

## **Feminism and Faith: Strengthening Commonalities of Feminists and Women of Faith**

A Workshop at the CSO Forum on B+30

Oct 2024 Notes

### Workshop Advocacy Recommendations

- 1) Encourage women's integration into leadership
- 2) Integrate gender equality into early educational curricula
- 3) Collect data that is community based
- 4) Use the tool of consultation as a tool for empowerment, learning, bridge building and consensus building from diverse perspectives
- 5) Adopt feminist – and inclusive—theology into Faith communities
- 6) Recognize the role of faiths in protecting human rights

### Feminism & Faith Notes - collected from one of the participants

- Spoke about need to Address intersectionality
- Used language such as Women of faith; women and men of faith
- Work we do to shift the paradigm, done in the aspect of faith
- How important to safeguard diversities within faith
- The initiative stopped, because decisions eventually were taken by men
- Recognize “Women’s soft power” - education, health care etc
- Faith can be a source of motivation.
- Believing in a system of beliefs
- Faith has been used as motivation, but also as motivator for pushback.
- When we use faith to its fullest capacity it can be the cause of harmony and can bring people together.
- Task of religion is to foster unity
- Somen religions accept that the equality of men and women is a divine truth - how does this motivate us
  - Helps us keep engaged in difficult conversation
  - to find constructive solutions, important when there is lack of trust in each other.
- Faith can foster trust
- Faith can help us reorient our perspectives
- Faith is a community of practice - to create new patterns of social life
- Faith can help us in the process of learning
- Develop a new body knowledge and practice, such as religion and science
  - Faith literacy - to provide a for gender equality
- There are patriarchal attitudes in many faith settings.
- “What we can do is to bring people together, that doesn’t focus on what is polarizing us”

## Workshop Discussion

- Moderated by two org: Latter-Day Saint Church of Jesus Christ (LDS) - US and the World Council of Churches
- Participants: there were many others whose organizations were not recorded
  - LDS
  - WCC
  - NAWO - from UK
  - Baha'i International Community
  - Widows Right International
- Context of marginalization - feminism and allies
- How faith can be used to transcend gender norms and shift paradigms
- Feminist and faith are often perceived as contradicted, but this dialogue tries to question this
- Focus on the things on common concerns and not what polarizes us. Approach the session with Tolerance and respect - to overcome challenges and misunderstandings

## Faith and Feminism Group challenges

- How to to enhance systems analysis,
- Could be a potential space to look at how we can overcome polarization
- Issue of soft power of women needs further clarification
- The language in this space was very different from that used in feminist circles.
- There might be challenges addressing men & masculinities with some faith groups

## *Lili's Personal Talking points*

- A great 20th thinker and advocate for peace once said
  - “religion must be the mainspring and source of love in the world, for religion is the revelation of the will of God, the divine fundamental of which is love. Therefore, if religion should prove to be the cause of enmity and hatred instead of love, its absence is preferable to its existence”
- Faith communities embody the interconnectedness of human beings
- Religion has a key role to play in demonstrating that our well-being is inextricably tied to that of our neighbours.
  - The task of religion is to foster unity by harmonizing disparate elements and nurturing in every heart a selfless love for humankind.
  - For Baha'is, the equality of women and men is not only a goal to be achieved, but a divine truth about human nature to be acknowledged and embraced.
- How does faith motivate us?
- Faith can be a motivating force for justice
- channel of moral guidance that reaches to the roots of human motivation.
  - awakening in people the capacity to love,

- to create,
- to sacrifice, and to overcome prejudice, ignorance and other harmful practices and beliefs
- source of motivation to help us to remain engaged in difficult conversations
- supplies hope in our abilities to find constructive solutions to problems that seem insurmountable
  - Especially where there is lack of trust
- Spaces for meaningful conversation among people of different faiths and races can help to build this trust
  - Trust is a reciprocal relationship
    - one must offer it and accept it.
  - Trust requires the telling of truth
  - Without truth, the full nature of injustice (for example the deleterious impact of patriarchy on all members of the human family)
  - And its effects and the actions needed to end it — become obscured
  - Faith helps us to understand that
    - We should be uncompromising in defense of the truth,
    - yet infinitely gentle and loving as we bring our spiritual principles to bear on the needs of the time we are living in.
- Therefor Faith can help us to foster honest and open dialogue,
  - to challenge our assumptions,
  - reorient our perspectives, and expand our consciousness —
- These are crucial practices we need to
  - Establish gender justice.
  - In our faith, we can find both the call to justice as well as the means to achieve it.
- helps us translate initial excitement for causes and programs into sustained, long-term commitment to action.
- enables us to understand and have faith that human beings are essentially noble,
- that they have dignity,
- and that they are entitled to certain inalienable rights to safeguard their high station.

### **How does faith Motivate communities and institutions?**

- Faith and Religion can be the
  - chief instruments for the establishment of order in the world and of tranquility amongst its peoples.
- The Bahá'í community has found it helpful to conceive of faith communities
  - as an evolving system of knowledge and practice,
  - analogous to science, aimed at contributing to the advancement of civilization.
- A faith community, in this context, becomes a community of practice,
  - engaged in a systematic process of learning as it strives to noble ideals to create new patterns of social life.
- With the above poster in mind
  - Faith and engaging in a process of learning have ramifications in the context of gender equality
  - No one knows what a society truly based in gender equality looks like, for such a society has never existed.

- While we may be able to identify some obstacles and steps forward, we will need to *learn* our way towards a new paradigm based in gender equality.
- The enterprise of bringing about gender equality can be understood as an urgent learning process.
- To develop a new body of knowledge, we need to draw on humanity's great systems of knowledge: religion and science.
- For religion to function alongside science as a system of knowledge and practice, scientific qualities of humble inquiry and learning are needed:
  - We need to ask questions and formulate hypotheses.
  - We need to observe, measure and rigorously test ideas we think will lead to the empowerment of women and girls.
  - These ideas must be measured against the standard of key principles like justice, kindness, trustworthiness, and nobility.
  - These efforts must unfold in a pattern of consultation, action and reflection so that observations and insights into effective practices can be better understood and continually improved.
  - Religion should serve as a dynamic knowledge system that provides much of the impetus for progress and advancement.
- Recommendation
  - Develop “faith literacy” at the United Nations that makes visible existing faith-based resources that provide a basis for gender equality and justice.