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**Social Justice for Women in Islam is a Myth or Reality: a South Asian Perspective**

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Social justice is promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity. The central argument of social justice is that all people share a common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights, and a fair allocation of community resources. In this conditions people are not be discriminated against nor their welfare and well-being constrained or prejudiced on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliations, age, race, belief, disability, location, social class, socioeconomic circumstances, or other characteristic of background or group membership.

In South Asian society where Social inequality due to patriarchal nature of society is a state which affects or harms a women's position, status in society among her fellow beings. Many times unjust turns into social inequality and leads to exploitation, discrimination, torture, physical, social, psychological and symbolic. There is not only a particular reason which can be singled out for social discrimination of South Asian Muslim women in the society. Social discrimination of women is not confined to any particular group, race, caste, religion but is common among all section in South Asian society. Religion, tradition, culture are few aspects which leads women to suffer silently.

Islam preaches equality among men and women and does not exclude women from social justice but women among Muslims in the region are looking this term as a myth. There may be several reasons and present paper will be an attempt to understand the lying causes behind this problem. It will explore the textual and contextual provisions, interpretations by Islamic scholars, feminists and by women themselves to understand social justice for women in Islam with reference to South Asian Muslim women.

**Key Words-** Social justice, Social inequality, patriarchy, Islam, myth, unjust, South Asia

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The term social justice is first appeared in political debate in the early nineteenth century. It was employed by political thinkers like John Stuart Mill and its use has since become widespread. Social justice implies that overall pattern of distribution in a society ought to be brought into line with principles of justice. There have been two major conception of social justice, one embodying the notions of merit and desert, the other those of need and equality. Social justice is defined as "... promoting a just society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity." It exists when "all people share a common humanity and therefore have a right to equitable treatment, support for their human rights, and a fair allocation of community resources." In conditions of social justice, people are "not be discriminated against, nor their welfare and well-being constrained or prejudiced on the basis of gender, sexuality, religion, political affiliations, age, race, belief, disability, location, social class, socioeconomic circumstances, or other characteristic of background or group membership" (Toowoomba Catholic Education, 2006).

The first conception entails that each person's social position and material rewards should as far as possible correspond to their place on a scale of merit, an idea also expressed in demands for 'careers open to talents' and 'equality of opportunity'. It implies the ending of hereditary privilege and an open society in which people have the chance to display their desert. The second conception entails that goods should be allocated according to each person's various needs. It is closely allied to an idea of equality, since a programme which successfully satisfies need makes people materially equal in one important respect. Two of the most prominent statements about social justice, each of which posits its own theory of social justice, are John Rawls' (2003) Justice as Fairness and David Miller's (2003) Principles of Social Justice. While neither of these theories can be considered an exhaustive treatment of the subject matter, each offers a complex theory of social justice that illustrates its broad meaning. Both conceptions of social justice are similar, so there is significant overlap between the main ideas of the theorists; this is likely due to the fact that they are founded on like principles and based on previously posited theories from significant historical political philosophers (Brighouse, 2005).

Social justice in Islam has a very broad meaning and it extends to those who are not related to a person such as the neighbors, orphans and the needy. Islam says that being human you should starts social justice from your home and you must pay attention and care to your parents especially when they reach old age. Qur'an reminds us that after being loyal to God you must be good to your parents. To leave your parents in a care home when they are old, frail and most vulnerable is simply cruel and unjust. Thus in Islam social justice starts from home. The Ummah must be just to their family as they will be asked about their duties and responsibilities on the Day of Judgment. Islam encourages Muslims to do everything possible to sustain a good relationship with their relatives. The prophet who said "one who cuts relations with relatives; God will cut relations with him or her". A Muslim cannot consider a Muslim if he or she goes to sleep with their stomach full while their neighbour sleeps hungry. Islam says help the orphans and the needy by sharing with them part of our wealth through paying Zakat (a proportion of my surplus wealth which must be given on a yearly basis to poor and the needy) and voluntary charity. The blessed Prophet once said "he is not a Muslim who sleeps with his stomach full while his neighbour stays hungry".

