

A Critical Analysis of Robert Spencer's Views on Women's Rights in the Light of Islamic Teachings

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to conduct a scholarly, critical and comparative examination of the objections raised by Robert Spencer regarding women's rights in Islam. In particular, objections such as the requirement of four witnesses in rape cases, the permissibility of slave girls in Islam, the punishment of adultery, the support of child marriage from the Holy Quran, the inferior status of women, female genital mutilation (FGM), and the permission to kill women based on the (verse 34) of Surah An-Nisah have been analyzed in the light of the Holy Quran, the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), reliable interpretations, hadiths of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), and jurisprudential sources. The research findings make it clear that Islam provides women with respect, dignity, protection, justice and basic human rights, while many of Robert Spencer's views and objections are based on fear of Islam (Islamophobia), lack of knowledge of Islamic teachings, prejudice and fabricated objections.

Keywords: Women's Rights, Islam, Robert Spencer, Feminism, Orientalism, Islamophobia, Status of Women, Rape, Zina bi'l-Jabr, Qazaf, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Child Marriage

Introduction

Women's rights are the sum of all the rights and freedoms that ensure the dignity, protection, equality and social status of women. The concept of women's rights in Islamic teachings is very comprehensive and balanced, because Islam considers women as complete human beings and clearly defines their religious, social, family and economic rights.

The Holy Quran says:

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ¹

"And for women are rights according to the constitution, just as they are responsibilities."

Similarly, The Holy Quran says:

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ²

Received 30 July 2026; Revised 29 August 2026; Accepted 06 September 2026; Published (online) 11 September 2026



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.69671/socialprism.3.7.2026.238>

“For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned.”

These teachings make it clear that Islam has granted women rights based on respect, equality, justice and protection, which are in accordance with their human status, social status and natural responsibilities.

However, when the Feminist movement arose in the West in the 19th century, this Western movement presented women's rights from a new perspective. This modern movement tried to convince people that women's rights could not be achieved through Islam or any religious system, but only through secular or Western movementsⁱⁱⁱ. However, feminism was taken to mean that women should be recognized as equal human beings, entitled to the same freedoms and responsibilities as men^{iv}.

There are basically three types of trends among those who study Islam. The first trend is that of traditionalists who study Islam conservatively. This group protects Islamic beliefs. They give importance to traditional interpretations rather than scientific and philosophical interpretations of Islamic teachings, especially the traditions of the Quran and Hadith. The second trend in the study of Islam is the study of Islam by orientalists who read, know, write and portray the East ‘both positive and negative trends can be found in this trend’^v. The third trend is the contemporary trend^{vi}. It is based on Islamophobia, which is based on fear or unfounded fear^{vii}. “Islamophobia is a tendency related to the concepts of fear, hatred and anger, one of which follows the other”^{viii}. Among contemporary orientalists and Islamophobic figures, Robert Spencer^{ix} is the most prominent personality.

Robert Spencer explains his view on women's rights in a way that scares the Western world into believing that Islam is a religion. For example, Robert Spencer begins his book "The Violent Oppression of Women in Islam" by saying, "Did you know that in Islam, if an uncle rapes an innocent girl, the girl's head is cut off? Beating daughters and wives is common in Islam. 90 percent of women are beaten in Islam simply for not cooking or for not giving birth to a son. Robert also says that in Islam, a rapist walks free because the woman he rapes has no witnesses. In Islam, girls are married off at a young age, Islam orders female genital mutilation, Islam allows killing one's sister, wife, and daughter. These facts that are being revealed or the war we are fighting is not just about bombs and hijacked planes and terrorism, but this war is about the oppression of women in Islam which is done to Muslim women in a horrific way”^x.

An analysis of Robert Spencer's feminist theories in the light of Islamic teachings:

The status of women in Islam:

The status of women in Islam is very important because before Islam, women had no status in society. Islam considered women as important members of society and gave those full rights and a high status.

In the Age of Ignorance, the polytheists did not consider women worthy of any status or position, so they would be angry when a girl was born and would go so far as to bury their daughters alive.

According to the Quran:

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ ۝ يَتَوَارَىٰ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَىٰ هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ^{xi}

“And if one of them gives good tidings to a woman, his face is written, and he is great; does he hold on to him or does he push him into the dust, but he does not rule?”

According to the Quran:

وَإِذَا الْمَوْءُودَةُ سُئِلَتْ بِأَيِّ ذَنْبٍ قُتِلَتْ^{xii}

“And when the girl buried alive is asked for what crime she was killed?”

In addition, adultery was widespread in Arab society, and many people even forced women to commit adultery.

