

The Relevance of Gender Equality from Asghar Ali Engineer's Feminist Perspective on the SDGs

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Abstract

Gender equality is one of the goals to achieve a sustainable and better life in facing global challenges. This research is a literature study using descriptive–analytical method. The approach used is a philosophical–critical approach. The philosophical–critical approach is necessary because it aims to pursue the researcher's ideas that can have an impact on substantial matters in society. This exploration tries to reveal the harmonization of Asghar Ali Engineer's feminist perspective of gender equality with Islam and its relevance to the SDGs critically. Data sources in this research are obtained by collecting primary and secondary data. The results of this study show that in Asghar Ali Engineer's view, men and women both have rights in the social sphere that refer to the principles of justice and humanity. Engineer refers to the Qur'an to show that the holy book explicitly recognizes that people must be treated fairly, regardless of gender, and must accept the consequences of their actions in the same way, whether they are men or women. The inherited patriarchal culture is due to differences in understanding. Engineer's view shows that religion can be a solution when understood normatively and contextually, including to realize the SDGs.

Introduction

Women are one of God's unique creations and play a significant role in the continuity of civilization. Through women, generations of excellence are born for the advancement of a nation. One of the most significant roles of women is as the primary educator (*madrasatul ula*). However, despite this, the dark history of women's lives in the past has made it seem as though women have lost their identity, been marginalized, and even considered second–class. This is akin to the view of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, as discussed in Jostein Gaarder's philosophical novel, which was later followed by Thomas Aquinas, who claimed that women are simply imperfect men.

Gender equality is an issue that has been discussed from ancient times to the present day. Although it was not previously termed as such, it has long been an intriguing fact that women and men have been viewed through different perspectives in the social sphere. This creates controversy, as humans are fundamentally created with equal rights by God on this earth. Looking at history, it is clear that men have always benefited at the expense of women, leading to gender injustice.

In a patriarchal view, society enforces and prioritizes the role of men to accompany women. Therefore, the concept of patriarchy presents a gender perspective where men and women are seen as having opposing qualities, positioning men as superior and thus deserving of respect, admiration, and maintaining their authority. Based on this principle, there is a clear connection between gender and societal views, which often triggers radical cases against women. (Elindawati 2021:186) This results in a disparity, causing women to be perceived as consistently backward.



There are many should be responsible for the inherited patriarchate and misogynistic legacy. Such characters were like Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and Descartes. However, there are still those who promote gender equality or are also called the feminist figure Asghar Ali Engineer. The figure is a contemporary scholar and intellectual. In his works it is known that there are different glasses of previous figures about the roles between male and female.

Asghar Ali Engineer was an Indian feminist voice who debated gender equality. According to him, in Islam, gender equality tends to be overlooked because of the preference for male gender superiority, not functional excellence. The engineer states that in the Qur'an, men's superiority in making a living is explained because of some factors. First, at the time, the social consciousness of underwomen and domestic work was regarded as women's responsibility. Second, men consider themselves to have power in making a living and managing expenses for women. (Rosnaeni 2021) Based on that view, in social life women are always viewed as *mustad'afin* (weak or oppressed). The perspective is continually inherited and there is no deconstructing of understanding, so there is a disparity of women's rights.

The main issue of this research concerns the relevance of gender equality from the feminist perspective of Asghar Ali Engineer in relation to Islam. This involves examining the background of patriarchal cultural heritage and the life of Asghar Ali Engineer as a feminist with Shia beliefs. Therefore, it is necessary to review the alignment of Asghar Ali Engineer's thoughts with Islamic teachings and the contemporary global context. The Shia background of Engineer needs to be examined for its harmony with the majority Sunni Muslim world.

In line with the main issue, the research problem is how to analyze the relevance of gender equality from the feminist perspective of Asghar Ali Engineer in relation to the SDGs. This problem is detailed into research questions: a) What is the trajectory of Asghar Ali Engineer's life? b) How does Asghar Ali Engineer define gender equality? c) What is the form of harmony between gender equality from Asghar Ali Engineer's perspective with Islam, and its relevance to the SDGs? This research aims to examine the harmony between gender equality from the feminist perspective of Asghar Ali Engineer with Islamic teachings and its relevance to the SDGs.

