holds true for both genders.

Economic Rights Of Women:

It is evident that Islamic law gave women more privileges than men in terms of the economy. Women receive the dowry from males at the time of marriage, and the bride or his family is responsible for covering the wedding costs. There is no restriction on that if the woman and her family are ready to share or forgive the costs in a good-willed manner. Their husbands are responsible for paying the household expenditures. In addition, a mother is entitled to custody of her young children and their allowances in the event of a divorce.

The Qur'an states that women's premarital property and any income they receive from investments or employment after marriage belong to them alone. It further specifies that women have a part in everything they earn and that they cannot inherit property against their will ¹²In terms of property division, women also inherited rights as mothers, daughters, and sisters: "Mu'adh gave the daughter one-half of the property and gave the sister the other half" ¹³However, if women are prepared to use their financial resources, educate others, support their families, and contribute their knowledge and experience to society, there should be no grounds for disagreement.

Responsibilities And Opportunities Of Women

Since rights are invariably accompanied by obligations, women's rights cannot be reclaimed without acknowledging their obligations. According to Islamic belief, a woman's duty on earth extends beyond delivery and includes performing as many good deeds as any other male. Both men and women are advised by the Qur'an to strive to be like the Virgin Mary and the wife of Pharaoh (pbut) (66:11–13). When it comes to their spouses' physical, emotional, social, and spiritual health, women ought to be their greatest resource. "Those who have the greatest need of a companion to provide them with affection, solace, comprehension, and encouragement" are these individuals. Given that "no man of sense builds love and affection for his wife on her transient, surface-level beauty, he ought to base his love on her excellent behaviour, which is the most enduring and beautiful kind of beauty." For his spouse is a beloved and enduring companion for all eternity, not just a passing helper and friend in this world. Thus, upholding one's modesty, dignity, and honesty is another of a woman's duties.

Hijab And Attires:

As long as they cover their awrah and maintain their modesty, women in the Islamic faith are allowed to dress however they like. There are many who argue that Muslim women face oppression due to the headscarf, which conceals their beauty. But beauty is a personal attribute, and there are ladies whose hidden beauty is every bit as beautiful as their apparent beauty. Moreover, women should never be the object of sexual harassment or abuse, regardless of whether they cover their heads or not. But a research found that girls who cover up their body with the hijab are less likely to be harassed than those who don't.

However, it's also a well-known fact that the attire of Muslim women has caused conflict in several countries. A lawful ban on the veil has been demanded by certain non-Muslims in response to terrorists who pose as women. The truth is that Muslim females do not have to cover their full face (niqab) other than their eyes; in fact, some Muslim communities actively forbid it in the interest of everyone's safety. Islam emphasises women's dignity highly. 24:31 in the Qur'an says, "Draw their veils over neck, not to reveal their adornments." and advised males "to lower their gaze" as well, saying that focused staring would lead to irrational reasoning. Islam requires us to maintain our spiritual purity in addition to maintaining our physical cleanliness. In order to accomplish this, we must perform ablution, also referred to as gusul (washing the entire body) or wudu (washing the visible bodily parts), with water before to saying the five daily prayers (salah).

Polygamy:

Throughout human civilisation, polygamy has been observed in a variety of racial and religious contexts. In Islam, "four wives issues" have always been a source of contention; nonetheless, Muslims are not required to follow this practice. The only religion that specifically counsels "to marry only one," according to Qur'an 4:2, is Islam. The reasoning behind this is that "that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice." If a guy feels that polygamy is necessary out of compassion for the women in society—especially widowers—he may partake in it. The Prophet said: "A person who helps the poor and widows is like a warrior fighting for Allah's (SWT) cause, or like someone who fasts during the day and prays all night" ¹⁴

In addition, there are much more women than men in the world's population. Considering that there are 25 million gay people in America, it is claimed that even if every guy married a single woman, over thirty million women would still be unmarried. There would be more than four million unmarried women in Germany, five million in Great Britain, and nine million in Russia. The fact that women's social standing was considered by Islam over 14,000 years ago is astonishing. Polygamy is subject to some limitations, nevertheless, such as equal treatment between the women and a living wage. "On the Day of Resurrection, whoever has two wives and is disposed to favour one over the other will appear with half of his body leaning" ¹⁵In actuality, males find it challenging to engage in polygamy because of these two circumstances. An average man has very little possibility of treating his women equally, without hurting their sentiments or favouring one over the other. It's difficult these days to even raise one family in harmony and serenity.

