

INDONESIAN BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY'S PERSPECTIVE ON GENDER EQUALITY

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ABSTRACT

The conception of gender for Indonesian context is understood socially, politically, culturally and even religiously biased. Gender equality, which is always regarded as respect for women, is actually a detrimental action for women themselves. This work seeks to explain the concept of gender equality in Indonesian context from the perspective of the Baha'i faith and find out the views of its followers about the role of women in gender equality. This is also to describe the principles of the teachings of the Baha'i faith in promoting the awareness of women's equal role in Indonesia. The article is based on research that falls under the descriptive qualitative research cluster using a gender study approach. The data were collected using observation, in-depth interviews and sources from previous studies. The work suggests that the followers of the Baha'i faith view the differences between men and women only from biological factors that exist in both sexualities. Those differences are merely due to the cultures of the people so that the understanding about gender equality becomes a biased concept. This is because the people in Indonesia observe to a patriarchal ideology which considers men to be superior and versatile while women are weak and marginalized in terms of social situation. The Baha'i community believe that God create humans from the same source, namely dust, so that no humans would exalt over the others. Humans are the same and equal between men and women.

Keywords: Baha'i Community; gender equality; Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Gender is a very sensitive topic of discussion in a country that holds patriarchal values (male domination). Discussion of gender from the past to the present has become a central topic of discussion in placing the role of women in everyday life, both from religious and social relations. The concept of gender in Indonesia is still overlapping, especially with regard to women's role in public, so that women are hampered in playing their role for change in society.¹ The

¹ Sarah Apriliandra and Hetty Krisnani, "Perilaku Diskriminatif Pada Perempuan Akibat Kuatnya Budaya Patriarki Di Indonesia Ditinjau Dari Perspektif Konflik," *Jurnal Kolaborasi Resolusi Konflik* 3, No. 1 (2021): 1-13.

discourse of seeking claims has raised its own problem, seeing that there is still a gender bias that places men as superior in society.² Differences in the context of the distribution of the roles of men and women in society are generally discussed in several theories. First, the Nature theory distinguishes men and women in a biological context, making a difference in the position of women in the social perspective (relationship). Second, the Nurture theory that holds that social differences are distinguished by the culture of the local community³. The two theories above are a reference in the bias in understanding gender among Indonesians particularly regarding in giving roles to women.

The role of women in Indonesia has yet to achieve equality between men and women.⁴ Women have not been able to awaken due to restrictions on their environment which dominated by patriarchy.⁵ This concept has marginalized women in gender roles, especially in the public sphere. This issue can be viewed broadly from two sides; first from the external side where there is a contradiction in understanding of patriarchy; second, from the internal side where women who limit themselves in playing a role in the public realm.⁶ External factors will set boundaries for women so that it is difficult for them to actualize their role in public. The role of women is quite strategic in social relations because they provide a balance in the role that men are unable to play, such as taking care of children and being a nurturing educator in general, even though men can take care of children and protect them, they will not be as good as women. The patriarchal concept only views men as hard workers while women are not, or in other words, women are weak and men are strong (superior) even in public, women have a limited role.⁷ Therefore, there is a significant gap in society and there is a sense of inequality. Efforts or studies to promote equality between men and women in Indonesia have been carried out since 1970.⁸ However, to date, little has been achieved.

The issues of gender equality not only concern the social, economic, political

² Sumadi, "Ideologi Bias Gender Dalam Lembaran Fikih Populer Di Indonesia," *al-Afkar, Journal for Islamic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2018): 1–15.

³ Mutmainnah, "Kesenjangan Gender Ditinjau Dari Persepektif Islam.," *Gender Equality: international journal of child and gender studies*. vol 5, no. 2 (2019).

⁴ Ingesti Lady Rara Prastiwi and Dida Rahmadanik, "POLEMIK DALAM KARIR PEREMPUAN INDONESIA," *JURNAL KOMUNIKASI DAN KAJIAN MEDIA* vol 4, no. 1 (2020).

