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SITUATING ISLAMIC FEMINISM: AN EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCE

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Abstract: Islamic feminist paradigm has gained momentum in the last decade among the Muslims societies where feminist started inducing gender equality and gender justice from Qur’ānic interpretations and religious teachings. Islamic feminists have challenged the patriarchal writings and have highlighted how subjective orientation of the Islamic text and tradition has been used as a manipulative tool by the male scholars and writers. According to Islamic Feminists, Muslim male jurists had tried to represent Islam in patriarchal manner which is quite visible in their interpretation of the Holy Qur’ān and their explanation of the concepts of *Ijtihad*, *Tafsir*, *Qawwamun* and *Parda* or veil. Islamic feminist writers aim to redefine the notions of gender equality and patriarchy within religious interpretations and are working to provide an accurate representation of gender equality in their writings. Certain limitations and restrictions are visible in the writings of Islamic feminists. Islamic feminism has been criticized for being a “western product” and has been accused of promoting western ideals of equality and gender roles. However, introducing the concept womanism can help them in removing all ambiguities and redefined Islamic feminism, winning over the trust of the masses once again. This article deals with an insight into the Islamic Feminism, its historical development, epistemological stance and an appraisal.

Keywords: Islamic Feminism, Patriarchy, *Qawwama*, Qur’ān and *Hadith*.

1. Introduction

Feminism with its multi-faceted dimensions highlights the common grounds utilized for defining, establishing and achieving gender equality and equal opportunities in all spheres of life ranging from socio-politics, economics and individual rights. The equal rights includes the right to caste vote, the right to fair and equal wages, the right to hold public office, the right to own property and the rights pertaining to education and marriage.¹ Islamic Feminists explain gender equality as an aspect of the Qur'ānic teachings pertaining to equality and demand its implementation in society at large.² Muslim women academicians are producing quality discourses both on national and international level that are widely read amongst the academic circles. Important feminist writings have emerged from countries including Morocco, Indonesia, Egypt, South Africa, Malaysia and India. These local writings differ in terms of political setting and knowledge levels or outputs, but present a common interpretive effort, initiated by women to propose legal reforms. This article presents a glimpse into the history and origins of Islamic feminism in the Muslim world. Furthermore, it also evaluates and appraises the project of Islamic feminism of redefining identity.

2. Historical Background and Epistemological Stances

Discussing the women's position has been the prime foci of countless debates and discourses throughout the history.³ Modern feminists gained widespread momentum during 1800's in the discourses of Wollstonecraft (1759-1797),⁴ Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832)⁵ and J.S. Mill (1806-1873).⁶ They advocated the cause of women equality, emphasized upon women advancement; and ridiculed the dual standards of morality pertaining to men and women.⁷ Legacy of these pioneer writers became the cornerstone; and initiated the struggle for women emancipation in social, economic and political domains in Feministic treatises throughout evolutionary phases of Feminist movement.⁸ Simone de Beauvoir's (1908-1986) existential interpretation of Feminism,⁹ Germaine Greer's (b.1939) psychological analysis of man and woman (b. 1939-),¹⁰ Betty Friedan's activism (1921-2006),¹¹ Shulamith Firestone's radical synthesis of Feminism (1945-2012) and Julia Kristeva's postmodern, semiotic course, with a blend of social, historical and philosophical contexts (b. 1941)¹² set the Feminist movement on its present tone.

Islamic Feminism which owes its identity to secular Western Feminist discourses pioneered in Egypt, in the early nineteenth century due to a fundamental shift in intellectual, social, economic and political scenario caused by European colonial powers.¹³ The concepts of Secular Feminism which emerged in Muslim communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, "articulated equal rights for women and proposed the importance of gender equality through a discourse that presented national, modern and humanitarian arguments based upon the notions of democracy and rights for

