

Balance for Better

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From the boardroom to the political and social domain, women's achievements are being celebrated across the globe today on International Women's Day 2019; the theme 'Balance for Better' aims towards a more gender-balanced world. While the emphasis is on the successes and achievements of women this day is also a time for reflection on the societal hurdles and challenges to equality still faced by women today. Regardless of making huge leaps and bounds to improve the legal status of women in many parts of the world, equality is far from being a reality. International Women's Day is marked as one day of the year, but if it became a daily way of life, where women in society would be treated equally and with respect at every level then communities would thrive. The question arises how can we achieve balance for better what does Islam say about this?

Islam has granted women a position of dignity and honour and was the first religion to formally grant women a status never known before. The moral, spiritual and economic equality of men and women as propagated by Islam is unquestionable.

Wearing the Hijab, does not restrict a Muslim woman's role. She is encouraged to seek education and is not restricted in pursuing a professional career. If a woman pursues a career her husband has absolutely no right to demand anything from his wife's income, property or wealth and Islam gives her the right to spend it as she wishes.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Women's organisation is a successful role model of a women's only organisation; Lajna Ima'illah means "maidservants of Allah" in other words women who can serve their faith and community to the utmost. The organisation was founded by the second successor to the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) who was the founder of the Ahmadiyya Community, His Holiness Khalifatul Masih II (may Allah be pleased with him). He felt that the vigorous participation of Ahmadi women was as essential for the success of the Community as that of men, and started activating them for this purpose. In pursuance of this objective in 1922, he wrote a letter to some prominent ladies in the Community, detailing therein the role, which Ahmadi women should play to make Islam go further ahead. He called upon them to disseminate his views among their sisters, win their sympathies for his plans and to form an association to help the resurgence of Islam. This led to the establishment of Lajna Ima'illah. An extract from the letter says:

'The efforts of our women along with our men are equally necessary for attaining the objects of our creation... Reflection will show that most women do not realise if there is any work to be done other than the daily chores... Apart from their own spiritual, intellectual and moral uplift, the future progress of the Jama'at (Community) is greatly dependent upon the role played by our women in this respect.... Moreover the reformation of women can be better effected by other women.'⁽ⁱ⁾

The women's organisation today works globally alongside their male counterparts under the direct guidance of the worldwide head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad (may Allah be his Helper).

Ahmadi Muslim women around the world have their own mosque areas, offices and at Jalsa Salana (annual convention) an entire ladies arena to themselves.

The Lajna Ima'illah have office bearers and teams of women in all departments such as health & safety, security, registration, administration, press & media, audio visual, camera crew, Voice of Islam radio, hospitality,

Humanity First, discipline, first aid, exhibitions and much more. All the women are volunteers and come from academic and professional backgrounds including housewives, working in unison with the men all united as one on a day to day basis. We also have equal access to and distribution of resources between women and men and as Ahmadi Muslim women we feel empowered as we experience gender equality through equal responsibility and participation of women and men in all spheres of public and private life exactly in accordance with the teachings of Islam. As a result, in Islam men and women are valued equally bringing balance.

REFERENCES

- i. The Constitution of The Lajna Imaillah Silsila 'Aliya Ahmadiyya pages 1-2