

*Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, July 17, 2009*

*Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah*

*Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim*

There is a general belief, especially in the West, that as per Islamic parameters, women are inferior to men. We can hardly blame them for this because on the media people see that in different places women are forced to wear burkhas, flogged if they are not in company of their fathers, brothers or sons, not allowed to attend school, cannot contest or vote in even municipal elections ( there are no other elections ) and cannot drive in Saudi Arabia where women are virtual prisoners and subordinated to men's authority. This misconception is in their mind mostly due to the irresponsible attitude of many "Muslims" and partly due to the fact that they confuse similarity and equality. The truth lies in the fact that people have not accessed the real and true Authorized Quran which contains provisions to ensure absolute equality between men and women.

However, we have to keep in mind that men and women are equal but not identical. Just because a woman is not supposed to perform certain tasks as a man does, it does not mean that she is less important than him. They are not subject to the same obligations and rights, because they were never created the same. Women's requirements and responsibilities are equal to those of a man but they are not necessarily the same. Since both have been fashioned differently from each other their tasks are also different. Their role in society and household chores may be diverse. The variations in their function do not imply that one is inferior to the other. Take for example the Olympics. Why is it that in all disciplines, men and women do not compete together? Men always compete with men and women with women. [3:36] *When she gave birth to her, she said, "My Lord, I have given birth to a girl" - GOD was fully aware of what she bore - "The male is not the same as the female. I have named her Mary, and I invoke Your protection for her and her descendants from the rejected devil."*

In fact, the Quran explains the story of Adam and Eve in the most accurate manner. Compare it with the *Bible Book of Genesis Chapter 3: 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, «Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'»? <sup>2</sup> The woman said to the serpent, « From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; <sup>3</sup> but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'» <sup>4</sup> The serpent said to the woman, «You surely will not die! <sup>5</sup> «For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil. » <sup>6</sup> When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings. »*

[7:22] He thus duped them with lies. As soon as they tasted the tree, their bodies became visible to them, and they tried to cover themselves with the leaves of Paradise. Their Lord called upon them: "Did I not enjoin you from that tree, and warn you that the devil is your most ardent enemy?"

[20:121] They ate from it, whereupon their bodies became visible to them, and they tried to cover themselves with the leaves of Paradise. Adam thus disobeyed his Lord, and fell.

According to Leviticus 12:2-5, a woman is "unclean" after giving childbirth. If she has a male child she is "unclean" for 7 days, then he is to be circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day and then she is "unclean" for an additional 33 days. If she has a girl child, she is unclean for 14 days followed by 66 days. What is so dirty about girl babies that she is "unclean" for twice as long?

Let us see what the Quran says of the various aspects of the equality of sexes:

1. Equality of spiritual status - The highest favour which God has bestowed upon man is the gift of Divine Revelation. In the Quran, we find women to whom Divine Revelation came and who have been spoken of along with men. [3:42] *The angels said, "O Mary, GOD has chosen you and purified you. He has chosen you from all the women. [3:43] "O Mary, you shall submit to your Lord, and prostrate and bow down with those who bow down."*[20:38] *"When we revealed to your mother what we revealed. [20:39] "Saying: 'Throw him into the box, then throw him into the river. The river will throw him onto the shore, to be picked up by an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his.' I showered you with love from Me, and I had you made before My watchful eye. Confidence in God [28:7] We inspired Moses' mother: "Nurse him, and when you fear for his life, throw him into the river without fear or grief. We will return him to you, and will make him one of the messengers."*
2. Equality of mention The Quran speaks of mighty Prophets of God [19:41] *Mention in the scripture Abraham; he was a saint, a prophet. [19:51]Mention in the scripture Moses. He was devoted, and he was a messenger prophet. [19:56]And mention in the scripture Idris. He was a saint, a prophet. [19:16] Mention in the scripture Mary. She isolated herself from her family, into an eastern location.* So a woman is spoken of in exactly the same manner.
3. Equality of worship [33:35]The submitting men, the submitting 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, the reverent women, the charitable men, the charitable women, the fasting men, the fasting women, the chaste men, the chaste women, and the men who commemorate GOD frequently, and the commemorating women; GOD has prepared for them forgiveness and a great recompense.
4. Equal right to education Women are equal to men in the pursuit of education. When we are enjoined to seek knowledge there is no distinction between men and women. The Most Important Commandment [3:18] GOD bears witness that there is no god except He,

and so do the angels and those who possess knowledge. Truthfully and equitably, He is the absolute god; there is no god but He, the Almighty, Most Wise.

