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Women's Dignity, Rights and Empowerment in Islam.

-Shah Abdul Hannan

We here a lot of things about women's position and rights in a society. Some of the words that are expressed about the realization of women's rights are acceptable. Again there is room for different opinions on some points. It is imperative to establish the rights of men and women fully as the society is moving forward everyday. So rights of every individual must be established.

The society has made significant progress during last fifty years. The women like men have come forward though not equally. We have left far behind the society we had during Begum Rokeya's time. She found that girls had no adequate opportunity for education. You ladies perhaps could not have received education if Begum Rokeya was not born at that time & had not taken audacious initiatives for female education.

In the whole world especially in our country the opposition that is being unleashed on the people particularly on the women has a foundation. The ideological foundation for the persecution on women by men and at times by women themselves is generally the people's (particularly men's) belief that women are inferior to men having low quality. The belief originates from some erroneous ideas among people. And on this belief is standing the firmly the whole edifice of oppression, deprivation and disrespect towards women.

If we want to eradicate persecution on women in Bangladesh, it can't be done excluding Islam. Those who have revolted against Islam are not able to sustain in a country where 90% people are Muslims. I firmly believe that there is such a framework in Islam that can ensure the progress of women.

I am not in favor of distorting Islam nor I am inclined to giving temporary interpretation of Islam. I true sense Islam has empowered women and upheld there respect. Islam has ensured rights for women. But before expounding this I would mention what could be the ideological foundation on which the fundamental equality of both men and women depends. Allah has not created all human beings with similar appearance. Two persons are never equal in every dot. One person is different from another in terms of weight, height, color, education etc. Even two twins do not possess the same genetic characteristics. But to almighty Allah every human being is equal. I would like to present four basic arguments to prove this. I say "basic" because there would remain some other differences between men and women:

1. Allah has made this clear that the fundamental element of real human being is *isruh*, that we call spirit or soul. The body perishes in grave. Allah created the *ruhs* of all human beings at the same time, in the same way and asked them a single question. All men and women gave the same answer.

When thy Lord drew forth
From the children of Adam
From their loins -
Their descendants, and made them
Testify concerning themselves (saying):
"Am I not your lord (who cherishes and sustains
you)?"-
They said: "Yea!
We do testify!" [7:172]

It means all men reached an agreement on the point that is, " Yes you are our Lord and we shall obey you." Here no separate agreements were made with men or with women. So the first word about our ideological foundation is that the real human being is the *ruh* and all spirits are equal.

2. We, men, boast that our physical structure is superior to that of women and think that Allah has created us better comparatively. But Allah has made it very clear in the Holy *Qur'an* that there is, of course, some difference between all human beings but every one is superb. Allah says, "We have indeed created human being in the best moulds"[95:4].

So, to establish the fundamental equality of men or women or to launch a new movement for women or the humanity at large, men should not say that the structures of women are inferior. Allah would not like that.

[To be continued]

The Purpose of Marriage

- Lois Lamya al Faruqi

The importance of marriage in Islamic Society and its advocacy by the religious teachings rest on the avowed purposes it serves. First, Muslims regard marriage as providing a balance between individualistic needs and the welfare of the group to which the individual belongs. As such, it is regarded as a social and psychological necessity for every member of the community.

Second, marriage is a mechanism for moral and mutually beneficial control of sexual behavior and procreation. Islam regards sexual activity as an important and perfectly healthy drive of both males and females. Thus, it is not shameful and should not be denied to members of either sex. Lack of sexual satisfaction is believed to cause personality maladjustment and to endanger the mental health and efficiency of the society. Islam therefore commends sex as natural and good but restricts it to participants of a union, which ensures responsibility for its consequences.

A third purpose of marriage is its provision of a stable ambience for the rearing of children. Islam sees this purpose as inextricably tied to an extended family system. The extended family may vary in size, even in residential proximity, as is evidenced in different regions of the Muslim world, but the cohesion its members is inextricably bound to *Qur'anic* prescriptions

and Islamic Law. These explicitly enunciate the rights and obligations of its members and the legal extent of those benefits and responsibilities.

Fourth, marriage assures crucial economic benefits for women during their childbearing years. Self-support during this period is difficult, if not impossible, for mothers who have no outside help. Even if sustained by the "supermom", of which we hear so much in recent times, the psychological and economical tool for such persons is beyond what most individuals can tolerate.

Fifth, the close companionship of the marital partners provides economical gratification for men and women. The importance of this purpose of marriage in Islam is evidenced by repeated references in the *Qur'an* and *Hadith* literature to the quiescence (30:21; 7:189) and protective nature (9:71) of the bond between the spouses. The man and woman are considered to be so close that they are described as garments of one another (2:187). The clemency, love, and consideration enjoined on the partners appear repeatedly in both religious and legal texts.

Editorial

Women issue is a burning question of the present century. The deprivation, disrespect and oppression towards women are causing great distress to the society. Also, the practice of being reclusive in the society is another important issue. We are very happy for being able to publish two enriched articles in the 2nd publication of "The Window".

Expecting instructive criticism and advice from you.

Ma'as Salam.

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