

of cultural factors. Glasse advocates, "Modesty is a religious prescription but veiling is a matter of cultural milieu." Therefore there is evident Quranic teaching on women and about the need for veiling.

A Muslim woman is taught in the Quran to be of more importance than a non-Muslim woman and they do not marry the same respect as in the Quran it states, "Do not marry idolaters until they believe." The Quran teaches that Muslim women are better than non-Muslim women and men should try and avoid marrying them at all costs unless they convert eventually to the faith. A Muslim woman is required to marry only a Muslim man however, a Muslim man can marry a woman of another faith.

In Islam, it is clear in the Quran that women are highly valued as wives. Muhammad said, "a believing slave girl is better than an idolatress although you may admire her." Marriage is one of the great signs of God's concern for humanity as God "has put love and kindness between husband and wife" states Sura 30:21. The crucial religious requirement for marriage is the contract negotiated by the man and the male representative of the woman who signs the contract in the presence of two witnesses." A dowry must be paid when getting married and if it is not then the Quran states that the marriage is invalid, "You shall give the women their due dowries equitably." This shows that the Quran puts heavy emphasis upon dowries when a Muslim woman is getting married. In marriage a man must treat his wife with utmost respect, "Provide for them and clothe them and speak to them words of appropriate." The horror stories that people hear through the media about the negative treatment of women is not taught in the Quran, it is cultural factors which influence this behaviour.

Polygamy is taught to be acceptable within the Quran, "You may marry two or three or four women whom you choose. But if you apprehend that you might not be able to do justice to them, then marry only one wife." There are obvious limitations to polygamy as in Pre-Islamic Arabia, men could marry as many wives as he wanted to but Islam brought a limit and conditions to the practice of polygamy. Polygamy fulfilled a social need as it gave women security when an independent life was virtually impossible. The practice is declining due to the legal statute that all wives must receive the equal treatment and in the economic climate, this is no longer feasible. It is also declining as Glasse states, "for reasons of social stigma of being looked down upon as unmodern." Men are limited to only four wives with Islam.

The Quran makes it clear that of all things allowed by Allah, talaq is the most disliked. However, if the marriage contract has been broken and the relationship has failed, Islam does not force people to remain together in misery. If the wife wishes for a divorce but has no grounds, it is known as kuhl. She would have to approach an imam to get an order, half in court but a woman in Islam can initiate a divorce.

Within Shiasm women are treated with utmost respect, this is understood especially by the fact that one of the five central figures of the Shias is Fatimah. Momen states, "The more accommodating attitude to women expressed in Shiite law over divorce and inheritance is attributed to the important position held by Fatimah among the Shiites." Shia women are better off than Sunni and often inherit equal to the males of the family. Ahmed states, "Shia women are thus in the forefront of religious practice and belief."

There are some controversial Suras within the Quran which can be seen as negative towards women for example a male having sex with a female is described with an emotionless metaphor, "Your wives are a place of sowing seed for you, so come to your place of cultivation however you wish and put forth righteousness for yourself." Men having sex with women is compared to be similar to a field which shows a lack of feeling. Men are also permitted to hit women as stated in the Quran, "But those wives from whom you fear arrogance – first advise them; if they then persist, forsake them in bed; and finally, strike them. But if they obey you once more, seek no means against them." This shows that men can manipulate and control women in Islam however many scholars can interpret the verses differently.

The idea of inheritance for women is also outlined in the Quran in 4:11, "The share of the male shall be twice that of a female." However, Glasse explains that there is logical explanation to this what seems to be a social injustice as men have to support themselves plus a wife whereas women are already supported by men and receive a dowry therefore do not need the money to the same extent as the males do in society.

To conclude, although there are negative verses within the Quran about the treatment and disciplining of women, the positive verses that teach about the equality of women outweigh the negative. The women within