

ISLAMIC SOCIETY AND WOMEN IN ISLAM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
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Chapter

I. GENERAL WESTERN PERSPECTIVES ON MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE MIDDLE EAST	6
II. WOMEN IN TRADITIONAL ISLAMIC SOCIETY	14
III. WOMEN IN PRIMORDIAL ISLAMIC SOCIETY	23
Islamic World View of "Tawhīd"	23
The Concept of Women in the Qur'ān	30
IV. WOMEN IN MODERN WESTERN SOCIETY	41
V. WOMEN IN ISLAM	57
The Ideal Model of Woman in the Islamic Revolution in Iran	58
The Image of Woman in Islam: What is "Equality" in Islam?	69
CONCLUSION	85
BIBLIOGRAPHY	90

Introduction

The Middle East has oftentimes been regarded as a very complex and difficult region to understand, a tendency which has been increased by the lack of knowledge about Islamic culture and society in general.

For the study of the Middle East, I believe, it is prerequisite to understand Islam, which constitutes the economic, political and ethical value system of the region. The principles of Islam have pervaded people's thinking and acting to unite them regardless of their nationality and ethnic origins. However, the Middle East has frequently been analyzed from the vantage point of the researcher and not from Islam itself. As I try to show in this study, it is essential to grasp the world view of Islam for a better understanding of Middle Eastern societies.

First, I examine the situation of women in Middle Eastern societies. "The differences between the two sexes", as Margaret Mead has remarked, "is one of the important conditions upon which we have built the many varieties of human culture that give human beings dignity and stature."⁽¹⁾ Thus, here I do not ask the usual question about the status of women, whether it is high or low, but rather focus on the structure of meanings and values which define the relative position

of women.

Women in the Middle East have generally been regarded as being oppressed and discriminated against. Although we cannot deny that such a situation exists, this sort of generalization is prompted by the non-self-critical approach of the West in viewing Middle Eastern societies. From the Western radical feminist's viewpoint, it was concluded that Muslim women in the Middle East are socially discriminated against. Western feminism from the 1950s to the 1960s, which aimed to organize a universal feminist movement, created these images of Muslim women according to the Western value system. It seems that Western feminism is one of the products of capitalism which itself is sustained by "universalism" and "the ideology of progress". Thus, no-one ever examines the meaning of "equality" in Islam, or what kinds of human relationships exist among Muslims. When the universal feminist movement was not accepted in the Middle Eastern world, the proponents of this movement rationalized this non-acceptance as evidence of the male-dominated society and inherent nature of the discrimination against women in Islam.

At this point, it is necessary to re-examine the position of women in society within the context of Islam. Thus, I emphasize the following points.

Chapter I looks into the typical generalizations made in Western studies concerning Muslim women in the Middle East. By means of this examination, the methodological fallacies of their studies and the lack of understanding of Islam will be highlighted.

Chapter II attempts to point out that "tradition" is not identified with Islam, by looking into traditional Islamic society, wherein women have really suffered because of a lack of knowledge concerning the rights endowed by Islam, and by examining the traditional values concept which has been closely connected with Islam.

Chapter III concentrates on the core of Islam, and contains an examination of the Islamic world view of "Tawhīd" together with some verses from the Qur'ān to provide an understanding of position of women at the "ideational" level in Islam.

Chapter IV examines the position of Western women in modern society by focusing on the feminist movement. It is important, I believe, to examine the situation of women in a different value system to have a clearer image of women in Islam and to understand the uniqueness of woman in Islam.

Chapter V discusses first the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 and describes the ideal woman advocated by the Revolution. The idea behind the

women's movement during the Revolution is examined as a case study. Second, the meaning of "equality" for women in Islam is examined through a comparison with the concept of equality in the West.

Therefore, this paper does not attempt to discuss the issue of women separately from the social and cultural values, but rather seeks to elucidate the norms and intrinsic values of Islam from the viewpoint of the situation of women in Islamic society at the ideational level and to depict the basic nature of Islamic social structure.

Note

(1) Margaret Mead, Male and Female (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1977), p.7.

Chapter I

General Western Perspectives on Muslim Women in the Middle East

Contemporary studies on women have a tendency to examine their problems by focusing only on specific aspects of their lives. They do not look into the relative position of women as defined by social structures. Moreover, they analyze women in different cultures, assuming without question that originally all societies were based on the same value system. They even examine social behaviour in different cultures from the viewpoint of their own cultures.

Western studies on Muslim women in the Middle East have a tendency to accentuate certain specific practices in society, and to examine them using their own Western framework or value concepts. These studies often conclude that Muslim women are discriminated against, subordinated or ill-treated. Furthermore, they claim that those problems stem from the basic values expressed in Islam. In other words, they lack the so-called "cultural character structure", which Margaret Mead defines as "the regularities in the intrapsychic organization of the individual members of a given society that are to be attributed to these individuals having been reared within that culture."⁽¹⁾

It should be noted that in order to understand the

position of women in the Middle East, it is necessary to understand the historical roles of women in the Middle East, the Islamic view regarding the place of women, and the position of women in the Law in Islam. It is important to look into these issues to be able to fully understand the disadvantages and discrimination from which women have really suffered in the Middle East.

Furthermore, there has been a particular tendency in Western studies on Muslim women, which are based on their own paradigm rarely to examine their framework and concept with a critical attitude. These studies are so concerned with actual practices and specific matters in Muslim society, that they oftentimes confuse Islam at the practical level and Islam at the "ideational" level. Thus, they portray the image of women in Islam only from deduction, that is, they describe Muslim women based on the Western viewpoint. Different images of women are constructed without examining Islam itself.

Therefore, there is a need to re-examine the images of Muslim women in the Middle East presented by Western studies. By means of this examination, the prejudices and biases toward Muslim women would be clarified. This kind of re-examination is appropriate to make up for the lack of understanding of Muslim

society as well as Muslim women from the Islamic point of view.

Most Western studies, which attempt to explain whether the women's status is high or low, use statistical analysis. They usually report such results in comparison with other cultural areas, such as the West. They point out that Muslim-majority nations of the world have low rates of economic activity by women, low female literacy, and low female school enrollment at all levels. They use such statistical data to verify certain hypotheses which they formulate to perceive Middle Eastern society. The usual explanation is as follows:

Statistical evidence suggests that low levels of female education and female employment are typical of Muslim societies. It can be further inferred that among Muslim societies, those that are the "most" Muslim, in the sense of enforcing the traditional restrictions on women, will have the lowest rates of female education and employment. The problem can be stated in the form of the hypothesis: women's educational achievement and participation in economic activity in Muslim countries varies with the enforcement of Islamic restriction on women.(2)

Moreover, using the statistical data on fertility rates, they explain that Islam contains "pronatalism" in its nature, and this tendency of pronatalism makes Muslim women confined to child-rearing and prevents

them from participating in various activities outside the home.(3)

They further explain certain social practices, such as veiling and the separation of men and women in the social sphere as the root causes of the restrictions on women. They use such terms as "Islamic restriction"(4) or "the Islamic tradition"(5), but without providing clear definitions.

Moreover, they try to prove the inferior status of Muslim women, especially by showing the low employment rates of women in commercial and industrial jobs.(6) However, this sort of analysis does not explain anything substantially. It is only in some specific situations in industrial societies that the employment rates of women in commercial activities explain the women's position in society. In other words, if one takes into account the economic situation or if one examines the concept of the economy in Islam and its relation to women, it would be clear that one could not find any causal relationship between the women's social status and their commercial or industrial activities.

As a result of this type of analysis, Muslim women have often been depicted as being excluded from social activities and incarcerated in the house. These conclusions are made stating that inactive participation

in social activities by Muslim women is the "ideal" for them in Islam.

The other type of analysis sustains its argument by focusing on legal institutions concerning women, such as marriage, divorce and inheritance, which seem unequal in their own perspectives. It is claimed that "the legal restrictions and inequalities mentioned in the Quran, hadith, sunna and sharia law codes"(7) discriminate against women. For instance, the explanation only refers to the quantitative difference, in that the female portion of inheritance is half that of the male, and treats this as evidences of discrimination against of women. However, it is not clearly illustrated in what sense women are restricted and suffer as a result of inequalities in Islam.

This type of approach neglects the historical and social background which maintains the legal institutions, and lacks a full understanding of Islamic jurisprudence. The study of Islamic jurisprudence is a prerequisite for studies of the legal institutions because Islamic jurisprudence is totally different from Western jurisprudence. Many studies use vague terms such as "Koranic law" or "Islamic law" in their arguments and do not explain what "Islamic jurisprudence" really is. Moreover, they do not explain that Islam has a dynamic and flexible nature, and that Muslims

have made efforts to interpret Islam flexibly in confronting new social situations.

Another type of analysis observes certain particular value concepts. Although cultural analysis should be comparative in order to show the differences of value concepts between cultures more perceptibly, it does not aim at evaluating the different cultures. This type of analysis concerning the relationship between men and women in Islamic society is represented by the following statement:

Woman is an inferior being, a sexual object with whom communication is not sought. The relation between men and women is the physiology of coitus. Woman in sexuality is not conceived as different from man; she does not exist as another. Her enjoyment is the achievement of the man, just as the field of wheat that ripens is the fruit of his labor. In addition, a sexuality that is not integrated with a more complete communication of a man to a woman is also without communication within the individual... (8)

The above arguments are replete with misperceptions that Islam has made women the object of sexual pleasure for men. It is interesting to point out that most of the Western studies contain this tendency in viewing Islam. They view Islam from the Christian ethical concept which gives higher value to the spirit, based on dualism.(9) Then, they conclude that Islam is a religion which promotes and diffuses moral deterio-

ration.

Therefore, I have shown the typical Western studies that have presented particular images of Muslim women, as secluded, deprived of human rights, and the sexual objects of men. This is the result of a non-self critical attitude that examines Muslim women and society only from the viewpoint of their own value concepts. In other words the value concepts of Islam are neglected.

In studying Muslim society, it should be recognized primarily that Islam constitutes the principles of Muslim society; Islam forms the basic core of Muslim life; Islam is not a subsidiary element in society, but a fundamental one. More specifically, it is necessary to examine the concepts of "equality" and "sexuality" within the context of Islam, to better understand the position of women in Islam.

Notes

(1) Margaret Mead, "The Study of Culture at a Distance", in The Study of Culture at a Distance, ed. Margaret Mead and Rhoda Metraux (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 33.

(2) Elizabeth H. White, "Legal Reform as an Indicator of Women's Status in Muslim Nations", in Women in the Muslim World, ed. Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 53.

(3) Nadia H. Youssef, "The Status and Fertility Patterns of Muslim Women", in Women in the Muslim World, ed. Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, p. 69 - 88.

(4) White, p. 53.

(5) Juliette Minces, The House of Obedience: Women in Arab Society, trans. Michael Pallis (London: Zed Press, 1980), p. 36.

