

## REASSESSING WOMEN'S HUMANITY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ISLAMIC TEACHINGS AND SOCIETAL PERCEPTIONS

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DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol26no2.10>

### Abstract

The societal perspective on women encompasses a wide array of beliefs, attitudes, and practices that influence their roles and status within various cultures. These issues highlight the gap between Islamic teachings and societal practices, underscoring the need for a deeper understanding of Islamic principles regarding women's rights and the importance of addressing cultural biases that hinder women's progress. Hence, this article explores the concept of women's humanity within the context of Islam and society. It addresses the historical and contemporary treatment of women, highlighting the frequent justification of various forms of oppression and subjugation in the name of religion. The aim is to

#### Article History:

Acceptance date: 17 Nov 2024

Available Online: 30 Dec 2024

**Funding:** This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

**Competing interest:** The author(s) have declared that no competing interest exist.



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clarify the Islamic view of women and compare it with societal perceptions, examining the reasons behind these views and offering a critique. Through critically examining relevant issues, the study reveals the apparent differences between the Islamic perspective and societal views on women. It emphasizes the need to reassess women's roles through the overarching objectives of *Shari'ah* (*maqasid al-shari'ah*), asserting that recognizing women's humanity is essential for the renewal of Islamic thought and the reform of societal realities. Therefore, women's issues in Islamic sciences (*shari'ah*) must be re-examined using a framework based on core Islamic sources, namely the Qur'an and Sunnah.

**Keywords:** Woman; humanity; society; *maqasid al-shari'ah*; Islamic perspective.

### **Khulasah**

Perspektif masyarakat terhadap wanita merangkumi pelbagai kepercayaan, sikap, dan amalan yang mempengaruhi peranan dan status mereka dalam pelbagai budaya. Isu-isu ini menyoroti jurang antara ajaran Islam dan amalan masyarakat, menekankan keperluan untuk memahami dengan lebih mendalam prinsip-prinsip Islam mengenai hak wanita dan pentingnya menangani prejudis budaya yang menghalang kemajuan wanita. Justeru, makalah ini meneroka konsep kemanusiaan wanita dalam konteks Islam dan masyarakat. Objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan perspektif Islam terhadap wanita dan membandingkannya dengan kesedaran sosial melalui demonstrasi dan penilaian semula terhadap pandangan-pandangan tersebut. Isu ini telah dikaji melalui tinjauan sejarah ringkas serta perbandingan antara perspektif Islam dan pandangan masyarakat, seterusnya penjelasan tentang bagaimana kesedaran kolektif telah mempengaruhi ilmu Islam. Perbincangan ini dilakukan secara kontekstual melalui kritikan dan analisis terhadap beberapa isu berkaitan topik terpilih. Kajian menyimpulkan bahawa terdapat

variasi eksplisit antara pandangan Islam dan masyarakat terhadap wanita dan kepentingan mengkaji perspektif Islam dengan tujuan umum (maqasid syariah) selain tuntutan bahawa kemanusiaan terhadap wanita adalah satu keperluan yang sangat penting untuk kebangkitan pemikiran Islam dan reformasi terhadap realiti sosial. Oleh itu, isu-isu yang berkaitan dengan wanita dalam Islam (syariah) mesti dikaji semula melalui ilmu kemanusiaan Islam yang berteraskan rujukan utama iaitu al-Qur'an dan Sunnah.

**Kata kunci:** Wanita; kemanusiaan; masyarakat; maqasid syariah; perspektif Islam.

## **Introduction**

Women's humanity refers to the recognition that women are complete and equal human beings, deserving the same rights, dignity, and respect as men. In Islam, Allah has honored women and granted them rights as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters, thereby safeguarding their rights to life, education, alimony, choice, and more. Islam affirms women's humanity through the honor bestowed by Allah upon the children of Adam, as mentioned in the holy Qur'an:

“We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of our creation.”

Al-Isra' 17:70

This article explores the concept of women's humanity in Islam and society. The topic of women's humanity has become a prominent issue in the fields of sociology, psychology, and education. It also generates skepticism towards Islam, prompting many writers to challenge the position of women in Islam without adequately studying the Qur'an and Sunnah. Unfortunately, without distinguishing

between principles and juristic rulings, numerous acts of injustice and humiliation against women have been carried out within Muslim communities under the pretext of religion. Therefore, this article presents the Islamic perspective on women's humanity by establishing that women are regarded as complete human beings in Islam. It also examines the impact of this perspective on Islamic sciences through critique and analysis of specific issues.

### **Women are Complete Human Beings**

Islam emphasizes the unity of the human type for both men and women, affirming that women are not inferior to men in terms of humanity. Both are equal in origin, having descended from the same essence. This is highlighted in the Almighty's words:

"O mankind! Be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And be mindful of Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Verily, Allah is ever an Observer over you"

Al-Nisa' 4:1

The relationship between men and women is further clarified in the Prophet's (PBUH) saying, as narrated by Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her): "Women are the counterparts of men."<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, God Almighty addresses both men and women without distinction regarding the principle of

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<sup>1</sup> Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah*, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, *hadith* no. 649, 1: 247. Al-Albani says: "It was narrated by Ahmad, Abu Dawud and al-Tirmidhi on the authority of Aisha, and was also narrated by al-Bazzar on the authority of Anas. Ibn al-Qattan said: "*Hadith* from the chain of Aisha is weak and from the chain of Anas is authentic".

human dignity and their creation in the best form. The Almighty says:

"We have honored the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea, and provided them with good and pure sustenance, and favored them above much of what We have created."

Al-Isra' 17:70

He also says:

"Indeed, We created man in the best of stature"

Al-Tin 95:4

Islamic *Shari'ah* directs its discourse equally to men and women, encompassing principles such as human dignity, criminal responsibility, and other foundational aspects.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the principle that must always be upheld is that any ruling established for a man equally applies to a woman, except in cases where *Shari'ah* texts explicitly specify a ruling as exclusive to one of them. Such exceptions are excluded from the general rule.<sup>3</sup> This means there are limited differences explicitly and clearly determined by the legislator. However, the principle of equality remains, with these differences being exceptions to the general rule.

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<sup>2</sup> Toseef Azid & Jennifer Ward-Batts, *Dimensions of Women Empowerment and Gender Inequality: A Muslim World Perspective, in Advances in Research on Islamic Economics and Finance: Economic Empowerment of Women in the Islamic World Theory and Practice* (London: World Scientific publication, 2020), 1:597.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad al-Baltaji, *Makanah al-Mar'ah fi al-Qur'an al-Karim wa al-Sunnah al-Sahihah: al-Huquq al-Siyasah wa al-Ijtima'iyyah wa al-Shakhsiiyyah li al-Mar'ah fi al-Mujtama' al-Islami: Dirasah Mu'assalah Muwaththaqah Muqaranah* (Cairo: Dar al-Salam, 2000), 61; Suhaimi, K.M., Azmi, R., Sabri, N.H. & Dollah @ Abdullah, A., "Pendidikan Karakter : Analisis 'Ibad al-Rahman Dalam Surah Al-Furqan: Character Education: An Analysis of 'Ibad al-Rahman in Surah al-Furqan." *Jurnal Usuluddin* 50(1), (2022): 21–42. <https://doi.org/10.22452/usuluddin.vol50no1.2>

The differences established by Islam in certain areas are driven by various necessities, including psychological considerations that respect women's humanity and femininity while acknowledging their specific needs. Therefore, actions that contradict their femininity, such as imitating men in dress, movement, or behavior, are prohibited.<sup>4</sup>

For the sake of exemplary humanity, Islam instructs women to dress modestly to preserve their dignity from harmful gazes without restricting them from engaging in various worldly and religious activities. Islam also distinguishes between a woman's biological conditions and the periodic changes in her body that affect her nerves and psyche. For this reason, Islam exempts women from certain acts of worship during specific times and permits them to perform those rituals at a later time. Social necessity, grounded in common sense, defines the complementary roles of men and women in building a family and organizing life-based on principles of goodness, justice, and righteousness to uphold humanity as a whole.