Previous research on gender equality from the feminist perspective of Asghar Ali Engineer has been extensively explored by various scholars. From the author's observations, studies on gender equality have been divided into several subtopics. First, research on the challenges and opportunities for theological feminists in advocating for gender equality, adopting Asghar Ali Engineer's perspective in their analysis. (Kurniandi 2024) Second, studies on liberation theology, which primarily focus on the liberation of women from gender injustice. (Azizah 2019; Farah 2020; Juliani and Hambali 2022; Ridho 2020; Salim 2010) Third, research focusing on Asghar Ali Engineer's concepts and views on gender equality. (Farah 2020; Rosnaeni 2021)

Among these studies, none have focused on the harmonization of gender equality from Asghar Ali Engineer's feminist perspective with Islam and its relevance to the SDGs. Previous research has predominantly concentrated on liberation theology concerning women's gender, patriarchal culture, and the concept of gender equality. This research aims to explore how Asghar Ali Engineer's perspective on gender equality aligns with Islamic teachings and its relevance to the present day. This also represents a gap or novelty in contributing to research focused on gender equality, the harmonization of Asghar Ali Engineer's thoughts with Islamic teachings, and their relevance to the SDGs.

Research Method

This research is a library research with descriptive – analytical method. The approach used is a critical philosophical approach. A critical – philosophical approach is needed because it aims to pursue researchers' ideas that can have an impact on substantial things in society. (Ainiy 2022) This exploration tries to reveal the harmonization of Asghar Ali Engineer's feminist perspective of gender equality with Islam and its relevance to SDGs critically. The goal is to explore the direction and way of thinking of a feminist figure who is also a philosopher, so that the philosophical approach is used as a formal object (analysis knife). With this approach, the researcher will participate in the character's thinking by making comparisons through the character's descriptions.

In this research the author first collects literature. The first step is to trace all data related to Asghar Ali Engineer and the topic discussed. Sources of data in this research are obtained from books, articles – journals, theses, websites and other documents on gender equality, feminist issues, misogyny, and Asghar Ali Engineer. Among Engineer's many works, this research uses the book "Women's Rights in Islam" as the primary source. Furthermore, the data was selected and chosen to be relevant to the research conducted. (Bakker and Zubair 2007)

Biography of Asghar Ali Engineer

Asghar Ali Engineer was born in Salumbar, Rajasthan, near Udaipur, on March 10, 1939. His family came from a respected scholarly background. His father, Sheikh Qurban Husain, was a scholar of the Shia Ismaili sect known as Bohra. (Mun'im 2016:26) He served as an amil, responsible for managing alms at the mosque during that time. His mother's name was Maryam. (Afifah and Hakiemah 2022:19)

Asghar Ali Engineer's education began at the primary level and continued through higher education in his birthplace. He received his education in Hosangabad, Wardha, Dewas, and Indore. In 1962, he earned a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Vikram University, Bombay. Additionally, he studied religious aspects such as theology, exegesis, jurisprudence, and Hadith, and was also indirectly exposed to other religions like Judaism and Christianity, as well as philosophical thought under the guidance of his father. Afterward, he dedicated 20 years working at the Bombay Municipal Corporation. However, in 1972, he decided to leave his job and embark on a new role as a reformer within the Bohra community. Within this community, he became a da'i, which is a leader in the Shia Islam sect. (Afifah and Hakiemah 2022)

Asghar Ali was active in writing, and his articles were published in various prominent media in India such as the Indian Express, Telegraph, The Times of India, The Hindu, and others. In 1977, at the inaugural conference in Udaipur, he was elected as the General Secretary of the Central Managing Committee of the Dawoodi Bohra Community with the highest number of votes. Additionally, since the riots in Jabalpur in 1961, he also wrote about the acts of violence perpetrated by communalism in India. In February 1983, he received an honorary degree from the University of Calcutta in recognition of his work, which helped affirm his reputation as a leading Islamic scholar in the world. (Engineer 2022: 80)

