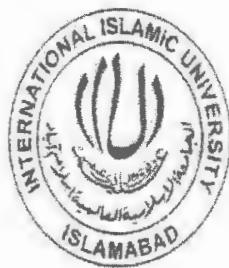


International Islamic University, Islamabad
Faculty of Islamic Studies (Usuluddin)
Department of Tafsir and Qur'anic Sciences



**Perspective of Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas towards
Interpretation of the Holy Quran with Respect to Women
(A Critical Study)**

**A Research Study for the Partial Fulfillment
of Masters in Tafsir and Quranic Sciences**

Supervised by: Dr. Shah Junaid Ahmad Hashimi

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Abstract

The last few decades has seen a rise of a type of feminists known as Islamic feminists. These are yet a small group of Muslim women writers, educated in Western Institutions, and claim to champion the rights of women in the light of Qur'anic teachings. Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas are two of such writers who, like others Islamic feminists, have questioned not just the traditional interpretation of verses related to women, but also the hermeneutical model used by the traditional scholars to interpret The Qur'an. They claim that the hermeneutical tools used by the traditional scholars are just as defected as the interpretations they have made on the basis of such tools, as these tools have given the traditional exegetes, who happen to be men, the window to exercise their patriarchal views. The study has critically analyzed the claims of the two writers and found them unjustified and based on flawed academic research and inadequate academic competence.

خلاصة

اكتسبت النسوية الإسلامية شهرة عالمية في بداية التسعينيات حيث بدأت بعض النساء من صفوف المسلمين يكتبن في تأويل القرآن الكريم بناء على أفكارهن النسوية. آمنة ودود و أسماء بلالس من أشهر هؤلاء المؤلفات ولهم كتابان أساسيان في الموضوع: "القرآن والمرأة: إعادة قراءة النص المقدس(القرآن) من وجهة نظر المرأة لآمنة ودود" و "المسلمات في الإسلام: تجريد القرآن الكريم عن القراءة الأبوية لأسماء بلالس" وهذان الكتابان هما موضوع دراستنا الحالية.

إن الكتب التي في تناولنا حاليا قد نقدت فيها أصول التفسير وخاصة ما يتعلق بمصادر التفسير و طرقه و مناهجه المعتمدة عند جمهور العلماء لأهل السنة والجماعة وقيل فيها أن السبب الأساسي في عدم المساوات بين الرجل والمرأة في العالم الإسلامي هو سيطرة الرجال على العلوم والتصوّص الدينية فإنهم أولوا نص القرآن من وجهة نظر الرجل واتخذوا أصول التفسير آلة لترويج أفكارهم الأبوية وبالتالي نجد في التصوّص الإسلامية مثل الحديث والفقه والتفسير عدم المساواة بين الرجل والمرأة.

والأطروحة بين أيدينا تركز على البحث في كتب آمنة ودود وأسماء بلالس والأفكار التي أوردن فيها على النحو التالي:

- أولاً: دراسة المستوى العلمي والخلفية العلمية للمؤلفين،
- وثانياً: دراسة الأفكار المتعلقة بمبادئ التفسير وما يتعلّق بها،
- وثالثاً: دراسة القضايا التي ناقشتها في كتبهن.

ووصلنا إلى النتائج التالية، من أهمها:

- أن المؤلفتين آمنة ودود وأسماء بلالس توكلان إيمانهما بالقرآن وتزيدان تدرسان الكتاب من وجهة نظر المرأة.

- أسماء بлас صحافية في الأصل وقد تخصصت في الدراسة العالمية والسياسة ولم تدرس العلوم الدينية، أما آمنة ودود فإنها درست اللغة العربية وبعض العلوم الدينية خاصة التفسير وحصلت على دكتوراه في هذا المجال ولكن لا يندو من خلال إنجازاتها العلمية عنابة كبيرة بالحديث.
 - أئمما درسنا دراستهما العليا في الغرب وتأثرا بالأفكار الغربية والنسوية المروجة هناك وإن كانت آمنة ودود توافق العلماء التقليديون مبدئيا في نظرها عن المساوات فإنها تعتقد كما يعتقدون أن مسؤوليات المرأة الاجتماعية تختلف عن الرجل ولكنها تختلف عنهم حين تعالج القضايا المتعلقة بالمرأة. أما أسماء بлас فقد نقلت كل آرائها عن المستشرقين والذين درسوا في الغرب فالمصادر والمراجع التي اعتمدت عليها دليل واضح على هذا.
 - أئمما ادعنا أشياء عن التراث العلمي والعلماء التقليديون وأجمعنا جميعهم تحت راية الأبوية والتحيز ضد المرأة بدون استشهادات كافية من كتب التفسير والعلوم فقد راجعت آمنة ودود فقط ثلاثة من التفاسير وأسماء بлас لم تفعل ذلك إلا لتفسيير واحد وذلك أيضا ترجمته وليس النص الأصلي.
 - طرق التفسير المعتمدة عندهما مأخوذة من طرق التأويل لدراسة النصوص الدينية في الغرب فقد يعتمدن على تفسير القرآن بالقرآن في ضوء التاريخ واللغة فقط وهذه بعينها الآلات المستخدمة لدراسة الإنجيل وكلاهما تجاهلت تلك طرق التفسير التي كانت نتيجة التطور النمو العلمي الخاص بتاريخ المسلمين وتراثهم والتي لم يكن من ورائها هدفا إلا الوصول إلى الحق.
 - كلامها تستخفان بجهود العلماء المسلمين ولا يقدرون عملهم في المجال العلمي و وجهدهم الذي يبذلوها في خدمة القرآن.
- فالدراسة هذه بحث علمي في الكتابين الأساسيين لأمنة ودود وأسماء بлас للوصول إلى الفهم الصحيح لأفكارهن والحصول على الصواب في دعواهن عن النصوص الدينية وجهود العلماء المسلمين وخدمتهم للإسلام.

وبالله التوفيق!

Preface

Gender Equality: A brief Introduction

The world at present is dominated by the West. The modern cultural and social values are largely a result of the experimentation of the European countries and America. The West is proud to bear the flag for uplifting the status of women from what it was in the traditional societies of the past.

In order to fully grasp the modern status of women we need to understand its historical background. Khalid Alavi gives a thorough and enlightening background:¹

The West, by faith, is Christian. The biblical world view which held a woman to be originally a sinner and man to be originally innocent made her the most degraded and abased class of the society. They were deprived of all kinds of social, economic and political rights. This was the environment in which started the Renaissance, rebirth of learning. Renaissance was fundamentally a pagan and materialistic movement, and focused on breaking away from the shackles of Church which at that time was in control of all aspects of life. This, of course, meant a rejection of the Christian values and teachings.

Along with Renaissance came the Industrial Revolution which greatly changed the social fabric of the western society. Women like men started working in factories to which men reacted and in 1842 women were banned from work. They were confined to the house. It was not until the First World War 1914 that women again got a chance to work as labor. It was because of the large number of men dying in the battle field. Now she had the burden of both man and woman. She had to work

1 - See: Khalid Alavi: *Aurat ki ma'asharti Hesiat: Aik Tarikhi Ja'izah*, (Women Institute of Science and Humanities, Islamabad, First edition, 2008), pg 33-50.

as well as manage the household and the children. However the induction in to the labor force by no means meant that women had started enjoying the same status as men. In fact, they were far from it. It was as late as 1970 that Britain passed the Equal Pay Act because women all thus while had been paid less than men for the same job. The economic struggle was accompanied by the political struggle and at the end of WW1 (1918) Britain granted women the right to vote as men.