According to the Quran:

وَلَا تُكْرَهُوا فَتَيَاتِكُمْ عَلَى الْبِغَاءِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوا عَرَضَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا^{xiii}

“And do not compel your female slaves to commit immorality (especially) when they desire chastity, so that you may gain the means of this worldly life”

Before Islam when a woman's husband died, her husband's heirs were entitled to her inheritance. This verse was revealed regarding her:

According to the Quran:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا يَحِلُّ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَرِثُوا النِّسَاءَ كَرْهًا وَلَا تَعْضُلُوهُنَّ لِتَذْهَبُوا بِبَعْضِ مَا آتَيْنَهُنَّ^{xiv}

"O you who believe! It is not lawful for you to take women by force, nor to restrain them, intending to take from them some of what you have given them."

In Islam, it is not appropriate for anyone to neglect the education and training of a girl by giving her a lower status than a boy.

According to Hadith:

طلب العلم فريضة علي كل مسلم^{xv}

Acquiring knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim (male and female).

Islam has granted women the right to own property, just like men. Women can not only earn their own income but can also become the owner of property acquired through inheritance.

According to Quran:

لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ^{xvi}

“For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned”

In addition, Islam has given mothers the most honorable and respected position in society by declaring paradise at the feet of mothers.

According to Hadith:

جاء رجلي الي رسول الله ﷺ فقال : يا رسول الله! من احق الناس بحسن صحابتي قال :
”امك، “ قال : ثم من قال : ”ثم امك، “ قال : ثم من قال : ”ثم امك، “ قال ثم من
قال : ”ثم ابوك^{xvii}

“A man came to the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and asked, O Messenger of Allah, who is the most deserving of my kindness?" He said, "Your mother. He asked, Then who? He said, your mother. He asked, Then who?" He said, "Your father.”

Islam not only elevated the status of the daughter on a social and political level, but also made her entitled to inheritance.

According to Quran:

يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمُ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثِيَيْنِ فَإِنْ كُنَّ نِسَاءً فَوْقَ اثْنَتَيْنِ فَلَهُنَّ^{xviii}
ثُلُثَا مَا تَرَكَ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ وَاحِدَةً فَلَهَا النِّصْفُ

“Allah commands you concerning the inheritance of your children: For a male, a share equal to that of two females; but if there are only females, two or more, then for them is two-thirds of the inheritance; and if she is single, then for her is half”

In addition, Islam provided women with marital rights.^{xix}

According to Quran:

هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ^{xx}

“They are your clothing and you are their clothing”

In addition, some other traditions regarding women have also caused objections from Orientalists and critics of Islam.

According to Robert spencer:

“Islam lowers the status of women compared to men because Muhammad said, "I have not seen a temptation more harmful to

men than women, and furthermore, there are three things that are bad: a house, a horse and a woman”

According to hadith:

مَا تَرَكَتُ بَعْدِي فِتْنَةٌ أَضَرَّ عَلَى الرَّجَالِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ^{xxi}

“I have not left after me any trial more harmful to men than women”

Fitnah means "trial and examination".^{xxii} In English, exams and tests are called "Tests".^{xxiii}

The Quran says:

وَنَبْلُوكُم بِالشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً^{xxiv}

“And we test you with both good and evil”

This hadith warns against temptations caused by women. Here, the intention is to warn men to control their desires.^{xxv} In this sense, the reason for a man's trial and test may also include the beauty and charm of a woman. Infect Fitnah means being tempted by women because Allah Almighty has placed a tendency towards women in the nature of men. Therefore, this hadith does not belittle women but rather describes human nature. The natural attraction between a man and a woman can sometimes become a test for a person, and this is what the hadith refers to.^{xxvi}

The Quran says:

وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً أَتَصْبِرُونَ^{xxvii}

"And we have made some of you a trial for others (to see) whether you are patient"

The Quran says:

وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ^{xxviii}

“And know that your wealth and your children are nothing but a trial, and that with Allah is a great reward”

But the attraction to women and their love is not undesirable, because it is the greatest need of every adult human being and the most desirable, provided that it is within moderation and within the limits of the Sharia. Because the adornment of a woman is also a test for men.^{xxix} If a woman is not married, she is a test for the man, and if she is married, she becomes a virtue for him. For example, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said in a hadith,

According to hadith:

الدنيا متاع وخير متاع الدنيا المرأة الصالحة^{xxx}

"The world is a place of gain, and its best asset is a virtuous wife".

It means a virtuous woman is the best gift for a man. In addition, Robert Spencer has objected to the inferiority of women in Islam, even though there is no mention of the inferiority of women in Islam.^{xxxii} Islam teaches man that profit and loss, good and evil, and all matters are in the control of Allah Almighty, therefore it is not correct to consider any person, day, month, animal, or any event as inauspicious in itself. A Muslim should avoid superstitions and bad omens and have complete trust in Allah Almighty, because the believer believes that nothing can harm or benefit without the permission of Allah Almighty.

