

## MUSLIM WOMEN AND THE POST PATRIARCHAL ISLAM

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### Abstract

*Islam, as a faith and a way of life, has often been examined through the lens of patriarchal interpretations, which have historically shaped societal norms and practices. However, a growing discourse among Muslim women scholars, activists, and reformists advocates for a re-examination of Islamic teachings through a post-patriarchal lens. This movement seeks to distinguish between culturally entrenched patriarchal traditions and the egalitarian principles inherent in Islamic scripture. This abstract explores how Muslim women are redefining their roles and reclaiming their voices in the quest for a post-patriarchal understanding of Islam. The Qur'an, the primary source of Islamic teachings, emphasizes the spiritual and moral equality of men and women. Verses like "And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable" (Qur'an 2:228) have often been overshadowed by patriarchal interpretations rooted in historical and cultural contexts. Muslim women scholars are re-engaging with these scriptures to unearth their liberative potential. This process includes challenging misinterpretations, such as the misapplication of verses related to inheritance, testimony, and marital relations, and highlighting the Qur'an's emphasis on justice, compassion, and equity. Patriarchy in Muslim societies is not purely a product of Islamic teachings but is deeply intertwined with pre-Islamic customs, colonial histories, and socio-political dynamics. The abstract delves into how these factors have been erroneously conflated with Islamic doctrine, leading to systemic marginalization of women in education, politics, and religious leadership. A post-patriarchal Islam calls for disentangling these structures, advocating for gender-inclusive reforms in both religious practices and socio-political policies. From the works of Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud to contemporary activists, Muslim women have been at the forefront of advocating for gender justice. These individuals challenge the androcentric frameworks of traditional jurisprudence, seeking to establish gender equality within the framework of Shari'ah. By fostering dialogues, conducting research, and leveraging digital platforms, these women are reshaping the discourse around gender and Islam. The ultimate goal of post-patriarchal Islam is to cultivate societies where the egalitarian values of Islam are fully realized. This includes fostering spaces for women's leadership in religious, social, and political domains, ensuring equitable access to education and resources, and eliminating gender-based violence. Such a vision is not about erasing the differences between men and women but about recognizing and respecting their complementary roles as outlined in Islamic principles. The discourse on Muslim women and post-patriarchal Islam is not merely an academic exercise but a necessary evolution in the lived realities of millions. By reclaiming their faith and reinterpreting its teachings, Muslim women are not only challenging patriarchal norms but are also contributing to the broader project of justice and equity in Islamic societies. This movement underscores the timeless relevance of Islamic values while addressing the contemporary challenges of gender inequality, offering a transformative blueprint for the future.*

**Keywords:** Interpretations, Distinguish, Contemporary. Jurisprudence, Inequality

How one envision post-patriarchal Islam depends in large measure upon how one understands patriarchal Islam and its fundamental assumptions and attitudes regarding women and women-related issues. Much of what has happened to Muslim women through the ages become comprehensible if one keeps one fact in mind: Muslims, in general, consider it a self-evident fact that women are not equal to men, who "above" women or have a "degree of advantage" over them. There is hardly anything in a Muslim woman's life that is not affected by this belief, hence it is vitally important, not only for theological reasons but also for pragmatic ones, to subject it to rigorous scholarly scrutiny and attempt to identify its roots.<sup>1</sup>

The views generally accepted regarding women's status and role considering them to be inferior and depriving them to be a human being had been emerged from the classical Islamic Thought and are now the challenge for the contemporary Muslim Intellectuals. Few of these views are:

1. God created woman from the rib of the Adam so her status cannot be equal to that of man.
2. The women was the primary agent of what is customarily described as "man's fall" hence she is a source of all evils.
3. Men are made governors over women; hence it is the duty of women to obey the men.
4. Her share in inheritance shall be half of that man.
5. Her blood money is half of that man.
6. The testimony of one man is equal to that of two women.
7. Men can beat their wives.
8. Beautiful companions (Hur) will reward righteous men but no such reward is promised to women.
9. A woman cannot be a judge, Imam or leader, because she is deficient in intellect and because she cannot be a full witness.
10. Women are less in prayer.

