



Women in Islam

Session I: Some basic principles about gender and watching a video about women in Islam

NOVA Life-Long Learning (NOVA-LLI)

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WELCOME
to
Women in Islam
Class !

Outline of Topics

Session 1:

- Significance of this topic
- Watching a video on Women in Islam
- Some Islamic principles about gender

Session 2:

- Women's specific rights
 - Basic human rights
 - Economic rights
 - Political rights
 - Social rights
 - Education rights

Session 3:

- Some areas in need of clarification
 - Women's Dress Code
 - Polygamy
 - Marital discord and "wife beating"
 - Inheritance share of males and females
 - Witness of women vs. men
- Summary and conclusions

Women in Islam

- Significance of this topic
- A very misunderstood and misrepresented topic
- All kinds of stereotypes about it

- Misrepresentation
 1. By those who are hostile to Islam
 2. By malpractices of some Muslims because of:
 - A. Following culture over religion
 - B. Abusing some Islamic teachings
 - C. Not practicing Islamic teachings

- Islamic teachings not only do not agree with gender discrimination and abuses, but offer special rights for women

- Watching a video on “Women in Islam”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsTHgbIYBtE>

Some Terminology: Name of God

- The Arabic word for God is Allah
- Allah: God's personal name
 - God addressing Moses in Mt. Sinai: *“Verily I am Allah. There is no god other than me.”* (20:14)
 - God addressing Muhammad: *“Say, He is Allah, the one and unique”*
- The word "Allah" is also used by Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians
- Jesus called God “Elah” in Aramaic language.
- In Judaism, God has been referred to as Eloah, Elohaim, Elah, etc.
- God has many more names and attributes, but
 - Allah is a comprehensive name covering all other names and attributes – very sacred and preferred to use

Meaning of “Islam”

- Two root meanings of term “Islam” in Arabic language are:
 1. Submission (*aslama*)
 2. Peace (*salaam*)Both meanings are related: Submission (to God) leads to peace
- Islam: Path of submission to The Only God of the entire universe (Allah) and resulting peace
 - A volunteer submission based on knowledge, love and trust
 - Resulting peace with oneself, with God, and with environment
 - Not a religion of violence and war
- Based on its meaning, Islam is:
 - Path of nature and universe
 - State of every human at birth and state of everyone’s nature
 - Path of all prophets of God including Prophet Muhammad
- Islam as a religion is God’s guidance given in final and complete form to Prophet Muhammad
 - Name of religion is not based on name of a prophet or leader or place

Meaning of “Muslim”

A Muslim is:

- A follower of Islam
- One who submits to the creator, and commits to Islam as a way of life
- One who believes in all prophets of God, submits to God and obeys God

- A more technical definition: One who believes in Oneness of God and in Muhammad (as the final messenger of God), and declares the following statement (based on sincerity and conviction):
 - *“I bear witness that there is no other god except Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God”*

Qur'an and Hadith/Sunnah

Qur'an: The primary source of knowledge in Islam

- The Qur'an is the word or speech of God revealed to Prophet Muhammad in Arabic language
- Linguistic meaning: A reading, a recitation, to be read
- Some unique aspects:
 - History of revelation, collection, and compilation
 - Qur'an and other divine scriptures
 - Preservation
 - Translations of Qur'an
 - Scientific knowledge in the Qur'an

Hadith/Sunnah: Secondary Source of Knowledge in Islam

- Hadith: Report of Prophet Muhammad's sayings, actions, approvals, and traditions
- Sunnah: His traditions, his methods, his way of doing things

Some Islamic Principles about Gender

1. Significance of creation in pairs
2. Equality of all humanity
3. Equality versus Equity
4. No historical fault for women
5. Source of rights for both genders

Creation of Everything in Pairs

- God has created all creatures in pairs
 - *“And of everything, We have created pairs so that you may become mindful.”(51:49)*
 - *“Exalted is He Who created all things in pairs, whether it be of what the earth produces, and of (mankind) themselves, and of what they do not know.” (36:36)*
 - For example: day and night, darkness and light, earth and heavens, sun and moon, positive and negative, male and female
 - Similarly, good and evil, belief and disbelief, right and wrong, this world and next world, etc.
- Purpose: All pairs are created to be partners in order to complement and complete each other - one's meaning would not be very clear without the other

Significance of Human Creation in Pair

Creation in two sexes (instead of one)

- Creation of first pair of human beings (Adam and Eve), their marriage and partnership
- Both identical in humanity with same basic formula of figure and form
 - But with some physical, biological, physiological and psychological differences
 - And then, their union is meant to bring a wonderful harmony between them such that each is a perfect counterpart of the other - matching physical and psychological needs of other's nature
- Perfect proportion of population of each sex at all generations and all places
- Both sexes are means of continuation (survival) of human race and civilization
 - In fact, soundness of a civilization depends on soundness of relationship between the two sexes
- Implication of implicit equality in the concept of pairs

Equality of All Human Beings

Islam announces equality of all human beings (regardless of any differences) with God, and announces righteousness (Taqwa) as the only **criteria of superiority**:

- *“O mankind, We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you get to know each other (not that you may despise each other).*
- **Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you.** And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things and how you treat each other)”.
Qur'an (49:13)
- “All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab. Similarly, a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action.” (Hadith)

Equality of Men and Women

- Islam confirms equality of men and women in many areas, such as
 - Equality in creation – both coming from the same source
 - Equality of treatment and rewards in religious and moral duties, etc.