According to hadith:

لا عَدْوَى، وَلَا طَيْرَةَ، وَلَا هَامَةَ، وَلَا صَفَرَ^{xxxiii}

“No disease is contagious, there is no truth in bad omens, and there is no truth in (superstitions about) zero.”

According to hadith:

الشُّؤْمُ فِي ثَلَاثٍ فِي الْفَرَسِ، وَالْمَرْأَةِ، وَالِدَّارِ^{xxxiii}

“Unlucky things are these three things: Horses, Women, and Houses”

Hazrat Aisha denied it in this way:

أَنَّ رَجُلَيْنِ دَخَلَا عَلَى عَائِشَةَ، فَقَالَا: إِنَّ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ يُحَدِّثُ أَنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ ﷺ كَانَ يَقُولُ: إِنَّمَا الطَّيْرَةُ فِي الْمَرْأَةِ، وَالِدَّابَّةِ، وَالِدَّارِ، قَالَ: فَطَارَتْ شِقَّةٌ مِنْهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ، وَشِقَّةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ، فَقَالَتْ: وَالَّذِي أَنْزَلَ الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى أَبِي الْقَاسِمِ، مَا هَكَذَا كَانَ يَقُولُ، وَلَكِنَّ نَبِيَّ اللَّهِ ﷺ كَانَ يَقُولُ: كَانَ أَهْلُ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَقُولُونَ: الطَّيْرَةُ فِي الْمَرْأَةِ وَالِدَّارِ وَالِدَّابَّةِ، ثُمَّ قَرَأْتُ عَائِشَةَ: مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا^{xxxiv}

“Two men came to Hazrat Aisha (RA) and said that Hazrat Abu Hurairah (RA) narrated that the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say: ‘I’ll omens are in women, animals and houses.’ Hearing this, Hazrat Aisha (RA) said: ‘By the One who revealed the Quran to Abu Al-Qasim (RA), he did not say that, but the Prophet (ﷺ) used to say that the people of ignorance used to say: ‘I’ll omens are in women, animals and houses.’ Then Hazrat Aisha (RA) recited this verse: ‘Whatever calamity befalls the earth and yourselves is written in a book before it is created’^{xxxv} According to Hazrat Aisha (RA), Abu Hurairah (RA) heard the entire last part of it and did not hear the beginning. Rather, the Prophet (PBUH) mentioned the belief of the people of ignorance (Jews) who used to take bad omens from women, houses and animals’^{xxxvi}.”

Hazrat Aisha’s hadith is refuted Robert Spencer’s objection. Robert Spencer’s objection presents only a one-sided point of view, which reflects a scholarly deficiency in his analysis.

The Islamic law of Zina bi'l-Jabar

There are two types of adultery in Islam: "Zina bi'l- raza" and "Zina bi'l-Jabar" which are two different crimes depending on the nature and consequences. According to Imam Malik, in Zina bil-Raza, both the man and the woman participate with mutual consent, and both parties are liable to punishment^{xxxviii}.

Quran says:

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّانِيَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا^{xxxviii}

“And do not come even close to adultery, for it is indeed a great indecency and an evil way”

Quran says:

الزَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِئَةَ جَلْدَةٍ^{xxxix}

“And We have made some of you a trial for others (to see) " whether you are patient”

Rape of a woman is a serious crime in Islam, since in the case of rape, if the woman is forced to do so, there is no punishment in Islam for women.

According to hadith:

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، قَالَ: قَضَى رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ فِي الَّتِي اسْتُكْرِهَتْ أَنْ لَا شَيْءَ عَلَيْهَا، وَعَلَى الَّذِي أَصَابَهَا الْخُدَا^{xl}

“It was narrated from Ibn Abbas (may Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “There is no sin on a woman who is raped by force, and the one who forced her is guilty of adultery”

The Islamic Sharia law of Pakistan provides for punishment in the Hudood law. According to Section 376, whoever commits rape shall be punished with death or imprisonment for a term of ten to twenty-five years and shall also be fined. If gang rape is committed, then under Section 367, each person shall be punished with death or life imprisonment.^{xli} The reality of this, in light of Islamic teachings, is that the condition of four witnesses is required for the accusation of adultery “qazaf” in the sphere of voluntary adultery of a woman, and not in the case of rape. In Islam accusing a chaste person of adultery, lewdness, or immorality is called qazaf.^{xlii}

The Quran says:

وَالَّذِينَ يَزْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ^{xliii}

“And those who accuse chaste women of adultery and do not produce four witnesses, then flog them with eighty lashes and do not accept their

testimony ever again. And it is these who are the transgressor”