However, despite these two major breakthroughs women still felt they did not have as many rights as men did. The reason was (as they saw it) within their own bodies, the womb. Women felt they can never be as free and independent as men as long as they were bound to the shackles of motherhood. This was the last chain that needed to be broken in order to gain parity with men. This hurdle was removed from their way in the 1960's when Birth Control Pills came into being. Abortion also became a socially accepted practice and divorce rate became higher than ever. These new developments lead to the disappearance of the basic unit of society, the family.

All these movements have been called by different names such as: women rights, suffrage movement, women liberation movement, feminist movement etc. If we study them closely we shall realize that at the heart of these movements is a reaction to the inferior and debased status that women had in the traditional western societies and the unjust and unworthy treatment that was meted out to them by men in these cultures. Man had denied her human rights and she fought a long and painful struggle to get them. Due to this history, her idea of a worthy status has only become a measure of whatever man is. Hence, these movements revolved around three points:

- 1) Women rights
- 2) Women equality to men
- 3) Women liberation

Women have successfully achieved the same political and economic rights as men. However, whether they are now truly liberated is a claim yet to be made. Let us take a brief look at the movement which has helped the woman in the West to achieve her current 'equal' status to man.

Feministic Movement

Feminism is defined in general as "the belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim".¹ The feminist movement is a movement that started basically in the West as a result of certain social upheavals and eventually spread to the rest of the world along with the Western culture and values. As Freedman rightly observes:

"Feministic politics emerged where capitalism, industrial growth, democratic theory and social critiques converged, as they did in Europe and North America after 1800."²

First Wave of Feministic movement:³

The first wave of Feministic movement in the west started during the 1800s and 1900s, with its focus on women's suffrage (the right to vote). Along with Renaissance came the Industrial Revolution which greatly changed the social fabric of the western society. Women like men started working in factories to which men reacted and in 1842 women were banned from work. They were confined to the house. It was not until the First World War 1914 that women again got a chance to work as labor. It was because of the large number of men dying in the battle field.

1-Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, retrieved on 7/8/15, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/learner/feminism>

2 - Freedman, Estelle, *No Turning Back: The History of Feminism and the Future of Women*, Random House, New York, 2002,

Pg2.

3 - See: Khalid Alavi, pg 33-50.

Now she had the burden of both man and woman. She had to work as well as manage the household and the children. However the induction in to the labor force by no means meant that women had started enjoying the same status as men. In fact, they were far from it. It was as late as 1970 that Britain passed the Equal Pay Act because women all thus while had been paid less than men for the same job. The economic struggle was accompanied by the political struggle and at the end of WW1 (1918) Britain granted women the right to vote as men. The first wave ended with that.

Second Wave of Feminism:

The second wave of the movement gained momentum in the 1960s and 1970s and the issues focused went beyond political rights. This wave unfolded with the Anti-Vietnam War and civil rights movement. Issues related to family, sexuality and work took prominence with the general tone of 'the same as men'. Things associated with women and their femininity were detested and associated with subjugation of women. The fight for reproductive right and the right to have access to knowledge about birth control took a high light and a campaign was launched for decriminalizing abortion. "The second wave was increasingly theoretical, based on a fusion of neo-Marxism and psycho-analytic theory and began to associate the subjugation of women with broader critiques of patriarchy, capitalism, normative heterosexuality, and the woman's role as wife and mother."¹ Everything associated only with women, like make-up, heels etc were portrayed as oppressive.

¹ - Martha Rampton: The Three Waves of Feminism, retrieved on 7/9/15, <http://www.pacificu.edu/about-us/news-events/three-waves-feminism>

Third wave of Feminism:

The third wave of Feminism came in the 1990s and was more of a reaction to the disillusionment caused by the results of the first and second waves. The constructs of the first two movements were deconstructed when it was realized that gaining the same rights as men in the political and social arenas didn't succeed in bringing women the liberation they were expecting. Feminists realized that women are still oppressed and thus the focus shifted on the problems facing women in general. The third wave was, and still is, more concerned with the exploitation of women in the public areas like mainstreaming of pornography, prostitution, women trafficking etc¹. However, the third wave feminists face a paradoxical situation. They want to celebrate publicly their differences with men, unlike the second wave feminists who tried discarding everything remotely associated with being a woman, the third wave feminists also want the exploitation based on this to end. How they will ever achieve that is still to be seen.

Islamic Feminism

By the third wave of Feminism, the movement had spread all over the world just as globalization was on the increase. The Muslim countries that had been colonized, and eventually de-colonized, by the Western nations were not left out of the sphere of influence of this movement. The section of the society that either studied in the West, or in educational institutes following Western educational programs, it was especially influenced by the movement.

The term Islamic Feminism came to surface in the 1990s through writings of Muslims who spoke for gender equality. Islamic Feminism uses Islamic discourse as its paramount tool to argue for women's rights, gender equality and social justice. It

1 - Nina Katrin Johansdottir: Patriarchy and the subordination of women, 2009, retrieved on 7/9/15, http://skemman.is/stream/get/1946/3017/9955/1/Nina_Katrin_Johannsdottir_fixed.pdf

contends that The Qur'an affirms gender equality but religious sources like Hadīth and Fiqh have been subverted heavily to patriarchal ideologies and practices. Some Feministic writers like Amina Wadūd and Riffat Hassan interpret the Qur'anic text directly while others like Aziza Al-Hibri and Fatima Mernissi take the path of re-examining the Hadīth and Fiqh.¹

Feministic hermeneutics² has taken three approaches:³

- 1) Revisiting verses of The Qur'an to correct false stories in circulation, such as the story of Adam and Eve and the events of their creation.
- 2) Citing verses of The Qur'an that clearly advocate the equality of the two genders.
- 3) Deconstructing verses that are generally cited for a male dominated interpretation.

Some Prominent Feministic writers besides Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas

Riffat Hassan:

Born in 1940's to a Shiite family in Pakistan, Hassan received her early education at a Christian missionary school. Then she went to Durham University to do her Honors in English and Philosophy and later received doctorate in Philosophy of Iqbal. She now holds American nationality and teaches Religious Studies at Louisville University. Hassan interprets The Qur'an from purely feminist perspective, negating anything and everything that clashes with the ideals of women rights that she

1 - Margot Badran, Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences, Al-Ahram Weekly, 2002, Pg 242-250.

2 - Hermeneutics: The rules of interpretation and understanding of religious texts; it is an old term from Christian theology.

3 - Ibid.

propagates. Her claims regarding the creation of woman and her degrading status in all the three major religions shows her lack of academic knowledge of the Islamic scriptures.

Fatema Mernissi:

Brought up in Morocco with a traditional setup, Mernissi studied political science at Mohammed V University and the Sorbonne before travelling to America and attaining a doctorate in sociology from Brandeis University in 1974. In 2003, she received an award for her contribution to Feministic literature and is well known for her book: "The veil and the male elite: a feminist interpretation of women's rights in Islam". In this book she explores and talks about Hadīth as a political weapon and criticizes the traditional work done in the respective field. She uses historical and thematic analysis to declare that Hijab was meant for the Arabs at that time. Such rulings are not applicable anymore.