(6) See White, p. 64 - 66; and Youssef p. 88 - p. 98; and Debbie J. Gerner, "Roles in Transition: The Evolving Position of Women in Arab-Islamic Countries", in Muslim Women, ed. Freda Hussain (London: Croom Helm, 1984), p. 83 - 87.

(7) White, p. 53.

(8) Paul Vieille, "Iranian Women in Family Alliance and Sexual Politics", in Women in the Muslim World, ed. Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, p. 465.

(9) The details are discussed in Chapter III.

Chapter II

Women in Traditional Islamic Society

Muslim society in the Middle East is not homogeneous in terms of cultural background and tradition. At the time of Muhammad, Islam completely denied the traditional Arab values and the existing social order of those days(1), and aimed at establishing a new religious, ethical and social order. However, some of the deep-rooted values and traditions were not completely eliminated or even changed.(2) Islamic values, traditionally inherited values and newly introduced values in the expansion of Islam are intermingled in present society. Thus, in this chapter, I discuss the issue of Muslim women who have not been awakened to their rights with which Islam endowed with them. In most cases, they are deprived of the opportunity to be educated or to participate in social activities. As a result, Muslim women suffer from subordination. It is considered that such discrimination has been caused by the deviation of Muslims' minds from Islam.

First, one of the traditional value concepts of the Arabs which has a strong influence on the relationships between men and women is discussed. At this point, it is appropriate to look into the relationship between traditional Arab value concepts and those of

Islam.

'Ird(honor) is one of the most important values and moral codes, especially among the nomadic tribes of the Arab peninsula. Even after the advent of Islam, 'ird was handed down from generation to generation in a form which was modified by its interaction with Islamic values. Still now 'ird is regarded as an important value to be kept in Arab society.(3)

Both men and women consider being "honorable" as the most important aspect for an individual, family and society. 'Ird has been related closely to moral values, although historically it has been actualized by keeping women's chastity. Not only do women keep their modesty, but also men must protect the chastity of the women of their family for their own honor. Unni Wikan describes the male's responsibility to protect the female's chastity in the case of Oman:

Unfortunately for the men, it is the conduct of their women that constitutes the main threat to their honor. A man may behave in all respects honorably, but if a woman of his goes once sexually astray, his honor is dramatically compromised. Arab Muslim culture, like some others in the world, has thus encumbered the male's prospects of honor and esteem with what must seem to him a most precarious foundation, whence springs his obsessions with female chastity.(4)

It can generally be said that the chastity of

every girl after puberty becomes a symbol of her family's honor in the traditional value concept. Thus, a woman must keep her chastity all her life, otherwise "she not only shames herself but also destroys her entire family's honor." (5) Keeping this honor is considered important enough reason to kill a woman whose conduct is immoral and shameful.(6)

Segregation of the sexes is one of the practices used to keep morality in society. Contrary to the general assumption that the purpose of such segregation is for women's incarceration, it is really for the protection of both male and female chastity in most Arab societies.(7)

However, we cannot deny the fact that this practice of segregation has gradually confined the active sphere of women to the house, has made them socially inactive, has subjected women to male control to keep the male's honor, and that women they have been generally deprived of education to maintain this male dominance. In the case of excessive domination, a husband exercises both physical and psychological domination over his wife. "He will frequently be extremely violent towards her, and will vent all his frustration upon her."(8)

Nawal El Saadawi describes the situation of discrimination against Arab women as follows:

The forms of suppression exercised against women are manifold. Most of them rely on fear and intimidation, on subtle or direct forms of obscurantism, on keeping her in the dark, ignorant, deprived of true knowledge. For a woman, right from the early stages of childhood and during the years of growth, adolescence and youth, is deprived of any real knowledge about her body and herself.(9)

She criticizes "obscurantism" in traditional Egyptian society and the low level of female education. She laments further the ignorance of women concerning their bodies and functions, and explains that many people still consider this sort of ignorance as a sign of honor, purity and good morals.(10)

This traditional value concept, 'Ird, inherited from the nomadic tribes, has been inherited in Arab society and has been intermingled with Islam. It should be pointed out, however, that Islam does not advocate the segregation of women. As is seen in the example of Khadijah(11), at the time of Muhammad there were many women who could attain social prominence as scholars, scientists, doctors, merchants and so on. It was in the later period of Islam that Islam was used as a justification for women's segregation. Although it is generally considered that the symptomatic practices of the separation of men and women are found from the time of 'Umar, the second Caliph, many women were still active in the social sphere at that time.(12)

Juriji Zaydan explains the historical change in the relationship between men and women and the latter's segregation, referring to the practice of polygamy.(13) In his opinion, polygamy changed in its basic essence as a result of the daily and continuous warfare for Islamic conquest. Previously, men had been allowed to have more than one wife only under exceptional case, but under the situation of conquest, men acquired many captives, both male and female, and made them slaves; they came to abuse female slaves for their pleasure, and began to possess more than one wife and to segregate their wives under the superintendence of eunuchs. As a result, male power increased, and the previously cooperative, trusting relationship between men and women no longer existed.(14)

The actual practice of women's segregation started rather from the later period of Islam. It is considered that women's segregation was prevalent in Arab society, especially among high class people, for the sake of protecting women when the social situation became unstable, such as in the period of decline of the 'Abbasid dynasty. Thereafter, "the practice of women's segregation was gradually and increasingly institutionalized."(15)

However, it should also be noted that the separation of the social spheres of men and women, which is

oftentimes seen in the Middle East, does not necessarily mean the practice of segregation which implies an exclusive and discriminative situation. The separation of the sexes can be considered in another sense as social order, which constructs social shape. Thus, what is more important at this point is to look into the process through which social order has changed its meaning. In other words, the meaning of the separation of the sexes has come to be understood in a more inelastic way and to be reduced only to the meaning of segregation.

As mentioned before, the same situation happened in Muslim society. The traditional value was sometimes transformed into an excessive and extreme form and exceeded the Islamic value. It might be said that this is partly due to the deviation of Muslims' minds from Islam. Moreover, in the development of Islamic Jurisprudence there would seem to be some factors which have made the role or situation of women more conservative. However, this subject is beyond the present study.

We have seen the situation of women in traditional society. If subordination or suppression of women in the Middle East really exists, it can be concluded that this situation is the concomitant result of the deviation of Muslims from the Islamic value system, and is not due to the nature of Islam, as is generally

assumed. It is true that the situation of women has changed with social evolution, but one should refrain from easily concluding that the subordination of women is a historical product of the Middle East. Rather, what should be reconsidered here is how we conceptualize or perceive subordinative relationships between the sexes. This is a problem at the epistemological level, which will be discussed later.

Notes

(1) Toshio Kuroda, Islam no Kokoro (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1970), p. 53.

(2) S. Husain M. Jafri, Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam (Qum: The Group of Muslims, n.d.)

(3) Toshio Kuroda ed., Islam Jiten (Tokyo: Tokyodo Shuppan, 1983), p. 315.

(4) Unni Wikan, Behind the Veil in Arabia: Women in Oman (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), p. 142.

(5) Naila Minai, Women in Islam: Tradition and Transition in the Middle East (London: John Murray, 1981), p. 100.

(6) Nawal El Saddawi, The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World, trans. and ed. Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Press, 1980), p. 25 - 32.

(7) See, Wikan, p. 51 - 186; and Saddawi, p. 99.

(8) Juliette Minces, The House of Obedience: Women in Arab Society, trans. Michael Pallis (London: Zed Press, 1982), p. 43.

(9) Saadawi, p. 44.

(10) Saadawi, p. 44 - 49.

(11) Khadījah was the first wife of Muhammad and a successful merchant at that time.

(12) Ravandi Murtaza, Tarikh-e Ijtima'i-e Iran [Iranian Social History] (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1978), Vol. 3, p. 632. It is reported that 'Umar reproached man for his act of walking with women or praying with women.

(13) Polygamy is oftentimes regarded as the best example in Islam of the subordinate position of women. In the Qur'ān polygamy is mentioned as follows: "If you fear that you will not act justly towards

the orphans, marry such women as seem good to you, two, three, four; but if you fear you will not be equitable then only one[4:3]." In this verse a man is allowed to have four wives, but as is clear in the latter part of this verse, a man who has more than one wife is obliged to treat his wives equally and he must be "equitable" toward all his wives in every aspect, such as financial support, housing and love. Furthermore, in the verse[4:128], God advised how difficult it is to deal with many wives justly. Western studies have often-times neglected this point. Moreover, the social situation at the time of Muhammad should be taken into account. At the time of the revelation of the Qur'an, because of the continuous warfare there were many widows and orphans, and since the circumstances of life were much harder than at the present time, it was very difficult for them to survive by themselves. It can be said that polygamy provided rationally a legal and ethical means of protection and survival for widows and orphans at the time of Muhammad. Thus, at the present time, concerning polygamy Muslims make efforts to establish or reform the law in order to make it suitable and justifiable under the new social situation. It should be noted that polygamy is accompanied by many conditions, and without fulfilling them men cannot engage in polygamy.

(15) Muhammad Abdul-Rauf, The Islamic View of Women and the Family (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1979), p. 127.

Chapter III

Women in Primordial Islamic Society

In this chapter, I will examine the values for men and women which are provided for in Islam and the relative position of women in Islam. In order to understand Islam, I will emphasize the following points. First, it is important to comprehend the Islamic world view of "Tawhīd", which defines the relationships between God and creatures and among creatures. This concept implies that there is no discrimination between men and women as creatures of God. Second, it is necessary to point out that a complementary relationship with equal value between men and women exists as provided for in some verses of the Qur'ān.

Islamic World View of "Tawhīd"

God is the Light of the heavens and earth; the likeness of his Light is as a niche wherein is a lamp (the lamp in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star) kindled from a Blessed Tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West whose oil wellnigh would shine, even if no fire touched it; Light upon Light (God guides to His Light whom He will) (And God strikes similitudes for men, and God has knowledge of everything) [24:35] (1)

Based on the world view of "Tawhīd", this verse

expresses the concept of "existence of creatures", illustrating the special relationship between God and the world. In Islam, "Tawhīd"(unification) is the most important and fundamental concept. "Tawhīd" expresses the absolute existence of God. It means that God created everything in the world, that all creatures are from one source.(2) In other words, no creature on the earth can exist independently; each existence must be caused by the others. If we trace the paths which connect causal relationships between each existence, we find that they converge at one point. Thus, God is the direction toward which existence and creation move, and He determines the goal of the universe.

'Ali Shari'ati describes Tawhīd as follows:

Tauhid is to be interpreted in the sense of unity of nature with metanature, of man with nature, of man with man, of God with the world and with man. It depicts all of these as constituting a total, harmonious, living and self-aware system.(3)

However, in Tawhīd it is not sufficient to recognize the absolute existence of God. Even more important is to put this concept into practice, that is in the sense that all creatures are equal before God. It is not permissible for one creature to be superior to, or even to discriminate one against, another.