Islam has provided ease and protection for women in the qazaf ruling. According to jurists, the wisdom and benefits of the “qazaf” ruling are that the strict requirement of four witnesses ensures that the honor of a chaste woman or individual cannot be accused based on the slightest suspicion, hostility, or rumor. Secondly, if there are not four witnesses, the accuser himself is liable to punishment. This closes the door to character assassination and slander in society. Thirdly, it is not enforced in the presence of doubt. The requirement of four witnesses limits the enforcement of the “qazaf” to the most definite and certain crimes. Doctor Zakir Naik says “no there is miss understanding, adult is willingly doing by two people, that’s why there are four witnesses in this case. In rape, medical evidence and Circumstances is sufficient, if there were four witnesses in rape, everyone would have done it and then easily would have been acquitted by saying there are no four witnesses.”^{xliv}

According to Robert Spencer, "Rape is normal in Islam" and after rape, the raped woman is killed and the male perpetrator is not punished and is set free.^{xliv} According to Robert Spencer, in lands that follow the rules of Sharia, it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove rape. In Islam, men can commit rape with impunity: as long as they deny the accusation or there are no witnesses. If the required male witnesses (four) are not available, the alleged rape of the victim becomes an admission of adultery. This is the reason for the heinous crime that 75% of the women imprisoned in Pakistan are in prison after being raped.^{xlvi}

According to Robert Spencer:

“This strange and destructive condition at the time of Muhammad. When Muhammad's wife Aisha was accused of infidelity. This accusation troubled Muhammad because Aisha was his beloved wife. But in this matter, as in other matters, Allah came to the aid of His Prophet. He revealed Aisha's innocence and imposed the condition of four witnesses for sexual testimony, and why did they not produce four witnesses for Aisha? Since they do not produce witnesses, they are certainly liars in the sight of Allah (24:13). When Muhammad's wife Aisha was accused, Allah saved Aisha by giving her testimony in the Quran and put the rest of the Muslim women in the difficulty of four witnesses”^{xlvi}

According to Robert Spencer:

“The Quran teaches that a non-Muslim woman can be taken for sexual use. The Quran states: Or those captives whose right hands possess, they are free from blame in their case (6:23)”^{xlvi}

Robert Spencer also says:

“The rape of a captured infidel woman is also permissible in Islamic traditions. During the Battle of Banu Mustaliq, some of the best infidel women were captured and Muhammad permitted it.”

(Sahih bukhari 4138) in this way, a Muslim man is allowed to have as many wives as he wants (polygamy), meaning that a man can have as many wives as he wants, and for this, the example of Muhammad is available for Muslim men. Muhammad was given the prophet license to have as many wives as he wants. "He had nine wives and many concubines. Allah permitted him to have as many wives as he wants." O Prophet, We have made lawful for you those wives whose dower you have paid and those whom your right hand has given you from among those whom Allah has given you (33:50).^{xliv}

In fact, the case of rape is tantamount to an attack on human life, rather it is tantamount to the killing of human life. That is why the ruling of "harabah" in Islamic law applies to this crime. According to Imam Shafi'i, the main element in a "harabah", (akhafat al-nas) is to put people in fear, whether the property is taken or not.^l

The Quran says:

إِنَّمَا جَزَاءُ الَّذِينَ يُحَارِبُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَيَسْعَوْنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَسَادًا أَنْ يُقَتَّلُوا أَوْ يُصَلَّبُوا
أَوْ تُقَطَّعَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ مِنْ خِلَافٍ أَوْ يُنْفَوْا مِنَ الْأَرْضِ ذَلِكَ لَهُمْ خِزْيٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَهُمْ
فِي الْآخِرَةِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ^{li}

“Indeed, the punishment of those who fight Allah and His Messenger and spread corruption in the land is that they be killed, or crucified, or their hands and feet be cut off on opposite sides. For them is disgrace in this world and punishment in the Hereafter.”

In addition, in the quote, Robert Spencer has presented verse 13 of Surah al Noor as evidence.

The Quran says:

لَوْ لَا جَاءُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشُّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بُمٌ الْكَذِبُونَ^{lii}

“Why did they not bring four witnesses against him? And if they do not bring witnesses, then surely these slanderers are nothing but liars in the sight of Allah”.

According to Mufti Muhammad Shafi, the above verse advises that Muslims should have demanded evidence from those who spread such news about Hazrat Aisha (RA) instead of spreading their words. Since the Sharia evidence in the case of adultery is not established without four witnesses, they should have been demanded to produce four witnesses to what they are saying or to keep quiet^{liii}. The truth and historical background of the incident of slander against Hazrat Aisha (RA) in the light of Islamic teachings is as follows:

