

Sachiko Murata: Islam, Gender and Islamic Education

Derry Ridwan Maoshul

Pascasarjana Institut Agama Islam Darussalam (IAID), Ciamis, Jawa Barat
email: maoshulridwan@gmail.com

Sumadi

Institut Agama Islam Darussalam (IAID), Ciamis, Jawa Barat
email: sumadi2009@gmail.com

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Abstract

Feminists advocate for gender equality, aiming to ensure that women are granted the same rights as men. They evaluate the subjugation endured by women due to a patriarchal societal structure that privileges men and marginalizes women. Feminists not only rectified the social system, but also rectified religion due to its perceived gender discrimination in their teachings. The concept of equality of rights refers to the notion of identical rights. This concept has also extended to the realm of education and is deemed to engender novel societal issues due to its origins in power dynamics. This article will elucidate the notion of gender as a foundation for education, drawing from Sachiko Murata's perspectives. This suggests the inference that education should adopt an equitable paradigm in perceiving women and men as individuals. Women and men are distinct genders, each characterized by their own unique biological and physiological attributes. Nevertheless, both entities have an equivalent function in existence, hence it is imperative to establish a celestial connection.

Abstrak

Perjuangan para feminis menginginkan agar perempuan memiliki kesetaraan hak dengan laki-laki. Mereka menilai

ketertindasan *yang* dialami perempuan adalah karena sistem sosial *yang* memihak kepada laki-laki dan mendiskriminasi perempuan. Para feminis bukan hanya mengoreksi sistem sosial, agama pun ikut mereka koreksi karena ajarannya dianggap terlalu diskriminatif terhadap kaum perempuan. Kesetaraan hak *yang* mereka maksud adalah keidentikan hak. Konsep tersebut pun telah merambah sampai kepada konsep pendidikan dan dinilai menimbulkan permasalahan baru di sosial karena berangkat dari relasi kuasa. Artikel ini menguraikan konsep gender sebagai landasan pendidikan berdasarkan pandangan Sachiko Murata. Implikasi pandangan Murata adalah bahwa pendidikan perlu memiliki paradigma *yang* seimbang dalam melihat perempuan dan laki-laki sebagai manusia. Perempuan adalah manusia dengan kondisi tertentu dan laki-laki adalah manusia *yang* memiliki kondisi *yang* lain. Namun keduanya sama-sama berperan dalam kehidupan sehingga perlu membangun relasi kosmik.

Keywords: Islam, gender, cosmology, Islamic education.

Introduction

The feminist movement has undergone three distinct stages of development since its beginning. The American revolution and the French revolution, which occurred between 1775 and 1779, were both driven by the principles of rights and equality.¹ During the late 1960s, feminists advocated for the concepts of oppression and liberation, as articulated by Simone de Beauvoir in her influential book, *The Second Sex*.² Feminists employ Jean Paul Sartre's ideas to bolster their beliefs in both instances. The third stage witnessed the propagation of feminist discourse, which

¹ J Brady, "Critical Literacy, Feminism and a Politics of Representation," in *Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire*, ed. Dalam P McLaren and C Lankshear (London: Routledge, 1994), 142–153.

² P McLaren and C Lankshear, eds., *Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire* (London: Routledge, 1994).

culminated in the women's liberation movement. The concept evolved between 1980 and 1990 due to the recognition that women's emancipation had not been fully achieved in the preceding period.³ Advocating for gender equality is vital for feminists to ensure that women receive fair treatment and legal recourse.⁴

In various countries, the background to the emergence of the gender equality movement is the increasingly narrowing of women's opportunities and the increasingly overlapping roles of women in social life. Including in Indonesia, these efforts continue to be inadequate.⁵ So that this struggle does not stop, feminists take refuge behind the idea of women's emancipation initiated by R.A. Kartini at the beginning of the 20th century.⁶ By using the idea of women's emancipation, feminists reinforced their ideas to Indonesian women about the importance of gender equality in Indonesia, as a reform movement for Indonesian women.⁷

Following the success of feminist endeavors to disseminate their views in the public sphere, they subsequently ventured into the domain of religion. Feminists assert that religious teachings are the underlying cause of the rise of gender injustice and inequality. This diverges from a religious ontological narrative that posits Eve's creation from Adam's rib. According to feminists, this initial kind of discrimination serves as the catalyst for the subsequent subjugation of women.⁸ Feminists contend that the interpretation of religious texts deviates from a patriarchal paradigm of thinking. The verse Q.S. al-Nisa 34 states that men

³ T L P Tang, "Falling or Not Falling into Temptation? Multiple Faces of Temptation, Monetary Intelligence, and Unethical Intentions Across Gender," *Journal of Business Ethics* 116, no. 3 (2013): 529–552.

⁴ Alfian Rokhmansyah. 2016. *Pengantar Gender Dan Feminisme; Pemahaman Awal Kritik Sastra Feminisme*. Yogyakarta: Garudhawaca. p. 40-47

⁵ Mutiara Andalas. 2009 *Lahir Dari Rahim*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Kanisius p. 24

⁶ Milastri Muzakkar and D. Ira. Aini, *Perempuan Pembelajar* (Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo, 2014).

⁷ Agus Sachari. 2007. *Budaya Visual Indonesia*. Surabaya: Erlangga p. 24

⁸ Nurjannah Ismail. 2003. *Perempuan dalam pasungan*. Yogyakarta: LKiS p. 174

are *Qawwam* for women, as Allah has bestowed preference upon some men over women.

Religious academics frequently employ this scripture as a basis to forbid women from assuming leadership positions. The term *Qawwam* is commonly understood to mean a person who holds a position of leadership.⁹ Based on the text of this verse, it can be inferred that it asserts the entitlement of men to exercise authority over women. The opposite is not true. This view has a negative impact on women since it restricts their involvement in the public domain, relegating them to a secondary position compared to men. In the absence of men, women are the sole participants.