Leila Ahmed:

Leila Ahmed received all her university education from the UK's Cambridge University and became a professor at the Harvard Divinity School. She is most renowned for her book: 'Women and Gender in Islam' She questions the authenticity of the Qur'anic text and uses a historical method to argue that for the cultural influences on the juristic understanding of Islam. She feels Islam has actually restricted the sexual freedom of women and makes a clear difference between the ethical interpretation and the juristic understanding of prophetic directives. According to Ahmed, traditional Muslims have fallen in to serious error regarding the latter.

Significance of the Study& Research Problem

In recent times, feminist interpretation of the Holy Quran has gained marked popularity and an increased worldwide momentum among the circles of Islamic studies. It has become a tool by which traditional interpretation of the Qur'anic text and approaches to its study are not just being questioned but often rejected as being biased, patriarchal and out of context in recent times. This study probes in to the interpretative methodology of two of the most well known and influential feminist writers who have tried to re-interpret the Quran with feminist perspectives and ideals of gender equality. It critically analyzes the claims they have made pertaining to the traditional interpretations of the Qur'an and investigates how successfully they have used their interpretative methodology to give a truly liberating interpretation of women related verses of the Qur'an.

Literature Review

During the search for the literature previously written no noteworthy academic work on the methodology of feminist approach was found. I came across only one book in Arabic that discussed the methodology of these writers: "Outside the Flock: A search in to the rejectionist Islamic feminism and the temptation of Freedom" (خارج السرب": بحث في النسوية الإسلامية الرافضة وإغراءات الحرية) by Fehmi jada'an. This book basically deals with four women: Irshad Munji, Tasleema Nisreen, Ayyan Harsi and Najla Kailik. The writer rejects the works of these writers as they believe that the problem is with Islam itself. However, in the first chapter of the book, the writer talks about the group of feminist writers that believes in re-reading the text of The Qur'an from the perspective of the women. He calls these women 'Interpretative Islamic Feminists' and supports the method they are using in the study

of women related issues. However, he does not go into the details of their methodology nor their interpretative tools.

A student of Comparative Religion from International Islamic University, Islamabad has also written a thesis on the influence of modern western hermeneutical approaches to the study of religion on contemporary Islamic thought. She talks about some of the feminist writings in a portion of her work. However, she focuses on the description of these works briefly and not on the methodology the writers have adopted in their works. An article by Fatima Abdul Ra'uf, in an online journal named Alrased, talks about some of the views of Amina Wadud from her book: Quran and Woman but no word on the methodology is said.

There is also an article by Dr, Hassan As-Shafii: "The required response to feminist reinterpretations of the Quran" in which he talks about the topic in general but does not go into the details of their works. There is also no mention of Asma Barlas in his article. He does suggest that we need to respond by developing an Arabic hermeneutical approach that incorporates the elements of interaction with tradition and its scientific and cultural phenomena from our original sciences and our historical experience.

Research Methodology & Outline:

In this research work a critical study of their works has been carried out. I have analyzed the purpose with which they have written these books and studied whether they were able to achieve it in an academic manner or not. I have also responded to the issues they have discussed in their works and the claims they have made in their two books about the Tafsir, Sunnah and the way Muslims have traditionally interpreted the Qur'an.

'the judiciary in Pakistan was neither free nor fair'¹. Barlas sought political asylum in the U.S² where she obtained a Master degree in International Studies from GSIS, University of Denver³. She went on to do her doctorate from the same university and graduated with her dissertation titled: "State, Class and Democracy: A Comparative Analysis of Politics in Hindu and Muslim Society in Colonial India, 1885-1947"⁴.

From 1985-1991, Barlas worked as an instructor and Research Assistant at GSIS. From thereon she continued her career at Ithaca College where she eventually became a full professor. Barlas also held the Chair for Department of Politics at Ithaca College from 1998 to 2004. In the spring of 2008, she was given the Spinoza Chair of Department of Philosophy at University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands while serving as Director, Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity, Ithaca College at same time (2006-present). Barlas's main areas of interest are Islam (religious, intellectual, and political history); Qur'anic hermeneutics; Muslim sexual politics; Colonialism and race; Decolonization and Third World.⁵

Books and publications:

Asma Barlas has authored a total of four books, including her book on Qur'anic Hermeneutics that is under study in the work before you:

- 1) *Re-Understanding Islam: A double critique* (2008): A monograph based on the Asma's Spinoza's lectures. In these lectures Asma tries to criticize the Muslims for reading sexual inequality and oppression in to

1 - Naufil Shahrukh, Interview: "The Qur'an Doesn't Support Patriarchy", ABC, The Nation, 2005, retrieved on 2/08/2014,
http://www.asmabarlas.com/TALKS/20050201_nationpk.pdf

2 - Ibid.

3 - Asma Barlas

4 - Ibid.

5 - Ibid.

the Qur'an while criticizing the West at same time for not being able to develop appropriate and morally relevant ways to study Islam and Muslims.¹

- 2) Islam, Muslims, and the U.S.: Essays on Religion and Politics(India, Global Media Publications, 2004). : In this book Asma discusses the effect that deadly event of September 11 has had on the relations between Muslims and the West. She criticizes the U.S for taking advantage of the event and taking its war on terror to the Muslim lands. She also tries to tell that for the Muslim world 'the other' is not the 'western infidel' but the Muslim woman who has been marginalized from the society.²
- 3) *Democracy, Nationalism, and Communalism: The Colonial Legacy in South Asia* (Westview Press, 1995) In this book Asma focuses on legacy of the British rule in Indian Sub-continent and the need to understand the political scenarios in the neighboring countries in the light of this legacy.

In addition, Barlas has written a number of books, book chapters, journal articles and conference papers, book reviews and forwards of miscellaneous works.

1. Barcelona III, published as towards a feminist view of Islam, *The Guardian*, October 31, 2008.
2. Hajj Permits Sexual Equality, *The Ithacan*, Ithaca, New York, January 25, 2007
3. Al-Ghazali on tolerance, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 29, 2003

1 - Ibid.

2 - Ibid.

4. Literature and imagination, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 15, 2003
5. Muslims in the US (II), *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 1, 2003
6. Muslims in the US (I), *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, June 17, 2003
7. Islam, Women, and Equality - III, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, June 3, 2003
8. Islam, Women, and Equality - II, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, May 20, 2003
9. Islam, Women and Equality - I, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, May 6, 2003
10. On Democracy, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, April 22, 2003
11. The Incidental Saddam Hussein, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, April 8, 2003
12. Determining Islamic authority in North America [II], *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, March 25, 2003
13. Determining Islamic authority in North America, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, March 11, 2003
14. Religion and our response to violence, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, February 25, 2003
15. Reforming religious knowledge, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, February 11, 2003
16. Educating the literate, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, January 28, 2003
17. Morality: for women and girls only, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, January 14, 2003
18. Religious authorities in Islam, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, December 31, 2002

19. Winning the hearts of Muslims?, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, December 12, 2002
20. Loving oneself to death, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, December 3, 2002
21. Margins and mainstreams, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, November 19, 2002
22. The DC rally and political belonging, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, November 5, 2002
23. Ignorance of a hegemonic imagination, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, October 23, 2002
24. Qur'an as a thematic whole, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, October 8, 2002.
25. The academy, 9/11, and renewal, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, September 17, 2002
26. On interpreting the Qur'an, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, September 10, 2002
27. Interpreting religion and tradition, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, August 27, 2002
28. Faces of Oppression, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, August 13, 2002
29. Secularising religion and sacralising politics, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 30, 2002
30. Traditional ignominies, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 16, 2002
31. Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 2, 2002
32. Hostile intent: the elisions of war, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, June 18, 2002

of women related issues. However, he does not go in to the details of their methodology nor their interpretative tools.