Born during a period marked by exploitation using religion as a guise, Asghar delved diligently into various religious literatures from diverse sources, both Islamic and Western, traditional and modern. From this extensive reading, Asghar acknowledged that several writings from various thinkers have influenced his mindset, including works by Niyaz Fatehpuri (an Urdu writer and orthodox critic), Bertrand Russell (an English philosopher), and Marx's Das Kapital.

Throughout his life, Asghar mastered several languages, including English, Urdu, Arabic, Persian, Gujarati, Hindi, and Marathi. He also published a total of 38 books addressing various issues related to Islam, Muslim issues, Muslim women's rights, communalism, and ethnic issues in India and South Asia. His notable book is *Islam and Liberation Theology*, has made her well-known as a prominent transformative theologian. (Quisay 2023) Besides writing actively, Asghar was also an active teacher at various universities in different countries, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Yemen, Egypt, Hong Kong, and others. For his contributions to promoting communal harmony and interfaith understanding, he was awarded an honorary D. Lit. degree from the University of Calcutta in 1993. Miftakhul Khoirul Habib, "Studi Analisis Pendapat Asghar Ali Engineer Tentang Keadilan Poligami Skripsi" (N.D.): 40.

In general, Asghar's works address four main themes: liberation theology, gender, communalism, and Islam as a whole. Some works that cover these themes are: 1) "Islam and Revolution" (New Delhi: Ajanta Publication, 1984). Examines the relationship between Islam and revolution, with a focus on the concept of liberation theology. 2) "Islam and Its Relevance to Our Time" (Kuala Lumpur: Ikraq, 1987). Discusses the relevance of Islam in the context of the modern era, potentially covering views on liberation theology and communalism. 3) "The Origin and Development of Islam" (London: Sangam Book, 1987). Reviews the origins and development of Islam, possibly highlighting themes such as liberation theology and gender. 4) "Status of Women in Islam" (New Delhi: Ajanta Publication, 1987). Examines the status of women in Islam, representing a significant contribution to gender studies in a religious context. 5) "The Rights of Women in Islam" (Lahore: Vanguard Book, 1992). Explores women's rights in Islam, addressing gender issues within a religious framework. 6) "The Qur'an, Women, and Modern Society" (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1999). Investigates the relationship between the Qur'an, women, and modern society. (Baroroh 2019)

Gender Equality from Asghar Ali Engineer's Feminist Perspective

Linguistically, the term "gender" originally comes from the English word "gender," which means sex. This definition is consistent with that provided in the KBBI (Indonesian Dictionary). Differences between men and women in terms of values and behaviors can also be interpreted as gender. (Nuraida and Zaki 2017:183) In line with Nasaruddin Umar's perspective, gender is understood as a form of cultural conception used to differentiate roles between men and women in the social order of the public sphere. (Aisy et al. 2023:228) This means that, according to Nasaruddin, gender does not refer to sex as defined in dictionaries, because these are two different concepts.

Equality, etymologically, means fairness. Justice has the connotation of balance. (Aisy et al. 2023) According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), justice refers to impartiality, lack of bias towards certain parties, and not being arbitrary. (Badan Pengembangan dan Pusat Bahasa n.d.) Thus, gender equality refers to the principle of equal rights held by both men and women. According to one Argentine feminist philosopher, Maria Lugones, the concept of gender has the characteristic of distribution (a concept that permeates all areas of life) as a mode of relations and subjectivity. (Fischer and Hotait 2023: 338)

Equality is the essence of the teachings spread by Prophet Muhammad (SAW), which state that in the presence of Allah (SWT), all humans are equal. Whoever does good, whether male or female, will receive the same reward (An-Nisa': 124). The Qur'an has

explained that a person's status in the sight of Allah (SWT) is not determined by their sex, societal status, or ethnic origin (Hendra and Hakim 2023:62) (Al – Hujurat: 13).