Indonesia's public policy is increasingly taking into account the proposals advocated by feminists, to the extent that these proposals have become benchmarks for measuring human development, as reflected in the Human Development Index (HDI). The measurement of gender equality in Indonesia commenced in 2009 through the introduction of the Gender Development Index (IPG) and Gender Empowerment Index (IDG). The index in question pertains to the metric established by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) starting from 1995. In 2010, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) created a metric to assess gender disparities called the Gender Inequality Index (GII) or Gender Inequality Index (IKG). In response to these developments, BPS conducted a review of the IKG in 2017 and 2018, resulting in an agreement on the methodology and indicators utilized for measuring the IKG.¹⁰

The UNDP interprets equality as the provision of equal chances and rights for both men and women to fulfill their roles in all domains. Gender justice is defined as the equitable treatment of both men and women, with the aim of eliminating any kind of subjugation, marginalization, and violence directed

⁹ Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *Woman Between Islam and Western Society* (New Delhi: The Islamic Centre, 1995).

¹⁰ Badan Pusat Statistik. 2018. *Perhitungan Indeks Ketimpangan Gender 2018*. Jakarta: BPS-Statistic Indonesia.

against either gender. Gender equality is more than just attaining parity in rank and position between females and males. Nonetheless, it holds significance in terms of equitable participation in decision-making processes within the political sphere, government management, and economic equality.¹¹

Law No. 2 of 2008 mandates that political parties must have a minimum of 30 percent female representation in their leadership and management at the national level, ensuring women's involvement in political decision-making. Prior to 2018, the representation of women in parliament stood at a mere 19.8 percent. Regarding the minimal educational level, 53.2 percent of individuals aged 25 years and older who completed junior high school were male, while 44.5 percent were female. According to the 2018 data from BPS, women's per capita expenditure in the economy was a mere 9.04 million. This is deemed unequal due of its significant disparity from men's per capita expenditure, which amounts to 15 million. The Gender Inequality Index (GII) was published by the UNDP in the Human Development Report 2018 Statistical Update. According to this index, Indonesia was ranked 104th out of 160 nations globally, with a GII value of 0.453.¹²

Education will play a vital part in advocating for the idea of equality championed by feminists, as previously elucidated.¹³ The feminist pursuit of equality in society through human education diverges from a societal perspective. Contrary to other feminists who advocate for gender equality in all aspects of life, Sachiko Murata holds a distinct viewpoint on gender. Sachiko Murata, from a cosmological perspective, posits that gender disparities contribute to the establishment and maintenance of the societal structure. Cosmology regards humans as a celestial creature

¹¹ UNDP. 1995. *Human Development Report 1995*. New York: Oxford University Press.

¹² Badan Pusat Statistik. 2018. *Perhitungan Indeks Ketimpangan Gender 2018*. Jakarta: BPS-Statistic Indonesia.

¹³ N P Stromquist, "Education as a Means for Empowering Women," in *Rethinking Empowerment: Gender and Development in a Global/Local World*, ed. J Parpart, S Rai, and K Staudt (London: Routledge, 2002), 22–38.

because to the intricate composition of the human body, which encompasses diverse forms and functions that harmoniously coexist.¹⁴ Similarly, the cosmos is composed of an intricate configuration comprising the sun, moon, earth, sky, planets, and stars, all of which collaborate to form a cohesive and functional system, despite their distinct functions and responsibilities.

The categorization of human sex into male and female is unequivocally associated with distinct duties and functions pertaining to gender roles based on biological factors. Murata argues that these disparities should not always be interpreted as gender-based discrimination, as women and men possess distinct strengths that can mutually enhance one another when working together.¹⁵ The various benefits they possess will synergistically complement the functioning of the universal system. Murata refers to it as a Cosmic Marriage.

In light of this, the author endeavors to elucidate the ramifications of Sachiko Murata's ideas on gender in relation to Islamic education. Particularly in addressing the fundamental challenges of Islamic education about gender identity, the concept of equality, and the narrative of Adam and Eve's creation.¹⁶ Comprehending these three concerns will subsequently have consequences for establishing educational frameworks and shaping the treatment of pupils as educational entities.

Gender According to Sachiko Murata

Sachiko Murata examines the concept of gender using a Sufi cosmology framework that shares similarities with the Chinese cosmological concept of *yin* and *yang*. The structure of thought proposed by Tajalliyah Ibn 'Arabi is highly robust in every argument put out by Sachiko Murata concerning gender. This

¹⁴ Toshihiko Izutsu. 2016. *Sufisme Samudra Ma'rifat Ibn 'Arabi*, (Penerjemah Musa Kazhim & Arif Mulyadi) Jakarta: Penerbit Mizan p. 259.

¹⁵ Sachiko Murata, *The Tao of Islam* (Bandung: Mizan, 1996).

¹⁶ Talha Rehman, "Islamic Feminism: The Challenges and Choices of Reinterpreting Sexual Ethics in Islamic Tradition," *Society and Culture in South Asia* 6, no. 2 (2020): 214–237.

conceptual framework has resemblance to Plotinus' theory of emanations, specifically elucidating the concept of unity transforming into duality, and subsequently dualism returning to unity. To enhance clarity, let us examine the theological and cosmological ideas that serve as the primary basis for Murata's analysis of gender.