'Ali Shari'ati explains further that Tawhīd does not accept multiplicity, plurality and contradiction in

the world.

There is no contradiction in all of existence: no contradiction between man and nature, spirit and body, this world and the hereafter, matter and meaning. (4)

Therefore, in the concept of Tawhīd, the world has one source, God, and is ruled by a single principle. Islam has given non-hierarchical value to all creatures and never accepts "dualism" and "pluralism" which are based on more than two opposing tendencies.

If the concept of Tawhīd is applied to the relation between men and women, no difference in their values can be seen. They have different roles as creatures of God. God has given women as well as men many qualities and attributes such as ability, intelligence and morality, in order to attain full human stature. It can be said that each sex has its own functions and complements other. If one sex does not have a function which the other has, the other would make up for it. However, those functions and roles are not absolutely assigned to men and women, but relatively. Thus, there is no contradiction and opposition between men and women.

At this point, it would seem appropriate to compare the Islamic world view with the Christian view for a better understanding of Tawhīd. Although both reli-

gions are monotheistic, there is a big difference between Islam and Christianity, as the former is based on monism and the latter on dualism. In other words, Christianity divides the world into two, sacred and secular, while Islam does not. Christianity separates spirit from body, and bestows a higher value on spirit. It also applies hierarchical value order to all creatures. As a result, to the original creature is added an extra value by means of "spiritualization", or making sacred. For instance, the Christian concept of "asceticism"(5) discovered love and gave it a "value high enough to make death acceptable."(6) Thus, in Christianity, sexuality was restricted to love by the endeavor to exclude practices whose purpose was not procreation; in other words, the desire for sex and sexual pleasure were expelled. Michel Foucault explains sexuality in Christianity in relation to love and sex:

The Christian pastoral also sought to produce specific effects on desire, by the mere fact of transforming it -- fully and deliberately --into discourse:effects of mastery and detachment, to be sure, but also an effect of spiritual reconversion, of turning back to God, a physical effect of blissful suffering from feeling in one's body the pangs of temptation and the love that resists it.(7)

Although in Christianity there is a strict separation of being sacred from being secular, in Islam there

is no process of refinement into spirit, or spiritualization. Thus, in sexuality, love and sex are harmonized. This idea has oftentimes been regarded as being "immoral" by the West, which supported the Christian idea of sexuality.

In Christianity, all phenomena are interpreted within the dualistic world view. Thus, the relationship between men and women is also grasped by dualism. It is called "sex-dualism". As the words express, "second sex" means that women belong to a lower level than men. This concept gives different values to the attributes of men and women and places them at two extreme ends. The relationship between men and women is an opposing one; women can never reach the higher level to which men belong as long as they are women.

Therefore, in Christianity the difference between the sexes is a conclusive factor to divide human beings into two: superior and inferior. From the first stage of existence, men and women are categorized into different levels. They exist only as male or female possessing different attributes, rather than as human beings who share the same attributes.

However, in Islam, in order to reach the stage wherein the difference between the sexes is conceptualized, two steps must be passed through. First, both men and women are creatures of God. They possess the

same meaning and values as other creatures, such as animals and plants. Second, they are both endowed with special qualities such as intelligence and ability to think and decide as deputies of God on the earth. These distinguish men and women from other creature, as human beings. Finally, at the next stage, they are categorized into men and women in terms of the differences between the sexes biologically and psychologically.

Actually, differences exist between the attributes of men and women in Islam. However, such differences are not contradictory, rather they form a complementary relationship and no higher value is put on either of them. The important point which should be emphasized in Islam is that primarily an equal value has been bestowed on men and women as human beings.

It is also necessary to look into what kind of roles have been assigned to both men and women, as human beings. Human beings have been appointed by God as His deputies on the earth, and they have been provided with unlimited opportunities to perform this function. They are also given independence to use those abilities and opportunities. At the same time, however, they must recognize their obligations as deputies of God. They are responsible for establishing "primordial" Islamic society, which is called "'Ummah".

The 'Ummah is "a society in which a number of individuals, possessing a common faith and goal, come together in harmony with the intention of advancing and moving toward their common goal." (8) It is considered that in the 'Ummah everything in the universe is harmonized, that is, all conditions of creatures and social affairs are in balance.

In social activities, therefore, based on this concept of harmony, social affairs such as politics, economics, culture and ethics are in equilibrium. It is not permissible, for instance, for economic development to be performed at the expense of ethics. In order to keep the balance in society, human beings must realize the meanings of relationships among creatures and the corresponding relative positions as well as have an understanding of the underlying concept of Tawhīd. Thus, in the 'Ummah, the most important thing is interrelationship between each existence, not individual existence itself.

An individual does not exist independently, but exists relatively. However, this does not mean that an individual is neglected in the 'Ummah. On the contrary, an individual is given great importance, and is commanded to fully use the abilities endowed by God. By means of those abilities, human beings must establish a dynamic society which will in due course be in

proximity to God. Thus, in the 'Ummah an individual activity is approved as long as it contributes to the construction of a dynamic and harmonized society. One must recognize one's position which is relatively defined in relation to the absolute existence of God, nature, society and other creatures.

Therefore, I have shown that human beings are responsible for establishing the 'Ummah, and are endowed with the knowledge and abilities to do so, and that men and women are equal as human beings in Islam. These conclusions are supported by many revelations in the Qur'ān which start with "O humankind!" or "O believers!" addressing both men and women. These verses imply that both men and women must be equally responsible for the world, which has been given by God.

The Concept of Women in the Qur'ān

In the following section, I will look into the norm of life for Muslims, and depict the relative position of women in primordial Islamic society. 'Ali Shari'ati points out that Islam is not a one-dimensional religion. Thus, a single and unique method cannot be applied to the study of Islam.(9) In his categorization, Islam has two dimensions, faith to God based on gnostic feelings and the question of man's

life on this earth, to which, respectively, the philosophical method and the human sciences should be applied.(10) For that purpose, it is essential to examine the Qur'ān, since the Qur'ān, in a sense, is considered as the text of a symbolic discourse between God and human beings. Secondly, the Qur'ān has played an important role in offering a norm of life to Muslims. This sort of examination is helpful to understand Islam and women in the Qur'ān from an analytical viewpoint.

As we have seen in the previous section, in Islam the relationship between men and women is complementary and co-operative. A more important fact is that men and women are equal before God, that is in relation to God both men and women exist at an equal level as human beings. They have the same duties and responsibilities to society, and share the same qualities. At the next level after human beings, they are attributed different, but harmonious qualities. Seyyed H. Nasr explains the relationship between men and women as follows:

In Islam the role of men and women is seen as complementary rather than competitive. Before God, man and woman stand as equal. They have to perform the same Islamic rites and, before Him, they must bear the same responsibility for their actions. Hence it may be said that in their relation with the metacosmic Reality they are equal. But on the cosmic level, which means the psycho-

logical, biological and social levels,
their roles are complementary.(11)

In the following verse of the Qur'ān, the equality
of believers is more concretely manifested:

This is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a
guidance to the Godfearing who believe in
the Unseen, and perform the prayer, and
expend of that We have provided them; who
believe in what has been sent down to thee
and what has been sent down before thee,
and have faith in the Hereafter; those are
the ones who prosper.[2:2-4](12)

Obviously from this verse, those who follow the
way toward God are equally rewarded by God. And in
order to be rewarded in the Hereafter, they must recog-
nize the absolute existence of God and perform His
teachings in the Qur'ān. They must fulfill and actu-
alize their responsibilities and duties in order to
express their faith in God. In other words, one's
position before God completely depends upon one's
action. The prime duty of human beings is to realize
their own position in the universe, which was har-
moniously created by God.

Have We not made the earth as a cradle
and the mountains as pegs?
And We created you in pairs,
And We appointed your sleep for a rest;
and We appointed night for a garment,
and We appointed day for a livelihood
[78:6-11](13)

O mankind, We have created you male and
female, and appointed you races and

tribes, that you may know one another...
[49:13](14)

These verses imply harmony in the universe and the greatness of God. Among creatures, men and women must be harmonized with each other and with other creatures. It is considered that men and women must construct society co-operatively, as day and night compose the world harmoniously.

Therefore, if it is supposed that the relationship between God and human beings is a vertical one, the relationship between men and women is expressed in the horizontal dimension, likened to the base of a cone. It is important here to understand that this dimension is emphasized at the level of human beings.

Women as well as men are endowed with particular attributes. They have to live in the world displaying their abilities through actual performance of their own roles. However, these roles are not individually determined, but are relatively defined in terms of relationships. In other words, women are situated in relation to men, and vice versa, and both men and women are granted relative positions as human beings. Thus, it is important to examine the position of women in Islam from two perspectives: as human beings and as human beings with female attributes.

First the horizontal relationship, that between

man and woman, is analysed. In the Qur'ān, Adam and Eve are both responsible for the transgression. From the day when Adam and Eve were deceived by the devil and were expelled from Paradise by God, men and women were warned not to be tempted by the devil again. This was a symbolic matter which manifested their disobedience to God, not only for keeping their modesty, but also for protection from every temptation.(15) Thus, in Islam modesty is emphasized and is demanded for both men and women. They must live a moral life and keep society virtuous.(16)

In the Qur'ān, a woman who is more specifically addressed as wife, mother and daughter and is relatively situated by her husband, children and parents. In Islam, the sexual relationship is only allowed in the husband-wife relationship and is prohibited in all others. It is confined to the legitimate couple, which is based on the marriage contract and excludes incest. The relationship between husband and wife is complementary. In the Qur'ān, there is no verse which allows the husband's dominance over his wife, or commands the wife's obedience to her husband:

... They are vestment for you, and you are vestment for them...[2:183].

And of His signs is that He created for you, of yourselves, spouses, that you might repose in them, and he has set between you love and mercy[30:20].

The Oringinator of the heavens and the earth;He has appointed for you, of yourselves, pairs, and pairs also of the cattle, therin multiplying you ...
[42:9].(17)

It can be seen in these verses that husband and wife exist interdependently. The term, "a vestment" here expresses the relationship to support and cover up each other which is based on "love and mercy" and in which man and woman comfort each other. Furthermore, reproduction is one of the most important reasons for the creation of man and woman. "Procreation implies a biological union of the two sexes, and union that embraces both of them and in which they participate in harmonious rather than contending manner."(18)

This "harmonious cooperation of the two sexes"(19) is extended to the family which in Islam is considered as a social unit of the community:

We say,'Our Lord, give us refreshment of our wives and seed, and make us a model'
[25:74].(20)

Islam emphasizes comfortable and cooperative relationships within the family, because the family is the basic unit which sustains the social structure. For this reason, Islam allows divorce when the marriage is considered unsuccessful; divorce is accepted if there are continuous conflicts and difficulties between the

spouses, which means that they cannot live together in a helpful way and keep harmonious relationships in the family.