⁵ Fransisca Jallie Pattiruhu, "Critical Legal Feminism Pada Kedudukan Perempuan Dalam Hak Waris Pada Sistem Patriarki.," *Culture & Society: Journal of Anthropological Research*. vol 2, no. 1 (2020)

⁶ Farida Hanum, *Kajian Dan Dinamika Gender*, (Malang: intrans publishing wisma kamitro., 2018).

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 212

⁸ Mutmainnah, "Kesenjangan Gender Ditinjau Dari Persepektif Islam."

or legal matters but have also extended to the religious matters. The Baha'i faith has a concept of equality. Even the concept of gender equality in the teachings of the Baha'i faith upholds women. The Baha'i prophet said, "Don't you know why we have made you all from the same dust? So that one does not elevate himself above the other"⁹ Therefore, Baha'i adherents obey him and uphold equality between men and women. However, in Indonesia women still face discrimination and their role is second to men.¹⁰ Even though this country is known for its rule of law, the fact is that discrimination still occurs against women. However, the majority of religions in Indonesia uphold the dignity of women, especially those in Islam.

Similar research was conducted by Hikmatir Pasya and Muhammad Haekal Hakim (2016) entitled *Gender Compatibility (a critical study of gender equality)*.¹¹ Furthermore, another study was conducted by Erna Ermawati Chotim (2020) entitled *Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women in Indonesia: Desire and Inevitability of a Pragmatic Approach (Study of Cirebon SMEs Home Made Products)*.¹² From the two studies above, several points can be drawn, such as: a) inequality in the concept of gender, be it related to economic, social or religious matters; b) understanding of gender is still too general; 3) the Indonesian government's dilemma to make a decision on gender equality. These facts serve as the basis for gender research in Indonesia from the perspective of the Baha'i teachings.

Most research on gender equality has been carried out to date and it has not well-received by Indonesian women. Some people still view women from a biological perspective (gender), and there are those who view them from the socio-cultural side of society that has patriarchal views, so that women do not get freedom in social relations or in relations between communities, even in the public eye.¹³ Even though in the field there are some women who have the same role, even more than men. However, people's mindset has not changed from time to time. The importance of gender studies is from various cultures, customs and even religions. However, the current researcher looks at gender equality from the perspective of the Baha'i faith, which sees women from the

⁹ "Kalimat Tersembunyi, Sabdah Baha'ullah" (n.d.).

¹⁰ Louisa yesami krisnatalia, "Perempuan, HAM Dan Permasalahannya Di Indonesia.," *Binamulia Hukum* vol 7, no. 1 (2018): pp. 71-80.

¹¹ and Hakim Muhammad Haekal Pasya, Hikmatiar, "Konformitas Gender (Studi Kritik Atas Konsep Kesetaraan Gender)," *Jurnal STUDIA QURANIKA* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1-28.

¹² Erna Ermawati Chotim, "Kesetaraan Gender Dan Pemberdayaan Perempuan Di Indonesia: Keinginan Dan Keniscayaan Pendekatan Pragmatis (Studi Terhadap Ukm Cirebon Home Made)," *AKSELERASI: Jurnal Ilmiah Nasional* 2, no. 1 (2020): 70-82.

¹³ Ratna Dewi, "Kedudukan Perempuan Dalam Islam Dan Problem Ketidakadilan Gender.," *Noura: jurnal kajian gender dan anak*. vol 4, no. 1 (2020).

perspective of its teachings. The explanation makes this article important in the study of gender in Indonesia, from the perspective of Baha'i teachings. This work is inspired by the raise of some questions on the concept of gender from the perspective of the Baha'i teachings, as well as the views of the Baha'i adherents in seeing gender in Indonesia today, and the changing trends of the times. This is what this research seeks to explain so as to present positive values that can be taken for future changes. Every religion has a perspective on gender equality, but this article seeks to examine gender from the perspective of the Baha'i faith which is relatively new after Islam.