Theological Argument

In the context of Islamic thought, God can be understood from two sides. According to the majority of Muslim thinkers, we can view God as He in Himself, namely the "Essence" (*zât*) of God which is completely unknowable.¹⁷ We put aside the cosmos, namely everything other than God. He cannot be understood, and this leads us to the perspective of God's incomparability, in theological language called *tanzîh*, which means "declaring God as incomparable with everything that exists."¹⁸ As Allah emphasizes in Q.S As-Saffat, verse 180, "Glory be to your Lord, the Almighty Lord from the nature of what they say."

Or Murata interprets it as "Praise be to Allah, the Unreachable God, far above what they attribute". Seen from a *tanzîh* perspective, Allah is an impersonal reality that is far from human reach. In other words, Allah is completely unreachable to His creatures and is far beyond their understanding.¹⁹ However, the dogmatic theologians, who consistently highlighted the unattainability of God, constituted a minority among intellectuals and had limited impact on society at large. Conversely, within the realm of Islam, the philosophical and spiritual aspects, as embodied by philosophers and Sufis, maintain that perceiving God as beyond comparison and understanding hinders the ability to adore Him due to His perceived remoteness. In the Qur'an, the God described is one who can genuinely be adored, as Allah's affection for His creations elicits their affection towards

¹⁷ Sachiko Murata. 1999. *The Tao of Islam* (Penerjemah Rahmani Astuti & M. S. Nasrullah). Bandung: Mizan p. 79

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 29

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 30

Him, as stated in Q.S Al-Mâ'idah verse 54, "He loved them and they loved Him."

The concept of *tasybîh* in theological terminology refers to the understanding and affection towards God, who is known as the Most Merciful. It implies that God must be appreciated and loved.²⁰ We can get knowledge of God by seeing the inherent attributes present within ourselves and the universe, as mentioned by Allah in Q.S. Fussilat: 53, "We will demonstrate to them Our manifestations of power throughout the earth and within themselves, until it becomes evident to them that the Qur'an is indeed true." Is it not sufficient that your Lord is an omniscient observer of all things?

Acquiring knowledge of God entails not only exploring the external world, but also delving into one's inner self to gain self-understanding and simultaneously comprehend God. Indeed, Allah underscores His proximity to humanity, surpassing even the closeness that humans have to those who are deeply committed to them. This is seen in Q.S Qaaf verse 16, when Allah states, "And We are nearer to him than his jugular vein."

However, understanding God requires more than just self-reflection. By attentively seeing and contemplating everything in the cosmos, one can arrive to the same conclusion. As stated in Q.S Al-Baqarah, verse 115, Allah affirms that His presence can be found everywhere, regardless of the direction one faces.

Wherever humans venture, the divine presence of God is omnipresent and accessible for humans to perceive and acknowledge. If the concept of incommensurability is referred to as negative theology, then resemblance is described as positive theology. These two theological perspectives represent opposing ends of Islamic thought. The most astute Muslim intellectuals argue that there exists a harmonious equilibrium between the negative and positive aspects of theology. In fact, both of these theological frameworks are indispensable for attaining an accurate comprehension of the Divine reality. Murata employs an

²⁰ Murata, Sachiko. 1999. *The Tao of Islam* (Penerjemah Rahmani Astuti & M. S. Nasrullah). Bandung: Mizan p. 30

analogy with Chinese thought or cosmology to elucidate the concept in a manner accessible to contemporary intellectuals. He characterizes the universe using the *yin* and *yang* framework, which represents feminine and masculine principles, or woman and man, respectively.²¹ When these two entities are merged, they will generate the creation of all entities present in the cosmos. The term “Tao” refers to this sign.

The concepts of *tanzâh* (inaccessibility) and *tasybîh* (likeness) pertain to the names and characteristics of God, specifically *Jalâl* (majesty) and *Jammâl* (beauty). Names such as Almighty, All-Creator, All-Majestic, Most High, All-King, All-Destroyer, All-Avenger, and All-Destroyer are all titles that refer to *Jalâl* (greatness). Within this particular framework, it signifies incorporating characteristics that accentuate masculinity. Conversely, names such as the Most Gentle, the Most Nurturing, the Most Merciful, the Most Beautiful, the Most Close, the Most Forgiving, the Most Enlivening, the Most Giving, are classified as *Jammâl* (beauty) names. Within this particular framework, it signifies the incorporation of *yin* attributes due to its manifestation of femininity.²²

According to Chinese cosmology, it is believed that first Tao or God demonstrated unity, and then Tao brought about the creation of the cosmos by incorporating two distinct qualities: the feminine quality (*yin*) and the masculine quality (*yang*).²³ God possesses two inherent traits that emanate from all of His creations, including mankind. This is exemplified by Asma al-Husna. Men embody the essence of *yang*, whereas women embody the essence of *yin*. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the perception of men as superior and women as inferior is not solely based on their respective masculinity and femininity, but rather stems from underlying power dynamics. The concepts of night, darkness, and earth are not subordinate to day, light,

²¹ Murata, Sachiko. 1999. *The Tao of Islam* (Penerjemah Rahmani Astuti & M. S. Nasrullah). Bandung: Mizan p. 28

²² *Ibid*, p. 31

²³ Fritjof Capra, *The Turning Point: Science, Society, and the Rising Culture* (New York: A Bantam Book, 1982).

and sky, as they are both derived from the feminine and masculine essence of God. The connection between the two is a celestial link.²⁴

Murata's theological argument posits that the primordial existence was singular, specifically God. God created the cosmos as a reflection of himself in dual forms. This demonstrates the exclusivity of His existence, as all other beings consistently exist in pairs. The tasks and authorities of created entities vary based on the cosmic order. The various elements of the universe, including humans, animals, plants, the Earth, and the sky, interact harmoniously to create a well-organized system. All entities possess equal status as created beings in the presence of God.