Since it is not possible to explain exhaustively all the above mentioned views in the scope of the study however in brief discussion, an attempt has been made to -highlight the way in which the source of normative Islam have been interpreted to depict the inferior status of women.

How does the Qur'an view the creation of woman? Is she just a part of Adam and an afterthought? This is what it says, in the first ayah (verse) of Surat an-Nisa-The Women:

O Mankind, be conscious of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate (of the same kind) and from them twain has spread a multitude of men and women.<sup>2</sup>

A single soul' is neither male nor female, although it could be understood to mean Adam it is not necessarily so. In fact 'soul' is feminine and mate' is masculine! Not that I'm suggesting that women came first but the gender relationship here is ambivalent. And the mate was created from the 'soul' not the humble 'rib'. No Muslim scholar could ever argue, after reading this, as some Christians have done, that women do not have a soul! They are made of the same soul as men. Their capacity for good and evil is identical with that of men. Women and men are from the same

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<sup>1</sup> Dr Riffit Hassan Muslim Women and Post Patriarchal Islam edited by paule Coocy, William Information's on World Religions, OrbisBooks, Mary knoll, New York 1971, pp 43.

<sup>2</sup> Qur'an 4:1

species. Biologically speaking, women have not been extracted from the bodies of their male counterparts. Allah Almighty fashioned them according to His Will. In Qur'an we find that it is good deeds and awareness of Allah, which make the believer, male or female, noble in the sight of Allah:

Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most pious.<sup>3</sup>

and

Whoever does right, whether male or female, (all) such will enter the garden.<sup>4</sup>

The works of male and female are of equal value and each will receive the due reward for what they do:

Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any one of you, male or female...<sup>5</sup>

Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him will We give a new life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to their actions.<sup>6</sup>

The same duties are incumbent on men and women as regards their faith:

For Muslim men and women for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves), for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God's praise- for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward.<sup>7</sup>

There are a few exceptions: women are given exemption from some duties, and that does not mean to lower the status of women infact these are the concessions given to women while men, on the other hand has been obligated to follow strictly the rituals of the religion ordained.

- Fasting when they are pregnant or nursing or menstruating,
- Praying when menstruating or bleeding after childbirth, and
- The obligation to attend congregational prayers in the mosque.
- They are not obliged to take part as soldiers in the defense of Islam, although they are not forbidden to do so. But under normal circumstances they are allowed to do all the things that men do.
- Even when they are menstruating, on special days, like the two Eid festivals, they are still allowed to come to the Eid prayers, and menstruating women can take part in most of the actions of the Hajj pilgrimage.

But are women's duties in social life different and complementary as most scholars assert? Is their sole function to keep house and bear and rear children while the men do everything else? Does the fact that they suffer disruption to their health when they menstruate make them unsuitable for any job outside the house, and fit only to maintain a happy and peaceful home, as some scholars would have us believe? This is an argument that is grossly exaggerated by male scholars everywhere to justify all kinds of discrimination against women. They would have us believe that women scarcely enjoy a few days' sanity in their lives, so disruptive are the effects of menstruation and childbearing. No doubt there is some truth in his description of

<sup>3</sup> Qur'an 49:13

<sup>4</sup> Qur'an 40: 40

<sup>5</sup> Qur'an 3:195

<sup>6</sup> Quran 16:97

<sup>7</sup> Quran 33:35

such disruption, and allowances should be made by men, and other women for this, but this does not disqualify women from any task that men can do any more than it disqualifies them from creating happy and well-run homes. Nor is there any basis in the Qur'an or hadith for such an attitude.

The Qur'an mentions menstruation in

They ask thee concerning women's courses. Say: They are a hurt and a pollution, so keep away from women in their courses, and do not approach them until they are clean. But when they have purified themselves, ye may approach them as ordained for you by Allah."<sup>8</sup>

According to the interpreters of Islamic law, this means only that sexual intercourse is not allowed at such times, but any other form of intimacy is still permissible. To put it briefly, menstruation may be messy and painful but it is not a disability.

