

### Fast 10: Women in Islam — 3: Property rights

- The Quran instructs Muslims:

“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). It is no sin in you that you eat together or separately. So when you enter houses, greet your people with a salutation from Allah, blessed (and) goodly. Thus does Allah make clear to you the messages that you may understand.” (24:61)

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَىٰ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ  
حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى  
أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ  
أَبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ  
إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ  
أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ  
أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ خَالَاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا  
مَلَكَتُمْ مَفَاتِحَهُ أَوْ صَدِيقِكُمْ لَيْسَ  
عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعًا أَوْ  
أَشْتَاتًا فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى  
أَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةً مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُبْرَكَةٌ  
طَيِّبَةٌ كَذَلِكَ يَبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ  
لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

This verse is very broad and gives Muslims a great deal of latitude about eating in the company of others, which in fact represents having social relations with others, and not only 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, due to prejudice, as somehow undesirable.

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 the same way as men. Just like your brother or uncle can own a house, so can your sister or aunt.

It may be said 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, 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 live in 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 her affairs, just like a man does.

- The Quran also says:

“For men is the benefit of what they earn. And for women is the benefit of what they earn.” (4:32)

لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا<sup>ط</sup> وَ  
لِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبْنَ<sup>ط</sup>

In the UK, before the Married Women’s Property Act of 1870, the position was that:

“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.”

(Wikipedia)

But the Quran recognized in the above two verses, and in other places, that women could own, earn and inherit property and hold it in their own right just like their male counterparts.

- As quoted above from Wikipedia, in the UK before 1870 the position was that:

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

Compare this with Maulana Muhammad Ali’s statement about marriage in Islam in his book *The Religion of Islam*, published 80 years ago in 1936:

“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.”