GENDER ISSUE IN IDONESIA

Gender issue have been discussed with many topics such as discrimination against women, patriarchy, violations of human rights against women and subordinated role of women in Indonesia. Ade Irma Sakinah and Dessy Hasanah Siti A. (2017) discuss a strong patriarchal culture in Indonesia,¹⁴ showing that men have better position compared to women so they are discriminated in this country. This article shows that patriarchal culture is a barrier for women to play a role in society, so that its concept and practice have become gender bias which causes injustice to women. The gender bias that occurs in Indonesian society is a frightening phenomenon that has inspired women to voice emancipation. From this, women are increasingly losing their freedom.

Mutmainnah (2019) talks on gender disparity from an Islamic perspective¹⁵ and indicates that the concept of gender in Islam is still an organic issue because the interpretation of the Qur'an is not comprehensive so that the existing classical understanding in society is still quite common, resulting in discrimination and exclusion of women still occurring among religious communities who should be able to apply religious recommendations and understandings contained in the Qur'an. A lot of people view gender as issues that are merely concerned with discussing sex (gender) given the position of women especially for men who believe in the patriarchal system. Islam has clear definition on the role of women, but in practice, it is still a taboo and a lot of men claim that women are only weak creatures that are dependent on men. However, women are capable of doing what men can do, so this point of view has refuted by the role women play.

Another study which is in line with the research above was conducted by

¹⁴ Ade Irma Sakinah dan Dessy Hasanah Siti A, "Menyoroti Budaya Partiariki Di Indonesia," *jurnal social work*, vol 7, no. 1 (2017): p. 71-80.

¹⁵ Mutmainnah, "Kesenjangan Gender Ditinjau Dari Persepektif Islam." p. 1-7

Louisa Yesami Krisnalita (2018) which discusses women, human rights and their problems in Indonesia.¹⁶ The discussion in this article explains about women's discrimination because Indonesia currently still adheres to the patriarchal ideology which places women second to men, so that it extends to human rights which is still an issue in Indonesia, which makes women's rights clash with the laws and culture of the local community. In addition, because of the discrimination that exists among women, many women do not get their roles in citizenship positions. Subsequent research was conducted by Wery Gusmansyah (2019) entitled *Dynamics of Gender Equality in Political Life in Indonesia*.¹⁷ From this research several points were drawn which became the discussion topics, namely: a) women being marginalized in public; b) women being ostracized in the political sphere; c) women being disfavored by the concept of gender itself. A study discussing gender in the workplace was conducted by Maulida Nurul Innayah and Bima Cinintya Pratama (2019) entitled *Challenges and Opportunities for Women in the Work Environment*.¹⁸ This research shows: a) restrictions on women from advancing to higher positions in the work environment; b) perceived implicit quotas for women in employment positions.

Studies on the role of women have been done including the one by Aisyatin Kamila (2020) entitled "Women's Role as the Backbone of the Family in Increasing Children's Learning Motivation Amid the Covid 19 Pandemic"¹⁹. The points of her work include that; a) women play a role in giving understanding to the nation's children; b) women play a role in giving affection and understanding to children. Similar research was conducted by Zainuddin Abdullah (2021) entitled "The Role of Women in the World of Education from the Hamka Perspective"²⁰ The points of this research are; a) women have the basis as being effective to become a leader b) women with the role they play have the right to get what they deserve in the public sphere. A study on the Baha'i community conducted by (2018) entitled *Conflict Resolution between the Baha'i Community and Muslims: A Case Study in Pati, Central Java*.²¹ This

¹⁶ Louisa yesami krisnatalia, "Perempuan, HAM Dan Permasalahannya Di Indonesia." pp. 71-80

¹⁷ WERY Gusmansyah, "Dinamika Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Kehidupan Politik Di Indonesia," *Hawa* 1, no. 1 (2019): 1-18.

¹⁸ Maulida Nurul Innayah and Bima Cinintya Pratama, "Tantangan Dan Kesempatan Wanita Dalam Lingkungan Kerja," *Jurnal Manajemen* 13, no. 2 (2019): 1-8.