In the family, the woman plays an important role as mother, as well as wife. Motherhood is given great importance in the Qur'ān:

God knows what every female bears, and the wombs' shrinking and swelling; everything with Him has its measure[13:8].(21)

The Qur'ān refers further to the difficulties and hardship of both father and mother in rearing children, and commands believers to respect their parents. Put in the opposite way, both father and mother are responsible for bringing up their children. Woman plays a role as mother not only through the nurturing of her children, but also through educating them, in order to make them responsible members of the community.

The Qur'ān does not command that woman must confine herself to domestic work in the family. Wives of the prophet were addressed as follows:

Remain in your houses; and display not your finery, as did the pagans of old. And perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and obey God and His Messenger. People of the House, God only desires to put away from you abomination and cleanse you[33:33].(22)

These verses should not be interpreted to mean that a woman should be segregated in the house and not be

allowed to go out simply in order to keep her chastity. What is more important is for her to purify herself, to stay at the center of the family, and to unite the members of the family. In Islam, to purify oneself means to recognize the existence of God and attain access to divine truth.(23)

Beside these roles of a woman as a family member, in Islam a woman has to accomplish her duties as a member of the 'Ummah. In the 'Ummah, women as well as men are responsible for establishing a society which maintains "justice"(24). Beyond the family unit men and women must actively participate in social activities. They must construct social justice within the 'Ummah and fight against the evils which cause the community to deteriorate in the sense of Islam. Thus, women have the same responsibilities and duties to the 'Ummah as men. Both men and women have the same values as human beings and are equal before God as stated earlier.

As we have seen, a woman in Islam shows and realizes her faith through her position in the family and society. As a daughter, she respects her parents with gratitude, which is equal to realizing the greatness of God who created her. As a wife, she supports her husband and harmonious relationship with him, which leads to a cooperative and harmonious family and socie-

ty. As a mother, she brings up her children and gives them a good education to make them aware of the meaning of their existence.

In my opinion, these responsibilities form part of her faith to God in the horizontal dimension, which I explained at the beginning of this section. More important is the direct relationship with God, that is the vertical one. This relationship is realized through the fulfillment of her duties to the 'Ummah as a deputy of God. As a member of society, she joins in constructing and keeping justice in the social sphere.

In Islam, as I have tried to explain, one must realize one's own position within the view of Tawhīd, otherwise one cannot follow the way to God. A woman is given a relative position not only as wife, mother and daughter, but also as a member of the 'Ummah. She cannot perform her role individually: she can fulfill her responsibilities as a believer by recognizing her position in relation to her husband, children, parents and the other members of society.

Therefore, in the Islamic world view no one can exist independently; no one can live individually or cut off the relationship with others who cause one's existence. In this sense, the position of women is also reduced to Tawhīd.

Notes

(1) The Qur'ān [24:35]; Arthur J. Arberry trans. The Koran(London:Oxford University Press, 1983).

(2) 'Ali Shari'ati, Religion vs. Religion, trans. Bint al-Byr and Husain Salih(Tehran:The Hamdami Foundation, n.d.), p. 10 - 11.

(3) 'Ali Shari'ati, On the Sociology of Islam, trans. Hamid Alger(Berkeley:Mizan Press, 1979), p. 85.

(4) Shari'ati, On the Sociology of Islam, p.86. He also explains Tawhid in comparison with "Shirk", i.e. polytheism:Shirk is a "world-view that regards the universe as a discordant assemblage full of disunity, contradiction, and heterogeneity, possessing a variety of independent and clashing poles, conflicting tendencies, variegated and unconnected desires, reckonings, customs, purposes and wills." On the contrary, Tawhid represents "a particular view of the world that demonstrates a universal unity in existence, a unity between three separate hypostases - God, nature, and man - because the origin of all three is the same. All have the same direction, the same will, the same spirit, the same motion, and the same life.

(5) Michel Foucault, The History of Sexuality, trans. Robert Hurley(New York:Pantheon Books, 1978), Vol. 1, p. 158.

(6) Foucault, p. 156.

(7) Foucault, p. 23.

(8) Shari'ati, On the Sociology of Islam, p.119;The 'Ummah is also considered a living and conscious organism in the world view of Tawhid. It possesses will and common faith.

(9) Shari'ati, p. 61.

(10) Shari'ati, p. 63.

(11) Seyyed H. Nasr, Islamic Life and Thought(London;George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 212.

(12) The Qur'ān[2:2-4].

(13) The Qur'ān[78:6-11].

(14) The Qur'ān[49:13].

(15) The Qur'ān[7:25-26]; "Children of Adam! We have sent down on you a garment to cover your shameful parts, and feathers; and the garment of godrearing - that is better; that is one of God's signs; haply they will remember. Children of Adam! Let not Satan tempt you as he brought your parents out of the Garden, stripping them of their garments to show them their shameful parts. Surely he sees you, he and his tribe, from where you see them not. We have made the Satans the friends of those who do not believe."

(16) The Qur'ān[24:30-31]; "Say to the believers, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts; that is purer for them. God is aware of the things they work. And say to the believing women, that they cast down their eyes and guard their private parts, and reveal not their adornment save such as is outward..."

(17) The Qur'ān[2:183], [42:9], [30:20].

(18) Nasr, p. 212.

(19) Nasr, p. 212.

(20) The Qur'ān[25:74].

(21) The Qur'ān[13:18].

(22) The Qur'ān[33:33].

(23) Nasr, p. 17.

(24) More details will be discussed in Chapter V.

Chapter IV

Women in Modern Western Society

In order to emphasize the difference between primordial Islamic society and other societies(both traditional and modern) in terms of the relationship between man and woman, I will examine the so-called "feminist movement" in Western industrial society.

The feminist movement started in the twentieth century as a kind of struggle against the ideology of "patriarchy" which still remained in society. It started as a political movement and recognized that the domination of women by men was closely associated with the patriarchal ideology, which had prevented women from participating in political activities.

On the other hand, the radical feminist movement emerged under a different circumstance: capitalism was ripe and the effects of industrialization prevailed in every section of society. With the development of capitalism, the idea that women's economic independence is essential for women's emancipation from men's domination was socially constructed. Thus, it is appropriate to examine the changes in the position of women in modern Western society, in relation to the development of capitalism.

The position of women was greatly influenced by

certain social changes. In early capitalism, the development of technology gave women the opportunity to participate in economic activities. Besides the demand for female workers in new industries, technology relieved the physical burden in productive work, with the result that physical weakness was no longer the reason which prevented women from participating in economic activities and from being economically independent.

Historically, the exclusion of women from economic activities and women's dependence on men gave social weakness to women along with biological handicaps.(1) Thus, until then, women in the West also suffered from oppression in the patriarchal family, wherein the males kept the dominant authority by forming a hierarchy. However, concerning the male behavioral pattern of nurturing females and their young, which is closely related to the source of authority in patriarchy, Margaret Mead points out that human fatherhood is a social invention, while motherhood is deeply rooted in actual biological conditions:

Somewhere at the dawn of human history, some social invention was made under which males started nurturing females and their young. We have no reason to believe that the nurturing males had any knowledge of physical paternity ... In every known human society, everywhere in the world, the young male learns that when he grows up, one of the things which he must do in order to be a full member of society is to provide food

for some female and her young.(2)

The tendency for the main role of women to be confined to giving birth and rearing her children became more distinct under patriarchy. Moreover, the social change brought about by the emergence of manufacturing after the Industrial Revolution and detaching economic activities from the domestic sphere(3) made it easier to accentuate this tendency. In other words, economic activities which were separated from domestic work were assigned to men, and domestic work, which was relegated to the periphery of the economic sphere, became the responsibility of women.

However, it should be added, at this point, that technology alone could not solve the problem of women's subordination as had been expected. "Industrial labor and automated technology both promise the preconditions for women's liberation alongside man's - but no more than the preconditions."(4)

Furthermore, contraception, which prevailed and was justified among the people in the nineteenth century, greatly influenced women's lives(5) as it meant that the mode of procreation was changed and child-bearing became one option among others. Thus, by means of contraception, sexual practices were separated from reproductive purposes and women had extra time which was not spent on children.

With the increase of opportunities and demand for women to participate in economic activities under the development of capitalism, male superiority in economic power could no longer form the basis for justifying male-dominance. Margaret Mead continues to explain the relationship between fatherhood and social change:

Within the family, each new generation of young males learn the appropriate nurturing behavior and superimpose upon their biologically given maleness this learned parental role. When the family breaks down -- [as is does] in periods of abrupt transition from one type of economy to another -- this delicate line of transmission is broken.(6)

Thus, it can be said that the new economic mode of capitalism brought contradiction into the patriarchal family and changed the relationship between male and female.

At this point, it is important to examine social change in the early period of capitalism. Joyce Appleby illustrates the American example:

In the eighteenth century two features of the market economy fascinated contemporaries: the reliance upon individual initiative and the absence of authoritarian direction. Increasingly private arrangements were counted upon to supply the public's material needs. At the same time the productive goal of making wealth to produce wealth supplanted the older notion of wealth as the maintainer of status. In these transformations we come close to the conceptual heart of capitalism ... (7)

Under these circumstances, an individual was disem-
bedded from his community.

Joyce Appleby further explains the emergence of
"liberal individualism" in the eighteenth century: "Men
appeared more and more as separate, autonomous entities
than as members of some collectivity." (8) Therefore,
with a growing number of females participating in
economic activities under liberal individualism, the
authoritative nature of the male position within the
family was no longer compatible with the social trend.
This contradiction was, however, held in check by the
nuclear family.

What is more important to note here is that the
substance and meaning of the family were being changed.
There was a change in the family with the development
of capitalism and a change in the position of women in
society. Juliet Mitchell illustrates such family
change in the economic sense during the early period of
capitalism:

The family changed from being the economic
basis of individual private property under
feudalism to being the focal point of the
idea of individual private property under a
system that banished such an economic form
from its central mode of production -
capitalism. (9)

During the early period of capitalism the individual
was more visible in society than before and began to be

separated from the tie of collectivity, in which the individual had been embedded. However, at that time, individuals were still united in the family, and the family kept its own functions which were beyond the control of the economic system. In other words, "early industrial capitalism did not immediately destroy the domestic economy. Even into the early twentieth century family economy supplemented the industrial wage"(10).