Islamic law makes no demand that women should confine themselves to household duties. In fact the early Muslim women were found in all walks of life. The first wife of the Prophet, mother of all his surviving children, was a businesswoman who hired him as an employee, and proposed marriage to him through a third party. Women traded in the marketplace, and the Khalifah Umar, not normally noted for his liberal attitude to women, appointed a woman, Shaffa Bint Abdullah, to supervise the market. Other women, like Laila al-Ghifariah, took part in battles, carrying water and nursing the wounded, some, like Suffiah bint Abdul Muttalib even fought and killed the enemies to protect themselves and the Prophet (Peace be on him) and like Umm Dhahhak bint Masoud were rewarded with booty in the same way as the men. Ibn Jarir and al-Tabari said that women could be appointed to a judicial position to adjudicate in all matters, although Abu Hanifah excluded them from such weighty decisions as those involving the heavy hadd and qisas punishments. The Qur'an even speaks favorably of the Queen of Sheba and the way she consulted her advisors, who deferred to her good judgment on how to deal with the threat of invasion by the armies of Solomon."<sup>9</sup>

She (the Queen of Sheba) said, 'O chiefs, advise me respecting my affair; I never decide an affair until you are in my presence.' They said, 'We are possessors of strength and possessors of mighty prowess, and the command is thine, so consider what thou wilt command. She said, 'Surely the kings, when they enter a town, ruin it and make the noblest of its people to be low, and thus they do. And surely I am going to send them a present, and to see what (answer) the messengers bring back.'

Women have sometimes headed Islamic provinces, like Arwa bint Ahmad, who served as governor of Yemen under the Fatimid Khalifahs in the late fifth and early sixth century. Umme Waraqa Ansaria Bint Abdullah Ibn Al Haris was the first Muslim Women who served as an Imam-e- Masjid-e-Madina during the era of the Prophet. The Prophet himself during the Battle of Badr appointed her Imam. At that time there was only one mosque called Masjid-e- Quba while Masjid-e-dar were common among the tribes. After the foundation of Masjid-e-Nabvi, which became the Jamah-e- Masjid there was no need for the Dar as there was no single tribe left where there was no Mosque. Dar means tribe and the mosque of the Ummeh Waraqa was called Dar instead of Bait

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<sup>8</sup> Qur'an 2:222

<sup>9</sup> Qur'an 27-32-35

(home). At this mosque Ummeh Waraqa had a Muazzin (caller for the prayer) and sometimes in his absence she used to give the call."<sup>10</sup>

Following the footstep of Ummeh Waraqa the Khalifa Walid II of Banu Ummaiah sent one of his Kaneez (slave) giving her his turban, to the mosque of Damascus and ordered her to lead in the Juma (Friday) Prayer. At this mosque the ruler had to lead the Juma prayer. This incident happened in the history of Damascus yet no objection from any quarter, any jurist has come into light or reported in the history. Hundreds and thousands of the male at that time listened the Khutaba (sermon) from the woman and followed her in the prayer."<sup>11</sup>

Thus the criteria for leading prayer are an ability to read the Qur'an, knowledge of the Qur'an, and knowledge of the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (Hadith, Sahih of Muslim). Hence, maleness is not a criterion. In addition to Umm Waraqa leading her family in prayer, a woman named Ghazala, in the 7th century A.D., led Muslim men and women in prayer."<sup>12</sup> Not only did she lead Muslim men in prayer, she recited the two longest chapters in the Qur'an during that prayer (many traditional imams do not accept Ghazala as legitimate precedent because she belonged to the Khawarij school; however, this does not necessarily invalidate her. actions. At Hazrat Umar's era the responsibility of the business affairs were in the hand of the woman, Shifa bint Abdullah and Hazrat Umar used to take advise from her. Hazrat Umar also appointed Hazrat Umm Hakim Baiza, who was the paternal aunt of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) a learned women, at the post of Khilafat."<sup>13</sup> "Hazrat Ayesha, the first woman leader of Islam was a teacher of men and women. In turn her students, men and women, taught others how to govern, how to organise Muslim communities, and how to arrange Muslim family and social life. The great scholars of hadith got their learning from Ayesha. The holy Prophet bore witness to Hazrat Ayesha's intellect, understanding, rational approach to life. At a time of crisis she had no hesitation in taking over command of the Islamic army and directing it in the field of battle. In peace time she gave religious rulings and helped the most learned of the Companions of the Prophet differentiate between the right and the wrong. All the Fiqh and Laws of Islam are related to Hazrat Ayesha..

