

# Gender and sexuality in islam philosophy essay



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The demarcation between male and female has been there since the world started to exist. Right from the very start, the thought that the two sexes are very different from each other, has been ingrained in to our heads. Some sociologists say that gender is just a social construct; which basically means that we act in a way according to how the society expects us to act depending on whether we are born biologically a girl or a boy. Different religions have addressed this issue and stressed on the differences and rights of both genders. Islam being no exception has clearly set down the ways in which a woman differs from a man and vice versa, and how each one is to act and to be treated. I'll first lay down what Islam has to say on gender and sexuality and will conclude by giving my own opinion on the matter.

The first thing we need to be clear about when talking about gender equality is to realize what context it applies to. For example, it can be private context, ritual context or family context. All issues pertaining to individual contexts are dealt with differently. Let's first appreciate that Islam is the first pre-modern religion that addressed the rights of women and distinguished itself from other religions by granting women enough liberty to live their lives according to how they wanted to, provided they did so humbly and modestly.

[3: 195] “ Their Lord responded to them: “ I never fail to reward any worker among you for any work you do, be you male or female – you are equal to one another.” From this it's pretty much clear that Allah has made man and women equal to each other. Now let's take a closer look.

Keeping in mind the religious context, some people question why only a man can be an Imam? The first thing we need to realize is that the duty of an Imam is just to make sure the congregation is in sync. Each person is praying in the same way, in the name of Allah. The only reason why a woman can't lead a congregation and why women are made to stand at the back whilst praying is to make sure no man gets distracted by the body posture of a female when ruko or sijdah is done. It may sound sexist to some but the truth remains that people are vulnerable to distractions and it's of utmost importance to make sure while praying, you don't lose focus. To eliminate this problem, men are made to be Imams while a female can lead a segregated congregation of just women. There is another issue where the testimony of one man is superior to that of two women. However the reasoning behind this is that often women aren't interested in trials and tend to get distracted by superficial details. Again this isn't sexism, this is just a way of life that we need to accept and understand.

One of the areas in which women are granted full liberty is that of private law. Once a woman has turned legal and she has all the authority to make business transactions, buy or sell property, give charity or spend her money according to her own wishes. She is accountable to no one and can't be restricted. Often people were of the view that women couldn't work outside of the house. Khadija, the Prophet's most beloved wife, was foremost a business woman. Islam permits their women to step out of the house and make a career for themselves provided they do so within the boundaries of their religion. Examples of Muslim political leaders include the Prime Ministers of Pakistan, Turkey and Bangladesh. From this one can see that

Islam doesn't restrict its women to be just house wives. Where typically the role of a woman is to oversee the proper functioning of her household, children and husband, she can step out and work too.

When it comes to family law, there may be some ambiguity in the laws stated in Islam. On the surface it seems as if women clearly lack the power to make decisions and men are the dominant ones who control the household. Only a man can give a unilateral divorce while a woman either has to seek a judicial one or needs to obtain consent from her husband. Only a man can marry four times while the woman can't. Only the man is seen as the legal head of the house and can make decisions relating to where the couple will live etc. A woman has to make herself available to her husband at all times and take care of his needs. However we need to understand that all of this is dependent on our interpretation of these laws. Divorces are heavily frowned upon in Islam and the Prophet himself was against them. Therefore men are trained not to take any unlawful advantage of this right. A man can only remarry if his wife agrees to his decision and if he has enough money to keep all the wives happy. He also has to give each wife equal attention, love and time. While drawing up marriage contracts, wives can include or exclude themselves from any activity; it is solely up to the couple to form their own contracts and live their lives according to their own ways. Only those household duties are mandatory on wives, which they will do for themselves. So if you really look at it, no particular rights of women are being infringed.

[16: 97]" Anyone who works with 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

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righteous works." From the above analysis one can easily see that Islam is a great advocator of equality between sexes. Both women and men are equally worthy of getting proper education, making a career, marrying whoever they wish to, making decisions for themselves and having a say in all aspects of life. That being said, there are proper guidelines as to how we are supposed to go about doing all of this. If they are followed religiously then I see no possible reason for anyone restricting women or infringing upon their rights.

The second part of my essay deals with sexuality. While deciding what topic to write on, I came across some rather interesting information that even I was not aware of. Our society has labeled issues such as homosexuality as such a taboo that we don't talk about it in detail to understand the root of the problem. Islam being the perfect code of life has addressed all of this to make life easier for us.

According to Islam's perspective, everybody is born heterosexual. The choice to be homosexual is ingrained in to a person's mind according to their environment and brought up. This is particularly critical at the time of puberty. Islam understands that a person may get certain whims time to time. However acting upon these instincts is prohibited. The basic gist of this is that humans have their own free will. It's up to them how they act and only they can determine what they want. This theory is also supported by some sociologists who write about free will and determinism. So for instance even if somebody starts getting the feeling that they might be homosexual, it is up to them to oppress these feelings and reject them rather than acting upon them. There are ways to cure a person from these thoughts and so

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help can be sought out. There are countless of cured homosexuals present in today's world who now function properly. However even after all this if someone remains the same, Islam tells them to suppress this part of their personality. They are told to stay away from anything that might tempt them, stay on the righteous part as laid down by the Holy Quran and engage in heterosexual marriages. The suffering that such people go through in this life will surely be rewarded in abundance in the next life; that is promised by Allah. If a person acts contrary to this, then that will mean living in sin forever as it has been said, " When a man mounts another man, the throne of God shakes." Also, " Kill the one that is doing it and also kill the one that it is being done to." The biggest example supporting this is the wrath that came on the people of Lut who were destroyed for carrying out homosexuality even after being warned not to. This may seem harsh but there is a reason why Islam is so strictly against this. Homosexuality is prone to giving rise to diseases such as AIDS. It also threatens the natural structure of life where a man and woman engage together to form a family. It disrupts this system and is a heinous way to contradict the balance set up by Allah. Therefore it must be avoided on all costs. The same goes out to women engaging in relationships with the same gender as it's been said, " Sihaq (lesbian sexual activity) of women is zina (illegitimate sexual intercourse) among them."

With this I come to the end of my essay. What I have done here is just a microscopic amount of research of what Islam really is. If you go to its depth, you will realize that everything that has been said has a proper reason behind it which is totally justified. The thing with today's world is that we

have confused modernization with westernization. Also we have confused Islamism with extremism. This manipulation is the primary reason why the message of Islam has become distorted. To understand all of this one needs to do extensive research and a thorough reading of the Holy Quran with its translation. That is the only way to properly understand what Islam is all about.