Cosmological Arguments

Murata posited that Islam encompasses three fundamental realities: Allah, representing the metaphysical realm; nature, symbolizing the broader universe; and humanity, denoting the individual microcosm. The term macrocosm is a linguistic equivalent of the term "universe".²⁵ Meanwhile, the term "microcosm" serves as a metaphor for "human individual," representing all the traits attributed to God as metacosm and nature. If God is the ultimate origin of creation, then both the macrocosm and microcosm are secondary manifestations.²⁶

As previously explained by quoting al-Hadith al-Qudsi, that the creation of the universe was motivated by God's narcissistic nature "in order to be recognized", so that everything in the cosmos is a manifestation of the names and attributes of Allah, many authors even touch on the macrocosm and the microcosm

²⁴ Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Colorado: Shambhala Publications, Inc, 1975).

²⁵ Ryan Gillespie, "Cosmic Meaning, Awe, and Absurdity in the Secular Age: A Critique of Religious Non-Theism," *Harvard Theological Review* 111, no. 4 (2018): 461–487, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/article/cosmic-meaning-awe-and-absurdity-in-the-secular-age-a-critique-of-religious-nontheism/03124514884171B3BDB14F4B9DDDBEBB>.

²⁶ Murata, Sachiko. 1999. *The Tao of Islam* (Translated Rahmani Astuti & M. S. Nasrullah). Bandung: Mizan p. 47

through the expression “horizon and soul” (*al-afaq wa al-anfus*),²⁷ as emphasized in the verse of Q.S Fussilat verse 53, “We will show them Our signs (greatness) in all corners and in themselves, so that it will be clear to them that the Qur’an is true.”

Signs are phenomena that tell us about Allah, so that we can know Allah through the signs that He scatters throughout the horizon and soul, or if we refer to the translation of the verse above, we can read Allah’s signs in all directions and in ourselves. Alone. Sachiko Murata’s fundamental assertion on the world is that God brought forth all elements of nature in dualistic pairs. The fundamental premise is derived from a verse in Q.S. Adz-Dzâriyat: 49, which states that “We created everything in pairs as a means for you to reflect upon the magnificence of Allah.”

Murata applies the concept of pairs to natural phenomena, such as the relationship between earth and sky, day and night, and women and men. The completeness of the cosmos relies on the existence of all its components. Each creation of God possesses its own set of benefits and drawbacks. According to this philosophy, every creation forms relationships, complements, and relies on each other. Murata’s gender ideology is rooted in Chinese cosmology, namely the Tao, which is understood within the framework of *yin* and *yang*. *Yin* encompasses many qualities associated with femininity, including being open to receiving, gentle, cool, and fluid. Murata drew connections between Chinese cosmology and Sufi cosmology, expanding the scope of *yin*’s attributes beyond just humans and environment. The attributes of God include *Jammâl*, Luthf, and Rahman. Meanwhile, individuals who exhibit potent, dynamic, intense, and fervent qualities, akin to the traits of God such as *Jammâl*, Qahr, and Jabbar.

Tao encompasses all facets of existence. The inherent polarity of *yin* and *yang* results in their inevitable reunion due to their mutual magnetic attraction. *Yin* and *yang* are mutually present in each other. Both Tao and Tawhid share a common

²⁷ *Ibid*, p. 47-48

focus, which is the establishment of harmony within the natural world.

Sachiko Murata: Gender and Islamic Education

While Sachiko Murata is recognized for her expertise in Islamic jurisprudence, her writings do not specifically address the topic of Islamic education. Nevertheless, the author asserts that Sachiko Murata's perspective on humans as educational topics is highly comprehensive and all-encompassing. Humans perceive themselves in the context of their connection to both God and nature. According to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, education aims to cultivate students' emotive, cognitive, and psychomotor aspects, enabling them to attain a state of perfection characterized by harmonious coexistence with both nature and society.²⁸

Sachiko Murata's perspective on nature establishes a distinct connection among three entities: humanity as a microcosm, nature as a macrocosm, and God as a metacosm. Sachiko Murata's examination of the concept of gender employs a broad methodology that encompasses religion, cosmology, and psychology. Unlike feminists who primarily focus on social aspects, or ecofeminists who heavily emphasize biological factors, this approach considers both aspects.

The various ideas within the field of education are inherently linked to the perspective adopted by educational theorists when considering humans as recipients of education. Similarly, adopting a gender-focused approach towards understanding humans would consequently lead to the creation of education that is centered around gender. This is because the framework proposed by the United Nations creation Programme (UNDP) for promoting human development will have direct repercussions for the notion of education. The UNDP aims to ensure that male and female educational topics are granted equal prominence, equal roles, and equivalent accomplishments.²⁹

²⁸ Dewantara, Ki Hadjar. 1967. *Masalah kebudayaan; kenang-kenangan promosi doktor honoris causa oleh Universitas Gadjah Mada*. Yogyakarta.

²⁹ UNDP. 1995. *Human Development Report 1995*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Concepts such as these are driven by the worldview adopted by the UNDP, which aligns with the worldview commonly embraced by feminists. However, this approach inadvertently gives rise to novel social issues and immerses individuals in perpetual strife, rather than fostering connections aimed at cultivating collective harmony. Thus, Sachiko Murata is present to provide his perspectives on humans as objects of instruction, as well as their connection with nature and God using the Chinese Taoist methodology and Sufi cosmology.

Now, let us examine the consequences of Sachiko Murata's perspectives in addressing different fundamental issues in Islamic education, as outlined below: Firstly, the matter concerning the development of human gender identity as a topic in education. Furthermore, the issue of deciphering gender equality. Furthermore, a crucial topic in the discourse of human philosophy is the archetypal event involving Adam and Eve. The unresolved nature of these three fundamental questions is a challenge for Islamic intellectuals in their efforts to formulate Islamic education.

