

Gender Partnership

MAULANA WAHIDUDDIN KHAN shares Quranic insights on gender equality

According to Islam, men and women were both made as special creations and created of the same substance. This concept is expressed thus in the *Quran*: "Men and women are members one of another." The same concept was emphasised by the Prophet of Islam: "Men and women are two equal halves of a single unit."

These references are very evident. To illustrate this point, I would say that life is like a cart with two wheels. The cart cannot move without the joint action of both the wheels. No wheel is superior or inferior; both are equal and both have an equal role to play.

It is said that the human being is a social animal. To fulfil their purpose in life, both men and women must cooperate. Every successful venture, be it launched by a man or a woman, has to be a joint venture. Without joint effort, no one can achieve their goals.

A joint venture does not mean that both genders do the same job. Joint effort means that both man and woman, like the two wheels of a cart, must unite in their life's mission. The role of any individual in life is not simply to earn money, accumulate material things, enjoy life, and get entertained. The purpose of life is greater than these things. You are not simply a physical entity; you are an intellectual being. A man or woman must enjoy life, not only on a material lev-



el, but on an intellectual level, too. The best way to enjoy life is to play the role of an intellectual partner.

The universe of facts has far more items than are found in a shopping mall — it has billions of things which are spiritual and intellectual in nature. And, man and woman must journey on this path, in order to discover higher facts and to enjoy life on a higher plane, thus unfolding the hidden treasures of life.

Jesus Christ rightly said that man does not live by bread alone. Here 'bread' is a symbolic term, meaning material goods. Experience shows that those who focus entirely on obtaining material things die in a state of dissatisfaction. No amount of material goods can give you real satisfaction or real peace of mind. Man cannot live on material things alone.

Joint Effort

The real goal for any individual is to achieve peace of mind, the most valuable thing in our lives. Peace of mind is spiritual in nature, and it is only spiritual attainment that can give you peace of mind. The mind can become peaceful only by feeding more and more spiritual things to it. And,

man and woman are natural partners in this regard.

Spiritual attainment is not a mysterious word. It is the same thing as intellectual attainment. Spiritual attainment, or intellectual attainment, can be had through intellectual exercise, and such an exercise is a joint effort. Everyone needs a partner to proceed on such a journey. And, nature has provided us with this blessing in its pairing of man and woman.

Culture Of Adjustment

Intellectual partnership is very important and is the highest goal. But there is a condition; for this to be successful, the miraculous word is adjustment. Adjustment is not submission or surrender. It is the greatest joy. And it is more than that. It is the acceptance of reality. When you adjust with the other partner, you prove that you are living at a higher level of intellect. Adjustment comes from high thinking and is a highly enjoyable experience.

The British hunter Jim Corbett was a great expert on tigers. He states in his book, *Man-eaters Of Kumaon*, "The tiger is a large-hearted gentleman with boundless courage." Contrary to popular notion, the tiger always adjusts, it never invites fighting. So adjustment is characteristic of the tiger. Live like a tiger and adopt the high culture of adjustment. The tiger is the king of the jungle, and by adopting this culture, you can also live like a king. ■

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