all.”¹⁴ Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898)¹⁵ Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Maulvi Syed Mumtaz Ali Khan,¹⁶ and Maulvi Chiragh Ali (1844-1895)¹⁷ advocated the rights of women and highlighted the pertinence of their role-playing in social as well as public domains. Moreover, the work of Egyptian lawyer, Qasim Amin (1865-1908),¹⁸ vehemently criticized the role of society in restricting the participation of women in public sphere; lack of educational opportunities for them, and obligations imposed upon them in relation to veiling. He considered Egyptian women, the backbone of a strong nationalistic society and hence his writings provided an intellectual foundation to women for fighting against colonial injustice along with men.¹⁹ The impact of such writings can be seen in the political zeal of Huda Shahrawi 1879-1974),²⁰ who was considered the pioneers of Feminism in Egypt. ²¹ The women’s right campaign was inspired by secularism, but arguments from Islamic teachings and literature were also sought where examples of *Hazrat Khadija (RA)* and *Hazrat Aisha (RA)* were cited to advocate women participation in public affairs. However, during this era no writings were produced to highlight the perspectives of women in relation to interpretation of scriptures, though Nazira Zein ud Din (1908-1976)²² was an exception and became the first scholar who questioned the misogynist interpretations of the Qur’ān.

Fatima Mernissi’s (1940-2015)’s phenomenal writings stirred a debate regarding women rights in the context of Islamic history.²³ In her *Veil and Male Elite*, she traced the historical and contextual foundations of the practice of veil and raised questions on the credibility of *Hadith* narrators who were mostly males.²⁴ She also outlined the lives of some of the most phenomenal women in her book *Forgotten Queens of Islam* who took up leadership roles and challenged societal odds and opposition.²⁵ Asma Barlas (b. 1950-),²⁶ research on *Believing Women in Islam* led to the deconstruction of patriarchal interpretations within Qur’ān. Riffat Hassan’s²⁷ theological inquiries about the Qur’ānic verses that focused upon women also made its way in the academic circles. The remarkable writings of Margot Badran (b. 1936-),²⁸ Fatima Nasseef²⁹ Aziza Al-Hibri (b. 1943),³⁰ Shaheen Sardar (b. 1955-),³¹ Leila Ahmad (b. 1940-) and ³²Asra Nomani (b. 1965-)³³ also contributed to the literature of Islamic Feminism. The Iranian magazine *Zan* was launched during 1992’s as a response to the Islamic Revolution and growing Islamism, covered feminist themes that were grounded upon Islamic teachings. The term “Islamic Feminism” was coined by the expatriate Iranian Feminists.³⁴

3. Epistemological and Methodological Approaches of Islamic Feminism

“Islamic feminism draws its decree from the Qur’ān and proposes equal rights as well as justice for women so that they can operate and function in society effectually.”³⁵ Practices of Islamic feminism are “the classical Islamic

practices of *ijtihad* and *tafsīr* (interpretation of the Qur'ān)³⁶ along with the “approaches and tools that are implemented in various domains of social sciences.”³⁷ The basic argument of Muslim feminists’ is the affirmation of the Qur’ānic principle which states that all human beings are equal and are suppressed by patriarchal exegesis of Qur’ān; and the usage of inauthentic or questionable *Hadīth* in support of patriarchal ideas. Islamic feminism, therefore, prioritize Qur’ān, in an attempt to focus upon its message which is egalitarian in nature.³⁸

Epistemologically, Islamic Feminism focuses on two objectives:

- i. Qur’ān and exegetical tradition, for instance the works of Amina Wadud (b. 1952),³⁹ Asma Barlas (b. 1950)⁴⁰, Maysam Al-Faruqi,⁴¹ Nevin Reda,⁴² and Omaima Abou-Bakr⁴³;
- ii. it emphasizes upon the critical engagements with the Islamic *fiqh* or jurisprudence, led by Ziba Mir-Hosseini (2000, 2003, 2010, 2013).⁴⁴ Less critical engagements have taken place with the scholars undertaking *Hadīth* traditions such as Indonesian Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir⁴⁵ and South African Sa’diyya Shaikh.⁴⁶