The principles of *Shari'ah* establish equality and freedom for women within the family, just as they do for men. Women are allowed to propose marriage, either orally or in writing, choose or reject a husband, and seek separation when necessary.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, women have specific rights over their husbands, including financial support, the right to compensation in cases of divorce, as well as rights to custody, inheritance, and life itself.

The Qur'an highlights numerous instances affirming women's presence, participation, and responsibilities, emphasizing their full preparation for life's roles and acknowledging their social contributions. It has been

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<sup>4</sup> Yusuf al-Qardawi, *Markaz al-Mar'ah fi al-Hayah al-Islamiyyah* (Oman: Dar al-Furqan, 1996), 34.

<sup>5</sup> Hassan al-Turabi, *al-Mar'ah bayn Ta'alim al-Din wa Taqalid al-Mujtama'* (Riyadh: Dar al-Sa'udiyyah, 1984), 15.

established that women's participation and interactions with men were part of the traditions of the Messenger (PBUH). In this context, these interactions are not merely permissible but represent a Sunnah, meaning an obligatory practice. This is evident from the consistent participation and interactions women had with men during the Prophet's (PBUH) life. Indeed, it was the method he chose and implemented practically in all public and private domains, reflecting the broader characteristics of the Muslim community during his (PBUH) era.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the comprehensive narrations—comprising approximately three hundred texts that document the actions, sayings, and reports of the Messenger (PBUH)—clearly indicate the frequent participation of women in the Messenger's (PBUH) society and their interactions with men. These narrations are unquestionably divinely inspired and provide definitive guidance, as most texts are explicit in their content.<sup>7</sup>

In the Prophet's (PBUH) society, women actively participated in various aspects of community life. Guests would visit their homes,<sup>8</sup> and women assumed roles such as

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<sup>6</sup> 'Abd al-Halim Muhammad Abu Shaqqah, *Tahrir al-Mar'ah fi 'Asr al-Risalah* (Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam, 1990), 2: 67.

<sup>7</sup> Abu Shaqqah, *Tahrir al-Mar'ah fi 'Asr al-Risalah*, 2: 86.

<sup>8</sup> Fatimah binti Qays said, "Prophet (PBUH) said to me: "You better shift now to the house of Umm Sharik, and Umm Sharik was a rich lady from amongst the Ansar. She spent generously for the cause of Allah and entertained guests very hospitably." I said: "Well, I will do as you like." In another narration, "The first immigrants come." Refer Muslim bin al-Hajjaj, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Talaq, Bab al-Mutallaqah Thalathan la Nafaqah laha, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 2: 1114.

nursing the sick,<sup>9</sup> providing treatment,<sup>10</sup> and serving guests.<sup>11</sup> They dined alongside men,<sup>12</sup> received gifts,<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> On the authority of Kharijah bint Zayd bin Thabit, she said, "Uthman bin Maz'un complained to us for his suffering; I nursed him till his death." Muhammad bin Isma'il al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab Fada'il al-Sahabah, Bab Muqaddam al-Nabi sallallahu 'alayh wa sallam wa Ashabih al-Madinah, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 3: 1429.

<sup>10</sup> On the authority of 'Abd al-Rahman bin Ka'ab bin Malik from his father, he said, "When death present in front of the Ka'ab Umm Mubasshir bint al-Bara' bin Ma'rur entered to him and said: "O father of 'Abd al-Rahman! If you meet my son then convey my *salam* to him." He replied: "May Allah forgive you O Umm Mubasshir...". Al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah*, *hadith* no. 995, 2: 694.

<sup>11</sup> On the authority of Abi Hazim from Sahl, he said, "When Abu Usayd al-Sa'idi got married, he invited the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. None prepared the food for them and brought it to them but his wife. She soaked some dates in water in a stone pot overnight, and when the Prophet (PBUH) had finished his food, she provided him with that drink (of soaked dates)." Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Nikah, Bab Qiyam al-Mar'ah 'ala al-Rijal fi al-'Ars wa Khidmatihim bi al-Nafs, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 5: 1978.

<sup>12</sup> On the authority of Abu Hurayrah, he said, "So she prepared her meal, lighted her lamp and made her children sleep, and then stood up pretending to mend her lamp, but she put it off. Then both of them pretended to be eating, but they really went to bed hungry. In the morning the Ansari went to Allah's Messenger (PBUH) who said, "Tonight Allah laughed or wondered at your action"." Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Manaqib, Bab: "(They) give them (emigrants) preference over themselves", 3: 1328. Yazid bin al-'Asam reported, "We were once with Allah's Messenger (PBUH) as he was with Maymunah, and there were with him al-Fadl bin 'Abbas, Khalid bin al-Walid, and some women (also) when a tray of food containing flesh was presented to him. As Allah's Messenger (PBUH) was about to eat that, Maymunah said, "It is the flesh of the lizard." He withdrew his hand." Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Sayd wa al-Dhaba'ih wa ma Yu'kalu Lahmah, Bab Ibahah al-Dabb, 3: 1541.

<sup>13</sup> Narrated 'Aishah, "I did not feel jealous of any of the wives of the Prophet (PBUH) as much as I did of Khadijah though I did not see her, but the Prophet (PBUH) used to mention her very often, and whenever he slaughtered a sheep, he would cut its parts and send them to the women friends of Khadijah." Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab Fada'il al-Sahabah, Bab Tazwij al-Nabi Khadijah wa Fadliha RA, 3: 1389.

adorned themselves for marriage proposals,<sup>14</sup> and even extended protection to non-believers.<sup>15</sup> Women also inquired about religious and worldly matters directly, without consulting their husbands or guardians.<sup>16</sup> Additionally, they sought clarification from their husbands on specific rulings, such as whether kissing during fasting was permissible.<sup>17</sup>

This is a brief overview of the Islamic perspective on women as respected human beings. Women are endowed with all the human rights granted to men, which are reflected in both their lives and personalities in the society of the Prophet (PBUH). As al-Ghazali aptly stated, "The

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<sup>14</sup> Sabi'ah bint al-Harith narrated, "When she completed the term of deliver (i.e. became clean), she prepared herself for suitors. Abu al-Sanabil bin Bu'kak, a man from the tribe of Bani 'Abd al-Dal called on her and said to her, "What! I see you dressed up for the people to ask you in marriage"." Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Talaq, Bab wa Awlat al-Ahmal Ajallahunna an Yadha'na Hamlahunna', al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 4: 1466.

<sup>15</sup> Narrated by Abi Murrâh Mawla Umm Hani' bint Abi Talib: "I said, "O Allah's Messenger (PBUH)! My brother 'Ali has declared that he will kill a man to whom I have granted asylum. The man is so and-so bin Hubayrah." Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "O Umm Hani'! We will grant asylum to the one whom you have granted asylum." Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Khams, Bab Aman al-Nisa' wa Jawarihinna, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 3: 1157.