Formation of Gender Identity

The initial paradigmatic issue is variations in the interpretation of gender identity development. Gender is often regarded as being strongly linked to inherent physical characteristics and basic human attributes that are present from birth. Conversely, some argue that gender identity is completely independent of physical attributes and inherent human characteristics, and instead is solely a product of societal construction. Varying paradigms in the interpretation of gender identity development will have consequences for the way persons are treated as educational subjects. Hence, it is imperative to address this issue promptly.

Gender variety plays a significant role in shaping social interactions, as it categorizes individuals into distinct gender groups, distinguishing them from other gender categories. The topic of this conversation is referred to as gender identity. Gender identity is inherent in people, present from or possibly even prior

to birth. The physical attributes, specifically the penis and vagina, serve as indicators for medical professionals to ascertain the gender identity of individuals at the time of birth. In addition, biological attributes such as chromosomal count, hormone levels, and bodily contours serve as indicators for discerning an individual's gender identification.

The binary gender system instructs individuals with a male gender identification to conform to masculine behavior, while those with a female gender identity are taught to adhere to feminine behavior. Subsequently, preconceptions arise that associate women with characteristics such as wearing high heels, skirts, and lip color, whereas men are associated with playing football, walking with an upright posture, and burping in public.³⁰ Such societal stereotypes then give rise to a negative response for someone who deviates from this categorization.

The two gender identities, also known as binary gender and their stereotypes, are then naturalized in such a way that these identities seem natural and shape people's thinking patterns.³¹ Every human being presents behavior naturally, as they should do according to the stereotypes embedded through gender identity.

In official documents such as a job registration sheet at a company or a registration sheet when wishing to continue your education at a university, you almost always find the option of whether a woman or a man must be chosen. Even in grammar, third person pronouns are identical to binary gender. For example, in English we encounter third person pronouns such as he and she, which respectively mark male and female gender identities.

Apart from gender categories which divide humans into two gender identities, the practice of heteronormativity also regulates a person's sexual preferences in order to maintain heterosexual

³⁰ Joan Z Spade. & Catherine G. Valentine. 2013. *The Kaleidoscope of Gender: Prisms, Patterns, and Possibilities*. US: Pine Forge Press p. 4

³¹ Judith Butler. 2002. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of identity*. New York & London: Routledge p. 43-44

stability.³² For example, a man must partner with a woman. This applies in reverse, requiring a woman to partner with a man. If someone goes outside these rules, they are said to be deviant.

As stated by Given,³³ An identity has two dimensions, an individual dimension and a social dimension. This implies that this identity restricts an individual according to specific regulations and standards. For an individual to be perceived as conventional rather than aberrant, it is necessary for each gender identity to conform to established regulations and standards. Butler asserts that gender is a socially constructed concept that influences an individual's cognitive abilities, dictates the societal roles they are allowed or prohibited from assuming, and shapes their position within the social hierarchy. These regulations and practices frequently result in harm towards one gender identity while favoring another, thereby giving rise to the notion of combating gender inequality and injustice. The notion of gender deconstruction originates from this point.

Due to the belief that gender identity is shaped by society, this idea considers the criteria for defining gender identity to be subjective. Feminists and gender activists distinguish between sex and gender, asserting that gender identity is mutable and may be interchanged between sexes. Additionally, they say that advancements in technology have made it possible to alter one's biological sex as well.

Butler has successfully dismantled the societal framework that dictates the roles of women and men, allowing them the autonomy to embrace femininity or masculinity as they see fit. This endeavor garnered backing from numerous factions, some of whom commenced transitioning from one gender identity to another. In the USA, some people have asked for their gender identity to be recategorized, as the author explains based on

³² Butler, Judith. 2002. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of identity*. New York & London: Routledge p. 23

³³ Lisa M Given. 2008. *The Sage Encyclopedia Of Qualitative Reaserch Method*. California: Sage Publication LTD p. 415

Meadow's journal,³⁴ emphasized that a number of public figures such as musician Lance Bass and politician Barney Frank from the US have announced to the general public that he is gay and does not follow the normative binary gender system. The same thing was done by a senator from Wisconsin, Tammy Baldwin, who declared herself a lesbian, William Bell as a drag queen, Anna Grodzka and Carmen Carrera as transgender. Various institutions such as Tri Ess and the National LGBTQ Task Force have shown their support for gender practices practiced by society.

Homosexual marriage has been permitted in nations including Canada, Brazil, and Spain. Germany is a European country that officially recognizes a third gender. Since 2011, Australian residents have been able to choose 'x' (intersex) as their gender category on their passports.

Since 2012, New Zealand residents have also engaged in the same activity. Since 2011, countries in South Asia, including Bangladesh, have incorporated the 'other' gender category into their passport options. In 2011, Nepal officially acknowledged the existence of a third gender on its population census form. In 2009, India introduced a third gender option to the voter list. The diverse initiatives undertaken by different nations demonstrate that society have the capacity to replicate comparable endeavors as those previously implemented in the specified countries.

Is Indonesia poised to endorse these methods in the near future? Is it a rejection of inherent characteristics or natural tendencies, and instead depending only on Islamic teachings that assert gender identity as a social construct, ultimately determined by each person?

Subsequently, Q.S. Al-Hujurât, verse 13 explicitly addresses this matter, stating "O people, Indeed, we have fashioned you from a male and a female and formed you into distinct communities and lineages, with the purpose of facilitating mutual

³⁴ Tey Meadow. 2010. *A rose is a rose: on producing Legal Gender Classifications*. *Gender & Society*, 24 (6), 814-837.

recognition and understanding. Undoubtedly, the one who possesses the highest level of piety is considered the most honorable in the eyes of Allah. Truly, Allah possesses complete knowledge and understanding.