¹⁹ Aisyatin Kamila, "Peran Perempuan Sebagai Garda Terdepan Dalam Keluarga Dalam Meningkatkan Motivasi Belajar Anak Ditengah Pandemi Covid 19," *Jurnal Konseling Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 2 (2020): 75-83.

²⁰ Zainuddin Abdullah, "Peran Perempuan Dalam Dunia Pendidikan Perspektif Hamka," *Al Amin: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu dan Budaya Islam* 4, no. 01 (2021): 115-135, <http://stitalamin.ac.id/jurnal/index.php/alamin/article/view/87>.

²¹ Moh Rosyid, "Resolusi Konflik Umat Baha'I Dengan Muslim: Studi Kasus Di Pati,

study recorded that the Baha'i adherents in socializing with Muslims; a) the Baha'is distribute books on the Baha'i; b) they administer education regardless of religious background and gender; c) self-introduction or self-existence.

This work employs the theories of Nature (biological) and Nurture (cultural society). The theory of Nature was first brought up by Carol Gilligan²² and Alice Rossi who was the first to put it forward in the field of gender.²³ This theory has experienced a very significant growth because it develops not directly discussing gender, but discussing religiosity. However, after undergoing more complex changes, at first this theory was associated with classical scientists. Sometimes this theory is also associated with Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel, but Charles Darwin²⁴ is considered to be the founder of this theory scientifically and it is supported by Gregor Mendel's Theory of Heredity.²⁵ In the end, this theory was diverted by feminism discourse towards biological essentialism after the 1980s which was marked by the re-acceptance of the concept of differences in gender roles. Coupled with the concept of ecofeminism,²⁶ this argument is able to bring the concept of nature to become more dominant. The initiators of this theory aimed to create social harmony, fair equality in diversity.²⁷

Furthermore, the nurture theory views women from social relations, both in the local community and in the wider community. Nurture theory was developed by several figures, such as Margaret Mead, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir,²⁸ Sigmund Freud,²⁹ Hilary M. Lips, Ann Oakley,³⁰ Nancy Chodorow, Judith Butler.³¹ In this concept, scientists disagree by looking at differences male and female from a biological perspective or in terms of gender, when

Jawa Tengah," *Jurnal Multi Kultural dan Multireligius* 17, no. 02 (2018).

²² Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, & London: Harvard University Press, Cet. 38), 2003.

²³ *Ibid.* p. 98

²⁴ Gregory A. Kimble, "Evolution of the Nature-Nurture Issue in the History of Psychology" Dalam Robert Plomin and Gerald E. McClearn (Ed.), *Nature, Nurture, & Psychology* (Washington DC: American Psychological Association), 1993. p. 5

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid* pp. 181-183

²⁷ *ibid* p. 225

²⁸ "Beauvoir, Simone De Dalam Catherine Villanueva Gardner, *Historical Dictionary of Feminist Philosophy*, (Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 28-31." (n.d.).

²⁹ Worell, Judith, *Encyclopedia of Women and Gender: Sex Similarities and Differences and the Impact of Society on Gender*. California: Academic Press., 2002.

³⁰ Ann Oakley Dan Bukunya *Sex, Gender and Society* (1972) Dianggap Sebagai Peletak Konsep Nurture Dalam *Diskursus Gender*. Lihat "Gender" Dalam Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan, *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies*, (London, California, & New Delhi: SAGE Publi, 2004.

³¹ Moh Khusa'i, "Problem Denifisi Gender: Kajian Atas Konsep Nature Dan Nurture," *Kalimah: jurnal studi agama dan pemikiran islam*. vol 11, no. 1 (2013).

looking at the perspective of gender it will lead to sex, and this is what makes these scientists disagree as they tend to look at it from the social perspective (community culture). These two things will be the analytical tools in writing this article in the context of Indonesia, so that this research will look at it from a biological point of view or from a cultural or social side which becomes the society's concept on women as being secondary from the perspective of the Baha'i faith.