<sup>16</sup> Ibn 'Abbas (Allah be pleased with both of them) reported, "A woman came to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) and said, "My mother has died, and fasts of a month are due from her." Thereupon he said, "Don't you see that if debt was due from her, would you not pay it?" She said, "Yes (I would pay on her behalf)." Thereupon he said, "The debt of Allah deserves its payment more than (the payment of anyone else).". Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Siyam, Bab Qada' al-Siyam 'an al-Mayyit, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 2: 208.

<sup>17</sup> On the authority of a person from Ansar, certainly Anas al-Ansari informed 'Ata', "That at the time of Prophet (PBUH) he kissed his wife while fasting, he asked his wife to find a ruling of it from the Prophet (PBUH)? Rasul (PBUH) answered, "Rasul also does like that and informs his wife." He said, "Certainly Prophet (PBUH) permits in some matters to his wives; go to him and tell him about it". Al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah*, *hadith* no. 329, 1: 647.

woman is a human being with complete material and moral rights, not social rubbish!"<sup>18</sup>

### **Society's Vision Towards Women and Islam's Confrontation with It**

From ancient times to the present, societal views that degrade and diminish women have dominated many cultures. Throughout history, women have faced various forms of oppression, from enslavement to being denied recognition as rational beings. Some of these practices continue to persist today, especially in less developed areas, while more advanced societies have made progress in addressing them. In some instances, however, these practices have been reversed, with sexual exploitation being commodified as a form of entertainment and pleasure.<sup>19</sup>

The societal vision of women has significantly influenced social customs and traditions, reinforced patriarchal beliefs and distorted religious texts to legitimize anti-woman views. Islam arrived at a time when these harmful attitudes towards women had deeply permeated the collective unconscious, rejecting the abuse of their humanity and advocating for a return to reason and justice in their treatment.

At the advent of Islam, there was widespread hostility towards girls, with practices such as female infanticide, cruel treatment, and denial of inheritance rights being common. Women's inheritance rights were disregarded, with male children inheriting from their fathers' wives after their deaths. Practices like polygamy, divorce, and *zihar* (a form of divorce in which a man says to his wife, "You are

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<sup>18</sup> Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Qadaya al-Mar'ah Buniya al-Taqlid al-Rakidah wa al-Wafidah* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1990), 31.

<sup>19</sup> Tamer Koburtay, et al., "Women Leadership, Culture, and Islam: Female Voices from Jordan," *Journal of Business Ethics* 183(1) (2023), 347-349.

to me like the back of my mother", were rampant and lacked regulation.

Islam condemned such deviant religious practices towards women. For example, as narrated by Anas (RA): "When one of their womenfolk menstruated, the Jews would not eat or drink with them, nor mix with them in their houses. They asked the Prophet of Allah (PBUH) about this, and Allah the Mighty and Sublime revealed: "They ask you concerning menstruation. Say, "That is an *Adha*" (a harmful thing)" (al-Baqarah 2:222). The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) then instructed them to eat, drink, and mix with menstruating women, permitting everything except intimate relations. This was one of many ways Islam sought to challenge and change the harmful perceptions and practices that existed towards women.<sup>20</sup>

Islam completely changed the religious view of the inferiority of women, returning the ruling to its true basis—that the prohibition of intercourse during menstruation is related to physical cleanliness, not because a woman is impure. The Jewish perception of women as a source of fear and caution arose from the collective unconscious formed by their distorted religious heritage, which Islam sought to correct. This perspective, shared by some, views women as the cause of evil, the first sin, and Adam's expulsion from Paradise, leading to the expectation of disorder, strife, and evil in every woman.

The testimony of 'Umar Ibn al-Khattab (RA) confirms the profound change Islam brought to the anti-woman mindset. He said, "We were in the pre-Islamic era, and we did not consider women as anything. When Islam came and Allah mentioned them, we recognized that we truly have rights over them." In another narration, he said, "By God, we were in the pre-Islamic era and would not consider

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<sup>20</sup> Al-Nasa'i, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, Kitab al-Taharah, Bab Ta'wil Qawl Allah 'Azza wa Jalla "Yas'alunaka 'an al-Mahid" (al-Albani said: this *hadith* is *sahih*), al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 1: 152.

women as anything until Allah revealed what He sent down, supporting them, and He assigned them their rightful shares."

Sayyidah Aisha (RA) also expressed her strong opposition to the demeaning view of women, particularly when a narration insulted women by equating them with dogs and donkeys as reasons for interrupting prayer. She responded: "You compare us to donkeys and dogs! By Allah, I have seen the Prophet (PBUH) pray with me lying on the bed between him and the *qiblah*. There was no room to sit, so I avoided moving so as not to disturb the Prophet (PBUH), and he slid his feet away from me."<sup>21</sup>

'Umar's testimony and Aisha's denunciation, may Allah be pleased with them, serve as models for how Islamic jurisprudence and education shaped the Muslim community's awareness of women as human beings. Islam instilled a natural view of women, one that is surrounded by respect, appreciation, and consideration for their femininity.

### **The Setback of the Muslim Community's Vision of Women's Humanity and its Causes**

Despite the corrective measures Islam introduced to rectify attitudes towards women, certain conservative views

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<sup>21</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Salah, Bab Man Qala la Yaqta' al-Salat Shay', al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 1: 192. The *hadith* narrated by Muslim, "interrupting prayer: the woman, the donkey, and the dog", it is possible to understand the intent of what preoccupies the man in prayer and not the matter in the woman herself, and that is according to the woman's human position in Islam, and this is confirmed by what Muslim also narrated - in the Book of Marriage, Chapter of the Commandment of Women - a *hadith* on the authority of 'Abd Allah bin 'Amr that the Messenger of God said: "The world is enjoyment, and the best enjoyment of this world is a righteous woman." The intent of the *hadith* is the effect of a grouchy woman in the prayer, as it distracted him from reverence, as well as the voice of a dog and the voice of a donkey that distracted the worshiper. A warning about a stranger or a guest staying at the house. God knows.

resurfaced in the collective unconscious shortly after the era of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions. According to Ibn Jurayj, "‘Ata’ told us that when Ibn Hisham forbade women from circumambulating with men, he said, ‘How can he prevent them when the wives of the Prophet performed circumambulation with the men?’"<sup>22</sup>

The decline in the Muslim community's views regarding women can be attributed to several factors, including the following:

### **1. The customs and traditions of societies entering Islam**

Many societies embraced Islam after the era of the Prophet, bringing with them their own customs, traditions, and some old beliefs. This influence not only affected Islamic values but also shaped the understanding of texts based on these beliefs.<sup>23</sup> This occurred at a time when Islamic education had weakened due to political and cultural factors that impacted morals, principles of behavior, and patterns of social relations. According to Karen Armstrong, "We find that women at the dawn of Islam enjoyed a great deal of freedom. Islam later adopted the harem system after its contact with Byzantine Christianity, which had been practicing this system with women..."<sup>24</sup>

Some Western historians have argued that the custom of veiling and isolating women originated with the Persians. While most of them embraced Islam and became part of the Muslim community, they did not abandon all of their previous customs. The practice of wearing the niqab, or face covering, was known to the societies and cities

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<sup>22</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Hajj, Bab Tawaf al-Nisa' ma'a al-Rijal, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 2: 575.

