



Ramadan Daily Quran Studies, by Dr Zahid Aziz, 2024

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Study 12:

Women in Islam —

3: Property rights





- The Quran instructs Muslims as follows:

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرْجٌ وَلَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ
أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ
عَمَّتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَلَاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتُمْ مَفَاتِحَهُ أَوْ صَدِيقِكُمْ^ط

“There is no blame on the blind man, nor any blame on the lame, nor blame on the sick, nor on yourselves that you eat in your own houses, or your fathers’ houses, or **your mothers’ houses**, or your brothers’ houses, or **your sisters’ houses**, or your paternal uncles’ houses, or **your paternal aunts’ houses**, or your maternal uncles’ houses, or **your maternal aunts’ houses**, or (houses) of which you possess the keys, or your friends’ (houses).” (24:61)





- This verse is very broad and gives Muslims a great deal of latitude about eating in the company of others. “Eating with others” in fact represents having social relations with others, and not only literally eating with them.
- It begins by assuring Muslims (although this is not connected with our topic) that there is nothing wrong with eating with the disabled and the sick, or having social relations with them.
- In many communities this was considered as somehow undesirable, due to prejudice.



- Here we refer to a particular aspect of this verse by highlighting in bold the specific mention of women's houses.
- Women's houses are mentioned equally with men's houses ("your fathers' houses or your mothers' houses", etc.).
- This shows that women can own property and houses in their own right, in the same way as men. Just like your brother or uncle can own a house, so can your sister or aunt.



- Someone might say that houses of “your sisters” and “your aunts” might mean the houses owned by their husbands in which they live.
- But even if that were meant, still your sister or your aunt has sufficient right over the house to entertain you in it.
- However, we note that the verse begins by mentioning “your fathers’ houses and your mothers’ houses”.
- Usually one would expect these houses to be the same, i.e., your father and mother have the same house.



- Their mention **separately** shows that the mother may own houses in her own right, just like your father.
- Since a woman has the right to own property, it means she has all the rights of a human being to conduct all affairs relating to her life, just like a man does.



- In the UK, before the Married Women's Property Act of 1870, the position of wives was as follows, as described in various sources:

“any money made by a woman either through a wage, from investment, by gift, or through inheritance **automatically became the property of her husband once she was married.**

Thus, the identity of the wife became legally absorbed into her husband, effectively making them one person under the law.

Once a woman became married **she had no claim to her property** as her husband had full control and could do whatever suited him regarding the property.”



- This cartoon of the time illustrates the mutual position of husband and wife in the UK:

“Before the Married Women’s Property Act of 1870, women were basically dehumanized when they entered into a marriage. ... a woman became a legal non-person”



Source: <https://hist259.web.unc.edu/marriedwomenspropertyact/>



- However, the Quran says:

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَتَبُوا^ط وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَتَبْنَ^ط

“For men is the benefit of what they earn.

And for women is the benefit of what they earn.”

(4:32)





- Maulana Muhammad Ali, in his book *The Religion of Islam*, published as long ago as 1936, writes about marriage in Islam as follows:

“By entering the married state, a woman does not lose any of the rights which she possesses as an individual member of society.

She is still free to carry on any work she likes, to make any contract she desires, to dispose of her property as she wishes; nor is her individuality merged in that of her husband.”

END OF STUDY 12