At this point, it is appropriate to examine the nature of the market economy in order to have a clearer illustration of the situation of women in modern Western society. One of the prominent features of the modern era, is considered to be the pervasion of the market economy into the associations of people as the identification of economy and market has proceeded. Karl Polanyi tells us:

Men's ultimate dependence on nature and his fellows for the means of his survival was put under the control of that new fangled institutional creation of superlative power, the market, which developed overnight from lowly beginnings. This institutional gadget, which became the dominant force in the economy -- now justly described as a market economy -- then gave rise to yet another, even more extreme development, namely a whole society embedded in the mechanism of its own economy -- a market society.(11)

This social transformation implies that with the

development of capitalism, the tendency toward individualization was accentuated. During the later period of capitalism, the market economy has been enlarged to ensure the survival of capitalism; in other words, the exchangeable value system has gradually been applied to human relationships as well. This situation is represented by the fact that the market economy has gradually entered into the domain of the family and started to destroy family bonds. John O'Neill calls individualism in the market economy "neo-individualism"(12). Under the situation of neo-individualism, the tendency of defamilization is accentuated and attempts are made to strengthen the market as the ultimate matrix of human life.(13) O'Neill further illustrates this situation as follows:

... the deepest tendency of capitalism begins to reveal itself: because capitalism seeks, but never completely manages, to replace human beings with machines, it is driven to replace family society with a consumer and service society underwritten by its industrial, legal, medical technology and feminizing ideologies.(14)

Thus, even the family has been reduced to a mere assembly of atomistic individuals, and no longer forms an organic entity.

Industrialization replaced domestic work with the machine and made it a target of the service industry.

Food, clothing and entertainment were gradually drawn into the market economy. "The commodity fiction" has been created, and it runs as an automaton which is governed by its own law.(15) It is this commodity fiction that has changed the nature of domestic work. Domestic work has been transformed into a calculated utility by means of the market economy. At the same time, by giving women extra time, capitalism had succeeded in withdrawing them from the family and pushing them into the labor force. Ultimately, domestic work began to be affected by the market economy.

However, a more important change which became visible through time, is that capitalism created the sphere of non-wage economic activities, or what Ivan Illich calls "shadow work".(16) Because of this change, domestic work is oftentimes considered as slave labor. At this point, the concept of "sexism" emerged. Juliet Mitchell explains this along with the concept of the economic exploitation of women as follows:

... what we are witnessing in this general denigration of women is an inevitable consequence of the socio-economic system of capitalism in which it operates. The inferiorization of women is essential to its functioning.(17)

Immanuel Wallerstein illustrates in more detail the process by which sexism has been institutionalized with the development of capitalism.

What was new under historical capitalism was the correlation of division labour and valuation of work. Men may often have done different work from women (and adults different work from children and the elderly), but under historical capitalism there has been a steady devaluation of the work of women (and of the young and old), and a corresponding emphasis on the value of the adult male's work. Whereas in other systems men and women did specified (but normally equal) tasks under historical capitalism the adult male wage-earner was classified as the 'breadwinner', and the adult female home-workers as 'housewife'. Thus when national statistics began to be compiled, itself a product of a capitalist system, all breadwinners were considered members of the economically active labour-force, but no housewives were. Thus was sexism institutionalized. The legal and paralegal apparatus of gender distinction and discrimination followed quite logically in the wake of this basic differential valuation of labour.(18)

In a society based on "utilitarianism", which reduces everything to a use value, only actions in pursuit of profit under capitalism can be regarded as useful. Women are relegated to the realm of non-productive labour. Domestic work is no longer considered socially productive and, as a result, neither women nor men place importance on it. Therefore, as the family has become gradually eroded by the market economy, the relationship between man and woman has been seen only in terms of economic value.

The radical feminism of the 1960s was a struggle against economic sexism which constituted the male

dominance of females within socio-economic relations. Radical feminism insisted on according women the same status as men, abolishing sexual divisions at work. However, due to the lack of proper historical analysis and inclusive perspectives, this movement was going in the direction of "uni-sexualization". It attempted to equalize or average the difference between man and woman by making the qualitative differences quantitative. However, such equalization cannot be the key to the emancipation of women. On the contrary, it is a very favorable tendency for the demands of the market economy, which attempts to change all qualitative values into utilities. Margaret Mead implies such a point in the following quotation:

We can recognize how our experience limits our questions by exploring the possible results of asking different questions. Suppose we ask: "Aren't women just as capable of performing activity X as men are?" Or the reverse: "Aren't men as capable of activity Y as women?" Investigation of this sort usually leads to quantitative comparisons, in which it may be found that men are a little faster than women, or women a little faster than men, or that there is no difference ... Once we have given such an answer, then, in terms of our present culture, employers, or benevolent government agencies, or one sex pressure groups will set to work to exploit these differences or to minimize them, in order to get better work for the pay, or to invent a machine that will equalize the difference. But in either case the discovered differences suggest no new uses of human resources ... They will primarily be the background not for using differences

constructively, but for inventing some methods for equalizing the differences so that they do not matter, or for pigeon-holing individuals in one job rather than another.(19)

At this point, the other aspect of discrimination against women should be noted, that is "sex dualism" in establishing economic sexism in Western industrial society. As I explained in Chapter III, within the concept of sex dualism, women are permanently given the inferior position. Thus when the economy was sustained by the dual system, that is when it began to consist of the market economy and the "nether" economy (based on shadow work), the nether economy was assigned to women. Under this situation, radical feminism advocated the emancipation of women from the sphere which belonged to the nether economy. However, the problem of women's subordination in sexism is not solved by merely fleeing from the nether economy. Such a movement only results in an acceleration of the growth of the market economy.

Thus, John O'Neill criticizes the radical feminist position and further argues that:

Feminists are ideologists. That is to say, they believe that the family economy is a slave economy and should be replaced by a free economy of working and consuming individuals whose only ties are legal, contractual relations. They consider that the logic of contract is sufficient (or justifiably expensive) in each of the domains of special reproduction outlined above to achieve this shift. In this, they display

a more coherent vision of capitalist society than it has so far practised.(20)

It is usually assumed that women would be emancipated from subordination, if they could gain equality in economic conditions such as wages, employment opportunities and promotion. Nawal El Saadawi expresses her criticism of this type of women's emancipation as follows:

Superficial processes of modernization, whether in the West or the East, will never lead to true equality between women and men in the economic, social, political and sexual aspects of life. Sexual rights as practised in many Western societies do not lead to the emancipation of women, but to an accentuated oppression where women are transformed into commercialized bodies and a source of increasing capitalist profits.(21)

An equalization of men and women only in economic conditions would not be a fundamental solution to the problem of women's subordination, which has been caused by the infiltration of the market economy into human relations, especially the relationship between man and woman in the family. The problem will not be solved as long as its solution is sought within the context of the market society. The problem is that the family no longer possesses organic functions and meanings in society; it has become a mere contact point of individuals and human relations are disintegrating.

Therefore, in Western industrial society under the market economy, an individual becomes a single person, as opposed to a "family being".(22) Furthermore, in late capitalism, the market economy has come to regulate the economy, and human relationships in the family, whereas it had played only a subsidiary function in early capitalism. Late capitalism has rapidly grown by means of the expansion of the market mechanism. In the meantime, the market economy has eroded the early folklore of individual family and society, and changed all those interlocking relationships into calculated goods and utilities. Thus, the market economy has intensified the tendency that individuals are related to each other only in terms of legal contracts and services. This is the very problem that both men and women are facing in modern Western society, to which I will return in the next chapter.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the framework of discrimination against women and its solution, which emerged particularly in the development of capitalism in the West, is not applicable to women in other regions in the same way, because "universalism" itself is the product of Western capitalism. The idea of women's liberation within the Western context would not solve the problems which women in the Middle East are confronting. In other words, the Westernization of

women based on superficial modernization would not bring about emancipation from the suffering and discrimination really imposed on women in the Middle East. It would rather result in the deterioration of the unique cultural values of the region.

Notes

(1) Among recent studies on biological sexual differences, see Evelyne Sullerot and Odette Thibault eds. Josei towa Nanika[Le Fait Feminin] (Kyoto: Jinbunshoin, 1980).

(2) Margaret Mead, Male and Female (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), p. 189.

(3) Ivan Illich, Shadow Work, trans. Tamanai Yoshiro, Kurihara Akira (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1982), p. 206.

(4) Juliet Mitchell, Woman's Estate (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd., 1971), p. 105.

(5) Mitchell, p. 108.

(6) Mead, p. 192.

(7) Joyce Appleby, Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s (New York: New York University Press, 1984), p. 22 - 23.

(8) Appleby, p. 15.

(9) Mitchell, p. 154.

(10) John O'Neill, "Defamilization and the Feminization of Law in Early and Late Capitalism", International Journal of Law and Psychiatry, Vol. 5, 1982, p. 264.

(11) Karl Polanyi, The Livelihood of Man (New York: Academic Press INC, 1977), p. 9.

(12) John O'Neill, Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1985), p. 19.

(13) O'Neill, Five Bodies, p. 91 - 117.

(14) O'Neill, Defamilization, p. 264.

(15) Polanyi, p. 10 - 11.

(16) See Ivan Illich, Shadow Work. Shadow work is the additional labour of a consumer needed to make

consumer goods usable, which has newly emerged in the market economy. It is composed of the spending of a consumer's time and effort, and is different from labour for the production of goods or services. Without shadow work, especially in the family economy, consumer goods cannot be used. For instance, in order to cook eggs, a housewife has to go to the market by car and cooks them using an electric cooker. The efforts of a housewife to go to the market and cook eggs using commercial goods such as a car and an electric cooker are considered as shadow work here.

(18) Immanuel Wallerstein, Historical Capitalism (London: Verso Editions), p. 25.

(19) Mead, p. 14.

(20) O'Neill, Defamilization, p.257.

(21) Nawal El Saadawi, The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World, trans. and ed. Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Press, 1980), p. x.

(22) John O'Neill explains that: "Men and women are familial beings who divide between them the tasks of reproducing themselves as average members of the society in which they live, subject to its legal and political economy." He further illustrates, using a structural approach to the economy of reproduction, that "Individually and collectively, social and economic reproduction is a family phenomenon; it is motivated by more than a concern for consumption. We are family beings before we are economic beings. Hence the family wage is the basic economic unit of income ... The family wage is paid in exchange for the work of being a familial/familizing employee. What is being recognized is a social function as well as a narrowly economic function."

Chapter V

Women in Islam

In this final chapter, I would like to depict the woman in Islam, who I will compare with the woman in traditional Islamic society and the woman in modern Western society.

First, I will look into the image of woman which was advocated in the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979 as a case study. I will attempt to analyze the Revolution from the cultural viewpoint and consider it as a struggle for the reconstruction of the Islamic value system.(1) From this type of analysis, I can derive one important aspect of woman in Islam, as a responsible member of the 'Ummah. Thus, the ideas behind the movements during the Revolution are given primary importance.

Finally, the image of the woman in Islam is discussed, bringing together all the types of women who were examined in the preceding chapters, in order to examine the meaning of "equality" of the sexes. This would result in a better understanding of the woman in Islam, who offers a stark contrast with the woman in traditional Islamic society, and the woman in modern Western society.