This study falls under the descriptive qualitative research cluster.³² Qualitative research means there is an effort to transfer and understand the meaning of what is happening in various individuals or groups. The research process involves questions and procedures that must be carried out by presenting field data directly obtained from the followers of the Baha'i faith regarding their perspective on gender in Indonesia, as well as data obtained from their teachings or from their holy books. This study used a gender approach.³³ The data were collected using interviews with the followers of the Baha'i faith, an assessment of Baha'i teachings in the context of gender. In addition, the data were analyzed using data condensation,³⁴ that is, all documents obtained in accordance with the theme of the discussion, and in the process were written into a form of work, then simplified by description and abstraction. Data display,³⁵ which is display of data that have been formatted in a written form and then processed into a systematic narrative according to the themes that have been grouped. Then, temporary conclusions³⁶ were drawn.

GENDER CONCEPT IN INDONESIAN BAHAI

Gender is a point of view towards men and women, be it from a biological point of view (sex) or from the role of women between the two, as well as from their innate characteristics (masculinity and feminism) that exist in men and women.³⁷ that exist in society. However, this does not rule out the possibility

³² A Muri Yusuf, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif, Kuantitatif Dan Penelitian Gabungan*, Edisi Pertama, Jakarta, (Jakarta: kencana., 2019). p. 328

³³ Asriana Harahap dan Hilda Wahyuni, "Studi Islam Dalam Pendekatan Gender," *Jurnal Gender dan kajian anak*. vol 5, no. 1 (2021): p. 45. In research

This gender approach is a research analysis that discusses women either from their discrimination or from their high regard.

³⁴ Miles. M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, *Qualitatif Data Analysis; Methods Sourcebook* (Third Edit). (SAGE Publications, Ins., 2014). p. 8

³⁵ *ibid* p. 8

³⁶ *ibid* p. 9

³⁷ Gusri Wandu, "REKONSTRUKSI MASKULINITAS: MENGUAK PERAN LAKI-LAKI DALAM PERJUANGAN KESETARAAN GENDER," *Kafa'ah : Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Gender* vol V, no. 2 (2015).

that these differences lead to discrimination against women.³⁸ There are many forms of discrimination against women that cause them to fight back (emancipation of women) for their rights and roles in society.³⁹ In addition, religion also plays a role in solving problems of gender but religious people seem to be silent about matters regulated in religion. In fact, religion is at the forefront of discriminating against the role of women. However, this is different from the view of the Baha'i teachings. The Baha'i faith originated in Persia in the 19th century which was founded by Mirza Husayn Ali Nuri who held the title of *Baha'ullah* (glory of God), the Baha'i faith adheres to a monotheistic style which emphasizes the unity of mankind. This religion stands alone and is not affiliated to any other religion. The purpose of this religion is to unite all religions and people in the principle of the oneness of God and a form of spiritual transformation in human life, and Baha'i adherents believe in the truth of religions that have come down before, such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam. So that spiritual life must always be improved including economic and social life in a balanced way.⁴⁰ The principles of Baha'i include believing in the existence of God, and the same God who sent down all religions, proof that God has messengers who sent prophets, and humans themselves.⁴¹

Several literature sources explain that the historical traces of the birth of the Baha'i faith began with the Bab movement during the Shiite dynasty. The pioneer of the Bab movement was the Ithna 'Asharia group, which is one of the Shiite sects. Ithna 'Asharia believes in the twelfth Imam after Hadrat Ali who is expected to be the figure of Imam Mahdi. Meanwhile, the Ithna 'Asharia sub-sect itself, known as Shaikhiyyah and led by Ahmad Al Ahsa -i (1751-1826) was the pioneer of the Bab movement itself. Before Ahmad Al Ahsa -i died he had appointed Kazim Rasyti (1789 - 1843) as his successor. After Kazim Rasyti died, Ali Muhammad, who was his main follower, declared himself the Bab-savior who was then regarded by his followers as the figure of Imam Mahdi.⁴² On the course of its journey, the Baha'i faith entered Indonesia and now it has followers. In the context of Indonesia, the Baha'i religion has views on the

³⁸ SUWARNO, "Diskriminasi Gender dalam Kebijakan Pesantren (Study di Pesantren Al-Muhamad Cepu)," *Dar El-Ilmi: Jurnal Studi Keagamaan, Pendidikan Dan Humaniora*, vol 5, no. 2 (2018).