Through the teachings and implementation of the divine revelations by Prophet Muhammad (SAW), the culture of Jahiliyyah, which placed women in discriminatory and exploitative positions, was successfully reconstructed. However, issues related to women have not yet reached a "bright point," as the status of women, which was elevated by Prophet Muhammad (SAW), gradually declined after his passing. Women once again found themselves in a limited position in the public sphere. After the death of the Prophet, patriarchal culture did not fully disappear, as this tradition was deeply ingrained in pre – Islamic Arab society and spread widely to other regions. (Suhada 2019:178)

According to Sayyid Sabiq's perspective, women belong to a group referred to as *mustad'afin*, or the weak. (Hidayat 2018:22) Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas, supported by their views, considered women to be imperfect men. On the other hand, Descartes argued that women lacked the capacity to pursue knowledge because they were seen as having inadequate epistemological foundations. Conversely, Rousseau, in his work "Emile," portrayed the ideal image of women as those focusing on the arts and affections, applying these in the context of their personal lives. (YJP 2021) These figures who presented perspectives placing women in disadvantaged positions are largely responsible for the patriarchal culture that was inherited.

In contemporary times, feminist figures advocating for gender equality have emerged, one of whom is Asghar Ali Engineer. He outlines two concrete conditions for achieving gender equality. First, gender equality generally means recognizing equal dignity between both sexes. Second, it is important to acknowledge that men and women have equal rights in various fields, such as social, economic, and political areas, and both should have equal responsibilities, including in terms of freedom. Engineer refers to the Qur'an to show that it explicitly acknowledges that people should be treated fairly, regardless of sex, and should face the consequences of their actions in the same manner, whether male or female. (Rambe 2017:26)

Engineer's opinion has the same purpose as that expressed by many feminist figures. One of them, the famous Arab feminist Fatima Mernissi, said that gender equality is a condition where women and men get the same rights and opportunities as human beings, namely being able to take part in the realm of law, politics, socio – culture, economy, education, and so on. (Yasnita 2022) Nasaruddin Umar as one of the Muslim scholars who sees the uniqueness of women's identity in the Qur'an also says gender equality is the placement of equal positions and opportunities between men and women, because the Qur'an was revealed to eliminate various forms of discrimination and oppression, including discrimination based on gender. This is explained through the perspective of tafsir and its hermeneutic approach. (Pambayun and Umar 2022; Yasnita 2022) This shows that Engineer is not the only figure who strives for justice and freedom.

In line with this feminist opinion, to support efforts for gender equality, Engineer argues that historically, the Qur'an first recognized women's rights, including rights in marriage, divorce, property ownership, inheritance, and others, as part of the provision of kindness to women. However, hadith literature and Qur'anic exegesis, predominantly produced by classical scholars during the medieval period, have treated women unfairly. (Afifah and Hakiemah 2022) For instance, in Qur'anic Surah An – Nisa, verse 34, classical scholars interpreted the term "qawwam" to signify male superiority over women, including the duty of men to protect women, which in India was understood as 'darogha' (i.e., men acting as police for women). Modernist scholars, however, interpret "qawwam" as meaning someone who manages and sustains the family. (Afifah and Hakiemah 2022)

Meanwhile, Amina Wadud as a feminist responds to the interpretation of surah an-Nisa verse 34 by introducing the concept of 'Functional Value' which subtly refutes the meaning of the term 'Qawwam'. The concept of 'Functionality' here does not mean that women must be led absolutely by men, but rather describes a functional relationship between the two that is applied in their respective responsibilities. Thus, when the verse states that men are Qawwam to women, this means that men have the responsibility to protect the physical and material needs of women. If men are unable to fulfill these responsibilities, then they are not entitled to the title "Qawwam" towards women. (Hidayah and Riyadi 2023)