All approaches and methods proposed by different feminists hold consensus upon one point that Muslim women have to read solely Holy Qur’ān.⁴⁷ Concepts of *Ijtihād* and *Tawheed* have been used by different writers to reconsider the patriarchal interpretations of the Qur’ān.⁴⁸ Amina Wadud and Barlas has criticized the traditional atomistic methodology of interpreting Qur’ān which moves in a linear manner; and does not take into account the structure and coherence of the Qur’ān.⁴⁹ While adopting contextual methodology, Islamic Feminists refer to numerous examples from Qur’ān,⁵⁰ that are misinterpreted such as verses of veil,⁵¹ *Qawwamīn*,⁵² polygamy,⁵³ equal testimony of a woman etc.⁵⁴

a. *Qawwama*

Omaima Abou-Bakr highlights⁵⁵ that the concept of *Qawwama* in classical interpretations is quite away from the depiction of gender roles in marriages.⁵⁶ Tracing the interpretation of *Qawwama* in the verse 4:34 in of al-Tabari (10th century) and later to the works of modern scholars such as Muhammad Abduh,⁵⁷ Abou-Bakr highlights the following points: Firstly the word was used as an adjective in the verse which indicates a particular organization of the social life as well as the marital roles, where men looked after women. Secondly, they provided a list of attributes that justified the superiority of men; and thirdly they linked *Qawwama* to verse 2:228 and the assumption that men enjoy a certain degree over woman in order to underline the hierarchy. However, the verse 2:228 urges men to be just towards women. Fourthly, modern scholars such as Abduh ascribed women an inherent domesticity over men and ascribed men intellectual superiority over women.⁵⁸

While rebuking the classical interpretation of the verse of *Qawwama*,⁵⁹ according to which men are declared superior to women, Islamic Feminists argued that men can only maintain women through their income and resources, rather than by the means of their physical strength, morality, virtue, intelligence, and other such exaggerated attributes. For them, the classical interpretation, however, ignores the fact that Qur'ān assigns both women and men as each other's *awliyā*, 'or conjoint guardian or protectors, which would not be true if men were in fact superior to women and their "managers."⁶⁰ This means that Qur'ān does not sanction one gender ruling the other, rather both genders are treated differently in terms of the social conditions they operate within.⁶¹

Asma Barlas cites multiple interpretations of *Qawwam* in her writings and asserts that the character of Qur'ān was lost in Islamic tradition, where the role of woman was reduced to the whims of general patriarchy.⁶²

b. Women as Interpreters of Texts and Muslim Jurists

Delving into the history of Islam, the Islamic feminists highlighted the active participation of women in texts that were recorded orally and how their roles were completely invisible in these texts. Scripturalist literature were interpreted by male scholars in a patriarchal while defining the Islamic ethos.⁶³ Ziba Mir-Hosseini tried to draw a relation between ethics and law and emphasized the legal considerations pertaining to gender. These Jurists according to Mir Hosseini believed that, "women were created of and for men and are inferior to them in terms of intellect and physical capacities and hence need protection of men. They also asserted than men and women are different from one another in terms of the sexuality and the latter are extremely unruly and dangerous in nature."⁶⁴

c. Veil as symbol of piety or archetype of Patriarchy?

Traditional notions of enforcing veil are considered as the symbol of piety but in reality, it is an archetype of patriarchy in Islamic societies. The veil as mentioned in the Qur'ān⁶⁵ is being interpreted in classical interpretations "as a symbol of the elimination of women from the community life, degrading their stature by mentioning them as entities that are easily controllable in home setting and allot a higher and superior position to men through the usage of a mask."⁶⁶ The reincarnation of fundamentalism in the modern times has endorsed veil as the marginalization of Muslim women in mainstream society. Fatima Mernissi claims that the word *Hijāb* is a three dimensional word, i.e., a visual one which means to hide away from the sight; the spatial one which means to separate, and finally, the ethical dimension which deals with the realm of the forbidden.⁶⁷ In *Sufi* doctrines *hijāba*, and *Kashf* are seen as contradictory forces which highlights both the hidden and the discovered respectively.⁶⁸ She states that, "evidently, the imams took benefit of the ignorance of the sacred texts to weave a *hijab*— a screen — to hide the