Much-vaunted hadith that the Prophet said, 'A people who entrust power to a woman will never prosper', has been shown to be extremely unreliable on several counts. It is an isolated and uncorroborated one and therefore not binding in Islamic law, and in addition there is reason to believe it may have been forged in the context of the battle, which Aishah the Prophet's widow led against the fourth Khalifah Ali. In view of the examples set by women rulers in history, it is also clearly untenable and false.

The Qur'an does not restrict the female from being in authority, either over other women or over both women and men. However, there is the implication that the Qur'an inclines towards seeing necessary tasks fulfilled in society in the most efficient manner.

<sup>10</sup> Anis ur Rahman Anis, Aurat Faqih-e-Azam, Aurat imame-e-masjid,, Syed Suleman Academy, Karachi, 1993, pp 39.

<sup>11</sup> Justice Syed Amerr Ali, Short History of Saracens Page No. 196.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Tabari, History of Messengers and King,s Cario, Ch. 51.p80(Ali Masudi,Gardens of Gold, Dar al-Andalus, Beirut 1965, ch. 3, p.139.

<sup>13</sup> Qari Suleman Mansoor Puri, Rehmanulalamin page no 105 part 2.



Neither male nor female will be equally beneficial in every situation.<sup>14</sup> There are verses in the Qur'an concerning men and women that are controversial and have been the topic of discussion by various scholars through out the Islamic history. Different individuals have used these verses in order to discredit Islam. For example, in Sura 2 Verse 228 the Qur'an states: And women shall have rights similar to rights against them, according to what is equitable. But men have a degree (of advantage) over them. And Allah is exalted in Power, Wise. This verse has been interpreted in different ways. Some see it as a degree in intelligence, other view it as a degree in superiority. However, many Muslim scholars argue that the degree is related to qiwama, that is, maintenance of the family. A man is legally obligated for this responsibility.

Therefore, this "degree above them" has an economic base and has nothing to do with intelligence or superiority of men over women. Another consideration in contemporary discussion on the issue of Patriarchy in Islam focuses on the women as a potential witness.

"... And if two men be not found, then a man and two women, such as you choose, so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her.."<sup>15</sup>

Muslims usually take into consideration the verse in Sura al- Baqarah to claim that one man is equal to two women. They do not notice the context of the verse: (1) it was revealed early after the hijra to Madina. (2) It gives the reason for two women and one rule applied to the men as in the verse the two male witnesses are mentioned while in the absence of another male witness two female witnesses has been added i.e. the evidence of a single man is not acceptable. Thus the rule in Sura al-Baqara does not have so much to do with gender as with experience.

In another verse it says:

... And it shall avert the punishment from her if she bear witness before Allah 15 four times that the thing he says is indeed false.<sup>16</sup>

Here one woman's witness is enough even in such a serious matter where, her husband accuses her of being of immoral character. The issue here is of much more serious nature than a commercial transaction and the Qur'an deems one woman's witness sufficient.

In fact her witness overruled the man according to this verse The Muslim woman has always had the right to own and manage her own property, a right that women in the west only attained in the last 100 years. Marriage in Islam does not mean that the man takes over the woman's property, nor does she automatically have the right to all his property if he dies intestate. Both are still regarded as individual people with responsibilities to other members of their family parents, brothers, sisters' etc. and inheritance rights illustrate this. The husband has the duty to support and maintain the wife, as stated in the Qur'an, and this is held to be so even if she is rich in her own right. He has no right to expect her to support herself, let alone support his children or him. If she does contribute to the household income this is regarded as a charitable deed on her part. Hence it must be noted that men's earnings and property are always divided according to the Qur'an while women's multiplied.

