

## *Sexology within the boundaries of Islam*

Heba Gamal Kotb is fastly getting fame throughout both the Muslim and the non-Muslim world. The Muslim world was surprised by her show about sex and private sensuality, aired on a private channel in Egypt. The non-Muslim world is surprised by the fact that she can do it without once transgressing the principles of her faith or culture.

But Heba Kotb has come a long way. As her own website <http://www.hebakotb.net/> mentions, “for a long time just mentioning sex was considered shameful and even sinful.” She did not find herself in the easiest of societies to openly start discussing sexual topics. Even more so, it was even impossible to study sexology in Egypt. She had to America to do so.

It made her acquire quite an impressive resume. She holds a Master Degree in Forensic Medicine and Clinical Toxicology, a Medical Doctor Degree in Forensic Medicine, a diploma in Clinical Sexology from Maimonedes University, a Philosophy Degree in Human Sexuality, Clinical Sexology, and Pastoral Counseling, Maimonedes University, Florida, USA, and she was awarded the best research work from Maimonedes University for the Ph.D. dissertation titled "Sexuality in Islam".

Nonetheless, this strong academic record did not make people respect her job that easily. Even her dad initially didn't want to talk to her anymore. Yet eventually she could convince him of the honesty and decency of her job.

And not only did she convince her dad, she also seems to have convinced the rest of her society. When she started her private practice she would only have about two customers a week, now she has a waiting list of up to three months.

The same thing happened to her talk show “Big Talk” on the private Channel El-Mehwar. At first people were skeptical and shocked, but gradually it became known all over the Arab world. Some conservative clerics criticized her for allowing too much western permissiveness, but all in all there is little reaction to her very straightforward approach. Why? Simply because she herself is a devout Muslim and says nothing that goes against any Islamic principles.

Kotb never gives advices that are prohibited by Quran. She is for example strong on her stance of extra-marital sex. She says that such sexual acts leave 'marks' that can destroy one's relationship and lead away from God. She also considers homosexual acts as haram, and homosexuality as a disease and proposes therapy to help homosexuals to free themselves of their desires.

But she doesn't focus on the constraints. On the contrary, her concern is more with the things that are possible within the boundaries of Quran. Oral sex, for example, is no problem according to her since there is no Quranic verse or hadith banning it.

This reasoning is not unknown within Islam: if it is not prohibited it is allowed. She just applies it to sexuality.

Even more so, on her website she writes that “a sexual relationship is highly sacred and highly recommended religiously” as the Quran writes that women as well have to enjoy, and that men should treat their women kind and good. According to Kotb therefore, a woman has, Quranically speaking, just as much right on good sex and a thorough orgasm as a man. She thus sees it as the duty of the man to make sure his wife is satisfied sexually just like Mohammed was dutiful to his wives.

According to Heba Qutb it is not religion that stands in the way of a healthy sex life of Muslims, but more their ignorance. She claims 80 % of the divorces in Egypt are due to a lack of comprehension of sexual problems. If you could tackle the ignorance, it is her conviction, it would lead to a more stable society. She thus considers it a huge necessity to bring her society to a higher awareness concerning various sexual topics.

Thus in her conferences, practice or TV shows, when asked by a Muslim woman whether it is normal that her husband wants to penetrate her from behind, she can straightforwardly reassure her that this is absolutely normal. And when somebody asks what an unmarried woman who has a strong sexual desire should do, she can answer that she can perhaps masturbate. Although masturbation is not fully endorsed by Islam (and therefore also not by Kotb), it is better than having extra-marital sex which is obviously haram.

In so doing Heba Kotb can openly, honestly and very seriously address issues like pleasure, desire, orgasm, masturbation, sexual frequency and erection problems in a society that was not at all used to talk about it. Using both scientific anatomy books and the Quran to help her patients she does not try to be an Egyptian and female Freud that puts her society or religion upside down, but she simply slowly brakes open an aspect of daily life that is an integral part of every person's existence that was so far closed.

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<http://www.yunusnews.com>