In Islam Social justice is about our struggle against inequality. In today's world we must fight against inequality and discrimination or against any act which is consider unjust. Islam stands firmly against such inequality and encourages Muslims to be involved with initiatives that would eradicate discrimination and challenge the root causes of inequality. The women were treated as

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chattel and were denied the status of human being before emergence of Islam. Islam restored their human status and gave them equal social and economic rights along with men. In the economic field, for example, women have been given rights to own property, to acquire property and to dispose it off at their discretion. They are given rights of inheritance from their parents, their husbands, their children and near relatives. They are allowed to work to earn their livelihood through any dignified profession or vocation of their choice. In the present article I have mainly focused on women and the issue of social justice in Islam from south Asian perspective, so I will discuss only this issue here.

It is true that in the early days of Islam i.e. 7th century CE, major reforms in women's rights were made which was related to marriage, divorce and inheritance. Women were not accorded such legal status in other cultures, including the West, until centuries later. The Oxford Dictionary of Islam states that the general improvement of the status of women in Arab societies included prohibition of female infanticide and recognizing women's complete identity. Under Islamic law, marriage was no longer viewed as a status but rather as a contract, in which the woman's consent was imperative. The dowry, previously regarded as a bride-price paid to the father, became a nuptial gift retained by the wife as part of her personal property. Women were given inheritance rights in a patriarchal society that had previously restricted inheritance to male relatives.

Annemarie Schimmel states that "compared to the pre-Islamic position of women, Islamic legislation meant an enormous progress; the woman has the right, at least according to the letter of the law, to administer the wealth she has brought into the family or has earned by her own work."<sup>[14]</sup> William Montgomery Watt states that Prophet Muhammad, in the historical context of his time, can be seen as a figure that testified on behalf of women's rights and improved things considerably. Watt explains: "At the time Islam began, the conditions of women were terrible – they had no right to own property, were supposed to be the property of the man, and if the man died everything went to his sons. Haddad and Esposito state that "Muhammad granted women rights and privileges in the sphere of family life, marriage, education, and economic endeavors, rights that help improve women's status in society."

In terms of women's rights, women generally had fewer legal restrictions under Islamic law (Sharia) than they did under certain Western legal systems until the 20th century. For example, under traditional interpretations of *Sharia*, women had the right to keep their surnames upon marriage; inherit and bestow inheritance; independently manage their financial affairs; and contract marriages and divorce. In contrast, restrictions on the legal capacity of married women under French law were not removed until 1965. (Noah Feldman, a law professor at Harvard University).

One of the major areas of scholarship and campaigning for Islamic feminists are aspects of Sharia (Islamic law) known as Muslim personal law (MPL) or Muslim family law. There is dispute that the use of *Sharia* law is oppressive because they are based mainly on "man-made misinterpretations of the sacred texts" and are not based in Islam. Some of the thorny issues regarding the way in which Muslim Personal Law has thus far been formulated include polygyny, divorce and custody of children, maintenance and marital property. In addition, there are also more macro issues regarding the underlying assumptions of such legislation, for example, the assumption of the man as head of the household. Muslim majority countries that have promulgated some form of Muslim Personal Law include Muslim minority countries that already have incorporated Muslim Personal Law into their own law or are considering passing legislation on aspects of Muslim Personal Law.

Islamic feminists have objected to the Muslim Personal Law legislation and arguing that these pieces of legislation discriminate against women. Some Islamic feminists have taken the attitude that a reformed Muslim Personal Law which is based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, which includes substantial input from Muslim women, and which does not discriminate against women is possible. Such Islamic feminists have been working on developing women-friendly forms of Muslim Personal Law. Other Islamic feminists, particularly some in Muslim minority contexts which are democratic states, argue that Muslim Personal Law should not be reformed but should be rejected and that Muslim women should seek redress, instead, from the civil laws of those states.

Feminists trace the root of injustice in their discussion on two terms oppression and exploitation. Social oppression is a concept that describes a relationship of dominance and subordination between categories of people in which one benefits from the systematic abuse, exploitation, and injustice directed toward the other. Because social oppression describes relationships between categories of people, it should not be confused with the oppressive behavior of individuals. In social oppression, all members of dominant and subordinate categories participate regardless of the individual attitudes or behavior. Oppression is a type of injustice. Oppression is the inequitable use of authority, law, or physical force to prevent others from being free or equal.

Feminists fight against the oppression of women. Women have been unjustly held back from achieving full equality for much of human history in many societies around the world. Feminist theorists of the 1960s and 1970s looked for new ways to analyze this oppression, often concluding that there were both overt and insidious forces in society that oppressed women. These feminists also drew on the work of earlier authors who had analyzed the oppression of women, including Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* and Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Many common types of oppression are described as "isms" such as sexism, racism and so on. The opposite of oppression would be liberation (to remove oppression) or equality (absence of oppression).