According to the biography of Ibn Hasham, Hazrat Aisha (RA) says that when the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) wanted to travel, he would cast lots to decide which of his wives to take with him. He would travel with the one whose lot came out first. When the battle of Banu Mustaliq took place in 6 AH, Hazrat Aisha (RA)'s lot came out first. She says that when the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ)

approached Medina, he stopped at a place. He spent part of the night there and then left at night. People started walking and I had gone to relieve myself. There, a necklace came loose from my neck. I started looking for it but could not find it. Then when I came to my place, people were leaving. I saw that people had left and, thinking that I was sitting in the hut, they had also taken my hut. Then I searched for the people of the army and there was not a single person there. He said, "I felt scared and I stayed in this place so that someone would come looking for me and see me there". Then Safwan bin Motal bin Salma passed by me, and I was lying down. Safwan had stayed behind from the army due to some need. Safwan asked me, "How are you? May God have mercy on you". She (may Allah be pleased with her) said, "I did not answer Safwan." Then Safwan brought his camel closer to me and himself retreated. I mounted it, and Safwan held its reins and went ahead himself, and they set off in search of the army quickly until morning. When the army stopped, Safwan took me with him.^{liv}

The chief of the hypocrites, Abdullah bin abi salul, spread the slander and spread it widely, and even three Muslims were affected by it. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was very worried for about a month. A month later, when Hazrat Aisha (R.A) found out, she wept profusely.^{lv}

After praising and glorifying God, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, "O Aisha, you have heard the news that is being spread about you among the people. If it is true, then repent to Allah. Allah certainly accepts the repentance of His servant." She said, "Tears welled up in my eyes at this blessed statement of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). Then when the revelation had been revealed, he (ﷺ) said, "O Aisha, be pleased that Allah has revealed your acquittal." I said, "Praise be to Allah." Then the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) came out and the verses of Surah al-Noor (11 to 16) were revealed. Therefore, the hypocrites, out of their evil intentions, wanted to cast a slander on the chastity and nobility of Hazrat Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), but the Lord of the universe, by bearing witness in the Quran, has refuted it until the Day of Judgment.^{lvi}

There is a fundamental difference between the case of rape and the accusation “qazaf” against the chaste woman Hazrat Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her). It is not correct to place both issues on the same level, but rather it is academic dishonesty.

The Quranic verse that Robert Spencer has given as rape evidence is verse number 6 of Surah Mominun, which is as follows:

The Quran says:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأُزْوَاجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ۚ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ
مُؤْمِنِينَ^{lvii}

“And those who guard their private parts, except for their wives or those whom their right hands possess, there is no blame upon them.”

According to Mufti Muhammad Shafi, its meaning is that "those slave girls who came into the possession of Muslims as slaves for some religious reason, therefore, the Sharia has declared them to be Mamluks due to their being in possession."^{lviii} In Islam the first option is to exchange prisoners with the infidel government. The second option is to collect a ransom from it, that is, a

war ransom, and then release them. The third is that they should be killed in exchange for Muslim martyrs. And if the Muslim government does not adopt any of these three options, then the fourth option should be adopted, that is, the prisoners should be distributed among the Muslim soldiers, and those soldiers will be called their owners.^{lix}

In this regard, Robert Spencer has presented as evidence the hadith number (4138) of Sahih Bukhari, the complete and correct text and meaning of which is as follows:

According to hadith:

قَالَ أَبُو سَعِيدٍ: خَرَجْنَا مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي غَزْوَةِ بَنِي الْمُصْطَلِقِ فَأَصْبَحْنَا سَبِيًّا مِنْ سَبْيِ الْعَرَبِ فَاشْتَهَيْنَا النِّسَاءَ وَاشْتَدَّتْ عَلَيْنَا الْعُرْبَةُ وَأَحْبَبْنَا الْعَزْلَ فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ نَعْزَلَ وَفَلَّأْنَا نَعْزَلَ وَرَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ بَيْنَ أَظْهُرِنَا قَبْلَ أَنْ نَسْأَلَهُ فَمَسَّأَلْنَاهُ عَنْ ذَلِكَ فَقَالَ: مَا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ لَا تَفْعَلُوا مَا مِنْ نَسَمَةٍ كَانَتْ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ إِلَّا وَهِيَ كَانَتْ^{lx}

“Abu Saeed Al-Khudri (may Allah be pleased with him) reported: We set out with the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) for the expedition against Banu Al-Mustaliq. In that expedition we found some Arab prisoners (including women). Then during the journey we felt a desire for women and it became difficult for us to be without women. On the other hand, we wanted to divorce (for fear of not having a child). Our intention was to divorce, but then we thought that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was present. It would not be appropriate to divorce without asking you. So we asked you about it, and you (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: There is no harm in not divorce, because the soul that is to be born until the Day of Resurrection will definitely be born”.