In contrast to Emina Wadud, Engineer himself argues that equality is not an absolute requirement. He suggests that, in the context of family issues, equality can be achieved through discussion and consultation. (Rambe 2017) Engineer emphasizes the need to understand the status given to women by the Qur'an and the views of fuqaha (Islamic jurists) on this matter in the context of gender equality. In societies that adhere to a matriarchal system, women are often considered inferior to men. Engineer divides the understanding of gender equality in the Qur'an into three points. First, the Qur'an presents principles of equality both normatively and contextually. Normatively, fuqaha often grant superior status to men, whereas contextually, the Qur'an acknowledges certain advantages for men over women. (Rambe 2017)

In the second part, Engineer mentions that the ways of interpreting Qur'anic verses vary depending on the perspective of the interpreter, so an element of subjectivity is often present in the process. This leads to the possibility that a male interpreter is more likely to favor a view that is favorable to himself than to a woman. Third, the meanings contained in the Qur'ān are open-ended and relevant throughout time. Religious scriptures often use symbolic language, which requires logical thinking skills that can be adapted to the context of the time when the book is interpreted, as well as the experiences of the people at that time. (Rambe 2017)

According to Asghar Ali Engineer, the concrete conditions for gender equality are as follows: First, broadly, this refers to recognizing equal dignity for both sexes. Second, it is crucial for individuals to realize that men and women have equal rights in social, economic, and political spheres. They have the same rights to make or dissolve their marriages, to own and manage their property without external interference. Both also have the right to freely choose their professions or lifestyles and share equal responsibilities in terms of freedom. (Baroroh 2019) The Qur'an's statement on gender equality lies in understanding equal dignity. The Qur'an declares that both sexes originate from the same living being, and therefore, have equal rights. (Rosnaeni 2021)

Asghar Ali Engineer illustrates his support for equal roles between men and women in the public sphere by referencing the story of the Queen of Sheba in the Qur'an. He emphasizes that in the sacred text, there is no verse that denies the legitimacy of the Queen of Sheba as the rightful ruler of South Yemen. If Allah had not permitted a woman to be a head of state or if female leadership were to lead to disaster, the Qur'an would present the Queen of Sheba in a contrary light, showing her weakness before her male advisors. However, the Qur'an depicts the opposite. (Baroroh 2019)

In line with this, the research by Efendi and Aprijon also explains that Islam has never supported preferential treatment that benefits men at the expense of women. As evidence, there is not a single verse in the Qur'an stating that women were created from a material inferior to men. Additionally, Islam does not hold a view that demeans women regarding their inherent traits and characteristics. Both men and women are considered noble beings regardless of ethnic background, and both have equal responsibilities to prosper the

earth.(Mahmudah and Supiah n.d.) Therefore, Engineer's opinion on equality is logically acceptable. Engineer's opinions and actions reflect a real effort to achieve equality and justice in society, which is a central tenet of his religious teachings and worldview. (Kurniandi 2024)

Harmonization of Gender Equality with Islam

With his hermeneutic interpretive approach, Asghar rejects the concept of patriarchy commonly associated with classical interpretations of the Quran, which he deems discriminatory towards women. He interprets Quranic verses in a two-dimensional manner, normatively and contextually, hoping that these verses can be reinterpreted to be universally relevant (das sollen) while also considering their context (das sein). This approach aims to achieve equality between men and women and attain gender justice. (Farah 2020)

Asghar Ali Engineer argues that the purpose of the Quran's teachings is to create balance between men and women in life. Although history records the dominance of men's roles leading to inequality between the sexes, this dominance is supported by male interpretations of religious norms to maintain their supremacy. The Quran also provides a very honorable place for all human beings, including both men and women. This is emphasized in Quranic verses that state that the religious status of women is equivalent to their social status, just like men. Thus, Asghar Ali Engineer's views stem from a concern for the still troubling condition of women in Islam. (Farah 2020)

Asghar Ali Engineer's thoughts on gender equality are in harmony with the intent of Islamic teachings themselves. However, due to varying interpretations, some of which perpetuate patriarchal or even misogynistic cultures, there are discrepancies. According to Asghar Ali Engineer, both men and women have equal rights in the social sphere according to the principle of justice, as Islam is a religion of mercy for all the worlds.