Limitations:

Although four books are included in the study—Sunan-An-Nasa, At-tirmidhi, Sahih Muslim, and Al-Bukhari—the discussion is not based on all of the Islamic al-hadith literature, which is one of its shortcomings. More research should be done from an Islamic perspective on topics including women's rights in the workplace, politics, education, and heritage. By presenting the admirable women of Islamic history as examples for the new generations to follow, the prospective study is required to determine the position of women. Even though Islam established ideal standards for treating women, some Muslims misinterpret the core teachings by basing their interpretations on societal and cultural factors. It is the duty of Muslim men and women to close the theoretical and practical divide on how women are treated in Islam, and it is also the responsibility of women to increase knowledge of their rights and status.

Discussions And Conclusions

Based on the aforementioned arguments, Muslim men and women have equal rights, although having distinct opportunities and duties. Since both men and women are descended from the same source, they share responsibility for their conduct. Women are valued greatly for their roles in the family as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters. They also receive special care and rewards for these roles. Women in Islam enjoy complete rights in the domains of education, the economy, politics, religion, and career choices. They also have the right to request a divorce, child custody, financial allowances, and to choose their partner. There are two requirements for practicing polygamy that make it challenging for a guy. Islam promotes the idea of marrying "only one," but the instances of polygamy that are permitted serve to shield women from sex trafficking, forced marriage, and STDs. The struggle for women's rights as a human right only began in Western nations in the 18th century, and it picked up steam in the 19th. According to a study done in 2016 by Alotaibi, Islam is a feminist faith that supports and empowers women. With the advent of Islam more than 1400 years ago, Muslim women were able to safeguard their liberties and rights. "Islam is unquestionably proven to be neither oppressive nor backward in its treatment of women." Maulana Muhammad Ali further asserts that "no other religious text or reformer has accomplished even a tenth of what the Holy Qur'an or the Holy Prophet Muhammad have done to elevate the status of women." It is up to women to take back the rights they already have and not overwork themselves or undervalue their responsibilities as family providers and supporters.

Despite the fact that Islam clearly establishes women's rights, there is a significant gap between theory and practice, which leads to a number of issues. Islam mandates that education be pursued, however in the majority of Muslim nations, girls are not encouraged to pursue higher education. However, some Muslim families have become so Westernised that their women consider caring for the home and raising children to be unimportant and inconsequential tasks. Due to a lack of knowledge or a secularised education, Muslim cultures have issues with women who are more and more victims of these issues. Islam of today thus calls for the return of women to a major role in both philosophy and practice.

The findings of a study conducted in Kuwait support the tendency of certain people to interpret religious teachings in light of their cultural backgrounds. The study suggests that women's position is influenced by both religious and cultural factors. Men "have a degree over women," according to a verse in the Qur'an (2:228). It is simple to observe that Allah (SWT) established the creation with enormous order and discipline: the sun and moon follow precise paths, the earth

and sky are in balance, and humans exist in their most perfect forms. There would be chaos everywhere if there was no discipline. Sociologically speaking, even a small group needs a facilitator or leader to keep things organised and assist the group in achieving its objective. It makes sense that in order to maximise the benefits of marriage, certain norms must be followed. The idea that men should be in charge of their families only refers to their responsibilities; it does not imply that they are superior to women.

Heritage-wise, women inherit half of men and "man get more than women." The explanation is that a son requires more money because he will eventually become a husband and must provide for his new family. After a daughter marries, her husband must provide for her; she only requires half or a third of what the family's male members require. Because men are responsible for providing for their families financially while women are not, this arrangement is considered fair. Islam actually gave women more advantages than men in this situation because of the dowry, property rights, and lack of financial obligations to the family.

Women should never be mistreated or neglected, regardless of their ethnicity, culture, or colour of skin. Domestic abuse and rape undermine women's rights to safety and freedom of movement. "The greatest approach to uphold cultural diversity and promote women's rights is to concentrate on the practices that affect women in their own nations and to assist them in making the necessary changes." Raising public knowledge of women's equality and rights as stated in the Qur'an and Sunnah, as well as putting an end to discrimination against and mistreatment of women, are crucial for achieving this. Islam provides the greatest guidelines for treating women, so it is evident that the way Islamic women are portrayed in the media is untrue. Certain topics, including Muslim women's clothing and polygamy, have not disappeared from the conversation. However, certain Muslims' mistreatment of their women is a contributing factor in the misinformation that exists about Islam. In every area—politics, education, healthcare, career options, inheritance, and family matters—women still have potential for progress. Men and women must both possess God consciousness (thakawa), and they must understand that on the day of the resurrection, they must bear witness for their deeds. Given that Islam offers the finest theory on women's rights, status, and responsibilities, it is the responsibility of all believers, male and female, to work towards bridging the gap between theory and practice for both this life and the next.

