

## Iran: Progress in Equal Rights or Ruin of its Population?

The secular powers see the concepts of gender equality, feminism, women's empowerment and liberal freedoms as one of the most important norms of a successful state. Accordingly, the capitalist states claim to represent and ensure these values, but reality reveals other facts. According to the Berggruen Institute egregious gender inequality still exists globally despite of substantial national and international measures that have been taken towards gender equality.

Unfortunately, these values invented by the non-believers, also invaded the Muslim lands and many of the Ummah have been affected by these notions due to suffering stagnation of Islamic knowledge. Like everywhere else in the world, the Ummah in Iran has not escaped from the Western values of gender roles. Numerous organizations such as the Iran America Women Foundation, The Women's Organization of Iran, UNICEF, UNDP, UN and many others are active in promoting the secular liberal distribution of roles between men and women.

The catastrophic consequences are not to be overlooked. Men and women can't find anymore their clear place within the family structure and in society and try to accept values which are against the nature of mankind. As a result, family life has been drastically adversely affected. Women are looking for freedom, self-sufficiency and independence. The primary role of the woman as a mother and home-maker is classified as backward and out-dated and the focus is on career, equal rights to men and feminism.

The statistics indicate that Iran's population growth has dropped to only 1.29 percent in the past 12 months, making it the lowest in the region. The truth is that divorce is skyrocketing in Iran and the share of marriages ending in divorce has more than doubled over the last decades. Compared to the average of divorce in the world which is one for every seven marriages, there is 1 divorce for every 4.8 marriages in Iran. More than 3 million educated Iranian women over 30 are unmarried, according to Mizan, the official news agency of Iran's judiciary. The household size has shrunk over the years. In the 1976 Iran Census, the size of the household was 5.02 but the results from the Iran census 2016 shows that an average household is 3.3. Another fact about the household size is the number of single households. In 2016 Census, 8.5% of households consisted of one person. The number of extramarital relationships has also increased in the last years. An opinion survey conducted by Iran's National Youth Organization last year showed that 55 per cent of the 7,000 young men and women polled had a girlfriend or boyfriend prior to marriage. Independent experts believe the real percentage may be even higher. Also the demand for prostitution has increased. The exact number of prostitutes working in Iran is unknown. However, prostitutes are visible on some street corners of the major cities. In 2002, the Iranian newspaper, Entekhab, estimated that there were close to 85,000 prostitutes in Tehran alone.

It is clear that these unrealistic and harmful Western norms and values have created a gender struggle today, and discord in the family-order and a crisis in the whole existence and living together of men and women. The Ummah forgot that these Western views and values stand against the Islamic ideology and the Shariah not because Islam does not guarantee women's rights, but because these feminist liberal and gender equality values are a result of the unfavorable treatment of women in the West and the falsified Christian mythology.

The rulers in the Muslim lands are also confusing the Ummah. Iran's President, Mr. Rouhani, said at the National Forum on Women Shaping Economy and Culture in Tehran: *"We will not accept the culture of sexual discrimination. Women must enjoy equal opportunity, equal protection and equal social rights."*

These and other statements of Rouhani and other Iranian politicians are further proof that Iran represents Western rather than Islamic norms and values. Because of this culturally confused government, the population in Iran does not have access to the true Islamic values and norms. The equality of men and women, reduction of birth rate, focus on career over motherhood, extra-matrimonial relationships, abandonment of Islamic clothing, personal freedoms and freedom of expression are never a solution to today's problems. In fact, their detrimental fallout is visible all over the world.

For Allah (swt), men and women are equal in their worth, intellect and nature as human beings. However, it is blatantly clear that there are differences in the physical nature of the genders. Hence, Allah (swt) has arranged their roles in this world according to the nature of the sexes. Hence, Islam provides women with the same political, economic, educational and judicial rights as men. However, to organize family life effectively, Islam prescribes roles, duties and rights within marriage and the family structure which are different between men and women. The roles and duties of men are not above that of women. Rather, each task is vital in ensuring a harmonious and productive family life where the rights of men, women, children, the elderly and extended family are taken care of effectively. Therefore, rather than following the heels of Western nations towards the destruction of marriage and the family structure through the adoption of their feminist, liberal and secular values, as a Muslim Ummah we need to look deeply into and embrace the values, lifestyle, laws and system prescribed by our Deen which alone can ensure strong marriages and family units.

﴿إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ وَالْقَانِتِينَ وَالْقَانِتَاتِ وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَالصَّابِرَاتِ وَالْخَاشِعِينَ وَالْخَاشِعَاتِ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقِينَ وَالْمُتَصَدِّقَاتِ وَالصَّانِمِينَ وَالصَّانِمَاتِ وَالْحَافِظِينَ فُرُوجَهُمْ وَالْحَافِظَاتِ وَالذَّاكِرِينَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَالذَّاكِرَاتِ أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا﴾

***“Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.” [33:35]***

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