³⁹ Olivia Roselina Sihotang, "Bentuk-Bentuk Kekerasan Verbal terhadap Perempuan Nelayan di Selambai Kelurahan Loktuan Kecamatan Bontang Utara Kota Bontang.," *eJournal Sosiatri-Sosiologi*, vol 7, no. 2 (2019).

⁴⁰ Samsul Hidayat, "Stereotif Mahasiswa IAIN Pontianak Terhadap Agama Baha'i," *jurnal studi agama-agama*, 7, no. 1 (2017). p. 59

⁴¹ "Majelis Rohani Nasional Baha'i Indonesia, *Agama Baha'i* (Jakarta: Majelis Rohani Nasional Baha'i Indonesia)" (2013): 5.

⁴² Niyaz, Sufi A.Q, "The Babi and Baha'i faith, *Islam International Publication: United Kingdom*." (1960).

local community and even Indonesia itself, one of which is a view on gender. The Baha'i adherents see Indonesia as experiencing a setback, because of rules that are detrimental to the position of women's roles, which is most visible in the costumes (clothing) that govern Indonesian women and differentiate between women and men, because the two are not different. Things that men can do; women can also do it. There is no need to discriminate in roles and functions as they are Indonesian people and God's creations.

Baha'i adherents view differences only in biological (sexual) context other than that there are no more differences. Existing rules actually harm women and cause setbacks for the country. The Baha'i view is that a country will progress if it upholds the dignity of women and ensure women play their role in society and the state.⁴³ Should this be fulfilled, the discrimination against them will no longer exist. At present the role of women is not only to function at home and to take care of the house but must move further forward as part of the society in general. There is no denying that there are things that women can do where men cannot do, so in life they complement each other in their roles.⁴⁴ The needs of the roles of men and women to get things done are crucial in various perspectives, giving rise to better perspectives as well. In this case, changes are needed. The Baha'i adherents view that men and women are like the wings of a bird where the bird cannot fly with only one wing, so it is necessary to complement each other. When the two do not meet at one point then the bird will fall. So are humans. If women are marginalized, the country will be difficult to develop and progress, and it will even experience a setback in civilization.

The decline in the role of women in Indonesia which is visible in the fields of economics, law, politics and education, even the society sees women as secondary to men. Indonesian women have been struggled for their dignity since the colonial times which was pioneered by Kartini, especially in the field of education.⁴⁵ However, the concept and culture that have been practiced for so long are difficult to break. People who discriminate against women in religious communities who practice teachings in their religion, in fact do not always do things in accordance with what is in their religious teachings, and even religion is at the forefront of discriminating against women, for example those who wear clothing that is not in accordance with the religious teachings

⁴³ "Interview with adherents of the Baha'i faith in View of Gender Equality in Indonesia." (n.d.).

⁴⁴ Rina, "Interview with the Views of Baha'i faith in Indonesia on Gender Equality," (n.d.)

⁴⁵ Ulmi Marsya, dan Johan Faladhin, "Belunggu Patriarki Pada Peran Laki-Laki Bangsawan Jawa Dalam Film Kartini Karya Hanung Bramantyo," *jurnal populika*. vol 7, no. 1 (2019): p. 80.

are immediately discriminated. This creates other issues in which as people are demanded to comply with the dress code of a certain religion. They forget about the role of women who are equal to men, and again women have become victims of people with a shallow mindset.