mosque/dwelling.”⁶⁹ She has also made distinction in obligatory and situational veil, however interpreters ignored it as the situational veil served their interests better.⁷⁰ Moreover, it was a better representation of their thought process that was deeply rooted within the culture of the pre-Islamic era.⁷¹

d. Women’s Active Participation in Politics and Government

In pursuit of finding arguments of women’s enhanced role in political and social spheres from Islamic history and teachings, examples of Khadija (RA) and Aisha Siddiqa (RA) are frequently referred. Fatima Mernissi appraises the contradictory history of Hazrat Aisha (RA) who played a pivotal role in early politics of Islamic tradition concerning the institution of caliphate,⁷² and how her part in politics was ‘misinterpreted’ to serve the patriarchal interests.⁷³ She further examined the narrators of *Hadith* regarding the stature of women in religion. For instance, in her research about the infamous *Hadith*,⁷⁴ “*The community that entrusts its affairs to a woman will not flourish,*” she points out that a narrator named Abu Bakra, who was also a companion was whipped for falsely accusing his fellow companion of adultery. While this *Hadith* is a part of *Sahih Bukhari*, she advocates that his narration should not be accepted according to the *Hadith* rulings or standards.⁷⁵ Contemporary *Hadith* scholar Jonathan A C Brown, appreciates Mernissi’s stance and quotes Imam Malik b. Anas that he “would not agree with the hadiths that have been narrated from a person who lied, as Abu Bakra was once flogged for deceitfully accusing a person for committing adultery!”⁷⁶

4. An Appraisal of Islamic Feminism

In spite of analyzing data and various debates on themes of gender equality there are still certain limitations to feminist approach. Although they are highly critical of the secular feminism, Islamic feminism is still accused of being a western product and agenda. These accusations are mentioned below:

- One of the most important objections raised on Islamic feminism is in the concept of equality. Feminists have repeatedly highlighted the conservative interpretations of the Qur’ān and have emphasized on sexual differences in order to justify their claim that women have lesser rights in comparison to men. Numerous feminists have based their demands of gender equality within the framework of scriptures, hence limiting the depiction of wives and mothers just in the light of scripture alone. This was a failed attempt to recognize heterogeneity within Muslim women and marginalized all those women who were not depicted or present within the parameters of the scripture. The work done by women interpreters is phenomenal and significant, but have their own methodological limitations which also put down their effort to attain an equal status for women.⁷⁷ Feminist writers need to introduce ideas about gender equality that are grounded within the Islamic framework, in order to influence religious leaders, mosque

leaders, politicians, and the whole gamut of religious and political authority. This will facilitate theoretical improvements and if implemented will bring forth a positive change in the legal and political rights of women.

- Ideas related to Islamic patriarchy may seem conflicting to some feminists but theorists need to come up with a work that identifies those hierarchies. It does not deny the rights that have been ascribed to women by the Qur'ān, but it means highlighting the fundamental message that men are the “guardians and providers” of women and children. Women are viewed in “balancing” roles to that of men, contributing towards an “equal but dissimilar” viewpoint. Such opinions depict the gender hierarchy which is quite visible in Islamic texts. In Asia, Islamic feminism holds different classifications as mentioned earlier on the basis of “equity versus equality,” “separate but equal,” and emphasized on “supporting” the gender roles. There is a gap between what is approved or sanctioned by the Qur'ān and the reality of men and women in Islamic states or other states where they are considered a minority.⁷⁸ Such problematic works fail in highlighting the reality of life; and use defensive and apologetic themes to attack Islam. They attempt to diffuse the impact of patriarchy and the actual commandments of Almighty.
- Islamic Feminism asserts that Qur'ān respond to genders within specific dimensions while on the contrary their pretentious claims make Qur'ān engendered, by using terms such as ‘male psyche’ which automatically differentiates man and woman on natural level and benefits them. This contradiction has been discussed by Amina Wadud who states that, “How can ideas that go beyond the notions of gender be expressed through a gendered language?”⁷⁹ The same question can be posed to feminists as to how ideas that transcend the notions of gender can be interpreted within a gendered exegesis? Islamic Feminism fails to resolve this contradiction.
- The idea of reclaiming women’s rights by utilizing a religious idiom can be traced back to as old as 7th century.⁸⁰ The methodology intends to make revisions and modifications within the primary text that are amalgamated in Islamic Feminism as a theory rather than an ideology. It provides a group of classifications that help in examining and analyzing issues such as gender and patriarchy.”⁸¹
- Islamic Feminism has also been criticized for power struggle in the name of endorsing women ‘self-belief’ and only a particular group of women are overheard and are publicized as the common voice of ‘women living in Islamic societies.’⁸² They have also been criticized for universalizing the experiences of a few, while in the postmodern