According to the biography of Ibn Hasham, the Battle of Banu Al-Mustaliq, also known as the Battle of Marisi', actually took place in 5 AH. When the Banu Al-Mustaliq tribe plotted against the state of Medina, the news of this reached the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), so he marched towards them. The armies clashed and they started killing each other. Allah Almighty defeated the Banu Mustaliq and some of them were killed, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) captured their children and their women. During this time, the soldiers had been separated from their wives for a long time, so they asked for permission to divorce. This request for permission and the permission of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not give any explicit permission to use the infidel woman for mere sexual purposes. According to Faiz al-Bari, the Prophet's permission was to encourage good behavior towards slave women and marriage or correspondence.^{lxi} Maulana Taqi Usmani writes in Fatawa Usmani that "In the past, when Islamic governments waged jihad and captured enemy women were brought to the jihad, it was permissible for the Islamic government to have sex with such a slave girl, even if she had converted to Islam or was from the People of the Book. It is completely wrong to call her children forbidden children. However, in today's era, it is not permissible to have sex with a woman by falsely declaring her a slave girl."^{lxii}

Maulana Jamil Ahmed Thanvi further says that "Today, Islam has been around for almost fourteen hundred years and during this time, thousands of jihads have taken place and millions of

slaves and maidservants have come and been divided. If Islam had not made laws to convert slavery into freedom, there would have been billions of maidservants in the world today. Today, it is clear that the ownership of maidservants is the source of their freedom and after this law of Islam, the word slave is not slavery but mastery and is a source of unparalleled religious and worldly comforts for them.^{lxiii}

In addition, the last part of the above quote by Robert Spencer contains verse number 50 of Surah al-Ahzab.

The Quran says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَحْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَكَ اللَّاتِي آتَيْتَ أُجُورَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ يَمِينُكَ مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ بَنَاتٍ عَمَّكَ وَبَنَاتٍ عَمَّتِكَ وَبَنَاتٍ خَالَكِ وَبَنَاتٍ خَالَتِكَ اللَّاتِي هَاجَرْنَ مَعَكَ وَامْرَأَةً مُؤْمِنَةً إِنَّ وَبَّيْتُ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنْ أَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ أَنْ يَسْتَنْكِحَهَا * خَالِصَةً لَكَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ۖ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ فِي أَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْلَا يَكُونَ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا^{lxiv}

“O Prophet! We have made lawful to you your wives to whom you have given their dowries, and the slave girls whom Allah has given you as booty, and the daughters of your paternal uncles and the daughters of your maternal uncles and the daughters of your maternal aunts who migrated with you, and the believing woman who offers herself to the Prophet, if he wishes to marry her. This is for you only, not for the believers. We know well what we have prescribed for them concerning their wives and their slave girls, that there may be no harm to you. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful”

In the above quote, Robert Spencer has used the words polygamy and prophet license after giving the argument of the commandment of concubines. However, if Robert Spencer had read the entire verse, the law of Allah Almighty has been clarified in this very verse. Maulana Abdul Rahman Kilani writes in his commentary on verse 50 of Surah Al-Ahzab in Taysir al-Quran that since the objection to the number of wives was certainly raised by the disbelievers, the Muslims could also have thought of it, so in this verse, Allah Almighty explained that the law of permissibility of up to four wives for the common believers is also Our law, and based on the work We want to do from the Prophet and the responsibilities that are imposed on him, We are the ones who make exceptions to this general law for the Prophet.^{lxv} Allama Ghulam Rasool Saeedi writes that the Ummah is commanded to be just in four wives, and the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) showed this by being just in eleven wives. This illuminates the path of guidance for the Ummah.^{lxvi} According to Peer Karam Shah Al-Azhari, the main purpose of the Prophet's (peace be upon him) order to limit the number of wives was to promote Islamic education. Since Islam guides every aspect of life, in order to convey and explain to the women of the Ummah the issues related to women that were given to the Prophet (peace be upon him) by Allah, there was a need for women who were extremely chaste, intelligent, and sincere workers for the fulfillment and propagation of the Prophet hood. This task could only be performed by women who were related to the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in marriage. This was because a wife could not be expected to perform this duty alone.^{lxvii} Therefore, Robert Spencer's

objection to the Prophet's polygamy and prophet license in terms of rape is based on undue prejudice.

FGM (female genital mutilation) in Islam

In the light of Islamic teachings, there is no explicit commandment to circumcise women, rather female circumcision is a cultural practice, the details of which are as follows:

According to hadith:

عَنْ أُمِّ عَطِيَّةَ الْأَنْصَارِيَّةِ أَنَّ امْرَأَةً كَانَتْ تَخْتِنُ بِالْمَدِينَةِ فَقَالَ لَهَا النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: لَا تُهَيِّكِي فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ أَخْطَى لِلْمَرْأَةِ وَأَحَبُّ إِلَى الْبَعْلِ^{lxviii}

"It was narrated from Umm Atiya Al-Ansaariyyah (may Allah be pleased with her) that a woman in Medina used to circumcise women, so the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said to her: "Do not cut too much, for it is more pleasurable for the woman and more pleasing to the husband."