A student of Comparative Religion from International Islamic University, Islamabad has also written a thesis on the influence of modern western hermeneutical approaches to the study of religion on contemporary Islamic thought. She talks about some of the feminist writings in a portion of her work. However, she focuses on the description of these works briefly and not on the methodology the writers have adopted in their works. An article by Fatima Abdul Ra'uf, in an online journal named Alrased, talks about some of the views of Amina Wadud from her book: Quran and Woman but no word on the methodology is said.

There is also an article by Dr, Hassan As-Shafii: "The required response to feminist reinterpretations of the Quran" in which he talks about the topic in general but does not go into the details of their works. There is also no mention of Asma Barlas in his article. He does suggest that we need to respond by developing an Arabic hermeneutical approach that incorporates the elements of interaction with tradition and its scientific and cultural phenomena from our original sciences and our historical experience.

Research Methodology & Outline:

In this research work a critical study of their works has been carried out. I have analyzed the purpose with which they have written these books and studied whether they were able to achieve it in an academic manner or not. I have also responded to the issues they have discussed in their works and the claims they have made in their two books about the Tafsir, Sunnah and the way Muslims have traditionally interpreted the Qur'an.

The order of the topics that I have followed is similar to the one followed in their books: I have also maintained the usage of the terms they have employed to avoid confusion as this is a work that is a response to their works. But I have commented in the footnotes on the terms and their appropriateness where needed.

After a brief introduction about Feminism and the most popular Islamic feminist writers like Riffat Hassan, Fatema Mernissi and Leila Ahmed, in the preface, In the Introductory chapter, I have shed light on the life and academic qualifications of the two writers and pointed out where they fall short of the requirements that are considered necessary for a person to qualify as an exegete. In this chapter, I have also discussed in detail the perspective of the traditional scholars regarding the sources used to interpret the Quran and the branches of knowledge needed to interpret the Qur'anic text. A critical analysis of the perspective of Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas and a detailed discussion on the hermeneutical model proposed by Amina Wadud and the methodological criteria supported by Barlas has also been carried out in this chapter.

In the second chapter the views or rather the claims both the writers have made regarding the corpus of Tafsir and the traditional scholars are discussed. Let me mention here that the headings chosen are the same as those given by the writers so as to be clear what part of their work is being discussed. For each claim I have first explained their view and then went on to analyze it in the light of the Qur'an, historic facts and the original texts of Tafsir.

In the last and the final chapter, the individual issues are discussed such as family and marriage, origins of mankind, equity of recompense, divorce, polygyny and witness. I have dealt these issues from two angles:

1) How successful they are in giving liberating view of these issues in the light of the model or criteria presented by them in their books.

2) Whether the claim they have made about the oppressive readings is true or not.

For this I went through all the main Tafasir like Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Zamakhshari, Ar-Razi, Qurtubi, Abu-Saud, Ibn Ashoor, Syed Qutub, Ibn Atiya etc to see if any of them have said the claims that these writers have made about them.

Those books of Tafasir have been consulted that are renowned within the traditional academic circles. The translation of Sahih International has been used throughout this work due to the extensive appraisal it has got from numerous renowned scholars of today and due to its brevity and comprehensiveness. The references of Quran have been mentioned with in brackets and their translation has been mentioned with in commas. The references from the books under study have been given in the footnotes along with their page numbers. The issues related to women that are discussed in this work are not meant to be a comprehensive discourse on the topics. They only focus on the perspective of the writers under study with particular emphasis on those aspects in which they differ from the traditional scholars.

In the end I would like to say that I am not a scholar but a student of this field whose only efforts and wishes were to understand these works in an academic light. As a student of Tafsir with a special interest in issues related to women, I felt compelled to look into the highly controversial claims made by these writers regarding the corpus of Islamic tradition and to study them in an academic manner. This of course does not in any way decrease the value these contributions have added to the richness of religious literature. They do inspire other Muslim women to come forward and take up the study of the Holy Qur'an. It is a fact that the voice of women has been non-existent in the field of Tafsir and it is high time that women of this

Ummah take up the task of interpretation of the Qur'anic text and contribute to an enhanced understanding of the core Islamic text. However, a care needs to be taken that whoever takes up this noble task, whether men or women, should do so with God-consciousness and the sole purpose of achieving an objective understanding of the word of God whether it goes in favor of their personal opinions or against it.

Sana Ammad.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas

Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas are among the few writers of our times who champion the cause of equality between men and women. They have produced numerous works and given delivered many lectures related to the topic of women in Islam. The two writers, like others of their league, have criticized the methodology of traditional Muslim scholars regarding the exegesis of The Holy Qur'an. However, before, one goes on to study the methodology used by the traditional scholars and analyze the method of study proposed by Wadūd and Barlas, it seems wise to take a look at their academic credentials briefly.

1.1.1 Amina Wadūd:

Amina Wadūd was born as Mary Teasly on September, 25, 1952 to a Methodist Afro-American family in Southern State of Maryland. She studies bachelors at The University of Pennsylvania (1970-75). In 1972, while still in university, she accepted Islam, after practicing Buddhism for a year. She received her M.A. in Near Eastern Studies and her Ph.D. in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Michigan in 1988. During graduate school, she studied in Egypt, including advanced Arabic at the American University in Cairo, Qur'anic studies and *Tafsīr* (exegesis or religious interpretation) at Cairo University, and philosophy at Al-Azhar University.¹

1 - Dr. Amina Wadūd, An inclusive Imam, ALEM, Confederation of Associations LGBTQI Euro-African or Muslim, retrieved on 7/14/2014, <http://www.calem.eu/Amina-Wadud-doctor-imam.html>

In 1989 Wadūd joined the International Islamic University in Malaysia and taught there as an assistant professor till 1992. During this period, she also published her famous dissertation *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* and co-founded the non-governmental organization Sisters in Islam. In 1992, Wadūd took a position at Virginia Commonwealth University as a professor of Religion and Philosophy. After retiring from there in 2008, Wadūd continued as a visiting lecturer at Center for Religious and Cross Cultural Studies at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia.¹ Wadūd's special area of interest is gender and Qur'anic studies and she has travelled widely and delivered numerous lectures and seminars on topics related to her area of study. In 2007, Wadūd received the Danish Democracy Prize. Besides the book under study, Wadūd has also written another book named "*Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*" which, along with Qur'anic analysis, also provides extensive details about her experiences as a Muslim, wife, mother, sister, scholar, and activist. Amina Wadūd is an enthusiastic advocate of equality between men and women in Islam to the extent that she led the famous Friday prayer of a mixed group of Muslim men and women. While she got appraisal for her action from some, the main stream Muslim scholars disapproved of her action.

Amina Wadūd's papers are organized into five series: Biographical, Conferences and Presentations, Publications, Sisters in Islam, and Teaching Files from Virginia Commonwealth University. Her publications are as follows:²

1) Anthologized Articles 1993-2007

- i. "Islam, Gender & Women's Rights: An Alternative View"

1 - Available at: <http://library.depaul.edu/Collections/spcapdf/wadudaminafa.pdf>, retrieved on 14/07/2014.

2 - Ibid.