From birth, both women and men are human beings, although they possess distinct sets of characteristics. This disparity is not attributable to geographical factors or social constructs, but rather stems from deliberate human design. Nature autonomously regulates these variations based on their various magnitudes. "The sun cannot possess the moon, and the night cannot come before the day." Each celestial body revolves in its designated orbit (Q.S Yâsin: 40). Any violation of natural law will result in an imbalance and attract undesirable devastation.

While feminists who subscribe to the nurture perspective argue that societal circumstances play a role, it is undeniable that human personality and behavior are inherently linked to their biological background. The disparities in nature and conduct are inconsequential. Issues develop when the framework employed to perceive these distinctions relies on power dynamics, resulting in the dominance of one gender identity over another. This hierarchy serves as the foundation for constructing role disparities that perpetuate gender inequality and injustice. What is the fundamental nature of equality and justice?

Understanding Equality and Justice

Equality, which in English literature is known as equality, has various meanings. In the International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary,³⁵ explained that equality is the state of being equal. This definition was later supplemented by the Oxford Dictionary,³⁶ be especially in status, rights, or opportunities (especially in status, rights and opportunities).

³⁵ Deluxe Encyclopedic Edition. 1996. *The New International Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary of The English Language*. Chicago: Trident Press International p. 428

³⁶ A S Robin. 2012. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. Oxford: University Press.

Thus, equality is defined as equality of conditions in status, rights and opportunities.

Deviating from this definition, feminists commonly assert that the foundation for constructing social systems, conceptualizing economics and politics, and formulating the fundamentals of education lies in the notion that men and women possess equal status and dignity as human beings. Consequently, feminists argue that the rights of men and women should be equivalent and indistinguishable.

Islam holds a distinct perspective on the disparities in rights between women and men inside the household. Naturally, there is a clear distinction between the events that occurred fourteen centuries ago and the current situation. Islam does not subscribe to the belief that there is a singular right, obligation, and law that applies universally to both women and men. Islam holds the belief that both men and women have distinct sets of rights, obligations, and laws that are applicable to each gender. Islam exhibits differential treatment towards women and men in certain circumstances, while in other circumstances, it upholds gender equality.

As a result of this Islamic perspective, it became apparent that Islam places importance on specific gender identities while excluding other genders. The Islamic therapy is believed to have a positive impact on certain genders while negatively affecting others. An alternative perspective argues that Islam does not adhere to the concept of equality in its treatment of humans.

Before we join in giving judgment, Saladin,³⁷ invites us to first understand the concept of why Islam treats women and men differently in certain conditions, while in other conditions it treats them the same. Feminist activists frequently assert that the teachings of religion, namely Islam, are the root cause of women's subjugation, advocating for gender equality. They perceive religion teachings on polygamy, dowry, maintenance, and divorce as derogatory towards women. Conversely, men receive

³⁷ Henri Shalahuddin et al. 2012. *Indahnya Keserasian Gender Dalam Islam*. Jakarta: KMKI p. 14

preferential treatment. Thus, they assert that the social hierarchy within religious groups is exclusively constructed to serve the interests of men. Women are solely utilized to accomplish men's objectives.

Islam is commonly regarded as a patriarchal faith that exhibits a tendency to prioritize men. Meanwhile, women are regarded as deficient in their status as human beings. If Islam has equitable doctrines, it would undeniably uphold gender equality by treating women and men on the basis of parity. Islam does not endorse polygamy. In different circumstances, Islam does not consider the evidence of two women to be equal to the testimony of one man. Islam does not grant the husband exclusive authority over divorce. Islam does not endorse an imbalanced inheritance system where women receive only half of the inheritance that males receive. If Islam is truly a just teaching, it will not assign males as heads of households nor treat women as laborers whose labor must be compensated by men. Feminist activists advocating for gender equality have reached the conclusion that Islamic doctrines systematically demean women by failing to afford them equal treatment to males. Islam is renowned for its commitment to justice, without discriminating between women and men.

The logic employed in their interpretation of Islamic teachings is evidently based on an Aristotelian logical framework. In this scenario, the idea is that if Islam is a doctrine that promotes justice, it must ensure equal rights for both women and men. However, if Islam does not guarantee equal rights between women and men, then it cannot be considered a teaching that defends justice. Equitable treatment and fair resolution of legal matters.

Islam consistently acknowledges the inherent differences between men and women across various domains. Due to the inherent nature and distinct qualities of each, their essence and character are inherently dissimilar. Consequently, Islam differentiates their status in terms of rights, obligations, and law. Feminists typically strive to provide consistency and equality in legislation, rights, and education for both women and men, sometimes disregarding the inherent and inherent distinctions

between them. This pertains to the disparity in the notion of equality between Islam and feminist ideology as a whole.³⁸ Subsequently, the author aims to explore Islamic justifications for the differential treatment of women and men under specific circumstances, juxtaposed with situations when they are treated equally. The author aims to address the paradigmatic issue surrounding the development of gender identity by analyzing the creation of Adam and Eve via a Sufi cosmological perspective.

Understanding the Creation of Adam and Eve

To address the questions about how gender identity is formed and the justification for treating women and men differently in certain situations while treating them equally in others, we must go into the Islamic perspective on the philosophy of human creation. The theory of human creation will serve as the foundation for constructing several sectors, including Islamic education. In this text, the author aims to analyze Murata's ideas on the philosophy of human creation.