5. Equal right to earn The Quran has granted men and women equal rights to contract, to enterprise, to earn and possess independently. *Murder, Suicide, and Illicit Gains Prohibited [4:29] O you who believe, do not consume each others' properties illicitly - only mutually acceptable transactions are permitted. You shall not kill yourselves. GOD is Merciful towards you.*
6. Equal freedom of expression Men and women are equally entitled to freedom of expression. Women can express their opinion freely. A woman can be a head of State for example – the Queen of Sheba.
7. Equal right of inheritance Men and women have been given equal rights to inherit from parents and relatives. *Women's Inheritance Rights [4:7] The men get a share of what the parents and the relatives leave behind. The women too shall get a share of what the parents and relatives leave behind. Whether it is a small or a large inheritance, (the women must get) a definite share.* Her right to inherit is as much protected by law as that of a man. In fact, the deceased cannot deprive her by favouring other relations or any other cause; she has to have even a small share. While the right to inherit applies to both men and women, the shares may be different. A woman, in certain cases may get only half of what the man gets which would apply if the person dies intestate (without a will). *Write A Will [2:180] It is decreed that when death approaches, you shall write a will for the benefit of the parents and relatives, equitably. This is a duty upon the righteous.* A larger share in inheritance does not depict the supremacy of the man over the women, but rather it is a concession granted to him in lieu of his financial burden. He has to look after his wife and children and his sister who may get half of what he got will in turn be looked after her husband. However, God is so just and fair that one could make a will and give everything to the daughter and nothing to the son. *[4:11].... When it comes to your parents and your children, you do not know which of them is really the best to you and the most beneficial. This is GOD's law. GOD is Omniscient, Most Wise.*
8. Equal dress code for believers *Dress Code for Believers [24:30] Tell the believing men that they shall subdue their eyes (and not stare at the women), and to maintain their chastity. This is purer for them. GOD is fully Cognizant of everything they do. [24:31]And tell the believing women to subdue their eyes, and maintain their chastity. They shall not reveal any parts of their bodies, except that which is necessary. They shall cover their chests, and shall not relax this code in the presence of other than their husbands, their fathers, the fathers of their husbands, their sons, the sons of their husbands, their brothers, the sons of their brothers, the sons of their sisters, other women, the male servants or employees whose sexual drive has been nullified, or the children who have not reached puberty. They shall not strike their feet when they walk in order to shake and reveal certain details of their bodies. All of you shall repent to GOD, O you believers, that you may succeed.* It is not established by any Quranic verse that women should completely cover their heads and faces, revealing only their eyes. This

verse pertains to *zeenah* (reveal any parts of the body except that which is necessary), not to veiling one's face.