<sup>23</sup> See: Yusuf Oktan, "Mehdînin Nesebî Hakkındaki Rivâyetlerin Yorumlanmasında Mezhebî Temâyül," *İslami İlimler Dergisi* 16(2) (2021), 7-30.

<sup>24</sup> Karen Armstrong, *The Gospel According to Women* (London: Em Tree Books, 1986), 2-3.

conquered by Muslims, including the ancient Syrians and Babylonians. The burqa or niqab was already present in regions such as Persia, and it was used as a distinctive identity for women. In some cases, punishment was imposed on female slaves who wore it.<sup>25</sup>

## **2. Israeli narratives and the Jewish and Christian vision of women**

The Israeli narrative, concerning the creation of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from Paradise, has been incorporated into books of interpretation. These interpretations have helped reinforce a view that blames women, primarily accusing Eve of succumbing to Satan's temptation, which led to Adam's fall through her influence. In his interpretation of the Almighty's words, al-Tabari mentions:

And their Lord called to them: "Did I not forbid you?" Allah said to Adam: "Why did you eat from it, despite My forbidding you?" He replied: "O Lord, Eve fed me." Allah then said to Eve: "Why did you feed him?" She responded, "The snake ordered me." Allah said to the snake, "Why did you instruct her?" The snake replied, "He—meaning Iblis—ordered me." Allah then declared: "Cursed be he who has been defeated. As for you, O Eve, as you bled from the tree, you will bleed every month. And as for you, O snake, I will cut off your legs, and you will crawl on your belly, and your head will be struck off by those who encounter you. Go down to one another, for you are enemies."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Wiebke Walther, *Women in Islam: From Medieval to Modern Times* (New York: Princeton & Markus Wiener Publishing, 1993), 70.

<sup>26</sup> Al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan, tafsir* for verse number 22 from Surah al-A'raf, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 5: 451.

This narration, along with others, suggests that a woman's menstruation and pregnancy are forms of anger and divine punishment that Allah imposed on Eve and her daughters.

However, this interpretation contradicts the Islamic values affirmed in the Qur'an, as Islam does not hold a belief in inherited sin, unlike the Christian tradition. The Qur'an explicitly rejects this notion, stating: "No soul bears the burden of another" (al-An'am 6:165). This verse is repeated five times in the Holy Qur'an, and there is no indication that Satan defeated Eve; rather, the verse refers to both Adam and Eve. Allah says, "So Satan caused them to slip away from it" (al-Baqarah 2:36), and, "Then Satan whispered to them" (al-A'raf 7:20). The Qur'an places the primary responsibility on Adam, as evidenced by the verse: "So Adam disobeyed his Lord and went astray" (Taha 20:121). It is important to note that if such an incident were accurate, it should be clearly mentioned within a narrative that has an educational context.

Historical studies confirm the Jewish perspective on women, which often portrays them as sources of temptation and seduction, leading men to evil. According to this view, it is better for a Jewish man to avoid walking near a woman, as she is seen as a potential source of seduction.

Christianity inherited and further propagated the negative view of women, with churchmen reinforcing this notion and shaping corresponding rulings. Church figures exaggerated in their descriptions of women, sometimes portraying them as soulless or as bodies with wicked souls. Paul, in particular, asserted that women were the origin of sin and the cause of all evil, contributing to the belief that women were the destination of all ugly things. In medieval European Christianity, it was believed that the poison of snakes and dragons was easier to cure and less dangerous

for men than the association with women, with the nature of women being linked to Satan.<sup>27</sup>

It was reported that a saint among them told his students, "When you see a woman, do not think you have seen a human being; instead, see her as a ferocious being, for what you are witnessing is Satan himself."<sup>28</sup>

### **3. The perverted appearances that prevailed in society at the end of the first Abbasid era**

During this period, deviant manifestations played a significant role in shaping a more conservative social vision of women. As a result, some jurists, responding to the changes and corruption of the times, began to impose stricter rulings on women, reinforcing excessive boundaries out of fear of sedition and an overestimation of caution and reservation. They often cited pretexts to justify these actions, with a few using 'jurisprudential tricks' to adapt *Shari'ah* in a way that aligned with old customs.<sup>29</sup> Rashid Rida said,

"Everything that people in large cities and villages have invented regarding the exaggeration of veiling women is a matter of blocking the pretext, not based on the principles of *Shari'ah*. For Muslims have unanimously agreed on the legitimacy of women's prayer in mosques with their faces and hands uncovered. They also unanimously agreed that women would assume *Ihram* for Hajj and Umrah. They traveled with men to jihad, served the wounded,

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<sup>27</sup> C. W. Hollister, *Medieval Europe* (New York: Newbery Award Records Inc., 1982), 165.

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad 'Ajaj al-Khatib et al, *Nizam al-Usrah fi al-Islam* (Jordan: Maktabah al-Falah, n.d.), 26.

<sup>29</sup> Hassan al-Turabi, *al-Mar'ah bayn Ta'alim al-Din*, 41-44.

watered, hosted guests, and attended court meetings with jurists and caliphs."<sup>30</sup>

The allegations of corruption and sedition at that time caused some jurists to become excessively cautious and overly restrictive, leading them to impose stricter rulings under the principle of blocking excuses. However, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) did not see incidents disturbing civil peace as requiring prohibitive measures. Instead, he believed it was sufficient to raise awareness of the danger and impose punitive measures on the wrongdoers, rather than introducing new legislation that would limit and burden people. Regardless of the corruption in society, the role of religion is to reform it, not to surrender to it or adapt Islamic life systems to fit its circumstances. Unfortunate events are a part of human society, even in prophetic society.

For example, on the authority of Wa'il al-Kindi, one morning, a man assaulted a woman as she was on her way to the mosque. She sought help from a man who passed by, while her husband fled. They then brought the matter to the Messenger of Allah (PBUH). In this case, the Prophet (PBUH) did not prohibit women from going to the mosque at night.<sup>31</sup> Instead, it was reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Do not prevent women from going out to mosques at night."<sup>32</sup> On the authority of 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar, it was reported that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Permit the women at night to go to the mosques."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Muhammad Rashid Rida, *Huquq al-Nisa' fi al-Islam*, ed., Muhammad Nasir al-Din al-Albani (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Islami, 1984), 185.

<sup>31</sup> Al-Nasa'i, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, 4: 313. Also referred al-Bayhaqi, *Sunan al-Kubra*, ed. Muhammad 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata' (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), 8: 494.

<sup>32</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Salah, Bab Khuruj al-Nisa' ila al-Masajid, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 2: 32.

<sup>33</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Jumu'ah, Bab Hal 'ala Man Yashhad al-Jumu'ah Ghushl min al-Nisa' wa al-Sibyan wa Ghayrihim, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 3: 33 & 2: 33.

While Islam is keen on the rule of blocking the pretext, it also emphasizes the rule of facilitation. The principle in Islamic jurisprudence balances these two rules when issuing rulings regarding women. For example, Islam allows women to walk in the streets and does not prohibit this, as this would be considered a pretext. Instead, Islam establishes etiquette to ensure security and protection from temptation. Allah Almighty said, "...and do not display yourselves as [was] the display of the former times of ignorance" (al-Ahzab 33:33). He also says, "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments. That is more suitable that they will be known and not be abused. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful" (al-Ahzab 33:59). Furthermore, He Exalted said, "...Let them not stomp their feet, drawing attention to their hidden adornments..." (al-Nur 24:31).