The Ideal Model of Woman in the Islamic Revolution in Iran

In the regime of Pahlavi Shah(1941-1979), especially after World War II, Iran devoted itself to industrialization and modernization with the help of the U.S. In the 1960s, Iran greatly increased its GNP mainly from oil revenues, and succeeded in increasing its material abundance.

In the process of modernization, Islam was not completely expelled from society, but was confined to the individual religious domain. In spite of the fact that Islam had constituted the political, economic, and ethical value system, and had been a norm of life for the Muslims, the Shah's regime intended to secularize itself by separating religion from politics.(2) An attempt was made to replace the inherited Islamic values with Western values, because the former were considered the cause of backwardness and obstacles to the rapid modernization of Iran. Under these circumstances, women's lives became one of the targets of Westernization. Women were encouraged to be liberated from Islamic convention, which the Westernized activists thought was the cause of discrimination against women. However, for many of the women who sought the authentic Islamic way of life, it was difficult to be fully Westernized, as they were then in

danger of losing their identity. 'Ali Shari'ati depicts this difficult situation as follows:

In our society, women change rapidly. The tyranny of our times and the influences of institutions take her from 'what she is'. All her traditional characteristics and values are taken away from her until they make her into a creature 'they want', 'they build' and we see that 'they have built'. This is why the most important and relevant question for the awakened woman at this time is, 'Who am I', knowing full well that she cannot remain what she is.(3)

Thus, for a better understanding of the Islamic values which the Revolution tried to regain, it is appropriate to examine the values of the Islamic woman.

'Ali Shari'ati pointed out that women moved in two directions under the policies of Westernization toward: "the traditional woman" and toward "the new woman". The former stayed in the traditional station, that is she followed old traditions "which were presented in the name of religion, but in fact, were national and tribal traditions ruling over the spirit, thoughts and behaviour of society." (4) The latter became modernized in the Western way, as the European type of woman who was newly introduced. Then, 'Ali Shari'ati advocates the ideal model of the Islamic woman, stating that women should identify with Fatima: "a perfect example of an ideal woman, of what a woman could be and no one has become." (5)

At this point, it is necessary to further examine the traditional woman and the new(modern) woman in order to make clear the way in which the ideal image of woman in the Revolution differs from others. The traditional woman has been deprived of her human rights such as acquiring knowledge and participating in social activities in the name of Islam, although Islam provided woman with those rights. "Her human values have been lowered to 'mother of the child'." (6) In other words, she plays the roles of mother and wife, but without human entity, and is unconscious of her human values which are bestowed by God. Although the traditional woman is very pious in worship, she has not yet become aware of her responsibilities and duties to society as one of its members. There is a vicious cycle here: the restrictions on woman in education and social activities made her irresponsible and indifferent to society, and vice versa. Because of this, she is "asleep in her quiet, tame and ancient mold" (7) which had been made prejudicially in the name of religion. It is a problem of the traditional woman that she lacks the attitude necessary to pursue the real values of Islam.

On the other hand, the modern woman follows a completely different value system which was brought from the West in the course of modernization. As I ex-

plained in Chapter IV, the Western value system, which has been conceptualized with the development of capitalism, is based on utilitarianism and individualism. It is a prerequisite for the expansion and survival of capitalism to break down the interlinking relationships of people and the folklore of family and society. Thus, Iranian society in the pre-revolutionary era was beginning to experience almost the same social change as the West had experienced.

The Western values began to erode the Islamic values by completely spoiling "the cultural symbols which in the past have been so vital in inculcating among Iranians a sense of self, and explanation of the cosmos and of social reality." (8) However, social change in the direction of severing the relationships among human beings was incompatible with Islam, because in Islam there always exist inherent movements and powers toward unification. As I explained in Chapter III, in the world view of Islam, the relative positions of all creatures are defined by means of their relationships with others, and human beings are responsible for establishing the 'Ummah.

Based on the concept of the 'Ummah, individuals possess a common faith and goal. 'Ali Shari'ati emphasizes that "Islam has made intellectual responsibilities and shared movement toward a common goal the basis

of its social philosophy."(9) Thus, it can be said that the deterioration of Islamic values under the influence of Western values, which are based on the principle of the market economy, results in the destruction of the idea of the 'Ummah. It is true that the economy plays an important role as the infrastructure of the 'Ummah, but it must be a social system which "is based on equity and justice and ownership by the people."(10) This is a different idea from that of the market economy which is based on free competition to pursue individual profit. It cannot be an ultimate goal of the 'Ummah to attain economic prosperity such as high GNP, efficient industrial output and investment.

In the pre-revolutionary period, resulting from the modernization initiated by the economic structural change, many sectors of Iranian life were affected. This social change is explained as follows:

At the social level, social change involves transformations affecting the family, religion and education above all. It also refers to developments influencing employment, health and services (typically provided by the state). Modernizers view beneficial social change as taking place on this dimension when the institutions represented here, and the culture that evolves from them, experience consolidation, maturation, differentiation and growth. However, many modernizers adduce measures of consolidation, maturation, etc., which are closely tied to their own parochial

vision of success. In this respect, then the stress they place on maintaining the upward trend of the economic indicators often creates serious dislocations in the sector.(11)

As the result of the intellectual and cultural attack of the West, the modern woman emerged. This modern woman thought that she was liberated; however, from the point of view of Islamic values, such a woman was regarded only as "a modern doll".(12)

'Ali Shari'ati illustrates the particular changes in women resulting from the expansion of the market economy as follows:

Now she has taken the form of an instrument employed for serving social and economic purposes. She is used to change the form of society. She is used to destroy the highest values of the traditional societies. She is used to change ethics. She is used to change a traditional, spiritual, ethical or religious society for the sake of an empty, absurd, consuming society. She is used to transform art which had been the theophany of the divine spirit of humanity. She is changed into an instrument for sexuality in order to change the type of humanity.(13)

Furthermore, the critical view is shown that modern women live only in the direction of their desires, devoting themselves to consumerism, that they are not charged with productive work, and that they are not aware of human dignity and responsibilities to their society. All are considered to be the results of

Western material civilization.

Islam accepts neither the traditional woman nor the modern woman: they both lack the attitude required to pursue the values of Islam as human beings and to fulfill their responsibilities to society.

In the 1970s, it seemed as if the rapid industrialization and modernization under the secularization policies had changed the social structure and the value system in Iran. However, the consciousness of Islam, to which people had been awakened since the early twentieth century(14) and which, since then, had been consolidated among the people, was never replaced by Western values. It is the repletion of such consciousness of Islamic values that led to the Islamic Revolution in 1979. 'Ali Shari'ati affirms the high values which Iranian people have inherited as follows:

Fortunately, Islamic societies from this point of view, although they would not consciously stand against the colonial attack of the West, have cultural power and possibilities, have a very progressive history, culture and religion and are very rich in this way. Thus they can, by relying on those values, sources, powers and by reviving and progressing towards the high humanitarian values which exist in their culture and their past history, encourage their new and young generation to stand and resist against the West's attack.(15)

To better understand Islamic values, at this point, it is appropriate to examine the specific values which

can be seen in the two ideal models of women followed by the Iranians: Fatima and Zaynab.

As explained in Chapter III, the family is a social unit. The members of the Prophet's family are considered a manifestation of the highest humanitarian and Islamic values. In other words, the actions of the Prophet's family are a text from which non-ostensive reference and symbolic social dimensions are derived. Thus, it is significant to look into the roles and activities of Fatima and Zaynab in order to grasp a clearer image of the ideal woman in the Revolution. It is not the purpose of this analysis to depict their situations, but to comprehend a set of actions whose meaning exceeds and transcends their social and situational conditions.

Fatima is considered the most respectable and virtuous woman, as the daughter of Muhammad, the wife of Ali, the mother of Husayn and Zaynab. As the daughter of Muhammad, she respected her father and supported him in the troubles that occurred between tribes. Finally, she came to be called, "the mother of her father".(16) As the wife of Ali, she supported her husband in the confrontation with Abu-Bakr and 'Umar.(17) As the mother of Husayn and Zaynab, she trained them, especially Zaynab, at home. The activities of Husayn and Zaynab in Karbala are oftentimes

regarded as the result of the good education by Fatima.

However, the more important qualities which can be seen in Fatima are her qualified knowledge of Islam, and her sense and respect for social responsibility and social justice. In other words, her attitude in pursuing her duties and human values is worthy and respectable for Muslims. It is considered that the circumstances of injustice and corruption under which Fatima lived had similarities to the social problems of the 1970s in Iran.

The situation of Fatima after Muhammad's death is oftentimes referred to. It can be grasped from the following sermon which Ali gave at the time of the burial of Fatima:

... Certainly your daughter would apprise you of the joining together of your Ummah (people) for oppressing her. You ask her in detail and get all the news about the position. This has happened when long time had not elapsed and your remembrance had not disappeared. My salam be on you both, the salam of a grief stricken not of a disgusted or a hateful person; for it I go away it is not because I am weary (of you) and if I stay it is not due to lack of belief in what Allah has promised the endurers. (18)

This speech is generally explained as follows: the treatment of Fatima after the death of Muhammad was extremely painful as those who claimed love and attachment with the prophet during his life -- Abu Bakr

and his companions -- became so engrossed in their machinations for power. Thus, they plotted to obliterate the prestigious position of the family of the Prophet. With this intention, in order to crush her economic position, Fatima's claim for the estate of Fadak was turned down, whereas she was entitled to the usufruct.(19)

'Ali Shari'ati also refers to this matter, and explains that Fatima's efforts to take back the ownership were not for the private property, but were the struggle against injustice brought about by the oppressive ruling system. Fatima criticized its deviation from Islamic rights and justice. This activity should not be reduced to an economic value. As a symbol, example, reason and manifestation, it has the highest value of Islam.(20)

Therefore, in the pre-revolutionary period it was required that the people should stand against injustice which dominated Iranian society. Women were required to identify with Fatima, who is the highest symbol of woman in the family, in motherhood and in society.

After the Revolution in 1979, the activities of Zaynab in Karbala were also taken as the symbol for women in the Revolution.(21) It should be noted here that the struggle in Karbala became one of the texts of the Iranian Revolution. Murtada Mutahhari explains

that Imam Husayn's movement implies the nature of the Revolution:

The actions of Imam Hussein(ع) can be explained by his logic of attack, martyrdom and propagation of revolution ... Imam Hussein(ع) wished to spread this movement by his logic of revolution. It was for this reason that he brought his household with him, for, they could carry his message.(22)

After the martyrdom of Husayn, Zaynab performed the mission in order to disclose the injustice of Yazid to the people. "She expressed with her words the facts and the truth that Husein expressed with his blood."(23) During and after the Islamic Revolution, the proponents of the Revolution have identified themselves with Husayn and Zaynab. They stood against what Islam regarded as injustice and corruption, which were brought by the Western material civilization and market economy, recognizing their duties to keep society purified in the sense of Islam.