Women are often disadvantaged in many sectors in society. First, in the economy. In this case, Women are favored when applying for jobs as they are considered weak, unproductive and unequal to men.⁴⁶ Women who are discriminated at work become marginalized. Second, in politics; very few women are active in politics because of the restrictions imposed on them. Women only have been under-represented in politics with only 30%, despite the amendment of Law No. 12 of 2003 Article 65 Paragraph 1 that stipulates to provide space for women in political parties.⁴⁷ Women are still in a disadvantaged position because despite the number of men and women is almost the same, women have fewer opportunities in politics. However, there are still many roles for women that have not been fulfilled and unfortunately they also do not make the most of these opportunities either. Third, the laws concerning women also do not favor them. Fourth, education that puts males first. Although currently there are many women who enjoy education, it is difficult for the community's mindset to change to move forward and accept the role of women in society. The existing curriculum only answers the needs of the market, not the needs of society, so women are again marginalized.⁴⁸ The patriarchal concept has placed women's role as being secondary because the needs of the market puts men first, so that women have little space to move in making changes.

BAHA'I COMMUNITY'S POINTS OF VIEW ON GENDER EQUALITY

Gender transformation from time to time is the responsibility of all human beings, not just a handful of humans. Followers of the Baha'i faith of the opinion that gender equality in Indonesia must be addressed, many things are gender biased, as it is always women who get discriminated. Violence that occurs against women and the perpetrators are men. For example, violence against women and children is becoming a serious issue at this time, because of the government's low attention to discrimination against women and it also exacerbated by the attitude of society which gives a negative stigma to women because of the concept held fast by Indonesian people.⁴⁹ In addition, the lack of institutions that deal with the problem shows unawareness of the importance

⁴⁶ Farida Hanum, *Kajian Dan Dinamika Gender*. p. 219

⁴⁷ *ibid* p. 212

⁴⁸ *ibid* p. 199

⁴⁹ *ibid* p. 205

of protecting women. Marginalization of women has always haunted the direction of women's movements. Indonesian women must awaken to fight for a better treatment of them and discrimination against them should be stopped. Women should have significant roles to play and they should even become pioneers of change. Marginalization of women must come to an end.

The teachings of the Baha'i faith on gender equality have been widely discussed, one of which is in the words of Baha'ullah, «Don't you know why we have made you all from the same dust? So that one does not elevate himself above the other»⁵⁰ It indicates that we should never discriminate against one another, men or women, nor should we marginalize people based on gender. Followers of the Baha'i faith believe that the differences are merely biological. It is clear that humans are created from the same dust, with the same degree. The visible equality makes the Baha'i adherents think about change regarding world peace. Baha'ullah denounces matters related to race or differences, and promotes respect of each other.⁵¹ These differences will only cause divisions between humans, both men and women.

TRANSFORMATION OF CHANGES

The Baha'is assume that equality of men and women is an aspect of human reality and not a condition to be achieved for the common good. What makes humans human, the dignity and glory attached to them, is no different between men and women. The search for meaning, purpose, community, capacity to love, to be created, to endure knows no gender.⁵² The differences are only human assumptions, basically all human beings are the same. Because of the complexity of civilization and development, people feel different and the ability to explore and apply civilization causes this to happen. The Baha'is provide the assumption that today's world must change from childhood to maturity which will unite humans in the framework of peace. The assumptions in society result in a cultural and social norm, so that it is embedded in the mindset of a patriarchal society about women that they are below men. The obvious pattern of gender equality in the Baha'i faith that, especially social relations, is education. The Baha'i religious view of education is that it is a sector that must be promoted and equality must be obtained in it. People must invest in educational processes that foster the development of human intellectual and spiritual powers, and this model must promote the unity of humanity and

⁵⁰ "The Hidden Sentence, Delivered By Baha'ullah." (n.d.)

⁵¹ Umi Rojati, "Manajemen Komunikasi Sosial Penganut Agama Baha'i," *Communicatus: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, vol 3, no. 1 (2019). pp. 10-11

⁵² "Baha'i Internasional Community, 1 March 2015." (n.d.).

the equality of men and women.”⁵³ From Education Humanity can learn what is needed in society, be it change or hope. Men and women must get equal education, even women must be prioritized in education, because women will guide their children as agents of change for future changes.