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari narrated that the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, "Any woman who perfumes herself and passes by people so that they can smell her fragrance is an adulteress."<sup>34</sup> The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) facilitated men's gatherings on the roads but encouraged them to observe specific etiquette. Abu Sa'id al-Khudri narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Beware of sitting on the roads." The companions replied, "We have no other option but to sit there; it is where we gather and converse." The Prophet (PBUH) then said, "If you must sit, give the road its due rights." They asked, "What are the rights of the road?" He replied, "Lowering the gaze, refraining from causing harm, responding to greetings (*al-salam*), enjoining good, and forbidding evil."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Al-Nasa'i, *Sunan al-Nasa'i*, *hadith* no. 5126, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 8: 153

<sup>35</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Mazalim, Bab Afniyyah al-Dawr wa al-Julus fiha wa al-Julus 'ala al-Sa'adat, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 6: 37. Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Salam, Bab Min

The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) did not forbid entering the house of a wife whose husband was absent if it served a beneficial purpose and aligned with cooperation in goodness. However, this was conditioned on avoiding situations of unlawful seclusion (*khalwah*). On the authority of 'Abd Allah bin Amr, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) stood on the *minbar* and said, "No man shall enter after this day of my absence without a man or two with him."<sup>36</sup>

Blocking the pretext to prevent corruption, particularly concerning the rulings related to women in Islam, depends significantly on the jurist's perspective on the likelihood of seduction and their understanding of women's human rights. Denying women their human rights to counteract a potential social evil can itself become a form of corruption, potentially leading to other equal or greater societal harms. Al-Shatibi cautioned that preventing a sin could result in a sin of equal or greater magnitude than the one being avoided.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, after the era of the Messenger (PBUH) and his companions, the Muslim community's awareness regarding women underwent a transformation. This new perspective emerged as a fusion of influences from the cultures of newly integrated societies, Jewish traditions, the Christian concept of women, and the manifestations of deviations within Islamic society itself.

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Haq al-Julus 'ala al-Tariq Radd al-Salam, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 7: 2.

<sup>36</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Salam, Bab Tahrim al-Khalwah bi al-Ajnabiyyah wa al-Dukhul 'alayha, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 7: 8.

<sup>37</sup> Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Musa bin Muhammad al-Lukhmi al-Shatibi, *al-Muwafaqat*, ed. Abu 'Ubaydah Mashur bin Hasan 'Ali Salman (Saudi Arabia: Dar Ibn 'Affan, 1997), 2: 358-361 & 4: 194, 195.

## The Impact of Society's Vision of Women on Islamic Sciences

The emergence of new societal awareness regarding women, influenced by fabricated *hadiths*, significantly affected the understanding and interpretation of Islamic sciences. These fabricated *hadiths*, often transmitted as though they were authentic, had a profound impact on people's perceptions and beliefs. However, efforts were made to identify and warn against such weak and fabricated narrations. Prominent works in this regard include *Kashf al-Khafa' wa Mazil al-Ilbas 'amma Ishthara min al-Ahadith 'ala Alsinah al-Nas* by Isma'il bin Muhammad al-'Ajluni al-Jarrahi, *al-Durar al-Muntathirah fi al-Ahadith al-Mushtahirah* by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, and *Silsilat al-Ahadith al-Da'ifah wa al-Mawdu'ah wa Atharuha al-Sayyi'ah fi al-Ummah* by Nasir al-Din al-Albani.<sup>38</sup>

These fabricated *hadiths* provide significant historical evidence of the resurgence of strong negative sentiments toward women, even two centuries after the Prophetic era. These attitudes resurfaced in the collective consciousness, influencing Muslims' judgments and behaviors toward women.<sup>39</sup> This phenomenon underscores the importance of examining some of these fabricated *hadiths* to understand the depth of these sentiments and their lasting impact on the collective consciousness to this day. Below are examples of narrations (*hadiths*) that express disdain for women:

- "Burying the daughters of the honorable."<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> See: Najmeddin Alissa, "Cerh ve Ta'dil İlminde 'Decâcile' (İbn Hibbân Kitâbu'l-Mecrûhîn Özelinde)," *Tokat İlmiyat Dergisi*, 9(2) (2021), 592-599.

<sup>39</sup> See: Muhammet Beyler, *Yüzyıl Halep Muhaddisleri ve Abdülfettah Ebû Guddê* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Vakfı Yayınları, 2021), 307.

<sup>40</sup> Abu al-Fadl Jalal al-Din 'Abd al-Rahman Abu Bakr al-Suyuti, *al-Durar al-Muntathirah fi al-Ahadith al-Mushtahirah*, ed. Muhammad 'Abd al-Qadir 'Ata' (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1988), 147; Abu al-Farj 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Ali al-Qarashi ibn al-Jawzi, *al-*

- "The nakedness of a jacket and provisions are enough."<sup>41</sup>
- "When the girl dies, beware of the evil of women and be careful of their choice."<sup>42</sup>
- "A woman has two shelters: the grave and the husband. It was said, "Which is better?" He said, "The grave."<sup>43</sup>
- "Women have ten faults, and if the woman is married, the husband will cover one fault, and if she dies, the grave will cover nine faults."<sup>44</sup>
- "If there were no women, there would be a true servant of Allah."<sup>45</sup>
- "Obedience to women is regret."<sup>46</sup>
- "Whoever obeys his wife, Allah Almighty will throw him into the fire on his face."<sup>47</sup>
- "Consult them and disagree with them."<sup>48</sup>
- "Be used to the women, practice no, for they are weak, and if you obey them, they will destroy you."<sup>49</sup>

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*Mawdu'at*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahman Muhammad Uthman (n.p: Muhammad Sa'id Aynd, 1966), 3: 35; Ibn 'Iraq Abu al-Hasan 'Ali al-Kinani, *Tanzih al-Shari'ah 'an al-Ahadith al-Shani'ah al-Mawdu'ah*, ed. 'Abd al-Wahhab 'Abd al-Latif & 'Abd Allah Muhammad al-Siddiq (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub 'Ilmiyyah, 1981), 2: 281.

<sup>41</sup> Al-Suyuti, *al-Durar al-Muntathirah*, 191.

<sup>42</sup> Isma'il bin Muhammad al-'Ajluni al-Jarrahi, *Kashf al-Khafa' wa Mazil al-Ilbas 'Amma Ishtaraha min al-Ahadith 'ala Alsinah al-Nas* (Cairo: Dar al-Turath, n.d), *hadith* no. 78, 1: 44.

<sup>43</sup> Nasir al-Din al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da'ifah wa al-Mawdu'at wa Atharuha al-Sayyi'ah fi al-Ummah* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'arif, 1988), 3: 585.

<sup>44</sup> Al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da'ifah wa al-Mawdu'at wa Atharuha al-Sayyi'ah fi al-Ummah*, 3: 585.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Mawdu'at*, 2: 255; Ibn 'Iraq al-Kinani, *Tanzih al-Shari'ah*, 2: 204.

<sup>46</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Mawdu'at*, 2: 237; Ibn 'Iraq al-Kinani, *Tanzih al-Shari'ah*, 2: 210.

<sup>47</sup> Ibn 'Iraq al-Kinani, *Tanzih al-Shari'ah*, 2: 215.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Suyuti, *al-Durar al-Muntathirah*, 172.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Suyuti, *al-Durar al-Muntathirah*, 172.