- ii. "On Belonging As a Muslim Woman"
 - iii. "Gender, Culture and Religion: An Islamic Perspective"
 - iv. "Teaching Afro centric Islam in the White Christian South"
 - v. "In Search of a Woman's Voice in Qur'anic Hermeneutics"
 - vi. "An Islamic Perspective on Civil Rights Issues"
 - vii. "Family in Islam: or Gender Relations by Any Other Name"
 - viii. "Alternative Qur'anic Interpretation and the Status of Muslim Women"
 - ix. "Islam and Women as Agents for Peace and Human Rights"
 - x. "Beyond Interpretation"
 - xi. "What's Interpretation Got to Do with It: The Relationship Between Theory and Practice in Islamic Gender Reform"
 - xii. "American Muslim Identity: Race and Ethnicity in Progressive Islam"
 - xiii. "The Role of Women in the American-Muslim Community and Their Impact on Perceptions of Muslim Women Worldwide"
 - xiv. "Citizenship and Faith"
 - xv. "Rights and Roles of Women"
 - xvi. "Women and Leadership in the Qur'an"
- 2) American Muslim 1994-1995
- 3) Arabic language n.d.
- 4) Arabic Translation—Qur'an and Women 2005
- 5) Citations (Selected) 2000's
- 6) Correspondence 1991-2006

Journals

- 7) The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, vol. 12, no. 2 1995-1996 Journal of Law and Religion, vol. XII, no. 1
- 8) Pakistan Journal of Women's Studies, vol. 4, no. 2 1997
- 9) Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion, vol. 16, no. 2 2000 Journal of Law and Religion, vol. XV, nos. 1 & 2
- 10) Hawwa: Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World, vol. 2, no. 3
- 11) The Middle East Journal, vol. 59, no. 3 2005
- 12) Magazines & Electronic Media 1995-2006
- 13) Publications 1991-2001
 - i. *Are Muslim Men Allowed to Beat Their Wives?*
 - ii. *Are Women & Men Equal Before Allah?*
 - iii. *Islam, Gender and Women's Rights: An Alternative View*
 - iv. *Islam and Family Planning*

1.1.2 Asma Barlas:

Asma Barlas is an academic born in 1950 in Pakistan. She completed her bachelor's in English Literature and Philosophy from Kinnaird College, Lahore, Pakistan in 1969. After her B.A. Asma went on to do a two year Master program in journalism from The University of Punjab, Lahore¹. She was one of the first women to join the Civil service of Pakistan in 1976. However, her diplomatic career ended in 1983 when General Zia ul Haq dismissed her from the Civil services for saying that

¹ - Asma Barlas, Professor, Department of politicsfaculty, School of Humanities and Sciences, retrieved on 2/08/2014, <http://faculty.ithaca.edu/abaras/>

'the judiciary in Pakistan was neither free nor fair'¹. Barlas sought political asylum in the U.S² where she obtained a Master degree in International Studies from GSIS, University of Denver³. She went on to do her doctorate from the same university and graduated with her dissertation titled: "State, Class and Democracy: A Comparative Analysis of Politics in Hindu and Muslim Society in Colonial India, 1885-1947"⁴.

From 1985-1991, Barlas worked as an instructor and Research Assistant at GSIS. From thereon she continued her career at Ithaca College where she eventually became a full professor. Barlas also held the Chair for Department of Politics at Ithaca College from 1998 to 2004. In the spring of 2008, she was given the Spinoza Chair of Department of Philosophy at University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands while serving as Director, Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity, Ithaca College at same time (2006-present). Barlas's main areas of interest are Islam (religious, intellectual, and political history); Qur'anic hermeneutics; Muslim sexual politics; Colonialism and race; Decolonization and Third World.⁵

Books and publications:

Asma Barlas has authored a total of four books, including her book on Qur'anic Hermeneutics that is under study in the work before you:

- 1) *Re-Understanding Islam: A double critique* (2008): A monograph based on the Asma's Spinoza's lectures. In these lectures Asma tries to criticize the Muslims for reading sexual inequality and oppression in to

1 - Naufil Shahrukh, Interview: "The Qur'an Doesn't Support Patriarchy", ABC, The Nation, 2005, retrieved on 2/08/2014, http://www.asmabarlas.com/TALKS/20050201_nationpk.pdf

2 - Ibid.

3 - Asma Barlas

4 - Ibid.

5 - Ibid.

the Qur'an while criticizing the West at same time for not being able to develop appropriate and morally relevant ways to study Islam and Muslims.¹

- 2) Islam, Muslims, and the U.S.: Essays on Religion and Politics(India, Global Media Publications, 2004). : In this book Asma discusses the effect that deadly event of September 11 has had on the relations between Muslims and the West. She criticizes the U.S for taking advantage of the event and taking its war on terror to the Muslim lands. She also tries to tell that for the Muslim world 'the other' is not the 'western infidel' but the Muslim woman who has been marginalized from the society.²
- 3) *Democracy, Nationalism, and Communalism: The Colonial Legacy in South Asia* (Westview Press, 1995) In this book Asma focuses on legacy of the British rule in Indian Sub-continent and the need to understand the political scenarios in the neighboring countries in the light of this legacy.

In addition, Barlas has written a number of books, book chapters, journal articles and conference papers, book reviews and forwards of miscellaneous works.

1. Barcelona III, published as towards a feminist view of Islam, The Guardian, October 31, 2008.
2. Hajj Permits Sexual Equality, *The Ithacan*, Ithaca, New York, January 25, 2007
3. Al-Ghazali on tolerance, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 29, 2003

1 - Ibid.

2 - Ibid.

4. Literature and imagination, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 15, 2003
5. Muslims in the US (II), *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 1, 2003
6. Muslims in the US (I), *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, June 17, 2003
7. Islam, Women, and Equality - III, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, June 3, 2003
8. Islam, Women, and Equality - II, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, May 20, 2003
9. Islam, Women and Equality - I, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, May 6, 2003
10. On Democracy, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, April 22, 2003
11. The Incidental Saddam Hussein, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, April 8, 2003
12. Determining Islamic authority in North America [II], *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, March 25, 2003
13. Determining Islamic authority in North America, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, March 11, 2003
14. Religion and our response to violence, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, February 25, 2003
15. Reforming religious knowledge, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, February 11, 2003
16. Educating the literate, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, January 28, 2003
17. Morality: for women and girls only, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, January 14, 2003
18. Religious authorities in Islam, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, December 31, 2002

19. Winning the hearts of Muslims?, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, December 12, 2002
20. Loving oneself to death, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, December 3, 2002
21. Margins and mainstreams, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, November 19, 2002
22. The DC rally and political belonging, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, November 5, 2002
23. Ignorance of a hegemonic imagination, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, October 23, 2002
24. Qur'an as a thematic whole, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, October 8, 2002.
25. The academy, 9/11, and renewal, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, September 17, 2002
26. On interpreting the Qur'an, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, September 10, 2002
27. Interpreting religion and tradition, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, August 27, 2002
28. Faces of Oppression, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, August 13, 2002
29. Secularising religion and sacralising politics, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 30, 2002
30. Traditional ignominies, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 16, 2002
31. Mirror, Mirror, on the Wall, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, July 2, 2002
32. Hostile intent: the elisions of war, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, June 18, 2002