In much of the written literature of the ancient and medieval world, we have evidence of women's oppression by men in European, Middle Eastern and African cultures. Women did not have the same legal and political rights as men, and were under control of fathers and husbands in almost all societies. In some societies in which women had few options for supporting their life if not supported by a husband; there was even a practice of ritual widow suicide or murder.

The second term in the discussion of social justice with reference to women is exploitation feminists have this argument that it occurs when one social group is able to take for itself what is produced by another group. The concept is central to the idea of social oppression, especially from a Marxist perspective, and can also include noneconomic forms, such as the sexual exploitation of women by men under patriarchy.

Islamic feminists argues that it is paramount to understand that the Quran equates being a "mu'min" (sing.) with actual practice, so that it is not enough to just have faith in principle; we must put our faith into practice. The same applies to our belief in the equality of men and women; gender equality as outlined in the Quran must also be put into practice. The modern scholar Laila Ahmed in "Women and Gender in Islam" says that "the implications are far-reaching. Ethical qualities, including those invoked in Quran--charity, chastity, truthfulness, patience, piety--also have political and social dimensions." Fatema Mernissi has argued that much of the suppression of women's rights in Islamic societies is the result of political motivation and its consequent manipulative

interpretation of hadith, which runs counter to the egalitarian Islamic community of men and women envisioned by Muhammad.<sup>[45]</sup>

### **Muslim Women and Issue of Social Justice in South Asia**

Muslim women are living in a patriarchal society in South Asian region that's why the problem of social justice becomes more complex and vulnerable here. If we go through the Quran we can understand that Almighty says in the Qur'an: "And of everything we have created pairs, that you may remember (the Grace of Allah)." (Quran Verse, 51:49). Islam never accepted the similarity between men and women it says differences are in the creation of both sexes but in reward, justice, dignity, chastity, modesty, punishment men and women are equal. The criteria to judge them are their good conduct not sex. Islam very clearly mentions social justice for all sexes and weaker section of the society too. But in contemporary era in South Asian society we are observing that the followers of Islam are not treating women equal they are discriminated on the ground of their gender. In South Asian society Muslim women have several issues related to social justice, broadly I have divided it in four sections in my article i.e. equality, identity, security and dignity.

#### **Equality**

Islam treats women as equals to men and declares that there is no difference between the two sexes in terms of qualifications in humanity, and each complements the other as the two genders of the species. Islam has abolished and abrogated all the previous unjust laws that demoted women as inferior in quality and nature. The Prophet said: Verily, women are the twin halves of men. (Abu Dawood -234, Tirmidhi -113 & others). Equal religious duties and rituals are required from both women and men. Testimony of Faith (Shahaadah), Prayer (Salah), Obligatory Charity (Zakat), Fasting (Saum), and Pilgrimage (Hajj) are equally required of both genders. Both males and females have similar rewards for obedience and penalties for disobedience in this world and the Hereafter. As stated by Allah in the Glorious Qur'an: "Whoever does righteous acts, whether male or female, while he is a believer, verily, to him We will give a good life, and We shall pay them certainly a reward in proportion to the best of what they used to do." (Holy Quran 16:97). Women are equally qualified and allowed to engage in financial dealings and property ownership. According to Islamic law women can own, buy, sell and undertake any financial transaction without the need for guardianship, and without any restrictions or limitations - a situation unheard of in many societies until modern times. Islam entitles women to the same rights as men in terms of education and cultivation. Men and women have similar obligations and responsibilities to reform and correct the society to the best of their capability. Men and women have set and determined rights to receive their fair share of wealth.

These provisions were made by Islam for women but what are the practices in Muslim society in south Asia? I will give some contextual illustration here to understand the issue of equality. Islam grants equal right to gain knowledge for male and female but if we go through the Muslim women literacy data in India Pakistan and Afghanistan we found it is very low. There is great difference in the rates of enrollment of Muslim boys, as compared to Muslim girls in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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The gender disparity is affected by the fundamentalist group like Taliban enforcement of a complete ban on female education in the Swat district of Pakistan, as reported in a January 21, 2009 issue of the Pakistan daily newspaper, *The News*. Some 400 private schools enrolling 40,000 girls have been shut down. At least 10 girls' schools that tried to open after the January 15, 2009 deadline by the Taliban were blown up by the militants in the town of Mingora, the headquarters of the Swat district. "More than 170 schools have been bombed or torched, along with other government-owned buildings." (*UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011*)

Afghanistan has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, female literacy levels are on average 17%, with high variation, indicating a strong geographical and gender divide. The highest female literacy rate, for instance is 34.7%, found in the capital, Kabul, while rate as low as 1.6% is found in two southern provinces of the country. This high variation between male and female literacy rate, is due to combination of factors, such as cultural norm of women not attending school and spending time managing the household, security problems in travelling to classes, and sometimes family not allowing women to attend classes.