Women and Christianity

One of the world's oldest religions, Christianity is practiced by a sizable portion of the global population who are dispersed throughout the globe. However,

institutionalised Christianity, like the other major faiths, has given women a secondary role in the home and church, preventing them from assuming leadership roles. According to conventional readings, women are subordinate to men in the church, in marriage, and in other contexts because the Bible requires this gendered hierarchy. It has historically kept women out of significant decision-making roles where they may have any type of influence over males.

Both Plato and Aristotle, who were not Christians, had a significant influence on early Christian philosophy. According to Aristotle, women were less moral and illogical than men. Several of the early Church fathers wrote with disdain for women and from prejudicial views. The most well-known theologian in church history, Augustine (354–430 CE), held that God created women only for the purpose of bearing children. "I cannot think of any reason for woman to be made as man's helper, if we dismiss the reason of procreation," he stated explicitly. As a result, the promise of equality found in Jesus' teachings and practices frequently fell short of reality. It's interesting to note that things were very different in the early church, and the first century of Christian history provides concrete proof of the leadership and contribution of women. In fact, women had significant positions in the community over the first four centuries. Women were not initially allowed to hold positions of leadership; instead, they were gradually pushed to the sidelines, where they have stayed up until recently. However, during the second half of the 20th century, the position of women in Christianity has been examined more critically, and more moderate viewpoints have started to surface.

In actuality, proponents of Christian egalitarianism hold that neither in the Church nor in marriage did Christianity's founder, Jesus Christ, adhere to a gender hierarchy. To support their arguments, they turn to a specific verse from the apostle Paul, which is sometimes referred to as the "Magna Carta of spiritual emancipation." "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus," says Galatians 3:28. No hierarchy remains after reading this statement. As a matter of fact, Jesus could be considered a radical since he treated women differently from the majority of the culture, which saw them as inferior. He urged them to follow Him and extended an invitation. Thus, "Traditional Christian thinking is not the same thing as biblical thinking about women." Feminist theologians do emphasise that women need to make an effort to unlearn how they have always been taught to read the Bible and read without the long-worn lens.

Jesus Christ

Christmas Day honours the birth of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, who is acknowledged as the Son of God. He advocated for love amongst people and

encouraged nonviolence. The New Testament provides a chronicle of his life, sayings, and deeds. He was able to heal and work miracles. Jesus chose twelve followers, referred to as the twelve apostles, and gave them the duty of spreading the gospel of God throughout the entire globe. Despite being blameless and a Jew himself, he was persecuted by the Jews and crucified as a result. Good Friday, the day of his death, is observed as a holy day by Christians and serves as a remembrance of the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus made. After three days, he rose once more and ascended to heaven. Easter is the celebration of his resurrection day. Jesus had a fair attitude towards women and was not prejudiced against them. In actuality, he accorded honour and respect to a large number of his female followers. Christian women are revered, including Mary, his mother, Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, and Martha, her sister. Joanna and Susanna who supported him with their money were among the other women disciples of Jesus. Jesus was against his people being subservient to one another in any kind. Rather, Jesus explicitly prohibited it in any Christian partnership. After adamantly opposing the subjugation of others, he outlined the Christian counter-example to subordination as being meaningful service to others, which goes so far as to offer one's life as a sacrifice if necessary.

The writings of St. Paul, which date to the mid-1st century AD, as well as his informal salutations to friends include details on Jewish and Gentile women who played significant roles in the early Christian community. His letters offer some insight into the kinds of activities that women were involved in. He names Priscilla, Junia, Julia, and Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchreae.

Position of Women in the early Church

Speaking with historical data, Dr. Catherine Kroeger, a lecturer in the Department of Religion at Hamilton College in New Hartford, N.Y., has conducted extensive research and has discovered evidence regarding the elevated status of women in the early Christian Church. "The enormous role that women played in the early church is one of the best-kept secrets in Christianity," the author claims. Even though they omit a lot, writers from the era, both Christian and secular, frequently attest to the important role that women played in the early development of Christianity."¹

Status of Widows

Widows were honoured, just as presbyters and deacons. They became known as "the altar of God," were a member of the ordained clergy, and "had been appointed to bless." Among their duties was instructing ladies and offering support and direction to those seeking a better life. They took on pastoral duties including teaching the uninformed, calling together those who aspired to live chaste lives for prayer and support, chastising the deviant, and working towards

their restoration. The wealthy individuals frequently gave them gifts. It was evident that widows belonged to the ordained clergy.