- "Do not teach your women to write, and do not inhabit them in lofty rooms."<sup>50</sup>
- "Do not live in them in rooms, and do not teach them to write, teach them spinning and surah al-Nur."<sup>51</sup>
- "Deceit and deception are not valid except in marriage."<sup>52</sup>
- "Starve the women without harm, and strip them naked and not severely, because if they are fat and clothed, nothing is more beloved to them than going out, and nothing is worse for them than going out and if the nakedness and hunger get them, nothing is more beloved to them than homes, and nothing is better for them than homes."<sup>53</sup>

The *hadiths* that place general rulings on wives without considering reasons or specific circumstances include the following:

- "If a woman goes out of her house and her husband does not like it, every angel in the heavens curses her and everything she passes by except for the jinn and men until she returns."<sup>54</sup>
- "Any woman who goes out without the permission of her husband would be under the anger of Allah until she returns to her home or he is pleased with her."<sup>55</sup>
- "There are three for whom God does not accept prayer and does not raise a good deed for them to heaven: the escaped slave until he returns to his masters and puts his hand in theirs, the woman whose husband is angry with her until he is satisfied, and the drunk until he awakens."<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Mawdu'at*, 2: 267.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn 'Iraq al-Kinani, *Tanzih al-Shari'ah*, 2: 208-209.

<sup>52</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Mawdu'at*, 2: 269.

<sup>53</sup> Ibn 'Iraq 'Ali al-Kinani, *Tanzih al-Shari'ah*, 2: 213.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da'ifah*, 3: 222. Al-Albani said this *hadith da'if jiddan*.

<sup>55</sup> Al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da'ifah*, 3: 88.

<sup>56</sup> Al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da'ifah*, 3: 189.

- "On Friday there is an hour in which no one will supplicate to Allah but He will respond to him, unless the wife of her husband is angry with her."<sup>57</sup>
- "If any woman says to her husband, "I have never seen good from you," then her good deeds are destroyed."<sup>58</sup>

The purpose of narrating these *hadiths* is to highlight the extent of exploitation women faced during those times. Commenting on the impact of these narratives on the Muslim community, al-Ghazali states:

"The Muslims have deviated from the teachings of their religion in the treatment of women. Dark narratives have spread among them, and *hadiths*—either fabricated or close to fabrication—led the Muslim woman into a state of complete ignorance and negligence, far removed from both religion and worldly affairs. Contempt for femininity became a common trait, and the deprivation of her material and moral rights was deeply ingrained as a custom."<sup>59</sup>

Most of these fabricated *hadiths* have no basis in the authentic sayings of the Prophet (PBUH) or Islam in general; rather, they directly contradict authentic texts. Their spread and acceptance—beyond the ignorance of many—can perhaps be attributed to their alignment with societal whims and the prevailing perceptions regarding women at the time. Consequently, these fabricated texts were often unquestioningly regarded as true religion without scientific investigation or an objective perspective.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi, *al-Mawdu'at*, 2: 273.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Da'ifah*, 4: 135.

<sup>59</sup> Word of Muhammad al-Ghazali in *Muqaddamah Tahrir al-Mar'ah fi 'Asr al-Risalah*. See, 'Abd al-Halim Muhammad Abu Shaqqah, *Tahrir al-Mar'ah fi 'Asr al-Risalah* (Kuwait: Dar al-Qalam, 1999), 1: 5.

Many of these texts persisted over generations, falsely presented as part of the prophetic Sunnah and integrated into the fabric of Muslim heritage. Preachers in mosques have, at times, cited them in sermons and referenced them in writings, frequently without conducting proper investigations. This has entrenched these texts in the collective consciousness, shaping perspectives on women and influencing social interactions, all without adequate scrutiny or study.

Such baseless perceptions have not only distorted the understanding of Qur'anic verses and authentic *hadiths* but have also been exploited to diminish women's rights and status. Authentic *hadiths* were often misinterpreted or disregarded to support these views. For instance, one commonly misused *hadith* claims that women are deficient in reason and religion. Another often-misquoted *hadith* states: "If I were to order anyone to prostrate to another, I would have ordered the woman to prostrate to her husband."<sup>60</sup>

The *hadith* regarding *Naqisat 'Aql*, which describes women as having a deficiency in intellect and religion, is indeed authentic *hadith*. However, it has often been misunderstood and misapplied, leading to the distortion of the true portrayal of women's nature as described in the Qur'an and exemplified by the Messenger (PBUH) in his Sunnah.<sup>61</sup> The Prophet (PBUH) said, "Among you, most of those who have a heart I have not seen as deficient in intellect and religion..."<sup>62</sup> This *hadith* has been regarded as one of the problematic narrations, leading to disputes and various explanations. If the text of the *hadith* is interpreted without considering its full context, purpose, and

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<sup>60</sup> Abu Shaqqah, *Tahrir al-Mar'ah fi 'Asr al-Risalah*, 1: 12.

<sup>61</sup> Abu Shaqqah, *Tahrir al-Mar'ah fi 'Asr al-Risalah*, 1: 46.

<sup>62</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, Kitab al-Iman, Bab Bayan Nuqsan al-Iman bi Naqs al-Ta'at wa Bayan Ilaq Lafz al-Kufr 'ala Ghayr al-Kufr billah ka Kufr al-Ni'mah wa al-Huquq, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 1: 86.

humanistic perspective on women in Islam, it can easily lead to a negative view of women.

However, this *hadith* refers to a deficiency in the rulings and not in women's religiosity as individuals. Therefore, the deficiency spoken of in this *hadith* is in the application of certain religious rulings, not in the fundamental aspects of women's faith or their worth in Islam. This understanding is clarified by the Prophet's (PBUH) own explanation, which specifically addresses women's religious deficiencies in the context of legal rulings or duties:

"Is it not true that when a woman menstruates, she does not pray (*salat*) or fast?"<sup>63</sup> This statement, along with the Prophet's (PBUH) discussion of her intellectual deficiency, reflects the control of her memory due to her emotional fluctuations, which stem from her unique and sensitive nature, distinct from that of men. It has been said that "whenever a woman experiences a change in her mood during her period, it causes her to be forgetful."<sup>64</sup> This is why the Prophet (PBUH) explained in another *hadith*: "Isn't the testimony of a woman half that of a man?"<sup>65</sup>

In reference to the verse of Allah: "If one of them goes astray, then one of them will remember the other" (al-Baqarah 2:282). The purpose of this discussion on intellect is not to demean women's understanding or intellect, but rather to highlight the context of the *hadith*. The *hadith* opens with, "O women! Give alms, for I have seen that most of the dwellers of Hellfire are women."<sup>66</sup> The deficiency mentioned here is not in terms of intellect or personal

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<sup>63</sup> Al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Kitab al-Hayd, Bab Tark al-Ha'id al-Sawm, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 1: 116.

<sup>64</sup> Abu al-Layth Muhammad al-Khayr Abadi, "Hadith Naqisat 'Aql wa Din, Ishkaliyyah Asbab wa Hulul", *Ma'alim al-Qur'an wa al-Sunnah* 1 (2005), 240.

<sup>65</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1: 86.

<sup>66</sup> Muslim, *Sahih Muslim*, 1: 86.

worth; rather, it concerns certain religious duties and responsibilities.