Murata believes that every element in the universe is a representation of the names and characteristics of Allah. The macrocosm is considered as the focal point where all the names and attributes of Allah are made visible. Individuals lacking comprehension of the Islamic intellectual tradition may perceive discussions of this nature as a continuation of the basic religious thought's evolutionism. Murata employs a correlation between the qualitative methodologies of current science and Sufi cosmology to address such concerns.³⁹

The titles and attributes of Allah, such as *al-Hayyu* (the Ever-Living) and *al-Qawiyu* (the Almighty), are plainly manifested in the vitality and robustness of life that emerges from the soil. Moreover, plants embody the divine names and qualities of Allah, specifically the attribute of knowledge (*al-'Alimu*), as they possess the ability to seek for nourishment and light. Plants exhibit grace

³⁸ Muthahhari, Murtadha. 2012. *The Rights of Women in Islam* (Translated Arif Mulyana). Yogyakarta: Rausyan Fikr Institute p. 114

³⁹ Sachiko Murata. 1999. *The Tao of Islam* (Penerjemah Rahmani Astuti & M. S. Nasrullah). Bandung: Mizan p. 63

(*al-Razaqu*) by supplying fruits to other organisms. Animals possess a higher degree of the names and characteristics of Allah compared to plants due to their embodiment of the four fundamental aspects of divinity: life (*al-Hayyu*), knowledge (*al-'Alimu*), will (al-Qadiru), and power (*al-Maliku*).

All the elements comprising the macrocosm can be observed within humans as a microcosm. Sachiko Murata refers to humanity as the offspring of all elements. Humans possess the same elements as nature, including iron, minerals, and protein. Additionally, humans exhibit the names and qualities of Allah found in nature, but with greater intensity.⁴⁰ This is the background for humans and nature to have a close relationship and need each other and need to give each other.

The Islamic intellectual tradition places humans as the center point, but humans are not viewed as material objects, but are viewed as spiritual subjects known as anthropocosmic. Based on this view, Muslims must seek knowledge to know themselves, nature and God. The highest knowledge lies in “whoever knows himself knows his God”. Knowing yourself means knowing the meaning of being human.⁴¹

In explaining this problem, Sachiko Murata quoted the opinion of Najm al-Din Razi.⁴² During the process of creation, Razi observes two distinct motions in the macrocosm: the downward migration from the beginning (*mabda'*) and the subsequent return to the origin (*ma'ad*). The downward movement refers to the transition from the First Mind to the physical body, and the upward movement denotes the transition from the physical body to the First Mind. Subsequently, Razi elucidated the process of human creation as described in verse 71 of Q. S. Shaad, wherein it is stated, “Recall when your Lord addressed the Angels, proclaiming, ‘Verily, I shall fashion humans from clay.’”

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 64

⁴¹ William C Chittick. 2010. *Kosmologi Islam Dan Dunia Modern* (Translated Arif Mulyadi). Jakarta: Mizan p. 110.

⁴² Murata, Sachiko. 1999. *The Tao of Islam* (Penerjemah Rahmani Astuti & M. S. Nasrullah). Bandung: Mizan p. 66

Razi posits that humans are composed of earthly elements. Razi stated that according to the Hadith, Allah fashioned mankind with his two hands over a period of forty days. Thus, humans possess four fundamental constituents that constitute the natural world: water, fire, wind, and earth. These elements constitute the fundamental components of the human body. This phenomenon causes humans to go from the spiritual realm to the material realm. Subsequently, humans exist in their existence until their physical forms transcend the material realm and revert back to their source, a phenomenon referred to as ascension. The adjectives “low” and “high” in this context refer to spatial position, rather than carrying any connotation of nobility or inferiority. The physical body is characterized as *yin*, while the spiritual aspect is considered *yang*. As a result, *yin* and *yang* form a fundamental connection within human beings, allowing them to maintain a state of equilibrium.⁴³

To this end, Razi emphasized that humans have a higher intensity in manifesting the names and attributes of Allah. Because humans were created in the image of all nature. Humans have elements from other creatures. When churning the soil of Adam, all the characteristics of Satan and angels, animals, plants and objects were actualized. It’s natural that angels and devils were curious about Adam. Because Adam knew them, while they did not know the nature of Adam. Adam knows everything in nature while they do not know all the essence of nature. “And He taught Adam all the names” (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 31).

After Allah created Adam, then Allah created Eve as narrated by al-Tabari, Satan was expelled from the Garden of Paradise when he was cursed and Adam was placed in the Garden of Paradise. Adam wandered around alone without a wife who could provide peace. He fell asleep and when he woke up he found a woman sitting next to his head, a woman whom Allah had created from his rib. Adam asked him “who are you?” and he answered “a woman”. Adam asked “why were you created?” he answered “so that you can find peace”. The angels then asked

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 66

to test how much Adam knew “what is Adam’s name?” Adam answered “Eve”, they again asked “why is she called Eve”. Adam answered “because he was created from something living”.⁴⁴

Feminist thinkers generally reject that Eve was created from Adam as stated in the information above. The ontological history of human creation as told by religious teachings has become the cause of gender inequality and discrimination against women.⁴⁵ We should inquire whether any entity that assumes the role of a parent possesses inherent nobility, whereas the offspring that emanates from this parent is inherently contemptible. Does this mean that Adam, as the progenitor, becomes esteemed, while Eve, as the offspring, becomes contemptible? Had Eve not been derived from Adam, would the eradication of injustice and prejudice against women have ensued? Alternatively, may the root issue actually stem from the presence of injustice and discrimination, regardless of whether Eve’s creation was derived from Adam or not?

