

Fast 9: Women in Islam — 2: Recognised as possessing intelligence

- The Quran mentions people who exercise their understanding, intelligence, reason and scientific observation:

“In the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day, there are surely signs for **those who have understanding**, **those who remember Allah**, standing and sitting and (lying) on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord, You have not created this in vain! Glory be to You! Save us from the punishment of the Fire.” (3:190–191)

إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَاخْتِلَافِ
الَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ لآٰيٰتٍ لِّاُولِي الْاَلْبَابِ ﴿١٩٠﴾
الَّذِيْنَ يَذْكُرُوْنَ اللّٰهَ قِيَمًا وَّ قُعُوْدًا وَّ عَلٰى
جُنُوْبِهِمْ وَيَتَفَكَّرُوْنَ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَّ
الْاَرْضِ رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هٰذَا بَاطِلًا
سُبْحٰنَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾

From their observation of nature, their reflection, and remembrance of God they draw the conclusion that this world is not purposeless, and that good actions have good results and evil ones bring punishment.

- It is then mentioned that they then pray as follows:

“Our Lord, whomsoever You make enter the Fire, him You indeed bring to disgrace. And there will be no helpers for the wrongdoers. Our Lord, surely we have heard a Crier calling to the faith, saying: Believe in your Lord. So we do believe. Our Lord, grant us protection from our sins and remove our evils and make us die with the righteous. Our Lord, grant us what You have promised us by Your messengers and do not disgrace us on the day of Resurrection. Surely You never fail in (Your) promise!” (3:192–194)

رَبَّنَا اِنَّكَ مَنْ تَدْخِلِ النَّارَ فَقَدْ اٰخَرْتَهُ وَّ
مَا لِّلظٰلِمِيْنَ مِنْ اَنْصَارٍ ﴿١٩٢﴾ رَبَّنَا اِنَّا
سَمِعْنَا مُنَادِيًا يُنَادِي لِلْاِيْمَانِ اَنْ اٰمِنُوْا
بِرَبِّكُمْ فَاٰمَنَّا رَبَّنَا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوْبَنَا وَّ
كَفِّرْ عَنَّا سَيِّئَاتِنَا وَّ تَوَفَّنَا مَعَ الْاَبْرَارِ ﴿١٩٣﴾
رَبَّنَا وَاٰتِنَا مَا وَعَدْتَنَا عَلٰى رُسُلِكَ وَّلَا
تُخْزِنَا يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ اِنَّكَ لَا تُخْلِفُ الْاِيْعَادَ
﴿١٩٤﴾

- These persons described as possessing “understanding” (*ul-il-albāb*), “remembering Allah”, and praying to Him, **are they men only?** For the answer to this question, let us see what Allah says in reply to their prayer:

“So their Lord accepted their prayer, (saying): I will not let the work of any worker among you to be lost, **whether male or female**; each of you is as the other. So those who fled and were driven forth from their homes and persecuted in My way and who fought and were slain, I shall truly remove their evil and make them enter Gardens in which rivers flow — a reward from Allah. And with Allah is the best reward.” (3:195)

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ
عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ ذَكَرُوا وَأَنْتَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ
بَعْضٍ ۖ فَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِّنْ
دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقَاتَلُوا وَقُتِلُوا
لَا أَكْفِرُنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَا دَخَلَتْهُمْ
جَنَّتِ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ
عِنْدِ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ ﴿١٩٥﴾

When Allah replies to their prayer, His reply clearly indicates that those praying are both men and women, and that He does not distinguish between them because “each of you is as the other”, i.e., the two sexes are the same to Him. This shows that the persons possessing “understanding”, who are “reflecting” on the workings of nature, are not only men but also women.

- Women are not “weak of understanding”. The Quran says:

“And give women their dowries as a free gift. **But if they of themselves are pleased to give you** a portion from it, consume it with enjoyment and pleasure.” — 4:4

وَأَتُوا النِّسَاءَ صَدُقَاتِهِنَّ نِحْلَةً ۗ فَإِن طِبْنَ
لَكُمْ عَن شَيْءٍ مِّنْهُ نَفْسًا فَكُلُوهُ هَنِيئًا
مَّرِيئًا ﴿٤﴾

“**And do not make over your property, which Allah has made a (means of) support for you, to the weak of understanding**, and maintain them out of it, and clothe them and give them a good education.” — 4:5

وَلَا تُؤْتُوا السُّفَهَاءَ أَمْوَالَكُمُ الَّتِي جَعَلَ
اللَّهُ لَكُمْ قِيَامًا وَارْزُقُوهُمْ فِيهَا وَاكْسُوا
هُمْ وَقُولُوا لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا ﴿٥﴾

Compare the above two verses, which occur one after the other. The first instructs husbands to bestow “dowries” (i.e., *mahr* or nuptial gift) on their wives, and the wives have the right to dispose of it as they please. The second instructs Muslims not to place property in the charge of those who lack the mental capacity to handle their affairs themselves. It is clear therefore that the Quran does **not** regard women, in

general, as being in the category of the “weak of understanding” who cannot make decisions about themselves.

- The next verse states:

“And test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage. Then **if you find in them maturity of intellect**, make over to them their property...” — 4:6

وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ
فَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ
أَمْوَالَهُمْ

This requires that guardians who are bringing up orphans under their charge must test them to see when they reach the stage of maturity of intellect, and at that stage make them responsible for their own property. Since the Quran, in the verse 4:4 quoted above, recognizes that women can handle their own property, it means that women are recognized as having “maturity of intellect”.