era it is believed that human variations lead to more and more possibilities to practice, not just dogmatic reduction.⁸³

- Some verses interpreted by the feminist theorists have limited and restricted use. These critiques center upon the assumption that differences amongst the verses revealed in Mecca and Medina is not always possible.⁸⁴ Secondly, many verses that were revealed in Medina encompasses the doctrines that forms the very core of Islamic notions of justice (including gender equality) and hence should be seen as normative. Furthermore, few particular verses has been stressed that highlights gender equality in the Qur'ān by the feminists. This can be used as a counter argument for the assumption that Qur'ān is patriarchal in its core, as it was revealed in an era when such conditions were prevalent.⁸⁵
- Critics believe that feminists are at fault to consider Islam as the only model in which women rights and reformations can be framed. They ignored other factors and their impact on gender equality such as political, cultural and social factors. These factors can also help in gauging the stature of women in society and the legal rights they exercise in Muslim societies. In the Egyptian context, Abu-Odeh claims that the secular space demanded by feminists for reforms are purely religious in nature and are hence problematic and even challenging.⁸⁶
- Feminist's stance of "Qur'ān-only" ignore Hadith and *Sunnah* at large, except when it comes to illustrating proto-feminist themes, where they choose the weakest possible *Hadith*.⁸⁷ *Ahadith* are given equal importance after Qur'ān. *Hadith* examples exists where explanation of Qur'ānic verse has resolved women issues. For example the most strongest punishment in relation to wife beating is present in the religious scripture, while Muslim wife-beaters deny any such justification within the Qur'ān."⁸⁸ "Such type of inconsistency is orientalist in its nature and signifies their spokesperson, who pit the Qur'ān against *Hadith* and then quote *Hadith* sources right and left in a manner that suits them."⁸⁹
- Islamic feminists have failed in distinguishing between "proper", "authentic", "true", and "valid" interpretations of the Qur'ān. A lot of work has been derived from the past and present interpretations of the Holy Scripture written by male scholars. An alternative interpretation is the need of the time, particularly the one that can highlight the true status and the sanctioned rights of women in Islam. On contrary, it is also argued that different interpretations of the text make Qur'ān flexible in nature; the one that represents all and is adaptable in accordance to the needs of the time.⁹⁰ As Tohidi states that, "One

general assumption is that, regardless of the descriptions pertaining to “Islamic gender activism,” “Islamic gender reformism,” or Islamic feminism,” is a multiplying and strong force that should be taken seriously.”⁹¹

- Critics like Yasmin Moll supported Feminists like Omaina Abou-Bakr and Asma Barlas and emphasize upon the application of *ijtihad*. However, she rejected that the interpretations of Islamic traditions are just limited to religious scholars.⁹² She argues that the literary and historical deconstruction methodologies adopted by these Islamist scholars are not based on religious sciences.⁹³ The shifts has been one of the most significant contribution of Islamic feminism, but is seen as a weakness by Moll. Other critics consider it counterproductive such as Valentine Moghadam, who believes that the rights for each gender cannot be won through theological works but is fought on the grounds of the political as well as the socio-economic realities prevailing in the world.
- Some critics, like Haideh Moghissi, are highly critical of nomenclature of Islamic feminism and asserts that feminism is incompatible with Islamic scripture that is developed on the grounds of gender hierarchy.⁹⁴ The aim of the feminist movement is to renew the notion of gender equality within the literary works which was an integral aspect of Islam since its inception. Feminists are working to revive this ideology that has lost its essence or has been marginalized in the Islamic history.⁹⁵

The feminist movement not only critiques the conservative Islamic traditions but also revolutionized gender theories within Islamic thought. Owing to feminist movement, Family laws has been changed within Iran and Morocco. Hence, it is important that these theoretical advances are applicable and enables to transform gender roles within the Islamic world.