A person who is intellectually deficient, such as a child or an insane person, is not held accountable for their actions. This is further confirmed in a *hadith* narrated by Aisha (RA), where the Prophet (PBUH) said, "The pen (of responsibility) is lifted from three: the sleeper until he wakes up, the boy until he reaches sexual maturity, and the insane until he regains his sanity." Therefore, the intellectually deficient individual will not be punished in Hell for actions for which they were not responsible.<sup>67</sup>

This view concerning women significantly impacted Qur'anic interpretations and jurisprudential issues. For example, al-Baydawi, in his interpretation of the Almighty's words, "Then marry those women who seem good to you" (al-Nisa' 4:3), offers clarifications regarding their features. He describes these women as lacking intellect due to a perceived deficiency in their reasoning abilities.<sup>68</sup>

According to Ibn Kathir's interpretation of the term *sufaha'* (the foolish) in the verse, "And when it is said to them, 'Believe as the people have believed,' they say, 'Shall we believe as the fools have believed?'" (al-Baqarah 2:13), he stated that *safih* refers to ignorance, weak opinion, and limited knowledge in distinguishing between good and bad. Thus, Allah referred to women and children as fools in the verse, "And give not your money to the foolish" (al-Nisa' 4:5). Most of the early scholars (Salaf) interpreted

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<sup>67</sup> Ibn Hibban, *Sahih Ibn Hibban*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut, Kitab al-Iman, Bab al-Taklif, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 1: 355. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut said: The chain of narrator is authentic by the condition of Imam Muslim.

<sup>68</sup> 'Abd Allah bin 'Umar al-Baydawi, *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar al-Tanzil*, ed. 'Abd al-Qadir 'Arafat al-'Asha Hasunah (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1996), 2: 142.

this to mean that women and children are the ones referred to as fools in this context.<sup>69</sup>

This misconception regarding women's status, value, and human rights has also appeared in Islamic jurisprudential compilations. Ibn Abi Shaybah's compilation, at the end of the second century, included jurisprudential opinions of his time that often revolved around disparaging views of women. Some of these opinions are as follows:

- Whoever dislikes performing ablution with the remaining water from a woman's ablution. Isma'il bin 'Aliyah narrated to us from Sulayman al-Taymi, who said that Abu Hajib narrated from a man of Bani Ghaffar, one of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH), who said: "The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) forbade a man from performing ablution using the remaining water from a woman's ablution."<sup>70</sup>
- Whoever dislikes a woman leading other women in prayer.<sup>71</sup>
- Preventing women from praying in congregation and attending Friday prayers. Hamid bin 'Abd al-Rahman narrated to us from Hassan, who narrated from Abu Farwah. He said: Hamid bin 'Abd al-Rahman narrated to us from al-Wasafi, who said: "I was with 'Umar bin Abd al-'Aziz when he wrote to 'Abd al-Hamid, saying: "Look at the women before you, as they have no right to join in the Friday prayer or the funeral prayer."<sup>72</sup>

It was reported by one of the Shafi'iyyah jurists that he said: "It is forbidden to propose to a *mu'taddah* (a

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<sup>69</sup> Abu al-Fida' Isma'il bin 'Umar ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1419H), 1: 93.

<sup>70</sup> Ibn Abi Shaybah, *Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah*, al-Maktabah al-Shamilah, 1: 38.

<sup>71</sup> Ibn Abi Shaybah, *Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah*, 1: 430.

<sup>72</sup> Ibn Abi Shaybah, *Musannaf Ibn Abi Shaybah*, 1: 446.

woman in her waiting period after divorce or the death of her husband) because this may lead to temptation once her waiting period is over. Women are often perceived as lacking in religion and trustworthiness, as they are believed to be deficient in both awareness and religion."<sup>73</sup>

Similarly, one of the Hanafī jurists commented on women's deficient intellect: "This refers to the inability to fully entrust servitude—specifically, the intellect with talent—due to a perceived lack in their ability to grasp fundamental truths through their senses. As for the statement, "...*wa qawluhu naqisat 'aql'*" is "*al-'aql bi al-fi'l*" (deficient in intellect), it refers to the practical manifestation of intellect. Hence, they failed to reform the state, the caliphate, and the leadership."<sup>74</sup>

Accordingly, a woman is often deprived of her right to choose her life partner or, at the very least, her right to approve or reject the one proposed by her guardian. This leads to instances where fathers marry off their daughters without their consent rather than consulting and seeking their opinions. Unfortunately, this practice has been supported by the Shafi'iyyah and Malikiyyah schools of thought, as well as a majority of the Hanabilah. However, this position lacks strong evidence and does not withstand the arguments of its opponents. Even Ibn Taymiyyah and his student, Ibn al-Qayyim, rejected this practice.<sup>75</sup>

Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, in his book *Ihya'*, mentions rulings based on fabricated and weak *hadiths* that are contrary to the status of women during the era of the Messenger (PBUH). For example, he states, "The proper way is that men should not enter her presence, nor should

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<sup>73</sup> Abu Bakr al-Sayyid al-Bakri, *I'ānah al-Talibin 'ala Hall Alfaz Fath al-Mu'in* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d.), 3: 268.

<sup>74</sup> Ibn Najm al-Misri transmitted from Akmal al-Din Muhammad ibn Mahmud al-Babarti al-Hanafī, *al-Bahr al-Rai'iq fi Sharh Kanz al-Daqa'iq* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.) 7: 61-62.

<sup>75</sup> See word of al-Qardawi in 'Abd al-Halim Muhammad, *Tahrir al-Mar'ah fi 'Asr al-Risalah*, 1: 11.

she go out to the markets." Furthermore, he quotes a narration where the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) asked his daughter, Fatima RA, "What is good for a woman?" She replied, "She does not see a man, nor should any man see her." Based on this, al-Ghazali suggested that she be kept secluded.<sup>76</sup>

The companions of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) took measures to prevent women from seeing men. For example, Mu'adh saw his wife looking out of the window and beat her for it. He also beat her when he saw her giving an eaten apple to their servant. 'Umar (RA) instructed, "Keep women inside the veil (the space in which women live within the home)," and he further advised, "Make your wives accustomed to the word 'no.'" The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) permitted women to attend the mosque, but this was only considered appropriate for the elderly."<sup>77</sup>

According to some jurists in their rulings regarding wives, one of the manifestations of restrictions is the lack of consideration for their human rights in certain marital matters. For example:

- The issue of the wife's treatment allowance: The four main schools of thought agree that if the wife becomes ill and requires medical attention, including a doctor's consultation and medication, the husband is not obligated to cover the costs for the doctor's fees or the medication. They explained that the medicine and the doctor are not obligated to cure the body to preserve it, and the husband has the right to benefit from this body, so he is not obligated to cover the costs of its treatment. This reasoning is akin to renting a house: if the house

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<sup>76</sup> Al-Hafiz al-'Iraqi, *Takhrij li Ahadith 'Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din*, Kitab al-Nikah, Bab al-Thalith: Adab al-Mu'asharah Kayf Yattaqi al-Rajul al-Ghayrah (Beirut: Dar Ibn Hazm, 2005), 485. He said this *hadith* is *da'if*.