Women are thus well provided for their husband's support them, and they inherit from 'all their relations. They are allowed to engage in business or work at home or outside the house, so

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Amina Wadud-Muhsin *Qur'an and Women* kuala Lumpur penerbit Fajar Bakai Sdn. Bhd. 1992, pp 89.

<sup>15</sup> Quran 2:382

<sup>16</sup> Qur'an 24:8

long as the family does not suffer, and the money they make is their own, with no calls on it from other people until their death. Nor are women expected to do the housework. If they have not been used to doing it, the husband is obliged to provide domestic help within his means, and to make sure that the food gets to his wife and children already cooked. The Prophet (peace be on him) himself used to help with the domestic work, and mended his own shoes. Women are not even obliged in all cases to suckle their own children. If a divorcing couple mutually agree, they can send the baby to a wet-nurse and the husband must pay for the suckling. If the mother decides to keep the baby and suckle it herself, he must pay her for her services! This is laid down in the Qur'an itself, The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years, if the father desires to complete the term, but he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms...If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no blame on them. If ye decide on a foster- mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided ye pay what ye offered on equitable terms...<sup>17</sup>

One of the widely propagated and largely accepted notions in today's Muslim world is that men are superior to women specially the husband is superior to wife. Basically this idea emerged from the famous Qur'anic verse 34 of Surah 4.

"Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more strength than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in the husband's absence. What Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill conduct, admonish them first, next, refuse to share their beds, and last beat them. But if they return to obedience, seek not against them. But if they return to disobedience, seek not against them means of annoyance for Allah is most high Great above you all."<sup>18</sup>

Defining Critical Words in 4.34

Qawwāmuna:

From root qawwām: maintainer, caretaker, provider, supporter, somebody who stands firmly and upright, one who stands firm in another's business, protects his interests and looks after his affairs; standing firm in his own business, managing affairs, with a steady purpose, be in charge of, manage, run, tend, guard, keep up, preserve, take care of, attend to, watch over, look after, manager, director, superintendent, keeper, custodian, and guardian.

Mohammad Asad has translated this in "The Message of the Qur'an" as

Man shall take full care of woman with bounties which had been bestowed more abundantly...." He explains, "The expression "Qawwām" is an intensive form of "Qaim" (one who is responsible for or takes care of a thing or a person). This "Qama alal mar'a" signifies "He undertook the maintenance of the woman" or "He maintains her". The grammatical form of Qawwām is more comprehensive than Qaim and combines the concepts of physical maintenance and protection as well as moral responsibility. From this wide range of meanings, some interpolate that a husband is responsible for his wife, i.e.: her disciplining, teaching and guidance in all matters "As for the meaning of qawwām, when I checked the lexical meanings of the root, there is (among many meanings) the meaning of 'be in charge of, manage, run, tend, guard, keep up, preserve, take care of, attend to, watch over, look after. From this comes the definition of qawwām as 'manager,

<sup>17</sup> Qur'an 2:233

<sup>18</sup> Qur'an 4:34

director, superintendent, caretaker, keeper, custodian, and guardian'. This range of definitions might allow for a paternalistic interpretation if you were disposed to find one, but, considered on the whole it carries the sense of, to take an analogy, stewardship over the environment as opposed to exploitation. (The parallel themes of femininity and the natural earth being noted, as also in the verse "Your wives are a tilth unto you...".)

What emerges very clearly from this analysis is the complete lack of warrant for coercion, dictatorship, and domination. I still think we should explore another side of this root, reflected in the word qayyim, meaning 'righteous, true, reliable', ie. this verse establishes a husband's responsibility to treat his wife well, to be kind, caring, and just. This takes it further away from dictatorship and makes it a partnership."<sup>19</sup> "

The same word used elsewhere in the Qur'an: Sûrah an Nisa 4:135

O you who believe! Stand out firmly (qawwamina) for justice as witness to Allah....