The Baha’i faith not only promotes social education but also religious education as the foundation of life both in the world and the hereafter. The teachings about religious education must be instilled from an early age, so religious education is as important. “Religion offers an understanding of human existence and development that opens up one’s eye from rocky paths to distant horizons, and if true to the transcendent spirit of its founders, religion will serve as one of the more powerful forces for creating new and beneficial patterns for individual and collective life.”⁵⁴ It is from Education that humanity gets knowledge. Education is a necessity for society to achieve equality between men and women because there is no difference between the two, and the rights and obligations are equal. The striking difference between men and women in Indonesian society is due to the wrong mindset, because basically all humans come from the same source, namely Prophet Adam.

The concept of Baha’i religious teachings regarding gender equality is a significant discussion in a society that adheres to patriarchal views because it is contrary to the concept that has existed since long ago, and that it is contrary to customs that have been in practice for quite a long time in society. Violence against women makes the Baha’is realize that they should do something across all lines and sectors. This is a challenge in itself and must be fair to the rights and obligations of men and women since the tendency to be fair or unfair, to act with violence or with kindness, to be dishonest or trustworthy, is usually shaped at home. This habit is then carried over into every social interaction. If male siblings are allowed to have control over female siblings,⁵⁵ it will become a mindset and will be practiced throughout their life as they have learned the concept of patriarchy from an early age and view women as weak, and must be subordinate to men. Such mindset should be abolished in social and religious life.

In exploring the issue of gender equality and the role of women from a Baha’i perspective in Indonesia, several standpoints can be explained. First, fundamental equality. Men and women have fundamental rights, abilities, and potential equality. This means that women have the same rights to get an education, engage in social and political activities, and participate in community development as men. This point emphasizes the need to address

⁵³ “Baha’i Internasional Community, 21 February 2020” (n.d.).

⁵⁴ “Baha’i Internasional Community, 24 November 2015” (n.d.).

⁵⁵ “Baha’i Internasional Community, 3 March 2017” (n.d.).

gender inequality and provide space for women to contribute to society fully. Second, elimination of discrimination. The need to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. This includes overcoming social and cultural norms that limit women in carrying out their roles and potential. In the Indonesian context, this may mean addressing barriers such as child marriage, gender-based violence, limited access to equal education and employment opportunities, and raising awareness of women's rights. Third, empowerment of women. Baha'is emphasize empowering women as the key to achieving societal progress and prosperity. Empowering women through inclusive education, skills training, access to resources, and social support can help women reach their full potential. The Baha'i perspective also encourages changes in women's perceptions and roles in the family and community, recognizing the importance of women's active involvement in decision-making and leadership. Thus, in exploring the issue of gender equality and the role of women in Indonesia, Baha'i puts forward fundamental equality, elimination of discrimination, and women's empowerment as important principles that can promote social and spiritual progress in society.

CONCLUSION

The Baha'i faith views the difference between men and women merely in human biology. What makes humans different is merely their gender and the characteristics that are attached to both. However, that is not a reason to marginalize women as being weak and secondary to men. Both men and women are equal in terms of the rights as human beings or obligations to themselves or to society in general. Indonesia is still facing gender bias in responding to the differences between men and women because the country adheres to a patriarchal ideology and must change as they develop from childhood to maturity, so that the existing marginalization of women must come to an end. Limited space makes it difficult for women to work in the fields of politics, education, economy and culture. The teachings of the Baha'i faith regarding gender equality have become teachings that must be upheld in fighting for gender equality rights and giving women freedom to express themselves in life.

This article recommends that the Baha'i perspective emphasizes that men and women have essential equality in their rights, abilities, and potential. The implication is that women's empowerment is considered important to ensure that their basic rights are recognized and met fairly, and that they have equal opportunities to develop themselves and contribute to society. Empowering women does not only mean providing equal opportunities, but also changing

people's views on the role of women in the family, community and society at large. In the Baha'i perspective, women are considered to have the same ability to become leaders, decision makers, and active contributors in all areas of life.

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