The topic of the relationship between men and women has always been a subject of endless discussion. Opinions from experts, philosophers, thinkers, and scholars over time have varied greatly, from views supporting equality to those demeaning the role of women. Some even believe that men can function independently of women and vice versa, without considering the actual needs that exist between them. However, in reality, men and women have complementary roles, especially within the family context. Both need each other.(Salsabila 2022) The principle of gender equality is explained in the Quran, Surah At-Taubah (Surah 9), verse 71, where Allah says:

"And the men's mukmin and the women's believers, for the most part being helpers to the others. They made the almighty, discouraged the might, performed the prayer, fulfilled the alms, and called it upon god and his prophet. They shall be gods in heaven, verily god is mighty all wise yet. "(QS – At Taubah [9]:71).

In quotations of verses Q.S Al-Baqarah [2]:187, it also explains the position between male and female. The verse's meaning reads:

"They are clothing to you and you are clothing to them"

The Quran does not prescribe rigid gender roles for individuals but grants humans the freedom to choose roles between men and women that are mutually beneficial, both in the domestic and public sectors. (Zaki 2018) There are several reasons that lead the Quran towards gender equality. First, the Quran provides a place of honor for all humans, including both women and men. Second, normatively and ethically, the Quran upholds the principles of gender equality. The Quran teaches that biological differences do not

imply inequality or differences in status based on gender, but rather differences in biological and social functions. (Engineer 2022)

In this context, Islam emphasizes principles that support gender justice, such as: First, that men and women have equal opportunities and potential to achieve high spiritual degrees as ideal servants of Allah, namely the *muttaqon* (pious). Second, both are considered as Allah's *khalofah* (stewards) on earth, with the same duty to make the earth flourish. Third, both men and women equally receive and bear primordial trust. Fourth, both are involved in the cosmic drama and have the potential to achieve accomplishments. (Zaki 2018)

The program of sustainable development or SDGs has a universal meaning as "the formation or process aimed at meeting today's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, solely for individual interests." This statement was originally introduced in "Our Common Future," a report initiated by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987. (Ngoyo 2015) The SDGs are based on the need for cross-sector collaboration to achieve common goals. (Trowbridge et al. 2024)

After the end of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) era in 2015, the SDGs program emerged with a target to be achieved by 2030. The SDG Agenda, as outlined by the UN, represents a global effort aimed at achieving a brighter future. (Organised by: EUPHA-PHMR and Chair persons: Heidi Lyshol (Norway) 2023) The SDGs or Sustainable Development Goals program has 17 goals to be achieved, which are:

"1) End poverty in all its forms everywhere; 2) End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture; 3) Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages; 4) Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all; 5) Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; 6) Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all; 7) Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all; 8) Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all; 9) Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and foster innovation; 10) Reduce inequality within and among countries; 11) Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable; 12) Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns; 13) Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; 14) Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development; 15) Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss; 16) Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels; 17) Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development." (Ngoyo 2015)

One point the SDGS will achieve is the gender equality project, which enables women to empower them. As the application of these points points, Asghar Ali Enginer thinking is still relevant to the context of time. There was an engineering thought that emphasized that both men and women had equal rights in the public domain. This thought, in addition to harmony with the teachings of Islam, is relevant to the context of the age of equality and gender justice in order to achieve a peaceful and meaningful life on the planet.