33. Uses (and abuses) of Muslim history in understanding Islam, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, June 6, 2002
34. The secular commitment to 'Islamic fundamentalism', *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, May 21, 2002
35. The Intelligentsia's Self-Inflicted Dilemma: A response to Ejaz Haider, *The Friday Times*, May 10, 2002
36. The political is personal, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, May 5, 2002
37. Will the 'Real' Islam please stand up?, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, April 23, 2002
38. Trauma, Lies and Exceptionalism, *The Daily Times*, Pakistan, April 8, 2002
39. Reclaiming 'the duality within ourselves', *The Ithaca Journal*, February 22, 2002
40. On U.S. academe post-Sept.11, *The Ithaca Journal*, February 11, 2002
41. Why Do They Hate Us?, *Ithaca College Quarterly*, No. 4, 2001

1.1.3 A word on the Academic Qualifications of Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas:

In the field of literary analysis, it is impossible to ignore the perspectives, circumstances and background of the writer whose work is under study. Wadūd has called it the 'prior text'¹. While the 'prior text' cannot be decisive in declaring any perspective as right or wrong, it does shed light on the potential objectivity of the claim. In the case of both Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas, we notice that both have had a struggling life as wives and mothers. Both the women had troubling marriages

¹ - Pg 12.

from which they were forced to break free. An ordeal like this is bound to affect a person and his emotional attachment to the topic of family and marriage. This, of course, does not directly translate in to a negative influence. However, it does influence the emotional attachment one may have with the topic under discussion.

The academic credentials of both the women shed some light on their qualifications as interpreters of Qur'an. Wadūd seems to have seriously taken up the path and has made efforts towards acquiring knowledge of Islamic sciences. During her graduate studies she travelled to Egypt to study Arabic, *Tafsīr* and Philosophy. Her doctorate is also in Arabic and Islamic Studies.

Barlas, on the other hand, does not seem to have any credentials that are necessary for the understanding of the scripture. She is basically a journalist who has absolutely no knowledge of Arabic. Without this most essential tool, one cannot even begin to understand The Qur'an or the Sunnah directly from the texts. Throughout her work she has quoted secondary sources. Out of a total of more than 200 works she has cited in her work, only 35 belonged to Muslims and the rest were all works of Non-Muslims. From those that were Muslim sources none belonged to the category considered as the primary source books for understanding of Islam. The only book consulted was that of Al-Tabari but it was also a translation a Non-Muslim and not the original book itself. Barlas has claimed that in writing this book, she wanted to 'challenge the oppressive readings of The Qur'an'¹ while she has not quoted any of these oppressive readings from the books of *Tafsīr* or any other book written by traditional Islamic scholars. How can a person pass such grave judgment as she has done in her book, without even a direct investigation of the object under study is completely beyond comprehension? Her work seems more like a patchwork of

¹ - Pg xi.

secondary sources put together by a lay-man who has no knowledge or experience in academics.

The Qur'an was revealed in Arabic to an Arab Prophet who was given the job of expounding and demonstrating The Qur'an to his followers as shall be shown in the following pages. This Qur'an was revealed in a historical context over a period of twenty three years for the purpose of raising a community that was trained by The Prophet himself and thus possessed an authentic understanding of the word of God. The traditional scholars have outlined the sources and the tools needed for the correct understanding of The Qur'an. Before elaborating on the perspective of Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas, it seems imperative to take a look at the qualifications declared as must by the traditional scholars to be able to interpret The Qur'an. These scholars, who did happen to be male, have set these standards irrespective of the gender. They have judged, and continue to judge, the work of scholars, male or female, in the light of these standards.

1.2 Perspective of Traditional¹ scholars regarding Tafsīr (exegesis) of The Qur'an:

The Traditional or the main stream Muslim scholars have followed certain guidelines while interpreting the meaning of The Qur'an. Any person, male or female, has to have certain qualifications if he or she wants to interpret The Qur'an. These qualifications have been deemed necessary for maintaining the objectivity of the interpretation.

¹ - Mainstream scholars of the Islamic world since the inception of Islam.

According to the traditional scholars like Al- Suyuti¹ in his book Al-Itqan fi Uloom ul Al-Qur'an, he has said that an exegete of The Qur'an must have ample knowledge in the following fields:

- 1) Linguistics
- 2) Grammar
- 3) Morphology(Sarf)
- 4) Semantics
- 5) Rhetoric
- 6) Qira'aat (Variant readings of The Text)
- 7) Principles of Faith
- 8) Principles of Jurisprudence
- 9) Occasions of Revelation (Context)
- 10) Abrogation
- 11) Jurisprudence
- 12) Hadīth
- 13) Aptitude and God gifted talent(Ilm ul Maohiba)

These are the skills or the talents a person must have if he or she wants to interpret The Qur'an and all of these are vital for an objective understanding of the Text. However, the knowledge of an exegete may vary in the different fields and that is why there are different types of Tafsir we see depending on what aspect of the Tafsīr the exegete has expounded in depth. No Tafsīr is said to be perfect from all angles since they are the work of man and there has not been a single Tafsīr, the

1 - Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (Arabic: جلال الدين السعوطي) (c. 1445–1505 AD), whose full Arabic name is Abu al-Fadl 'Abd al-Rahman b. Abi Bakr b. Muhammad Jalal al-Din al-Khudayri al-Suyuti, also known as Ibn al-Kutub (son of books) was an Egyptian religious scholar, juristic expert and teacher, and one of the most prolific Arab writers of the Middle Ages, whose works deal with a wide variety of subjects in Islamic theology.

experts of the field refrained from commenting on and pointing out its strengths and the weaknesses. For example, it is renowned fact among traditional scholars that the *Tafsīr* of Zamakhshari is an excellent source of linguistic analysis of the Text but one should not rely on it as a source of Aqeeda as he was a Mu'tazili.

Muhammad Taqi Uthmāni¹, in his widely acclaimed book on *Uloom ul Qur'an*, says that there are two types of verses in The Qur'an. First, verses that are very explicit in their meanings and thus only require knowledge of Arabic language to understand. Second, verses are not very explicit and knowledge of the language alone is not sufficient to ascertain their meaning. In order to understand the latter of the two types of verses, there are six sources of exegesis or *Tafsīr* of The Qur'an that are utilized:²

- 1) The Qur'an itself,
- 2) Traditions of the Prophet(p.b.u.h)
- 3) Sayings of the companions of The Prophet(r.a),
- 4) Sayings of the followers of companions,
- 5) Arabic language
- 6) Intellect

We are going to take a look at each of these sources, the position they hold in the process of exegesis and the method with which they are incorporated in that process.

1 - Justice Mufti Muhammad Taqi Usmani, born in Deoband in 1362H(1943 CE), is one of the leading Islamic scholars living today. He is an expert in the fields of Islamic Jurisprudence, Economics, Hadīth and Tasawwuf.

2 - Muhammad Taqi Uthmāni, *An Approach to the Qur'anic sciences*, Darussalam Ishaat, Karachi, Pakistan, 2000, pg 344.

1.2.1- The Qur'an itself:

The first source that is to be used for an exposition of the meaning of The Qur'an is The Qur'an itself since the speaker best knows the intent with which he has spoken a word. Hence, if any word, phrase or verse is unclear to the expositor he should first look for a clarification in the rest of The Qur'an. There are numerous places in the Qur'an where a word or phrase is mentioned in a verse but the meaning is not very obvious. However, when we look through the rest of The Qur'an the meaning becomes clear. Here are a few ways of ambiguity that The Qur'an clarifies:

- i) A word that carries two different meanings; for example: 'Baitil atiq'² means ancient as well as honored. It has been explained by the verse 96 of Al-Imran:

(إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيْتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لِلَّذِي بِسْكَةً مُبَارَّكًا وَهُدًى لِلْعَالَمِينَ)

“Indeed, the first House [of worship] established for mankind was that at Makkah - blessed and guidance for the worlds.”³

- ii) Due to ambiguity of the meaning of a word or an article; for example:

(صِرَاطُ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرَ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ)

“The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray.”⁴

1- انظر: أضواء البيان في إيضاح القرآن بالقرآن لـ محمد الأمين الشنقيطي، دار علم الفوائد، ج 1، مقدمة المزلف.