In 2007, a study was conducted by Usha Nayar (India) and she found in her research that Muslim girls and women lag behind their male counterparts. Gender disparity in literacy rates is 9.67% in rural and 13.11% in urban areas. Only 3.6% Muslims are graduates as compared to the National Average of 6.7%. Mean Years of Schooling (MYS) for 7-16 years of age in 2001 was 3.9 years. In that it was 3.26 years for Muslims and 2.7 years for Muslim girls. Findings of the study revealed the Educational backwardness of Muslims and confirmed the unequal status of women.

## Identity

Women are independent individuals, as exemplified by the fact that all human beings will be accountable for their own intentions and deeds on the Day of Judgment when "no human being shall be of the least avail to another human being" (Quran 82:19) If men were ultimately responsible for women (fathers for their daughters, husbands for their wives, etc.), then this accountability would be solely on men's shoulders to bear until the Day of Judgment. But this is not the case: "And whatever wrongs any human being commits rests upon him alone; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden..." (Quran 6:165)

A woman's individual identity is often questioned and compromised in South Asia. Family law in this region which ought to encompass areas of women's rights also accommodates gender discrimination. The center of society is the family unit, yet woman, the main character, is often ignored in getting acknowledgement socially as well as legally. Family law here has provided ground for debate for feminists in search of laws with respect to gender.

In South Asia, complex personal laws that cater to marriage, inheritance, divorce and custody are in practice and are influenced by cultural and religious traditions. Secular laws also exist that try to homogenize rights on the basis of citizens rather than religion or community. However, in the South Asian context, since community and family have always been a priority, existence of secular and religion-based laws has negatively affected women's development and their legal protection.

The South Asian judiciary, in the absence of legislation reflecting Ijma or consensus of Muslim community, has given a proactive interpretation to family law within the Islamic framework. It is

interesting to see that the South Asian judiciary has proved that it is beneficial for entire societies to adapt to the need of a forward-looking Muslim society. Alamgir M. Serajuddin, in his book “Muslim Family Law, Secular Courts and Muslim Women of South Asia: A study on judicial activism” provides an in-depth analysis of South Asian countries where Muslim family laws are in practice in combination with modern civil laws. The author has made interesting observations on the Muslim legal system in South Asia, “It might have been expected that in the secular Republic of India, judicial interpretation would take the path of activism and liberalism, and in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan passivity and conservatism. In fact, in 1950s and 1960s the opposite was the case. While the Indian courts held that they were bound by the doctrine of precedents to follow the rules of interpretation laid down by the Privy Council in *Aga Mahomed v. Koolsom Bibi* and *Baker Ali Khan v. Anjuman Ara*, the Pakistan courts refused to abide by these decisions and claimed and exercised the right of independent interpretation of the rules of Sharia law. This has interesting results; Muslim personal law remained more or less rigid and conservative in India but became flexible and progressive in Pakistan. No wonder, the law in Pakistan and Bangladesh has diverged in a good many areas from that in India.”

Due to different systems of governments and policies the judicial system in different South Asian societies did get its share of influences on its working. On the basis of Individual country case studies we can take an idea about the situation and the difference in obstacles that Muslim women face in different socio-political settings across the region. Muslim-majority countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan follows a dual court system where, if the government is secular, Muslims can choose to bring familial and financial disputes to Sharia courts. The exact jurisdiction of these courts varies from country to country, but usually includes marriage, divorce, inheritance, and guardianship. Family relations in India are largely governed by personal laws based on religious and cultural practices even as the state has tried to establish secular laws to homogenize the rights of people according to citizenship rather than religion or community. Article 44 of the Indian Constitution provides that the state shall endeavor to secure for its citizens a uniform civil code (UCC). The Indian constitution, apart from being secular in character, is also sensitive to the cultural and religious plurality; hence, the state had to balance rights under personal law against the need to grant equality to all Indians. Secular law unfortunately has little impact when it comes to personal laws like the Muslim personal law that allows the marriage of minors to be contracted by guardians.