The goal of sustainable living aligns with the sociological discussion that focuses on how societies achieve order. (Miftahuddin 2020:1 – 58) Issues of gender, as outlined in the SDGs, are always related to social structures and social institutions. (Abid et al. 2024:56 –

69) From a sociological perspective, gender equality is considered achievable when each group is aware of its roles, responsibilities, and positions. (Ismail et al. 2020:154–61) According to this perspective, discussions about gender lead to the social construction of differences between men and women within societal life. (Nursyif 2020:57) This means that challenges related to gender equality and injustice are specifically addressed in sociology, (Nursyif 2020) as sociology is inherently connected to society.

The hoped – for social construction is to achieve equality as it should be. In the social aspect of Indonesian life, gender equality has not yet been fully realized, as there are still many social phenomena leading to oppression. However, efforts to elevate the status of women have been made by many figures, including Indonesian women such as Raden Ajeng Kartini. Through her struggle, the book "Habis Gelap Terbitlah Terang" was published, allowing women in Indonesia to access education.

Considering the reality in the contemporary era, the struggle for gender equality continues in Indonesia. The understanding of patriarchal culture remains deeply ingrained, leading to numerous cases of harassment, oppression, and sexual violence. In this context, women are disadvantaged as they do not enjoy the rights to freedom and safety. According to data from the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan), the implementation of gender equality in Indonesia needs to be realized in line with the SDG points.

"Based on the type of violence, data from service institutions and the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) shows that out of 13,428 cases, there were 15,466 instances of violence recorded. The most common form of violence is physical violence, found in 6,784 cases or nearly 44%. For complaints to Komnas Perempuan, the most common type is sexual violence, with 2,228 cases out of 5,831 cases based on the form of violence, or 38%. This number has increased compared to 2021, which had 2,204 cases. The second most common type is psychological violence (2,083 cases/35.72%). Meanwhile, service institutions are predominantly dominated by physical violence (6,001 cases/38.8%), followed by sexual violence (4,102 cases/26.52%)." (Komnas Perempuan 2023)

In the political sphere, women's involvement is only thirty percent, but this target has not yet been met, so the representation of women in politics remains below thirty percent. Data from the World Bank (2019) shows that female participation in the Indonesian Parliament is still very low. Indonesia ranks 7th in Southeast Asia in terms of female parliamentary participation. This figure indicates that gender equality in Indonesia has not effectively addressed the disparities affecting women. (Fitriyani 2022)

Other obstacles contributing to gender inequality in Indonesia include human trafficking, the educational gap between women and men, and low or impoverished economic conditions. Forms of gender injustice can include double burden (the dual burden of both domestic and public work), marginalization, subordination, stereotyping, and acts of violence. (Dalimoenthe 2021:23–27) Additionally, research indicates that women living in low–income and standard countries are often directly involved in agriculture and plantation sectors. If gender–based violence occurs, it can reduce their contributions and weaken the economy. (O'Mullan, Sinai, and Kaphle 2024)

In light of current data and realities, Asghar Ali Engineer's ideas remain relevant and applicable. His thoughts align with the gender equality goals of the SDGs, and in a social context, gender equality is crucial. Contemporary issues related to gender, social factors, and Islam have a reciprocal relationship in achieving sustainable living.

Conclusion

Asghar Ali Engineer is a reformer, writer, activist, Muslim thinker and also a feminist. Born in a time of exploitation using religion as a front, Asghar immersed in a wide range of religious literature from various sources, both Islamic and western, both traditional and modern. He was the one who was influenced by Karl Marx's thoughts. As a feminist figure she was known for the concept of gender equality that championed women's rights that tended to remain contained in a patriarchy.

Gender equality means an acknowledgment of equal dignity between the sexes. It is important to recognize that men and women have equal rights in various areas, such as social, economic, and political, as well as both should have equal responsibilities, including freedom. The engineer referred to the Qur'an to show that it explicitly acknowledges that people should be treated fairly, regardless of gender, and should accept the consequences for their actions in the same way, whether it's male or female. Asghar Ali Engineer thinking about gender equality harmony with the intent of Islamic doctrine itself and in accordance with the social reality that must be realized. It is only in a different sense of interpretation, so that some of that bequeathes the patriarchate, even misogynistic.

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