**Faddala:** preference

Dharaba has several meanings other than striking, one of them meaning to return to having sexual relations, i.e. return to normal life. adriboo as: 'to separate' or 'to part'. The word translated as "slap/hit/beat" derives from the Arabic root DRB.<sup>20</sup>

Words derived from the same DRB root occur 58 times in the Koran, and nowhere else is it used (or translated) in this sense. Of the many other meanings assigned to it, a few are: to set out (on the road), to shroud (in darkness), to strike (an example), to mint (a coin), to publish (a book), to cover (concerning ladies' dresses), to dispatch, to throw, to raise (something set down), etc. 'dharaba' metaphorically means to have intercourse, and quotes the expression 'darab al-fahl an-naqah', 'the stud camel covered the she-camel, which is also quoted by Lisan al-'Arab. It cannot be taken here to mean 'to strike them (women).'

It has been generally assumed that this verse has been addressed to the husbands, which is not true. It is infact addressed to ar rijal (the men) and an nissa (the women).

The key word in the first sentence of this verse is "qawwamun. "

This word has been translated variously as "protectors and maintainers [of women], ""in charge of women], " "having pre- eminence [above women], and "sovereigns or masters [over women]," Linguistically, the word "qawwamun" means breadwinners" or "those who provide a means of support or livelihood." A point of logic that must be made here is that the first sentence is not a descriptive one stating that all men as a matter of fact are providing for women, since obviously there are at least some men who do not provide for women. What the sentence is stating, rather, is that men ought to have the capability to provide (since "ought" implies "can"). In other words, this statement, which almost all Muslim societies have taken to be an actual description of all men, is infact a normative statement pertaining to the Islamic concept of division of labor in an ideal family or community structure. The fact that men are "qawwamun" does not mean that women cannot or should not provide for themselves, but simply that in view of the heavy burden that most women shoulder with regard to child nearing and rearing, they should not have the additional obligation of providing the means of living at the same time. What is outlined in the first part of this passage is a functional division of labor necessary for maintaining balance in any

<sup>19</sup> except from encont life web site: [www.cote.com/this](http://www.cote.com/this) defining-31hum

<sup>20</sup> Ibid



society. Men who do not have to fulfill the responsibility of childbearing are assigned the function of being breadwinners. Women are exempted from the responsibility of being breadwinners in order that they may fulfill their function as child bearers. The two functions are separate but complementary and neither is higher or lower than the other is.<sup>21</sup>

The second Qur'anic passage which is cited in support the idea that men are superior to women is in the specific context of "iddat" a three month waiting period prescribed for women between the pronouncement of divorce and remarriage. The "advantage" men have in this regard is that they do not have to observe this waiting period due to the fact that, unlike women, they do not become pregnant. (The three-month waiting period is for making certain that the woman is not pregnant.). That the intent of this verse is to ensure justice is made clear by its emphasis that "women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable."<sup>22</sup>

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (the person who is) the most Allah-conscious. And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted (with all things)."<sup>23</sup>

Maulana Maudoodi's commentary says: "Men are superior to women not in the sense that they are above them in honor and excellence..." But, if honor and excellence are excluded from the scope of "superiority," what exactly is the meaning and basis of superiority then?

Like many other commentators, the Arabic word "faddala" has been translated in the quoted commentary as "superior." There are other notable translators and/or commentators who never employed the word "superior" or anything close to it in their translations. For example, A. Yusuf Ali translated the same verse as: "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other...." T.B.. Irving, in *The Qur'an: Basic Teachings*, Fathi Osman in *Muslim Women in the Family* and many others have not translated the verse in terms of "superiority." Their translation shows no sense of superiority of men over women, which is also consistent with the verse 49: 13 quoted earlier. This led to a discussion on whether the word "faddala" is a neutral word or does it necessarily imply superiority?

In addition to the verse Qur'an 4: 34, there are three more places in the Qur'an in which exactly the word "faddala" has been used. Variation of this word, such as "faddaltukum," "faddalkum," "faddalna," has been used in many other places in the Qur'an.

"And in no wise covet those things in which God has bestowed His gifts more freely on some of you than on others: to men is allotted what they earn, and to women what they earn: But ask God of His bounty, for God has full knowledge of all things."<sup>24</sup> In this verse, bestowing His gifts "more freely" does not imply any superiority. Unless, we accept such implication that those who are rich are superior to those who are poor.