5. Conclusion

The term ‘feminism’ is considered secular and subsequently ‘Islamic Feminism’ is considered a western import. Islamic and Secular feminism are processes that are developing and growing together to empower women i.e., they can make their own decisions in life, and men can be educated not to feel intimidated by the women around them. Islamic feminism is without doubt an inspiring effort from religious scholars and has helped in the factual and accurate interpretation of the Qur’ān that is free from the elements of male subjectivity. However, the notions of Islamic feminism will be less controversial when they can move beyond the secular or liberal approach and methodologies utilized for the interpretation of Qur’ān, generating a critical history. Islamic feminist in their effort of applying western critique on Islamic tradition localized the Western discourse and, in this way, they tried to upset

whole system of Islamic tradition. Overlapping the writings or concepts of Islamic feminism with womanist theology can help in creating a new form of feminism for Islamists. The concept of Womanism can help in intensifying the impact of feminism, as it is against all forms of violence and oppression against women.⁹⁶

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- ⁴⁴Ziba Mir-Hosseini, *Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran* (London and New York, I.B. Tauris, 2000); Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "The Construction of Gender in Islamic Legal Thought and Strategies for Reform," *Hawwa: Journal of Women of the Middle East and Islamic World* 1(1), (2003): 1–25; Ziba Mir-Hosseini, 'Muslim Women's Quest for Equality: between Islamic Law and Feminism,' *Critical Inquiry* 32, (2006): 629–45; Ziba Mir-Hosseini, "Classical Fiqh, Contemporary Ethics, and Gender Justice," in *New Directions in Islamic Thought: Exploring Reform and Muslim Tradition*, ed. Kari Vogt, Lena Larson, and Christian Moe (London and New York, I.B. Tauris, 2010), 77–88; Ziba Mir-Hosseini, 'Justice, Equality and Muslim Family Laws: New Ideas, Prospects.' in

- Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law: Justice and Ethics in the Islamic Legal Tradition*, ed. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Kari Vogt, Lena Larsen, and Christian Moe (London and New York, I.B. Tauris, 2013.), 7–34.
- ⁴⁵Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, ‘Gender equality and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad: Reinterpreting the Concepts of Mahram and Qiwāma,’ in *Gender and Equality in Muslim Family Law: Justice and Ethics in the Islamic Legal Tradition*, ed. Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Kari Vogt, Lena Larsen, and Christian Moe (London and New York, I.B. Tauris, 2013), 169–90.
- ⁴⁶Sa’diyya Shaikh, ‘Knowledge, Women and Gender in the Hadith: a Feminist Interpretation,’ *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 15(1), (2004): 99–108; Sa’diyya Shaikh, *Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ‘Arabi, Gender, and Sexuality* (Chapel Hill, NC, University of North Carolina Press, 2012).
- ⁴⁷Leila Ahmad, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 127-128; xxii.
- ⁴⁸Qudsia Mirza, ‘Islamic Feminism and Gender Equality,’ *ISIM Review* 21. Spring (2008): 31.
https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/17220/ISIM_21_Islamic_Feminism_and_Gender_Equality.pdf?sequence=1
- ⁴⁹Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam*, 19; *Qur’ān and Women: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Women’s Perspective*, 26; Dr. Riffat Hassan argued that this is the trap into which the conservative Islamic scholars fell: “[t]hey have taken Qur’ānic verses out of context and read them literally, ignoring the fact that the Qur’ān often uses symbolic language to portray deep truths.” Riffat Hassan, ‘Members, One of Another: Gender Equality and Justice in Islam,’ *Consultation Paper*, www.religiousconsultation.org/hassan.html.
- ⁵⁰See the etymology of *nafs* and *Zawj* [Amina Wadud, *Qur’ān and Women* 20]. “O Mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single *nafs*, and from it created its *zawj*, and from that pair spread abroad [over the earth] a multitude of men and women.’ (4:1) It establishes the origin of all humankind as a single *nafs*, which is part of a contingent-pair system: that *nafs* and its *zawj*. In practical terms, this essential pair is man and woman. (Amina [ibid., 22-23.] She concludes, “Thus the use of ‘you and your *zawj*’ means ‘you and whoever paired with you because of like nature, deeds, faith, etc.” [Ibid., 56.]
- ⁵¹Al-Ahzāb, 33:58-59 “Prophet! Tell thy wives and thy daughters and the women of the believers to draw their cloaks close round them (when they go abroad) ...”
- ⁵²An Nisā’ 4:34.
- ⁵³An Nisā’ 4:3 If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, two or three or four, but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal (with them equitably), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hand possess. That will be more suitable and, to prevent you from doing injustice. All feminists argue that Allah has made condition and himself said that this could not happen.
- ⁵⁴Al- Baqarah, 2:282.
- ⁵⁵Omaima Abou Bakar, ‘The Interpretive Legacy of *Qiwamah* as an Exegetical Construct,’ in *Men in Charge? Rethinking Authority in Muslim Legal Tradition*, 84-108.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Muhammad ‘Abduh, Muhammad. *Tafsir al-Manar*, edited by Muhammad Rashid, 12 vols. (Cairo: Al-Hay’ a al-Misriya al- ‘Amma.110 1990), 55–8.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Riffat Hassan, “An Islamic Perspective,” in *Sexuality: A Reader*, ed. Karen Lebacqz (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 1999), 354. http://riffathassan.info/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/An_Islamic_Perspective.pdf; “men are the (*qawwāmīn*), managers of women and handle their everyday affairs because Allah has made them one hand superior to women.”

⁶⁰Such exegesis reads into the Ayah claims about sexual inequality and male privilege on the basis of misinterpreting three words in it: which is read as managers; *qanitāt*, read as wifely obedience, and *nushuz*, read as the wife’s disobedience to the husband. However, all three interpretations are misleading, as a number of Qur’ān scholars have shown.” [Asma Barlas, “*Believing Women ” in Islam*, 186].

⁶¹Ibid., 189.

⁶²Ibid., 199; Asma Barlas, “The Qur’ān and the Hermeneutics: Reading the Qur’ān’s Opposition to Patriarchy,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies*, vol. 3, No. 2, (2001): 17-19.

⁶³Qudsia Mirza, “Islamic Feminism and Gender Equality,” *ISIM Review* 21 (Spring 2008): 31.

⁶⁴Mulki al-Sharmani, “Islamic Feminism: Transnational and National Reflections,” *Approaching Religion*, vol. 4, No. 2 (December 2014): 88.

⁶⁵al-Ahzāb 33: 59-60; an-Nūr 24:30-31.

⁶⁶Fatima Mernissi, *Women’s Rebellion and Islamic Memory* (London and Atlantic Highlands, N. J.: Zed Books, 1996), 41-42.

⁶⁷Ibid., 93.

⁶⁸Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and The Male Elite*, 95; “For the Sufi master al-Hallāj, it is the constant seeking of God that allows one to go beyond the *hijab* that imprisons our consciousness: “Men lose their way in a dark night while searching for you and perceive nothing but hints.” For mystics, the opposite of the *hijab* is the *kashf*, the discovery.”

⁶⁹Ibid., 115.

⁷⁰“In this context, it is important to note, first, that both sets of Ayat are addressed only to the Prophet; i.e, they are not a universal mandate for all Muslim men to force women to comply. As I argue in later chapters, not only can one not force moral praxis upon a person— as the Qur’ān (2:256) says, “Let there be no compulsion in religion”— but no one, not even the Prophet, was given the right to force compliance upon his wives with any of the Qur’ān’s injunctions. Second, and more to the point, the form, the purpose, and content of the idea of “the veil” in these two Ayats are neither same nor akin to the one suggested by conservatives. [Asma Barlas, *Believing Women in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur’ān*, 56.]