According to Abu Dawood, "This hadith is (zaeef) weak^{lxx} and is also Mursal^{lxx}, there is one narrator named Muhammad bin Hassan Majhool and the hadith is weak."^{lxxi} However, the Prophet (PBUH) did not impose it as a new duty, but rather instructed to reform its practice, as in the above hadith (لَا تُهَيِّكِي) only moderation is emphasized regarding the circumcision of women.^{lxxii}

Regarding FGM (female genital mutilation), Robert Spencer wrote "In Islam, women's genitals are cut, mutilated, and purified." Robert Spencer further writes, "Why is this permissible? Because Muhammad said so, saying: Circumcision is a law for men and a protection of honor for women" (Ahmad bin Hanbal 5:75). Robert further writes that it is narrated that a woman was circumcised in Medina and the Messenger of Allah said to her, "Do not cut too much, for it is better for women and more pleasing to the husband." (Abu Dawood 5271)^{lxxiii}

In fact, female genital cutting, which is common in Egypt and many African societies, has existed as a historical and cultural tradition, and not on the basis of any explicit Islamic commandment. Several researchers have clarified that this practice existed in some African nations even before Islam and continued later in different cultural contexts. For example, Nawal El Saadawi wrote that "Female circumcision in Egypt is an ancient social custom with roots in paranoiac and tribal cultures."^{lxxiv} Similarly, Gerry Mackie argued that circumcision in Somali and African societies is a social convention associated with social acceptance and marriage customs, and not primarily a religious obligation.^{lxxv} Furthermore, the World Health Organization (WHO) has stated that this female Genital Mutilation practice is found in different religions and cultures.^{lxxvi} Dr. Zakir Naik's words on this are very interesting: "Islam should be seen in the light of the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah, and not the individuals of Islamic countries, because not all individuals of an Islamic country may fully follow Islamic teachings, therefore, one cannot object to Islamic teachings by looking at the actions of ordinary individuals of an Islamic country"^{lxxvii} "And the governments of other Islamic countries where this custom exists should issue laws prohibiting it and should not heed the clamor of blind followers of old customs."^{lxxviii}

Child Marriage in Islam

Islam has given clear guidance on this. In Islamic law, the condition of puberty for a woman to marry is not set at a fixed age or number, but is based on the physical, mental and social signs of puberty, which may vary from person to person and from region to region. Signs of puberty, such as the onset of menstruation in girls (which can occur at any age). For example Imam Muhammad asked: "A minor girl was married off by her uncle. Now that the minor has menstruated, if the girl says, 'I have given my own will,' then according to Imam Muhammad, she will be valid."^{lxxxix} The important thing is that puberty in girls may appear at different ages in different regions. The reason for this is natural and biological processes, which include weather, nutritional conditions, genetics and other different environments. Because in some regions, girls reach puberty early due to different nutritional conditions and healthy environment. Therefore, the difference in early age in child marriage is based on their social and geographical context.^{lxxx}

But according to Robert Spencer:

“The Quran considers child marriage as a minor injustice. The Quran has made child marriage a practice that should have been abandoned long ago, even though it was approved by revelation. After divorce, when a woman needs to wait for her period to become pregnant, the Quran states: "If you have doubts about your wives who have finished their menstruation, then their waiting period is three months. This is also applicable to those who have not menstruated (4:65) this is emphasized^{lxxxix}.”

According to Robert Spencer, “Here Allah is imagining a scenario in which a prepubescent girl is married”^{lxxxii} Robert Spencer has quoted verse number four of Surah Talaq of the Holy Quran, which says:

According to Quran:

وَالَّذِي يَسْتَنْ مِنَ الْمَجِيزِ مَنْ يَسْأَلُكُمْ إِنْ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ أَشْهُرٍ ۖ وَالَّذِي لَا
يَحْضُنَّ وَأُولَاتُ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ۚ وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ
أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا ۚ^{lxxxiii}

“And as for those of your women who have despaired of menstruation, if you are in doubt (about what their waiting period will be), their waiting period is three months, and for those who have not yet menstruated, their waiting period is the same, and for pregnant women, their waiting period is the time of delivery. And whoever fears Allah, He will make his task easy for him.”

The important point in the verse is that the method of dealing with the issue of women's “iddat” is explained here, and not that marriage to a minor girl is emphasized. “Iddat” means “to count” and a woman's iddat refers to the days after which it becomes permissible for a divorced woman to marry.^{lxxxiv} According to Islamic commentators, this refers to a young girl or a girl who has not menstruated for some reason.^{lxxxv} Some women also have periods that are very late in their lives due to their age, and it is also possible for a woman not to have periods at all throughout her

life. The waiting period for such a woman will start from three months, which will be counted as three lunar months, on the day she was divorced.^{lxxxvi} Here, the Qur'an is not encouraging child marriage; rather, it provides a solution for cases in which menstruation does not occur due to illness or another medical reason.