In *Futuhat Al-Makiyyah* volume II, Ibn ‘Arabi elucidates that Adam is regarded as occupying a higher level than Eve. This relationship is a result of Eve’s creation from Adam. Adam was the initial manifestation of the human body. Adam was the inaugural progenitor of this particular species. Subsequently, God created a second progenitor for the human species, namely named Eve. Adam holds a greater position in the ontological hierarchy compared to Eve, as he is the progenitor of Eve. Jesus was conceived by Mary through divine intervention, establishing Mary’s role as equivalent to that of Adam, while Jesus assumed a role similar to that of Eve. In the second scenario, Mary assumes the role of the mother, while Jesus is the offspring who originated from her. The tale of Jesus, as stated by God, bears resemblance to the story of Adam (Q.S. Ali Imrân: 59). The significance of the parallels between Jesus and Eve lies in the fact that Jesus was conceived without a biological father, whereas Eve was created

⁴⁴ Entin Anwar. 2017. *Jati Diri Perempuan Dalam Al-Qur’an*. Bandung: Mizan p.125.

⁴⁵ Nurjannah Ismail. 2003. *Perempuan dalam pasungan*. Yogyakarta: LKiS p. 174

without a biological mother. When Eve was separated from Adam, God instilled in him a strong need to unite in marriage with her. The occurrence of closure is facilitated by this process, as stated in Q. S. al-A'râf: 189, with the purpose of achieving procreation and reproduction.⁴⁶

However, Ibn 'Arabi stressed that humanity is an encompassing concept that encompasses both men and women, hence rejecting the notion of men having a superior status to women within humanity. Nature encompasses both the macrocosm and the microcosm, just as it contains the larger universe and the smaller human realm. In terms of their connection with God, humans as the microcosm are not subordinate to nature as the macrocosm.

The hierarchical positioning of the macrocosm above humans and males above women is attributed to the transmission of energy from the macrocosm to the microcosm, and from men to women. In this scenario, the microcosm and women assume a more receptive role, representing the *yin*, while the macrocosm and males take on a more active one, representing the *yang*. The recipient of the activity does not possess greater authority than the entity doing the action, as women receive activities from men and nature receives activities from God.⁴⁷

From the perspective of the Islamic intellectual tradition, the creation of Adam and Eve can serve as a basis for understanding the rationality behind the love that develops between a man and a woman. The love experienced by women and men is not identical due to the inherent distinctions between the two genders. The hierarchical relationship that is established delineates the complementary and interconnected nature of each party.

Upon the creation of Adam's physical form, he lacked any inclination towards matrimony. However, it is widely recognized that marriage and reproduction play crucial roles in the

⁴⁶ Muhyi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi. 2010. *Futuhat Al-Makiyyah*. IX Jilid. Beirut: Dar Ihya Al-Turath Al-'Arabi p. 136.

⁴⁷ Sachiko Murata. 1999. *The Tao of Islam* (Translated Rahmani Astuti & M. S. Nasrullah). Bandung: Mizan p. 241

perpetuation of life, a fact that is known by God. Thus, God extracted Eve from Adam's rib. After Eve was separated from Adam, God instilled in Adam a strong desire for her, as the absence of anything does not align with the nature of life. Eve exhibited a predilection for her partner and offspring, but Adam had a predilection for himself. Due to Eve's connection with Adam, Adam exhibited a proclivity for Eve.⁴⁸

The inclination of men towards women stems from their inherent connection, as women are an integral part of their own being. Conversely, women's inclination towards men arises from their deep affection for their ancestral roots. The authenticity of men's love for women stems from women's genuine nature. Conversely, a woman's love remains concealed as its source is not fully incorporated within her. Love will manifest if men can disclose their ancestry to women. Men rely on women for support, and women rely on men for support because women serve as a source of comfort for men, and men serve as a source of comfort for women.⁴⁹

Islamic education is structured on the basis of gender equality, however it does not imply complete uniformity between men and women. Education should acknowledge that pupils' gender identities are not solely shaped by social constructs, but are also impacted by their inherent biological characteristics. By examining the story of Adam and Eve, educators can discern that male and female students possess equal opportunities for growth, development, and participation. Indeed, it is possible to receive equal treatment in the educational process under specific circumstances. However, there are instances where differential treatment may occur, without acknowledging that such treatment amounts to discrimination.

Conclusion

Education, according to Ki Hadjar Dewantara, is a deliberate endeavor to cultivate the character, intellect, and

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 244

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p. 143.

physical abilities (psychomotor) of pupils, enabling them to attain a level of excellence wherein they can live in peace with both nature and society. By establishing a broad worldview basis in education, we may effectively address paradigmatic issues related to gender perspectives and gain a thorough understanding of equality. Hence, the initial course of action entails initiating education with a holistic perspective, specifically adopting the monotheistic worldview. This worldview acknowledges humans not solely from a biological and social standpoint, but also recognizes their physical and spiritual dimensions, as well as their individual and social facets, along with their connections to the natural world. This diverges from the ecofeminist approach, which solely considers humans from a strictly biological standpoint, as well as the broader feminist viewpoint, which solely focuses on humans from their social dimension. Furthermore, it is necessary to reevaluate the paradigmatic issue that perceives the interactions between women and men as being rooted in power dynamics. Murata proposes that women and men establish a harmonious cosmic relationship in their lives. In order to ensure that education fosters a harmonious collaboration between men and women. Furthermore, the notion of equality must not deviate from a materialistic standpoint that solely examines the economic aspect of women and men's status or prioritizes the public sphere over the domestic sphere. Islamic education should acknowledge that while women and men possess distinct biological and psychological attributes that result in diverse characteristics and behaviors, this does not imply that one gender is superior to the other. Women are equal to men as fellow human beings. Both has inherent capacity and are entitled to cultivate and actualize this capacity. Both women and men are equally designated as caliphs on earth, with the shared responsibility of fostering prosperity.

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Ethical Considerations

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