In case of Bangladesh, most of the laws were followed under the Muslim Family laws Ordinance. The ordinance or the progressive, liberal role of the judiciary did not face any serious threat and the ordinance remains in force in Bangladesh without any amendment or alteration. Though the Ulema continue to oppose it as un-Islamic and some of them have attempted to make it a political issue, none has challenged its legality in a court of law. Since 1971, Bangladeshi courts have accepted all the progressive interpretations and decisions of Pakistani courts given before the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, but they have also considered the new social needs and realities. The judicial activism has brought about beneficial changes in many areas of Muslim personal law in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, though they have not gone unchallenged. Despite this, the judges have interpreted and applied the law to promote the cause of justice. Judicial activism has significantly enlarged the dimension of women’s rights under that law and bridged the gap between a woman’s theoretical legal rights and her actual position in society. Still Muslim women in South Asia are fighting against gender discrimination in South Asian society judicial activism may be one

path but their identity question, which was given by Allah till today is questionable by Islamic feminists and social activists.

### **Security**

The real intent of Islam underlying all the rulings, restrictions, procedures, and commands for women is their safety and protection. Islam aims at preserving their honor and upholding their dignity. In Islam some relations are known as Mahram and in my opinion these arrangements are made by Allah for the protection and security of women. In these Mahram relations marriage or any kind of bad intentions are consider haram. These are bonds for a healthy and pious society but at present we are observing that women are not safe even in the hands of Mahram. This security issue is a major threat among Muslim women in South Asian society too.

Another issue which is related to women security is honor killing. In South Asia, many families practice 'honor killing,' or murdering a daughter or wife for a perceived dishonor she has committed. Examples of these 'dishonors' include seeking divorce or losing virginity out of wedlock, even through rape. The issue of honor killing is important because these killings violate human rights by discriminating against women and taking away the security of their person. Honor killing violates Article 2nd of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which prohibits "engaging in any act or practice of discrimination against women and to ensure that public authorities and institutions shall act in conformity with this obligation."

The roots of honor killing come from a complex code of honor that is ingrained in South Asian societies. Family status depends upon honor, which in turn depends upon the respectability of the daughters and wife of the family. According to the code of honor, these daughters and wives can damage family honor irreparably by a "misuse" of their sexuality, such as sexual relations before marriage or even being the victim of rape .

The United Nations Population Fund estimates that about five thousand women die from honor killings every year, but this data is not as accurate as possible due to the vast number of honor killings that are not reported (Seema Kazi, 1999).

Since honor killings are ingrained into the society of practicing countries, many of the crimes are unreported or ignored by local law enforcement. As a result reliable statistics do not exist. In order to stop honor killings, legislation must be changed, authorities need to prosecute for these crimes instead of turning away, and sanctions must be imposed on countries that still engage and promote this form of inequality and murder taken should not be an approach telling Jordanians that their culture is wrong for placing family honor upon a girl's virginity. Rather, education about democracy and human rights must be implemented through local grassroots organizations that are from the violating country and thus are part of the culture. No foreign body can enter into a country and try to force change. Honor crimes violate the basic human rights of women, but societies continue to practice this crime. To spare the lives of women who are under the control of a patriarchal society, efforts to create change must be refined and implemented now.

It's a well-known fact that Islam maintains the protection of life and does not sanction any violation against it. In the Glorious Qur'an, Allah, Most High, says, "Whoso sleuths a believer of set purpose, his reward is Hell for ever. Allah is worth against him and He hath cursed him and prepared for him an awful doom." (Quran verse An-Nisa: 93)

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Focusing on the topic, Sheikh Ahmad Kutty, a senior lecturer and an Islamic scholar at the Islamic Institute of Toronto, Ontario, Canada, states: “There is no such concept in Islam that is called “honor killing”. Islam holds every soul in high esteem and does not allow any transgression upon it. It does not allow people to take the law in their own hands and administer justice, because doing so will be leading to chaos and lawlessness. Therefore, based on this, Islam does not permit such killings.

Shedding more light on it, Sheikh `Atiyyah Saqr, former head of Al-Azhar Fatwa Committee, states: “Like all other religions, Islam strictly prohibits murder and killing without legal justification. The so-called “honor killing” is based on ignorance and disregard of morals and laws, which cannot be abolished except by disciplinary punishments. It goes without saying that people are not entitled to take the law in their own hands, for it’s the responsibility of the Muslim State and its concerned bodies to maintain peace, security, etc., and to prevent chaos and disorder from creeping into the Muslim society.”