2 - (Al-Hajj:33)

3-(Al-Imran:96)

4-(Al-Fatiha:7)

It is not clear who are the cursed people and who are the lost people in this verse. This is explained by the verse:

(وَمَن يُطِعُ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ الْبَيْنِ وَالصَّدِيقِينَ وَالشَّهِدَاءِ
وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسْنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا)

“And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger - those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth, the martyrs and the righteous. And excellent are those as companions.”¹

iii) A thing mentioned in one verse raises a question in the reader’s head and this question is answered in another place. For example: The first verse of Surat Al-Fatiha raises a question in mind about what is meant by ‘Aalameen’. It is answered by the verse:

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُّوْقِنِينَ

“Said Pharaoh, "And what is the Lord of the worlds? [Moses] said, "The Lord of the heavens and earth and that between them, if you should be convinced.”²

iv) An opinion by a scholar who erred in interpretation of a particular verse is negated by another verse. For example, scholar Al-Hasan Al-Basri stated that the two men being talked about in the verse are two men of Bani Israel:

(وَاتْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأَ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَأَا قُرْبَانًا فَتَعَقَّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يَتَعَقَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ
لَا أَقْتَلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَعَقَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ)

1-(An-Nisa:69)

2-(As-Shu’raa:23)

“And recite to them the story of Adam's two sons, in truth, when they both offered a sacrifice [to Allah], and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other. Said [the latter], "I will surely kill you." Said [the former], "Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him].”¹

However, the following verse shows that this event happened before people got introduced to burying the dead. This event then definitely took place before the time of Bani Israel.

(فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ غُرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُرِيهِ كَيْفَ يُوَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ)

“Then Allah sent a crow searching in the ground to show him how to hide the disgrace of his brother.”²

- v) An incident is mentioned in one verse and a relatively detailed description in another place. For example, the events of the crossing of Red sea by Bani Israel and how the Pharoah and his army were drowned.
- vi) An order or demand made in one place that is clarified in another place. For example, the demand made by the Non-believers of Makkah that an angel should descend upon The Prophet, is explained by the verse:

(وَقَالُوا مَا لِهَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أُنْزَلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونَ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا)

“And they say, "What is this messenger that eats food and walks in the markets? Why was there not sent down to him an angel so he would be with him a warner?”³

1 (al-Ma'idah:27)

2(al-Ma'idah:31)

3 (Al-Furqan:7)

- vii) One of the meanings of a word is deduced to be the intended meaning in the light of the usage of the word in other places in the Qur'an as is the case with the meaning of 'Injustice' in the verse (6:82) to be Polytheism in the light if verse (31:13).
- viii) The creation of something is mentioned in one verse and the wisdom behind its creation is mentioned in another. For example, the wisdom behind the creation of the stars is explained by the following verses:

(وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ قَدْ فَصَلَنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ)

"And it is He who placed for you the stars that you may be guided by them through the darknesses of the land and sea. We have detailed the signs for a people who know."¹

(وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَاهُ السَّمَاءُ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحٍ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ)

"And We have certainly beautified the nearest heaven with stars and have made [from] them what is thrown at the devils..."²

- ix) A thing is mentioned in one place and its characteristics in another place. For example, certain things were forbidden for Bani Israel to eat. They have been mentioned in passing in Surat Al-Nahl and in detail in the verse:

(وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَمَنَا كُلَّ ذِي ظُفُرٍ وَمِنَ الْبَقَرِ وَالْغَنِمِ حَرَمَنَا عَلَيْهِمْ شُحُومَهُمَا إِلَّا مَا حَمَلْتُمْ
ظُهُورُهُمَا أَوِ الْحَوَالِيَا أَوِ مَا اخْتَلَطَ بِعَظِيمٍ ذَلِكَ جَزِئُنَاهُمْ بِغَيِّرِهِمْ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ)

1 (al-An`am:97)

2(Al-Mulk:5)

“And to those who are Jews We prohibited every animal of uncloven hoof; and of the cattle and the sheep We prohibited to them their fat, except what adheres to their backs or the entrails or what is joined with bone. [By] that We repaid them for their injustice. And indeed, We are truthful.”¹

This is not an exhaustive list of how Qur'an explains itself. The above mentioned modes of Qur'anic explanation are aimed to demonstrate only the variety of the ways in which Qur'an explains itself and the importance traditional scholars have attached to this method of exegesis. In fact, some exegetics have expounded the whole Qur'an in this manner, two prominent examples being Zad Al-Masir fi Ilm At-Tafsīr by Allamah Ibn Al-Jauzi and Adwa ul Bayan fi Idahil Qur'an bil Qur'an by Muhammad Amin bin Muhammad Mukhtar Shanditi².

1.2.2 Traditions of The Holy Prophet:

The second source of exegesis near the traditional scholars is the sayings of The Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet is the person upon whose heart directly The Qur'an was revealed and hence he would obviously have the best understanding of it. There is no second opinion among the traditional scholars regarding the importance and the position of sayings of The Prophet Muhammad with regard to the exegesis of The Qur'an. The Qur'an itself has clarified it beyond doubt that the real purpose of sending a prophet in this world is to explain to the people what has been revealed to them.

(وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْذِكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نَزَّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ)

1 (al-An`am:146)

2 - Uthmāni, pg 350.

“And We revealed to you the message [i.e., the Qur'an] that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.”¹

In another verse The Qur'an explains in further detail the purpose of his advent:

(لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَنْذُرُهُمْ أَيَّاتِهِ وَيُنَزِّلُهُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمْ
الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ)

“Certainly did God confer [great] favor upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book [i.e., the Qur'an] and wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error.”²

The Prophet's Sunnah has also been declared by Allah as a beautiful example to follow:

(لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا)

“There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of God an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in God and the Last Day and [who] remembers God often.” (Al-Ahzab: 21)

The Prophet is to be obeyed just as God and in case of a difference of opinion among the believers, it is The Qur'an(word of God) and The Prophet to whom the matter should be referred to.

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولَئِكُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ

(إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَخْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا)

1(An-Nahl:44)

2(Al-Imran: 164)

“O you who have believed, obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you should believe in God and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.”¹

These verses show clearly that The Prophet was sent to teach the people how to live their lives properly according to the revealed scripture. Whatever, he says is to be taken seriously as he is acting as a representative of God on earth. If the Arabic language and the context of revelation was enough to understand the meaning of The Qur‘an then the Arabs of the time would have been the least in need of a prophet in the role of a teacher since they were the masters of the language and witnessed the environment of revelation.