Therefore, as I have shown, the ideal woman in the Iranian Revolution cannot be reduced only to a daughter, wife or mother. She possesses higher values, that is, the values of human beings. At this level, there is no distinction between man and woman. The values of human beings are actualized by participating in the social sphere, in the 'Ummah. Human beings are

responsible for keeping the 'Ummah harmonious in the world as deputies of God. Moreover, they must pursue wisdom in order to participate in society with consciousness of their responsibilities. The ultimate duty of human beings is to go on the path to God with faith. Within the context of Islam as well as the context of the Iranian Revolution, being faithful to God is to participate in social activities and fight against the injustice and corruption in society. Furthermore it is the social activities for establishing the 'Ummah which express or embody their human values.

At the present time in Iran, the conceptualization of the ideal woman in Islam is still under discussion. However, it is noteworthy that since the Revolution women are more aware of Islamic values. They are trying to comprehend the meanings of their existence and their duties within the context of Islam. Moreover, they are very positive and active to express their human values endowed by God.

The Image of Woman in Islam:What is "Equality" in Islam?

I have already pointed out that Muslim women in the Middle East are generally considered to be discriminated against or even oppressed, and many of the

existing Western studies exhibit a tendency to exaggerate such generalizations. On the whole, these studies base their assertions regarding discrimination on the practices of women's veiling or the separation of the sexes in the public sphere. Then, they give the image of a woman who is treated like a servant or a slave, deprived of all her human rights and forced to obey the master of the family. This kind of observation seems to be deeply rooted in a preconceived prejudice against the Islamic culture of the Middle East, based on ethnocentrism in the Western culture.

For about a hundred years after the advent of Islam, Islam attained a high civilization in the Middle East, which surpassed the Western one. However, later, the West carried out modernization through the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution, while the Islamic civilization stagnated. After the attainment of modernization, the West became dominant, culturally as well as politically and economically, over the Middle East.

Behind this dominance is "the ideology of progress" developed under capitalism in the modern era. In the theory of evolutionary progress, systems and ideas in later history are considered better and more developed than ones from an earlier period.(24) Moreover, universalism, which became an epistemology in

the course of Western modernization, has searched for general statements about the world. Thus, in the Western theory of modernity sustained by universalism and the ideology of progress, Middle Eastern culture is considered as being far behind. The same is true of Western perspectives on Muslim women. Since all situations of women in the world are universalized, even the social position of Muslim women is viewed by the analogy of the situation of women in their own culture. Then, such an analysis often reaches the conclusion that women in the Middle East have not yet been enlightened and realized their oppressed situation. Under the epistemology of universalism, the concept of "equality" has an absolute meaning. Thus, an attempt is rarely made to examine "equality" for Muslim women within the context of Islam.

Therefore, at this point, it is important to reconsider the meaning of "equality" between man and woman in Islam. In this section, I shall seek to comprehend the meaning of equality of the sexes from two standpoints: whether they are endowed with the same values and whether men and women have the same rights.

Regarding the given values and abilities, it should be reiterated here that Islam has assigned in its principles, the same duties to both men and women, and there is no difference between them in accom-

plishing those duties. As discussed in Chapter III, in Islam both men and women have the same value as human beings. Although they possess different attributes as male and female, these attributes play predicative roles for the as human beings. In other words, male and female attributes stand on the level next to that of human attributes.

This becomes clearer when compared with Christianity which is based on dualism. In the Christian world view, every existence is perceived in the context of dualism. Thus, the existence value of human beings is also based on dualism. In Christianity, human beings are divided into two kinds: superior and inferior. In categorizing human beings, the attributes of the sexes become a determinant of this dualistic perception. Contrary to the concept of Islam on human beings, in Christianity human nature is replaced by the attributes of the sexes. Thus, in Christianity there is no concept of equality as human beings, while there is in Islam. In Christianity, one kind of human being, the male, is perpetually superior with higher value than the other, the female. Women cannot attain the same level of human beings to which men belong, due to such sexual dualism. In the sense that woman is bestowed with lower value than man and is considered as being inferior in abilities, woman in Christianity is

given an unequal position in existence.

In Islam, human dignity is equally given to both men and women. Men and women are equal before God, and at the same time, they are endowed with different attributes. The difference between the sexes cannot be discussed from the viewpoint of the relative merits of male and female, because there is no point of comparison. They are granted different attributes in order that they can fully develop as human beings. Concerning the rights given to women, it is oftentimes stated that most women in the Middle East are deprived of their rights, especially political rights, and because of this, they cannot succeed in preventing male dominance.

As I explained in Chapter IV, Western feminism started from acquiring political rights in order for women to have a voice in social matters. Since the franchise generally came by stages, starting from a restrictive property qualification, moving to manhood suffrage, and finally reaching women suffrage(25), the attainment of political rights is considered one of the important steps in women's liberation.

Like the women in the West, women in the Middle East were behind in gaining the franchise. Because of this kind of structural similarity between the situation of women in the West and the Middle East, it is

generally concluded that the enfranchisement of women is one of the important solutions to the problem of women's suppression in the Middle East. Furthermore, the principles of Islam are usually counted as the main cause of the restriction of women's rights. However, an examination of the Qur'ān, which is the primary source of the principles of Islam, proves the contrary. In the Qur'ān it is written that both men and women should participate in social activities and pursue wisdom. These are commanded as their duties. In this sense, no Muslims must be indifferent to social affairs including politics.

What needs more emphasis in this regard is the fact that it is still controversial whether Western political institutions, like the parliamentary system, are suitable or compatible with Islam. Thus, the structural similarity does not prove that the nature of the problems of Western feminism and those of women in the Middle East are identical. Then, it is necessary to continue to inquire into the concept of rights in Islam.

In Islam, one's rights must be exercised only for the end as provided by Law, or Sharī'ah.(27) This implies that one's deeds are controlled by Sharī'ah, and that one should refrain from all its prohibitions and perform all its obligations.(27) A Muslim, who

absolutely submits himself/herself to Allah, is under an obligation to realize God's Will on Earth. God's Will is expressed in other words by Divine Justice. Thus, justice in the concept of Islam derives from God. Majid Khadduri explains it as follows:

God disclosed himself through Revelations, communicated to men through prophets in which his justice is embodied. The justice which flows from such a high divine source is considered applicable to all men and forms another category of justice. In contrast with positive justice, it may be called Divine or Revelational justice. It is the product of intuition, or divine inspiration, and is closely interwoven with religion and ethics.(28)

Therefore, Muslims must primarily fulfill their obligations commanded by God to establish the righteous 'Ummah based on Divine justice. Then, in the context of the justice of the 'Ummah, the individual rights of Muslims can be insisted on and exercised. At this point, it can be acknowledged that Islamic Law gives to rights the nature of "sociality" based on the idea of the 'Ummah.(29) Islam guarantees individual rights, but prohibits the exercise of one's right in a case where it would reduce the welfare of the 'Ummah or break the equilibrium of the 'Ummah. The concept of right in Islam is identical to neither socialism nor liberalism.

If we take into account this concept of right in

Islam, it becomes apparent that women as well as men are fully endowed with the rights to fulfill their duties. However, in the context of Islam the equality of right between the sexes does not necessarily mean that men's rights are identical to women's, and vice versa.(30) Since, as previously seen, the relationships between men and women are complementary and it is primarily important for both to establish the 'Ummah harmoniously, it can be a rationale that men's rights are different from women's rights but both are complementary in order to fulfill their duties as a whole. However, it should not be forgotten that, as explained in Chapter III, men and women have the same human rights at a different level.

Therefore, if there is a situation in which women cannot exercise their right to perform their duties as Muslims, it is not considered as discrimination but rather as "injustice" within the context of Islam. Furthermore, if there is in Islamic society the same type of sexism based on discrimination as in Western society, such a situation cannot be solved only by changing the women's situation, because it means that the social value system, including the social structure and people's minds, have as a whole deviated from the norm of Islam.

It is appropriate to reiterate the comparison

between the Western concept of equality of the sexes behind Western feminism and the Islamic concept. The idea of sexual dualism had fundamentally existed in the Christian world; however, it was the social change in the modern era that determined and institutionalized the inferiorization of women. The great social change which people in the West experienced in the modern era seems to have been caused partly by the change of the epistemological level.(31) The difference between two objects came to be discerned or recognized by changing the attributes of the objects into quantitative and exchangeable values. Thus, since even the differences between the sexes had been quantitatively recognized, Western feminism, especially in the 1960s, aimed solely at making up those quantitative differences in order to liberate women from the inferior status.

Sexual dualism was turned into economic sexism in the market society of the modern era. Contrary to the expectations of Western feminists, the policies of this movement seemed to produce nothing but encouragement for economic sexism. The idea behind Western feminism faithfully reflects the sexual dualism of Christianity, and is the result of the institutionalization of women's inferiority, that is economic sexism based on male dominance. In order to overcome institutionalized sexism, the only way for women to be equal to men is to

gain the same rights as those which guarantee men's privilege in society. Needless to say, in the context of the market society, it is considered that the liberation of women can be accomplished by endeavouring to make up the quantitative differences between the sexes. Feminism under the market economy made its way toward changing human relationships into commercial goods and utilities to solve the problem of women's inferior situation. Seyyed H. Nasr suggests this point as follows:

One of the greatest errors of the modern world is the attempt made everywhere to destroy all qualitative differences and to reduce all things to a least common denominator in the name of equality and democracy. It is one of the most conspicuous features of the tendency towards the total reign of quantity from which the modern world suffers. This error is to be seen especially in the question of the relation between the two sexes and the role of women in society.(31)

A woman who is relegated to an inferior position in the realm of non-productive labour exerts efforts to be another man, since for her this seems the only way to obtain equal status. Women found a clue to solving this problem by participating in economic activities; that is, they tried to show their abilities and to be equal to men by joining in the labor force.

However, as long as the market mechanism, whose major principle is based on "differentiation" for

gaining profits, is applied to human relationships, women can never escape from their situation of discrimination. Since the market mechanism continuously exercises its differentiation cycle, the efforts to even the differences would result in the creation of a new difference. Thus, the economic-oriented liberation of women does not solve the problem of the relegation of women, but rather helps the market economy to change human values and to render the relationships between human beings meaningless. This is a sort of double binding situation that is intractable within the system.

This value concept which changes all values into exchangeable ones is completely opposed to the value concept of Islam. Thus, this type of women's liberation has no sense or significance for Muslims. In Islam, the attributes of the sexes are subsidiary qualities attached to human values. The differences between male and female attributes are qualitative, not quantitative. Thus, one cannot put those attributes into order by means of quantitative comparison. In Islam men and women are endowed with different qualities and abilities psychologically, biologically and socially. However, those differences are not the conditions for the evaluation of human beings and, as I have repeatedly explained, men and women maintain

complementary and harmonious relationships.