Moreover, the eminent Muslim scholar, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Hanooti, member of the North American Fiqh Council, adds: “In Islam, there is no place for unjustifiable killing. Even in case of capital punishment, only the government can apply the law through the judicial procedures. No one has the authority to execute the law other than the officers who are in charge. Honour killing could be a wrong cultural tradition. It is unjust and inhumane action. The murderer of that type deserves punishment.”

Islam never permits its followers to kill any one if we go through the Quran we can understand that it declares that if you kill a single person you kill the entire humanity. In south Asia if Muslims are practicing honour killing it is clear cut violation of Islam and Sunnah. But in India (Mewat Haryana Muslims are killing their daughters in the name of Gotra and Caste practice) Pakistan (Sind, Baluchistan and in some tribal areas) and Afghanistan (stoning practice) till today there are incidents of women killing in the name of honour. Now the question is if these are practices are prevalent in society why Ulema are not coming forward to stop this evil and why they are not passing fatwa on honor killing. This matter is related to women security and Quran says on the Day of Judgment the innocent daughters will ask on what ground they were killed or buried. If daughters were killed because of their sex or in the name of honour how this humanity survives how a balance society will be remain. In India some states have sex ratio problem due to female feticide including Muslim community.

### **Dignity**

Human dignity is the recognition and respect of human need, desire and expectation one individual by another. This recognition is indispensable because no human being survives alone. Human dignity creates the foundation of society and civilization. An Islamic view of dignity is crystallized in the Quran through the selected biographies of mother of Moses, mother Mary, wife of Pharaoh and others. These pious ladies are presented as role-models of dignity because they did not abandon their self-respect by bowing to social pressures. These ladies faced immense pressures but held firm in their positive actions. Elaborations on dignity have been made by many scholars of Islam, such as Mohammad-Ali Taskhiri, head of the Islamic Culture and Communications Organization in Iran, in 1994. According to Taskhiri, dignity is a state to which all humans have equal potential, but which can only be actualized by living a life pleasing to the eyes of God. This is in keeping with

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the 1990 Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, which states that "True faith is the guarantee for enhancing such [basic human] dignity along the path to human perfection".

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Islam gives dignity, complete freedom, individuality, an independence of thought and opinion, and formally acknowledged natural rights to women. Any form of emotional, physical, or psychological abuse is prohibited in Islam and the improper treatment of women is no exception to this rule. Islam clearly disallows any form of oppression, violation of human dignity or abuse because all of God's creation is dignified and protected under Islamic law.

Islam give a very dignified position to women but I will mention one practice which shows that Muslim women in South Asian society not enjoying their dignity .This practice is known Haq Bakshish(marriage to the Qur'an) .It is not a mainstream Islamic practice, "marriage to the Qur'an" is clearly the product of a society where women are the property of men, and where the nature of that relationship, as defined by the Qur'an, is enshrined as the divinely determined order of things, and thus highly resistant to change. "Prominent families in Sindh and marriage to the Holy Quran," The Haq Bakshish tradition, most common in Sindh, but also followed in parts of the Punjab, is most often practiced by feudal families, often `Syeds". Syed families are often reluctant to allow women to marry into non-Syed families, in a kind of a caste system that sees such families as being lower in status. Syed families are those who claim to be descendents of Muhammad through the marriage of his daughter, Fatima, and Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth of the "rightly guided" caliphs to Sunnis, and the first Imam to Shi'ites. Moreover, in cases when no match deemed suitable exists within the family for a young woman of marriageable age, rather than have property leave the family when a woman weds outside it and takes her share of the property with her, it may be decided to preserve it by marrying her to the Holy Quran. But the practice, frowned upon by almost all religious scholars and much of mainstream Islam, is generally practiced in secret.

I have given only one example with reference to dignity of women in our society. There are several examples when we are looking that male dominated societies are violating Islamic teaching just to sake their position. Due to this reason in all over world the advocates of the women seek to highlight the deeply rooted teachings of equality in the religion and to encourage a questioning of the patriarchal interpretation of Islamic teaching through the Qur'an (holy book), *hadith* (sayings of Muhammad) and *Sharia* (law) towards the creation of a more equal and just society.

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