9. Equal prayers for Divine Mercy *Laa Elaaha Ellaa Allah: First Commandment [47:19] You shall know that: "There is no other god beside GOD," and ask forgiveness of your sins and the sins of all believing men and women. GOD is fully aware of your decisions and your ultimate destiny. Important Commandments to All Believers [62:9] O you who believe, when the Congregational Prayer (Salat Al-Jumu`ah) is announced on Friday, you shall hasten to the commemoration of GOD, and drop all business. This is better for you, if you only knew.*
10. Equal civil and criminal liability *As far as the Quran is concerned, a woman's life, property and honour are as sacred as those of man. If she commits an offense, her penalty is no less or more than a man's in a similar case. If she is wronged or harmed she can get due compensation, equal to what a man in her position would get. Discouraging Capital Punishment [2:178] O you who believe, equivalence is the law decreed for you when dealing with murder - the free for the free, the slave for the slave, the female for the female. If one is pardoned by the victim's kin, an appreciative response is in order, and an equitable compensation shall be paid. This is alleviation from your Lord and mercy. Anyone who transgresses beyond this incurs a painful retribution. [2:179] Equivalence is a life saving law for you, O you who possess intelligence, that you may be righteous. Equality in civil and criminal can also be explained by the example of theft. If proven guilty the person regardless of being man or woman is liable to be punished with marking of the hands. Mathematical Proof Supports Quranic Justice [5:38] The thief, male or female, you shall mark their hands as a punishment for their crime, and to serve as an example from GOD. GOD is Almighty, Most Wise. Similarly, the punishment for adultery is also the same for the man or woman. Adultery [24:2] The adulteress and the adulterer you shall whip each of them a hundred lashes. Do not be swayed by pity from carrying out GOD's law, if you truly believe in GOD and the Last Day. And let a group of believers witness their penalty.*
11. Equally charitable *[57:18] Surely, the charitable men and women, have loaned GOD a loan of goodness. They will receive their reward multiplied manifold; they have deserved a generous recompense.*
12. Equal right to complain *[58:1] GOD has heard the woman who debated with you about her husband, and complained to GOD. GOD heard everything the two of you discussed. GOD is Hearer, Seer.*
13. Equal right to remarry *Divorcees and widows can remarry if they wish. You Shall Observe the Pre-Marriage Interims [2:228] The divorced women shall wait three menstruations (before marrying another man). It is not lawful for them to conceal what GOD creates in their wombs, if they believe in GOD and the Last Day. (In case of pregnancy,) the husband's wishes shall supersede the wife's wishes, if he wants to remarry her. The women have rights, as well as obligations, equitably. Thus, the man's wishes prevail (in case of pregnancy). GOD is Almighty, Most Wise. [2:234] Those who*

*die and leave wives, their widows shall wait four months and ten days (before they remarry). Once they fulfill their interim, you commit no error by letting them do whatever righteous matters they wish to do. GOD is fully Cognizant of everything you do.*

14. Equal in hypocrisy [48:6] *And He will requite the hypocrite men and women and the idol worshiping men and women, for they have harbored evil thoughts about GOD. Their evil will backfire against them. For GOD is angry with them, condemns them, and has prepared for them Gehenna. What a miserable destiny! The Worst Losers [57:13] On that day, the hypocrite men and women will say to those who believed, "Please allow us to absorb some of your light." It will be said, "Go back behind you, and seek light." A barrier will be set up between them, whose gate separates mercy on the inner side, from retribution on the outer side.*
15. Equally predictable [24:3] *The adulterer will end up marrying an adulteress or an idol worshiper, and the adulteress will end up marrying an adulterer or an idol worshiper. This is prohibited for the believers.*
16. Equal bestowal of rewards *The Quran makes no difference between men and women regarding the conferral of reward for worship and good deeds performed by him or her. Guaranteed Happiness Now and Forever [16:97] Anyone who works righteousness, male or female, while believing, we will surely grant them a happy life in this world, and we will surely pay them their full recompense (on the Day of Judgment) for their righteous works. [48:5] He will certainly admit the believing men and women into gardens with flowing streams, wherein they abide forever. He will remit their sins. This is, in the sight of GOD, a great triumph.*

The verdict of Islam on the status of men and women is the only complete, logical and practical declaration pertaining to the matter. The approach of Islam towards defining the positions of men and women is unique as it always handles the issue by making a distinction between equality and similarity.

Value does not lie in man emulating a woman, nor does it lie in woman envying a man but by being content in what God has made us and by using our talents for the greater benefit of humankind. *Men and Women Endowed With Unique Qualities [4:32] You shall not covet the qualities bestowed upon each other by GOD; the men enjoy certain qualities, and the women enjoy certain qualities. You may implore GOD to shower you with His grace. GOD is fully aware of all things.*

*God be Glorified!*