Example Verses:

“O human beings! Be conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single being, created its mate of the same kind and propagated the multitude of men and women from them both” (4:1)

*“So their Lord responded to their prayer, saying, “I will not waste the work of a worker from you, **whether a male or a female** – you all are from one another.” (3:195)*

“And do not covet that which Allah has bestowed (in this world) upon some of you more than others; (in the Hereafter) men shall have the reward for what they earn and women shall have the reward for what they earn; and ask Allah of His grace; certainly, Allah knows absolutely everything...” (4:32)

*“And whoever does righteous deeds – **whether male or female** – while being a true believer, they shall enter the Garden of paradise, and they shall not be wronged even a bit.” (4:124)*

Equality of Men and Women

More Example Verses:

*“Whoever acts righteously, **whether male or female**, provided he is a believer, We will most certainly grant him a good life, and We will most certainly give them their reward for the best of what they used to do”. (16:97)*

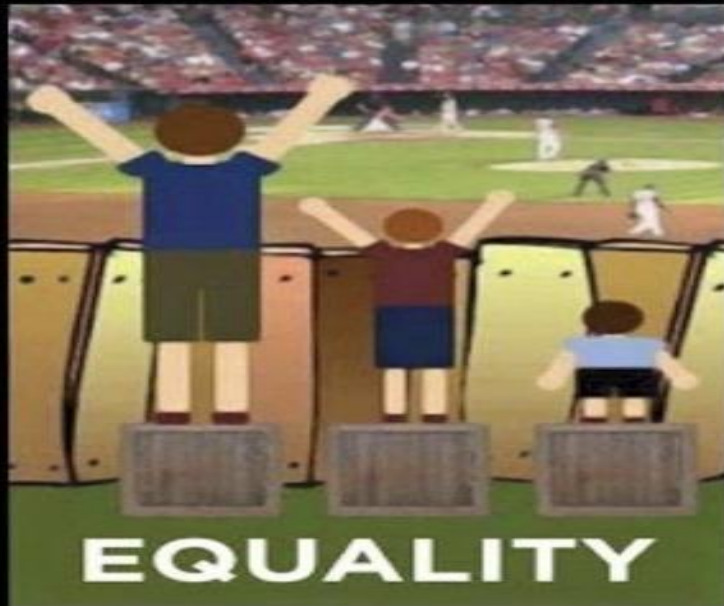
*“Whoever commits an evil, he will merely be requited with its like; but whoever acts righteously and is a believer, **whether male or female**, they will enter the Garden of paradise and will be given sustenance without any limits”. (40:40)*

*“The Muslim men, the Muslim women; the believing men, the believing women; the obedient men, the obedient women; the truthful men, the truthful women; the steadfast men, the steadfast women, the reverent men (in front of Allah), the reverent women; the charitable men, the charitable women; the fasting men, the fasting women; the chaste men (who safeguard their private parts), the chaste women; and the men who remember Allah consciously and frequently, and the women who remember Allah consciously and frequently; **Allah has prepared for (all of) them forgiveness and a great reward.**” (33:35)*

Gender Equity over Equality

- While Islam confirms equality of men and women in many areas of life, it emphasizes more on equity over equality
 - Equality is about sameness and having identical nature
 - Equity is about fairness, justice, balance
 - Equality leads to competition while equity leads to cooperation
- Understanding of equity and balance in family and society
- Complementary and cooperative role, and not competitive

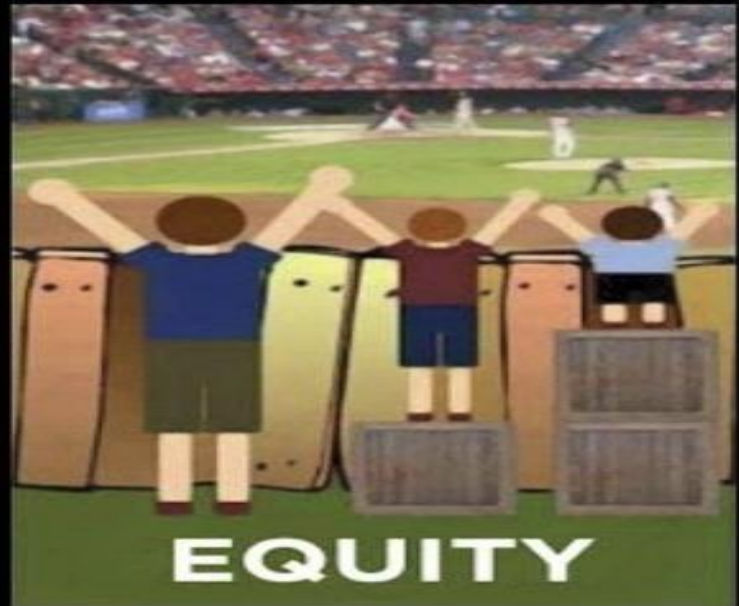
Equality vs Equity



Equality is about Sameness

Equality promotes fairness and justice by giving everyone the same thing.

It can only work if everyone starts from the same place.



Equity is about Fairness

Equity gives people access to the same opportunities.

Our differences and/or history can create barriers to participation, so we must first insure equity before we can enjoy equality.

Women Not at Fault - Historical

In story of Adam and Eve:

- Quran does not blame woman for the “fall of man”
- Nor it views the women sufferings in pregnancy and childbirth as punishment for eating from forbidden tree, but depicts pregnancy as a special favor of God
- Quran depicts both Adam and Eve equally responsible for their sin in the Garden (see Verses 7:19-27),
- In two instances, it squarely points to Adams in this issue (Verses 20:115 and 120)

Source of Rights for both Genders

Islam asserts that rights of both women and men are given by God Who is ...

1. The Just (rights are based on absolute justice)
2. The All Knower (rights are based on ultimate and full knowledge of human nature)
3. Neither male nor female (away from any bias)