<sup>77</sup> Abu Hamid al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din* (Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifah, n.d.), 2: 46.

is damaged or undergoes any other mishap, the tenant is not responsible for its repair.<sup>78</sup>

Although Islam commands the husband to treat his wife well, it is not considered good behavior if the wife is sick, and the husband is not obligated to pay for the doctor's fees or the cost of medicine. The question remains as to what the jurists suggest in this matter. It appears that the jurists have no direct evidence to support the idea that the husband is not obligated to pay for medical expenses, except through an analogy with renting property.

However, there are significant differences between the marriage contract and the lease contract. This analogy stems from the jurists' definition of the marriage contract, which emphasizes that the wife is not obligated to serve or manage her husband's affairs. This definition includes the statement, "She is contracted to be enjoyed by him and is not obligated to anyone else." The husband is not required to provide any benefits outside the home, nor is he responsible for any obligations beyond the wife's allowance and clothing.<sup>79</sup>

This analogy can be understood in terms of the *mahr* (dowry), which financially compensates the woman's benefits, much like renting property. However, the *mahr* is not merely a payment for benefits but a gift, as indicated by the Almighty's saying: "Give women their bridal-due in good cheer (considering it a duty)" (al-Nisa' 4:4), meaning it is a form of recompense. If it were simply a requital, the renewal of benefits and extension of time would have been

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<sup>78</sup> See: Ahmad Ibn Muhammad al-Sawi, *Hashiyyah al-Sawi 'ala al-Sharh al-Saghir*, e-book, www.al-islam.com, 5: 161; al-Bahuti Mansur bin Yunus bin Idris, *Kashf al-Qina' 'an Matn al-Iqna'*, ed. Muhammad Amin al-Danawi (Cairo: 'Alim al-Kutub, 1997), 5: 460-463; Ibn Qudamah Abi Muhammad Muwaffaq al-Maqdisi, *al-Mughni* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Qahirah, 1968), Fasl ma Tashmuluhu Nafaqah al-Zawjah, 9: 233.

<sup>79</sup> Ibn Qudamah, *al-Mughni*, Fasl ma Laysa 'alayha Khidmah Zawjaha min al-Ujn wa al-Khubz, 8: 131.

incorporated into the arrangement. Al-Ghazali comments on this by stating:

“Enthusiastic women were angered when jurists defined the marriage contract as a mere agreement permitting the enjoyment of women. Here, it is clear that this definition fails to capture the full depth of the relationship between spouses. It only addresses the legal aspect, ignoring the broader dimensions of human interaction. Marriage is much more than a contract focused solely on the woman's physical body... And Allah has made for you mates (and companions) of your own nature, and made for you, out of them, sons and daughters, and grandchildren.” (al-Nahl 16:72)<sup>80</sup>

- The issue of meeting the wife's parents and her *mahram* (unmarriageable relatives) with her: The opinions of Hanafi jurists differ on this matter. Some believe that the husband has the right to prevent her parents, son, and other family members from entering the marital home with her, as the house belongs to the husband and controls access to his property.

However, the proponents of this view argue that the husband has no right to prevent them from looking at or speaking to her at any time, as doing so would sever family ties. Furthermore, they assert that such interactions do not cause harm to the husband.<sup>81</sup> Based on the Hanabilah, “the husband may prevent his wife from visiting her parents, caring for them, or attending the funeral of one of them.” However, they further state, “The husband should not prevent her parents from visiting her, nor should he prevent

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<sup>80</sup> Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Qadaya al-Mar'ah*, 156-157.

<sup>81</sup> See: ‘Abd al-Ghani al-Ghanimi al-Dimashqi al-Maydani, *al-Lubab fi Sharh al-Kitab* (Beirut: Maktabah al-‘Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 3: 22.

her from visiting them, as doing so would be considered severing family ties and would compel the wife to disobey her husband. Allah has ordered the husband to treat his wife with kindness and good manners."<sup>82</sup>

- The issue of the missing husband's ruling (i.e., absent or missing): Most jurists opine that the wife should be made to wait for a period of four years. However, the Hanafi school of thought suggests that the woman should wait for a duration equal to the age of her husband at the time of his disappearance.<sup>83</sup>

Literature played a significant role in shaping the collective consciousness, contributing to the inhumane conception of women. According to one poet:

"And I did not see a blessing that included a generous respect like the blessing of a woman covered in a grave."

Another poet said:

"I wished for my daughter, and I wished that I placed her at the edge of my grave."

Abu al-'Ala' al-Ma'ari says in his *Luzumiyat*:

"However, women are ropes of enticement; many honorable men lost their honor because of them!"<sup>84</sup>

Hence, society's view obscured the high status of women as prescribed by Islam, subjecting them to societal values rather than the values of Islam. This led to women's social roles being defined according to societal norms,

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<sup>82</sup> See: Ibn Qudamah al-Maqdisi, *al-Mughni*, Fasl Walahu Mana'aha min al-Khuruq, 8: 130.

<sup>83</sup> Abu al-'Ala' al-Mawdudi, *Huquq al-Zawjayn: Dirasah Naqdiyyah li Qanun al-Ahwal al-Shakhsiyyah* (Riyadh: Dar al-Sa'udiyyah, 1988), 127.

<sup>84</sup> See: Muhammad 'Imarah & Qasim Amin, *Tahrir al-Mar'ah wa al-Tamaddun al-Islami* (Cairo: Dar al-Shuruq, 1988), 95-97.

regardless of their alignment with religious teachings, creating a contradiction between societal values and the tolerant principles of Islam.

Consequently, conflicting ideologies such as feminism emerged, employing approaches such as rejecting classical juristic *ijtihad* and redefining equality to mean justice for women.<sup>85</sup> This study does not aim to delve deeply into the emergence of such ideologies, as their epistemological foundation is already at odds with revelation.<sup>86</sup> Nevertheless, the aggressive reactions of these groups stem from the interpretations that have been recorded. In this regard, a comprehensive (*kulli*) analysis of the sources of revelation from the objective perspective of *Shari'ah* is seen as a means to provide a more balanced consideration between the demands of revelation and contemporary social needs.

## Conclusion

This article clearly distinguishes between the humanity of women in Islam and society's perception of them. The straightforward discussion of the impact of various interpretations, rulings, explanations, and literature shows that the current reality of women in Muslim society does not stem from the core teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Instead, it emerges from a societal view influenced by various factors, such as interaction with different cultures and beliefs, as well as historical context.

Therefore, it is essential to examine the human perception of women through the broader goals of

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<sup>85</sup> Md. Asham Ahmad, "Islamic Feminism: A Critique of *Musawah's* Conception of Justice," *AFKAR: Jurnal Akidah dan Pemikiran Islam* 24 (1) (2022), 7-23.

<sup>86</sup> Juliyana Junaidi, Latifah Abdul Majid & Mohd Arif Nazri, "Revisiting Social Justice: Exploring the Quranic Paradigm in Addressing Contemporary Challenges." *AFKAR: Jurnal Akidah dan Pemikiran Islam* 25(2) (2023): 157.

*Shari'ah*. Moreover, the societal perspective on women encompasses a range of beliefs, attitudes, and practices that influence their roles and status across different cultures. Historically, these views have been shaped by cultural, religious, economic, and political factors, often resulting in complex gender norms and expectations. In many societies, traditional perspectives have led to the perception of women as subordinate to men, limiting their opportunities and rights in areas like education, employment, and leadership.

It is crucial to revisit women-related issues in some Islamic heritage books. These texts were often characterized by a limited view of women's humanity, which influenced society's treatment of them. This review will draw on the human sciences to help advance the Islamic understanding of women.

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