Conclusion

This study critically examines Robert Spencer's objections concerning women's rights in Islam in the light of the Qur'an, Sunnah, Islamic jurisprudence and the interpretations of Muslim scholars. The study demonstrates that Islam granted women religious, social, economic, family and marital rights and established their dignity and protection as fundamental principles. The Qur'an rejected pre-Islamic practices such as female infanticide, forced prostitution and the unjust treatment of women, while also granting women rights to inheritance, property, education, marriage and family life.

The analysis further shows that several of Robert Spencer's objections arise from a selective reading of Islamic sources and from presenting particular texts without their historical, legal and interpretive context. His interpretation of the hadith concerning women as a "Fitnah" does not establish the inferiority of women; rather, the term refers to a test or trial and is connected with human desires and moral responsibility. Similarly, the narrations concerning women, houses and animals as "unlucky" cannot legitimately be used to establish that Islam considers women inherently inferior or harmful. The explanation attributed to Hazrat Aisha (RA) further demonstrates the importance of contextual understanding of such narrations.

Regarding rape, the study establishes a fundamental distinction between consensual Zina and Zina committed by force. The requirement of four witnesses relates to establishing the offence of Zina and the punishment for qazaf, and it cannot simply be transferred to the victim of rape. Islamic legal sources recognize the absence of liability for a woman who is subjected to sexual violence and prescribe punishment for the perpetrator. Therefore, Spencer's claim that Islam allows rapists to escape punishment because four witnesses are required represents a conflation of distinct legal categories.

The discussion of slavery and female captives also indicates that Spencer presents selected Quranic verses and Prophetic traditions without adequately considering the historical and legal framework of slavery in classical Islamic law. Likewise, his reference to Qur'an 33:50 regarding the Prophet's marriages does not establish an unrestricted permission for ordinary Muslim men, because the verse itself distinguishes the rulings applicable specifically to the Prophet (ﷺ) from those applicable to other believers.

With regard to female genital mutilation, the study finds no explicit Quranic command imposing FGM as a universal religious obligation. The practice existed in certain societies as a cultural tradition, and the weakness and disputed status of some narrations cited in support of female circumcision must also be taken into account. Thus, attributing every cultural practice found among Muslims directly to Islamic teachings is methodologically problematic.

Finally, Spencer's discussion of child marriage based on Qur'an 65:4 requires examination through the principles of Quranic interpretation and Islamic jurisprudence rather than through an isolated reading of the verse. The verse primarily establishes rules concerning the waiting period

“iddat”, while jurists discussed marriage, puberty, capacity and protection within a broader legal framework. Therefore, the objections examined in this study cannot be accepted as an accurate representation of the Islamic position on women’s dignity, rights and protection.

Recommendations

1. Islamic teachings should be studied through the Qur’an and Sunnah in their complete textual, historical, and legal context to avoid drawing conclusions from isolated or decontextualized texts.
2. A clear distinction should be maintained between Islamic teachings and the cultural practices of Muslim societies. Social or cultural practices should not automatically be attributed to Islam without examining their basis in authentic Islamic sources.

The objections raised by contemporary critics regarding women’s rights in Islam should be examined through objective and scholarly research, with responses based on the Qur’an, authentic Sunnah, classical Islamic jurisprudence, and authoritative scholarly interpretations.

Further research should be encouraged on contemporary issues such as rape, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and women’s legal rights, particularly by examining classical Islamic jurisprudence alongside contemporary legal and social contexts.

Greater academic attention should be given to presenting the comprehensive framework of women’s rights in Islam, highlighting women’s dignity, legal protection, economic rights, family rights, and social status while addressing misconceptions about Islamic teachings.

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- ^{ix} Robert Spencer was born on February 27, 1962 in Alexandria, Virginia, USA. Robert Spencer is an American anti-Muslim writer. He is one of the most important figures in modern times who has written on feminists, the biography of Muhammad (peace be upon him), and Islamic jihad. His full name is Robert Bruce Spencer. Robert Spencer comes from a Christian family. According to Robert Spencer, Robert Spencer's grandfather was forced to emigrate during the reign of Mustafa Kamal Atatürk because he was a Christian. Robert Spencer's father worked for the Voice of America. Robert received an MA in religious studies from the University of North Car-

olina in 1986 and joined the Greek Catholic Church. Robert Spencer is the founder of the online blog Jihad Watch, which publishes anti-Islamic commentary, and is also the co-founder of the American organization Stop the Islamization of America.

In addition, Robert Spencer is a regular columnist for PJ Media and Front Page Magazine, among others, and has written numerous articles about Islam. Robert Spencer often uses Quranic arguments to make anti-Islamic comments laughably. In a Washington Post interview, when a journalist said he was being deliberately provocative, Robert laughed and said, “Why not it’s fun?” In addition, Robert Spencer is greatly influenced by D.S. Margoliouth among the Orientalists.

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