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# Women, Feminism, and Islam

By Adeel Zeerak



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If asked for your perspective of Islam's treatment of women, what would you say? How would you explain Western feminism? Many Westerners believe that Islamic teachings are anti-woman, when the truth is that the religion gave many rights to women centuries before the rest of the world, including education, ownership and control of property, inheritance, and freedom of expression. Many Muslims believe that Western feminism is mostly the promotion of vulgarity and immorality, but it is actually an ongoing movement in pursuit of equal rights between genders. In *Women, Feminism, and Islam*, Adeel Zeerak provides secular and Islamic explorations of women's roles in society, exploitation, and rights. He discusses why gender equity is a better term to use than gender equality, differentiates the terms liberation and debauchery for people, and details how anti-women practices found in some Muslim regions are not at all related to Islam. This compelling discourse breaks down the wall of assumptions and stereotypes, through balanced, research-based discussion that is both enlightening and educational. By its end, you may find yourself wondering what other misperceptions are clouding your views and judgments of the rest of the diverse world population.



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## **Editorial Review**

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### **KIRKUS REVIEW**

Zeerak (*Islam: A Superior System of Life*, 2012) considers the relationships between men and women and the role women play in Islam and the world.

“Both men and women are the wonderful creation of the Almighty God,” Zeerak writes. It is on this premise that the entire book rests. After a brief tour of feminist schools of thought and relevant issues, Zeerak formulates the ideal role women play in society. He is firmly committed to the idea of equity over equality—that is, he believes men and women to be complementary to one another rather than strictly equal, and he believes tying women’s power to traditionally masculine roles is detrimental to women as a group. While acknowledging that emotional, sexual and physical violence against women is endemic across the world, Zeerak takes great pains to outline the ways in which the texts of Islam protect women against societal ills: “The objective of Islamic modest dressing is not to restrict the liberty of women, but to protect them from harm and molestation.” Not particularly interested in the third wave of Western feminism, Zeerak isn’t keen on the second wave: “This debauchery of society produced many social evils like increased divorce rates, increased single parent families, neglected children, sexual exploitation, objectification, unwanted pregnancies, and the spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).” Gender relations are an incredibly complex topic, Zeerak admits, and he pursues the best outcome for society based on his strong faith, guided by tenets not found in Western feminism. In the chapter “What is Islam?” Zeerak offers a concise, well-developed snapshot of what Islam means to him. Using relevant passages from the Quran and the Hadith, he concludes that Islam is a positive force for women. Islam, he says, gives women and girls the rights to get an education, own property, inherit, choose their own husbands and work outside the home. Readers looking for Western feminist ideals in Islam may be disappointed, but those who are open to an Islamic perspective on gender relations will find plenty of material to contemplate.

A worthwhile read that corrects several misconceptions.

Review

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#### About the Author

Adeel Zeerak was born in the cosmopolitan city of Karachi—Pakistan's business hub. He earned a mechanical engineering degree from NED University of Engineering and Technology; and completed an MBA, with dual specialization in marketing and finance, at the Institute of Business Administration in Karachi. He also received a Certified Supply Chain Professional (CSCP) designation from APICS USA. Adeel Zeerak acquired knowledge about Islam from traditional Ulema as well as non-traditional Islamic scholars. Zeerak develops and administers training programs for local and international organizations on general management, operations management as well as on gender and feminism. He took part in a joint program between United Nations Development Programme and the government of Pakistan to conduct gender-sensitive project planning skills training for government planning officers. *Women, Feminism, and Islam* is Zeerak's second book in which he aims to dispel many of the world's misconceptions regarding both Western and Islamic views of women.

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