Therefore, what is necessary for Muslim women as well as Muslim men is to fight against injustice in society in the context of Islam, but not to compete with each other in order to be superior to the other. The direction toward the liberation of Muslim women is not to try to become something with which she cannot identify, or to become at best a second-rate male. Such a way for liberation is considered in the Islamic value system as "nothing but a poison which kills the spirit of both men and women and drags them to the infra human level." (32)

It has been shown that, since women in Islam are endowed with the same human value as men, there is no need for women to seek to emulate the male condition. Furthermore, both men and women are provided with their own rights to fulfill their duties and realize justice in the 'Ummah.

Therefore, for Muslim women the idea behind Western feminism, which is the product of the market society, would only bring inequality of the sexes into their society and break the harmonious relationships. In this sense, I believe, the ideal woman in Islam stands at the very antipodes of the model of Western woman, who seeks to be liberated only within the economic context.

Notes

(1) However, it is often said that since the revolution the economic situation and activities have been depressed, the new government is still unstable, or there is a big gap between real society and ideal Islamic society. Furthermore, this revolution is explained as one which was accomplished only by fanatics, or based on reactionism. It is true that people's lives over the five years since the Revolution have had many difficulties and inconveniences in reality; however, I would like to evaluate the Revolution in terms of people's consciousness of Islam which was one of the forces which initiated the Revolution.

(2) The Shah specified the secularizing policy of the regime and intended to confine the influence of 'ulama to the domain of personal status and make Islam effective as 'ibadat(rituals of worship). See Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran (Albany:State University of New York Press, 1980); and Hamid Algar, "The Oppositional Role of the Ulama in Twentieth-Century Iran", in Scholars, Saints, and Sufis, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (Berkeley:University of California Press, 1972), p. 231 - 255.

(3) 'Ali Shari'ati, Fatima is Fatima, trans. Laleh Bakhtiar (Tehran:The Shariati Foundation, 1980), p. 23.

(4) Shari'ati, p. 21.

(5) Shari'ati, p. 47.

(6) Shari'ati, p. 108.

(7) Shari'ati, p. 121.

(8) Akhavi, p. 183.

(9) 'Ali Shari'ati, On the Sociology of Islam, trans. Hamid Algar (Berkeley:Mizan Press, 1979), p. 119.

(10) Shari'ati, On the Sociology of Islam, p. 119.

(11) Akhavi, p. 182.

(12) Shari'ati, Fatima is Fatima, p. 112 - p. 114, p. 121.

(13) Shari'ati, Fatima is Fatima, p. 102.

(14) As Murtada Mutahhari mentions, "Islam by no means believes in an eruptive revolution. It insists on its being based on awareness and resolution." [Mutahhari, The Nature of Imam Hussein's Movement (Tehran: Beth'et Foundation, n.d.), p.6]. The Islamic Revolution of 1979 is not considered as an explosive movement caused unconsciously by the pressure of the West. On the contrary, it was achieved in full consciousness of Islam which had been ripe for a century before the Revolution. It is seen in Iranian history for about a hundred years before the Revolution; we can see particular movements in Iranian society, namely the rise of Babism, the tobacco boycott and the Constitutional Revolution. Babism led by Sayyid 'Ali Muhammad Shirazi in 1943 was not accepted by Shi'i thought, but became a kind of critical movement against stagnant and conservative society at that time. Among other things, Babism called for a higher position for women and Qurrat ul-'Ain, one of the outstanding followers, appeared in public without the veil to show her resistance. Further study is necessary in order to evaluate the contribution of Babism to women's emancipation; however, it is true that Babism gave an opportunity to people to reconsider what Islamic values are. People came to have a consciousness of Islam, which succeeded in the movement of the tobacco boycott. The boycott of tobacco was caused by the concession of the tobacco monopoly granted by the Shah to a British company. The rising consciousness of Islam prevented the Shah from acting in conspiracy with the West to keep his autocracy. The local revolts extended to nation-wide rebellions; people in all classes participated in this movement by boycotting tobacco. Although women had a habit of smoking at that time, they carried out the boycott. The consciousness of Islam which arose among people was inherited from the idea of the constitutional movement (1905 - 1911). The aim of this movement was to achieve coextensiveness of the religious and political spheres. Murtada Mutahhari points out that the Iranian people acquired their inalienable right to supremacy at the national level through the Constitutional Revolution. [M. Mutahhari, The Concept of Islamic Republic (Tehran: Be'thet, 1982),

p.24]. From 1925 to 1941 Reza Shah advocated modernization reform policies which aimed at creating sovereignty free of religious and external powers. Although one of his policies was to overcome the Western powers, it is said that Western incursions were mostly indirect but the alliance between the regime and certain Western interests influenced the nature of reform. [Nikki R. Keddie, Roots of Revolution (New Haven:Yale University Press, 1981), p. 94]. As a result, Iranian society experienced a great and abrupt change. At that time, the erosion of Islamic values by Western values gradually started; however, culturally the Iranian people were not so influenced by the West as they were affected politically and economically.

(15) 'Ali Shari'ati, "What the Contemporary World expects from the Muslim Women", Mahjubah, Vol. 1, Nos. 11 & 12.

(16) Sharia'ti, Fatima is Fatima, p. 139.

(17) Abu Bakr and 'Umar, the first two caliphs attempted to "displace Banu Hashim, and especially 'Ali, from their prerogative claims to the leadership of the community according to their own understanding of the new order and the form they felt it should take." [S. H. M. Jafri, The Origins and Early Development of Shi'a Islam. (Qum:The Group of Muslims, n.d.), p. 58].

(18) Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 200.

(19) It is unanimously reported that "after this event Fatima did not speak to either Abu Bakr or 'Umar till her death six months later. She asked 'Ali to have her buried at night, and not to allow Abu Bakr and 'Umar to take part in her funeral. 'Ali accordingly carried out her wishes and buried her at night, with only the family members accompanying her coffin." [Jafri, p. 63]; Nahjul Balagha, Sermon 200.

(20) Shari'ati, Mahjubah, p. 62 - 63.

(21) Husayn was martyred in the struggle against Yazid who succeeded the Caliph from his father Mu'awiya.

(22) Mutahhari, The Nature of Imam Hussein's Movement, p. 16.

(23) Shari'ati, Mahjubah, p. 64.

(24) Immanuel Wallerstein, Historical Capitalism, (London: Verso Editions, 1983), p.105.

(25) C. B. Macpherson, The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy, (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), p.23.

(26) Yoshiaki Sanada, Islam-ho no Seishin, (Tokyo: Chuo University Press, 1985), p.148.

(27) Toshihiko Izutsu, Islam Bunka (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1985), p. 140; Moojan Momen, An Introduction to Shi'i Islam, (New Haven; Yale University Press, 1985), p. 202.

(28) Majid Khadduri, The Islamic Conception of Justice, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 2.

(29) Sanada, p. 149.

(30) However, in the social sphere where men and women are related as believers, both men and women are given the same human rights by God. The different but complementary rights are exercised only in the private sphere where men and women are situated by specific relationships.

(31) Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Islamic Life and Thought, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), p. 212.

(32) Nasr, p. 213.

Conclusion

Enough has been said in the preceding pages to elucidate the norms and values of Islam from the viewpoint of the situation of women in Islamic society, at the ideational level in particular. It has become apparent that contrary to the general assumption, women in Islam are fully endowed by God with values and rights as human beings as well as as females. The concept of discrimination in the Western sense cannot be applied to Islamic society as all relationships which shape society are based on Tawhīd. Put differently, a common universe of meaning for the members of 'Ummah is constructed through the concept of equality in Tawhīd. Thus, men's discrimination against women is none other than injustice in the context of Islam.

I have rather accentuated the ideational aspects of Islamic society in this study; however, this does not mean that the reality of Muslim society has been secularized, as Western societies have experienced, or that efforts to realize Tawhīd in the life-world have been neglected. We cannot deny the fact that in the reality of Muslim societies practices and institutions which deviate from Islamic ideas sometimes occur. However, such deviation is injustice, not secularization, in the context of Islam, caused by the non-

fulfillment of the obligations of believers. It should be noted at this point that this injustice is conceptualized within the framework of Islam; that is, it is different from the injustice which is the opposite of justice in the Western concept.(1) Thus, injustice in the reality of Muslim societies does not necessarily prove secularization or a discrepancy between ideal and reality. If we focus on the aspect of the life-world of Muslims where all social life is given meaning by Islam, the continuity between the Islamic ideal and the reality of Muslim societies is clear.

However, it can be said that Muslim societies in the Middle East have experienced in the modern era more difficulty than ever before in establishing a common world within which everyone is bound by the ultimate meaning of Islam, mainly as a result of the strong influence or domination of external cultural value systems, especially that of modern Western civilization. As one of the prominent features of modern Western society, there is a tendency toward the institutional separation of religion and social life. In other words, religion is "subjectivized" or "privatized", and becomes "a matter of free subjective choice, that is, loses its intersubjectively obligatory character."(2) Needless to say, this substantial change in the meaning of religion was brought about by

rationalism in modern industrial society, which faithfully reflected "a high degree of rationalization, not only on the level of infrastructure but also on that of consciousness." (3) It is rather important here to consider rationalization on the level of consciousness. Behind the subjectivization of religion there is the dualistic way of perception developed in the modern era, in which public order is conceived as "the rule of mind over matter or of reason over the senses." (4) Thus, religion, which had constructed a symbolic universe, was replaced by the rationale of modernization and was subjectivized on the basis of dualism.

As we have seen, privatized religion is none other than a product of modernization. However, there is a tendency for universalism, which is also a staple of the modern era, to make this substantial definition of religion absolute. As a result, in the context of modernism, a religion like Islam which covers all spheres of the life-world and maintains its role in shaping society is considered a traditional or backward hence which should be relegated for "progress". Even after questions about universalism or the credibility of the idea of progress were raised in Western society, Islamic movements which have risen in the contemporary Middle East are oftentimes considered

merely as if they were in the same category as the counter-modern elements in Western society. It might be true that these movements in Islamic society are partly characterized by counter-modern elements, but they should be considered as activities for the reconstruction of their own social order in terms of the Islamic value system, which are rather derived from immanent elements.

Therefore, although further research is required to analyze the nature of Islamic society in relation to contemporary Islamic movements, I would venture to say at this point that these contemporary Islamic movements can be explained in one sense as signs of the positive construction of Islamic social order in the 'Ummah, and that in another sense they seem to offer a critical viewpoint to other societies which have developed anthropocentric ideas to an extreme degree.

Notes

(1) Regarding the concept of justice under Western conditions, see Majid Khadduri, The Islamic Conception of Justice, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p.192 - 227.

(2) Peter L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion, (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), p.166 - 167.

(3) Berger, p.132

(4) John O'Neill, Five Bodies: The Human Shape of Modern Society, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p.18.

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