

Imam Khomeini Championed Women's Rights

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One of the gifts of being born into a family is that we inherit relatives, people who have experienced life before us. From these people, we inherit many shared values and family stories that shape our lives. Just as we have family heritage, we also have a faith heritage. As

Muslims, we remember the great Muslim people who lived their lives in exceptional ways. Most often, their lives inspire us to follow their footsteps. Remembering those who have influenced us in the past and reflecting upon their lives can be a grounding experience and

remind us where we have come from. It can be encouraging and empowering to reconnect with our roots and recall the lessons learned through the lives of those important to us.

However, undoubtedly the most towering figure in recent Muslim history, the man whose

thoughts and leadership effectively gave birth to what we now know as the global revolution, stands to be the late Imam Khomeini (RA) the thirty-third anniversary of whose demise is going to be commemorated this year.

Despite his demise 33 years ago, his statements and actions continue to inspire both Muslims and non-Muslims across the world. But there is a new generation of Muslims now who are too young to have more than a vaguest recollection of his impact on the world in the late 1970s and 1980s; not to forget that even many of those who are old enough hardly know him and his contributions made to the world of Islam. Therefore, this occasion provides us with the opportunity to reflect upon his life. The thirty-third anniversary of Imam Khomeini's demise which will be commemorated a month after the International mother's day, therefore, seems to be an appropriate time to write about his role in championing women's rights.

In my opinion, this year's anniversary of the late Imam's demise is a moment to reflect, though briefly, on some of the more salient aspects of his thoughts and ideals. The importance of values in influencing human behavior and actions is universally acknowledged. Imam Khomeini worked out such values with respect to women, as he could motivate humanity to respect and honor them. An extensive look at history shows that various social

communities imposed a lot of cruelty and injustice on women, in one way or the other.

The pure Islamic revolutionary school presented by him, Imam Khomeini preached that a woman is a divine being who is imbued with special and distinguished status. In his own words: "the role of the women in society is more important than that of the men, for, in addition to being active members of society themselves in all fields, the ladies also raise active members. A mother's service to the community is greater than that of a teacher, and indeed that of anyone else".

Islam came at a time when the Arab society, like so many patriarchal societies at that time, was rife with abhorrent practices against girls. It came with a message of liberating women and girls in every walk of life; education being a prime aspect.

Imam Khomeini strongly believed in and put into practice

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these lofty teachings and used to pronounce that, in the Islamic system, women will have the same rights as men; the right to education, the right to work, the right to own property, the right to vote, the right to stand for elections.

The late Imam taught that Islam obligates both men and women to acquire education. It is the duty of every Muslim. Education in Islam is not divided into sacred and secular, and the implication of these sayings of the Prophet, in modern terms, is that every Muslim boy or girl, man or woman, should pursue his or her education as far as it is possible.

He also said: "The rise and fall of a society depend on the rise and fall of women of that society." The Prophet has stated that "A parent who educates his daughter well, will enter Paradise". Yet another tradition states that "A mother is a school. If she is educated, then a whole people will be educated".

In Islam, therefore, both men and women are credited with the capacity for learning and understanding and teaching, and one of the aims of acquiring knowledge is that of becoming more conscious of God.

It is considered in Islam that the more a person, male or female, is educated, the more he or she becomes conscious of the Creator, the Power who made and sustains the Creation.

"Read in the name of your Lord who created, created humankind from a clinging mass. Read! Your Lord is the Most

Generous, who taught by means of the pen; taught humankind what he did not know". (Holy Qur'an 96:1-5)

Values as such promoted by the Holy Qur'an help solve the problems faced by the girl child. It is through such values that a revolution can be brought about and the girl child can receive her fair share of dignity, respect, and rights.

against corruption in the same way as men should.

The Islamic revolution led by the great Imam in Iran transformed the status of women in society profoundly. After the Islamic revolution, not only did the presence and cooperation of women in various fields improve, but we are witnessing their increasing contributions to various areas.

The victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran under Imam Khomeini's leadership offered a different viewpoint toward women. And this is what the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) wanted; women to be people who train society and bestow upon the community lion-hearted men and women.

The 10-year-long superb leadership of Imam Khomeini caused the accessibility to his opinions to go beyond pure theories; making practical examples available to everyone. The approach adopted by Imam Khomeini (RA) in this regard makes his thoughts superior to the thoughts of the other Muslim thinkers and connoisseurs. Attainment of higher levels of education for women has improved considerably in the Islamic Republic of Iran over the past three decades.

In the post-Islamic Revolution era, especially during this period the educational achievements of Iranian women has been greater than that of men. Since the victory of the Islamic revolution, women have gained access to education at different levels and in many fields. The closing of the gender gap in education has been hailed as one of Imam's many important achievements and as a result women have outnumbered men in getting admitted to different university courses.

Truly, Imam Khomeini revived the Islamic gender equality and women's rights in every sphere of their life and guaranteed the rights of men and women to an equal degree and without any discrimination between them.



Imam Khomeini (RA) is quoted to have said on several occasions that, "Islam holds you, the women, in high esteem. The favors that Islam confers upon women are more than it does upon men. The status of women is lofty, supreme, and towering."

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