Christian maidens were very numerous.

The fact that there were more women than men who were Christians in its early days is an intriguing fact. Bishop Cyprian of Carthage said in the second century that there weren't always enough Christian men for them to marry.

This could be due to a number of factors. Christians, in contrast to the other groups, did not leave their female infants to perish. They so had a greater quantity of mature ladies. Numerous women from the upper class also became Christians, although not their spouses. The men were afraid to lose their official standing, therefore they refrained from doing so. This also played a part in the disproportionate number of women attending the church. These well-educated and affluent women studied the Bible, Hebrew, and Greek with diligence. Indeed, Augustine is reported to have claimed in the early 400s that "any old Christian woman" was better educated spiritually than a multitude of so-called philosophers.

The legend of St. Thecla

Both modern ladies and their historical predecessors have grown to love the legend of St. Thecla. Thecla, a wealthy member of the nobility, is regarded as one of the first Christian heroines. She became a Christian after being moved by Paul's teachings. She encountered a great deal of hostility and danger, but her deep faith helped her overcome them. She travelled through Asia Minor with Paul before settling close to Seleucia. She is mentioned in historical accounts, and a pilgrim named Egeria wrote a report of her visit in 399 A.D. He talks about the activity centre, hospital, and monastery that she constructed there. A German excavation team discovered in 1908 beautiful mosaics, two chapels and several large containers of water in a site as large as a football field. Apparently the place had functioned for at least a 1,000 years. More than anything else, this is testimony of the fact of an extremely strong Christian female leader in Asia minor.

Christian Marriage

Marriage is regarded as a sacred union and a cooperative relationship based on respect and assistance. The New Testament offers insights on marriage and the married relationship through a number of Books that include guidance and instructions on the subject. The Book of Corinthians makes it very evident that husbands and women have obligations to one another as husband and wife, and that they should be considerate of one another's needs. However, in the Lord, neither the woman nor the man are whole without the other. Because the woman

is of the man, and the man is of the woman, everything is of God ¹⁶The necessity of love and respect between a husband and wife is mentioned in the Book of Ephesians. The husband is called to love his wife as much as he loves himself and the wife is asked to respect her husband. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself ¹⁷

Conclusion

It's critical to address the subject of women in Islam and Christianity with tact and respect, keeping in mind that women's experiences within these religious frameworks are influenced by a variety of cultural, geographical, and personal factors. I offer a thorough comparison analysis below, focussing on a number of similar issues like legal rights, social roles, and educational prospects. Islamic law confers particular rights on women with relation to inheritance, marriage, divorce, and property ownership. The rights of women to consent to marriage, file for divorce, and inherit a portion of property are outlined in the Quran and Hadith, albeit typically fewer than those of men. Because Islamic law (Sharia) is interpreted and applied differently in different Muslim-majority countries, women's status can vary greatly amongst them.

Since Christianity lacks a centralised legal system like Sharia, state laws rather than religious teaching have a greater influence on women's legal rights. Christian women have always had a range of privileges; nevertheless, in the modern day, especially in Western nations, they have made great progress in terms of their legal rights and position. Islamic traditional teachings highlight different roles for men and women, with a particular focus on women's roles as mothers and spouses in the home. These responsibilities, however, are not fixed and might change according to regional and cultural customs. Many Muslim women manage their families and employment, education, and public duties at the same time. In the past, Christianity has also maintained clear gender norms, albeit denominational interpretations differ greatly.

All Muslims, including women, should have an education, according to Islamic doctrine. According to reports, the Prophet Muhammad stated that "every Muslim has an obligation to seek knowledge." In the Muslim world, women's access to education varies greatly. Women enjoy equal or almost equal access to education in many nations, but in some, educational opportunities may be restricted by political or cultural constraints. In the past, women were largely educated by Christian institutions, however this was frequently restricted to particular classes or influenced by gender norms. Nowadays, women have equal access to education in most Christian-majority nations, and numerous Christian organisations actively support women's education around the world.

Overall, the status of women in Islam and Christianity is dynamic and subject to change, influenced by religious interpretations, cultural practices, and modern legal and social reforms.

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