Indeed, Allah very clearly points out that what men and women will get is based on what they earn. They should not be judging themselves in comparison to others as to who has "superior" provisions. Such would be a perversion of the very fundamental precepts of Islam, indeed.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>22</sup> Dr Riffat Hassan Are women and Men equal before Allah? The issue of (gender –justice in Islam from an unpublished paper prepared for Ford foundation in Cairo, 1994.

<sup>23</sup> Qur'an 49:13

<sup>24</sup> Qur'an 4:32

"Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive and fight in the cause of God with their goods and their persons.

God has granted a grade higher to those who strive and fight with goods and persons than to those who sit (at home): to all (in faith) has God promised good: but those who strive and fight has He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward. "<sup>25</sup>

In this verse, a sense of superiority is implied by the word "faddala," but not on the basis of any "inherent distinction". Rather it is an "earned" distinction.

Also noticeable is that "ba'dukum ala ba'd" (one over the other) clause is absent in this verse.

"God has bestowed His gifts of sustenance more freely on some of you than on others: those more favored are not going to throw back their gifts to those whom their right hands possess, so as to be equal in that respect. Will they then der the favors of God?"<sup>26</sup> Once again, unless we accept the implicati..... that the rich are better than or "superior" to the poor, one need to treat the word "faddala" in a neutral sense. Allah has not created men as "superior" to women! Translating the verse 4: 34 with "superiority" simply indicates a person's interpretive bias. It should not be attributed to the Qur'an either, as it is a gross injustice to the Qur'an.

In the final analysis, "post-patriarchal" Islam is nothing other than Qur'anic Islam which is profoundly concerned with freeing human beings-<sup>27</sup> women as well as men-- from the bondage of traditionalism, authoritarianism (religious, political, economic, or any other), tribalism, racism, sexism, slavery or anything else which prohibits and inhibits human beings from actualizing the Qur'anic proclamation, "Towards God is thy limit. "<sup>28</sup>

So, to conclude, these are the ideals to which Muslim women can aspire and frequently have done in the past. In a truly Islamic society, they are guaranteed

- personal respect,
- respectable married status,
- legitimacy and maintenance for their children,
- the right to negotiate marriage terms of their choice,
- to refuse any marriage that does not please them,
- the right to obtain divorce from their husbands, even on the grounds that they can't stand then (Mawdudi),
- custody of their children after divorce,
- independent property of their own,
- the right and duty to obtain education,
- the right to work if they need or want it,
- equality of reward for equal deeds,

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<sup>25</sup> Quran4:95

<sup>26</sup> Qur'an 16: 71.

<sup>27</sup> Dr Riffat Hassan Are women and Men equal before Allah, The Issue of Gender- Justice in Islam" from a paper for Ford foundation in Cairo, 1994.

<sup>28</sup>Reference here is to Surah 53: 42, translation is by Iqbal The reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam, Lahore 1960,pp57.

- the right to participate fully in public life and have their voices heard by those in power, and much more besides which no other religion, political theory, or philosophy has offered such a comprehensive package.

### Conclusion

The journey toward a post-patriarchal Islam is both a rediscovery and a redefinition of the faith's foundational principles. Muslim women are reclaiming their rightful place within the framework of Islam by distinguishing between patriarchal cultural practices and the egalitarian teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This movement does not seek to oppose Islam but rather to align its application with the justice and equality it inherently promotes. Through critical scholarship, activism, and leadership, women are challenging entrenched norms and advocating for inclusive interpretations of Islamic jurisprudence. This endeavor not only empowers women but also revitalizes Islamic societies by fostering principles of mutual respect, compassion, and fairness. A post-patriarchal Islam envisions a future where gender equity is normalized in religious, social, and political domains, enabling Muslim women to thrive as equal contributors to their communities. By addressing systemic inequalities and offering transformative solutions, this movement stands as a testament to the dynamic, timeless nature of Islam, ready to meet the needs of a changing world while remaining true to its core values.

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