⁷¹Ibid., 57.

⁷²Fatima Mernissi, *The Veil and the Male Elite*, 4- 5.

- ⁷³Ibid., 6-7. “Al-Afghani is convinced that if ‘A’isha had no intervened in the public affairs of the Muslim state, “Muslim history would have taken the path of peace, progress, and prosperity.” According to him, Allah wanted to use the experience of ‘A’isha to teach the Muslims a lesson: “It seems that Allah created women to reproduce the race, bring up future generations, and be in charge of households; He wanted to teach us a practical lesson that we cannot forget.
- ⁷⁴Muhammad b Ismail Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukh* □ri, Kitab al-fitan, ch. 18.
- ⁷⁵The words of Allah Almighty, “Never again accept them as witnesses. Such people are the degenerate – except for those who after that repent.” al-Qur’ān an-Nur 24:4- ‘Umar flogged Abu Bakra, Shibl ibn Ma’bad and Nafi’ for slandering al-Mughira and then he told them to repent, saying, “Whoever repents, I will accept his testimony.”
- ⁷⁶Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadith Muhammad’s Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oneworld Publications, 2009), 249.
- ⁷⁷Qudsia Mirza, “Islamic Feminism and Gender Equality,” 31.
- ⁷⁸Ibid., 31.
- ⁷⁹Amina Wadud, *Qur’ □n and Woman*, xii.
- ⁸⁰Raja Rhouni, “Deconstructing Islamic Feminism: A look at Fatima Mernissi,” in *Gender and Islam in Africa: Rights, Sexuality, And Law*, ed. Margot Badran (Washington: Woodro Willson Centre Press, 2011), 70. Umm Darda, a jurist in Damascus, “shocked her contemporaries by praying with men—a nearly unknown practice, even now—and issuing a *fatwa* [ruling on Islamic law], that allowed women to pray in the same position as men. Whereby the Islamic Feminists upheld the belief that Islam is not inherently gender discriminating and they seek to show how it was tradition which was the real culprit. Ibid., 70.
- ⁸¹Ibid., 76.
- ⁸²Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 42.
- ⁸³Ibid., 52.
- ⁸⁴Qudsia Mirza, “Islamic Feminism and Gender Equality,” 31.
- ⁸⁵Ibid.
- ⁸⁶Lama Abu-Odeh, “Egyptian Feminism: Trapped in the Identity Debate,” in *Islamic Law and the Challenges of Modernity*, ed. Yvonne Haddad and Barbara Stowasar (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2004), 202.
- ⁸⁷G. F. Haddad Ramadan, “An Innovation of Misguidance: Amina Wadud’s Untightened Feminism,”
- ⁸⁸Ibid.
- ⁸⁹Ibid.
- ⁹⁰Huma Ahmed-Ghosh, “Dilemmas of Islamic and Secular Feminists and Feminisms,” *Journal of International Women’s Studies*, 110.
- ⁹¹Nayareh Tohidi, Nayareh. “The Issues at Hand,” In *Women in Muslim Societies: Diversity Within Unity*, eds. Herbert Bodman and Nayereh Tohidi (London: Lynn Reiner, 1998), 287.; Naverah Tohidi, “Gender and Islamic Religious Extremism: Feminist Politics in Iran,” In Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres ed.,

- Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism (Bloomington: Indian University Press, 1991), 251- 270.
- ⁹²Yasmin Moll, 'People like us in Pursuit of God and Rights: Islamic Discourse and Sisters in Islam in Malaysia,' *Journal of Women's Studies* 11(1) (2009): 40–55. <http://vc.bridgew.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1147&context=jiws>
- ⁹³Ibid.
- ⁹⁴Haideh Moghissi, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*, 93-98.
- ⁹⁵Ibid., 93-98.
- ⁹⁶Linda Thomas, "Womanist Theology, Epistemology, and a New Anthropological Paradigm," *Cross-Currents*. Winter. (1998).

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