Keeping in view the importance attached to the sayings of The Prophet it was only to be expected that companions of The Prophet would convey the sayings to the generation after them. The Prophet had ordered his followers to convey his message to those not present with him:

(نَلْعُوا عَنِي وَلَوْ آتَيْتُهُ): relate from/of me even if one thing.²

However, great care had to be taken to make sure that sayings that reach the later generations are actually the true sayings of The Prophet. This lead to the development of a whole new discipline in Islamic sciences that is called Hadīth and Asma ur Rijal (Hadīth and the names and characters of the people who narrated them). While it is true that after the year of fitna(40A.H), there were people who had started attributed fabricated sayings to the Prophet and there was also an increase in

1(An-Nisa: 59)

مُختصر صحيح الإمام البخاري، أبو عبد الرحمن محمد ناصر الدين، بن الحاج نوح بن نجاتي بن أنم، الأشقردي اللبناني (المتوفى: 1420 هـ)، مكتبة المعارف للنشر - 2
والتوزيع، الرياض، الطبعة الأولى، 1422 هـ - 2002 م، ج 2، مص 445.

the invalidated traditions that were being quoted from Judaica, the early scholars were not unaware of it. They meticulously worked with each and every tradition, investigated and scrutinized its text and narrators before declaring it a word of The Prophet. The Muslim Ummah has access to the phenomenal works of these scholars even today and hence there does not seem to be a valid excuse to reject the Hadīth literature as unreliable.

1.2.3 Sayings of the companions of The Prophet:

The companions of The Prophet were those privileged people who learned The Qur‘an directly from The Prophet. They were not only the experts of Arabic language, they were also of witnesses of the context in which The Qur‘an was revealed i.e. the Arab society in general and incidents that became the cause of revelations in specific. Above all that, they were taught the Qur‘an and wisdom and purified (physically and spiritually) by The Prophet himself. Hence, it is only reasonable to assume that after The Prophet they were the ones most aware of the meaning of The Qur‘an. In Al-Itqan, it is related from a renowned Tabi‘i (successor of the companions) Imam Abdur Rehman Sulami:

Abdullah ibn Masood, who is one of the most famous exegetes said¹:

“Those of the companions who used to teach The Qur‘an, such as Sayyidina Uthmān bin Affan and Sayyidina Abdullah ibn Masood and others told us they did not proceed further in their lessons until they had learned ten verses from the Prophet and they had received all knowledge and practical applications related to it.”

However, despite the high position in which sayings of the companions are held, traditional scholars did not adopt them blindly. They follow certain guidelines which are as follows:²

¹الإتقان في علوم القرآن لجلال الدين السيوطي، «مجمع الملك فهد لطاعة المصحف الشريف بالعدين المنورة»، النوع 78، ص 2277 - 1

² - Muhammad Taqi Uthmāni, pg 356-357.

- a) Only authentic sayings are accepted that have passed the test in the light of the principles used to test Hadīth.
- b) Sayings of the companions are cited only in the absence of explicit sayings of The Prophet regarding a verse or an issue.
- c) Their view is adopted no difference of opinion is found among the companions.
- d) In case of difference of opinion, the scholar tries to bring harmony among the sayings. However, if this cannot be achieved then he uses his intellect to deduce the meaning through established reasoning.

1.2.4 Sayings of Tabi'i (successors of the Companions):

There is a difference of opinion among the scholars whether the sayings of Tabi'i can be regarded as a conclusive argument in exegesis. Ibn Kathir is of the view that their opinion is adopted if they are stating the opinion of a Sahabi without any interpretation of their own. In their case, it will have the same status as the saying of a Sahabi. Otherwise, it will be seen if he differs in his opinion with other successors. If no difference exists only then it will be adopted. In general, their individual opinions are considered their own opinions like the opinions of scholars after them.

1.2.5 Arabic Language:

Since Arabic is the language in which God revealed the Qur'an, a sound knowledge of the language is essential in understanding the text. However, as stated earlier there are two categories of verses in Qur'an; those that can be understood by knowledge of the language alone and those that cannot be. In order to understand the latter other sources of exegesis are needed to narrow down and specify the intended meaning of the text since a text in Arabic language can yield a range of different

meanings due to its polysemic nature. Traditional scholars use The Qur'an, Hadīth, sayings of the companions and the successors of companions to narrow down the meaning. In case there is still ambiguity in the meaning then the verse is interpreted in the light of the general idiomatic usage of the Arabic language at the time of revelation. It should be noted here that this does not mean that the meaning of a verse is narrowed down to one and only one meaning as a text can still yield more than one meaning which cannot be ruled out in the light of language alone. The books of scholars such as Al-Zamakhshari who have highlighted the linguistics aspect of the Qur'an in their exegesis are full of examples like this.

1.2.6 Sound Intellect:

Intellect has been placed the last of all sources not because it has the least part to play in the process of exegesis. In fact, it is the most active ingredient throughout the process as one cannot begin to see the link between a verse and its exposition in different sources without the use of intellect. The reason why it is placed the last is because it is bound by what is explicit in the five foregoing sources. The use of human intellect can lead a human in to all kinds of directions (after all it has also led so many 'geniuses' to atheism). Hence, the foregoing five sources act as a check on the intellect and guide it to the right direction. It is exactly this use of intellect that The Prophet meant when he prayed for Abdullah ibn Abbas:

These are the sources that the traditional scholars use for the exegesis of The Qur'an. There are also sources that have been used by individuals but which are not among the acceptable sources among traditional scholars. These are:

- I) Israiliyyat or Judaica: From the Judaica only those traditions are accepted that are supported by The Qur'an or The Hadīth

- II) Exegesis of The sufis (Mystics): Those interpretations that do not go against the apparent and obvious meaning of the verses and the Qur'anic universals are accepted.
- III) Self-conceived Interpretations: Only those human interpretations that are made in the light of principles of exegesis are accepted.

From the above elaboration of the sources used to do *Tafsīr* of The Qur'an it can be seen clearly that both writers lack a sound base for exegesis of The Scripture. Wadūd has studied Arabic and Islamic Studies at the doctorate level and she even seems to have acquired some knowledge of *Tafsīr*. However, her doctorate program at the Michigan University did not entail study of *Tafsīr* or *Hadīth*. She went to Egypt, during her graduate studies at Michigan, to learn some advanced Arabic, *Tafsīr* and philosophy, which would not have been possible in great depth as she was doing her Masters at Michigan at the same time. As for knowledge of *Hadīth* she seems to have none. Barlas has never done any specialized studies in any of the Islamic sciences. She is basically a journalist and a student of political science who has not been able to consult the original works of Islamic writers in order to do qualified academic research. Her work, as will be seen later, is a hodgepodge of opinions borrowed from others.

Let us now come to the books under study and see the proposed method of exegesis defined by the authors and the tools used by them in order to interpret The Qur'an.

1.3 Perspective of Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas Regarding the Exegesis of The Qur‘an

1.3.1 Perspective of Amina Wadūd and its Critical Analysis:

a) Objectivity of Qur‘anic exegesis:

Wadūd is of the opinion that, “No method of Qur‘anic exegesis is fully objective.”¹ Since every person reads the text with a ‘prior text’ i.e. the language and the cultural context in which the text is being read, his worldview is bound to play a part in the choices he makes while doing *Tafsīr*.

It is true to an extent that a person is a product of the circumstances they live in. However, to say that a human being, despite being the best of creation is incapable of rising above his circumstances and can never look beyond what he finds in his environment and society would be a grave under estimation of his capabilities. The ability to see distinguish between the right and the wrong has been put in every human, it is man himself who chooses to ignore and tread the right path. As The Qur‘an says:

فَأَنْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا، قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَاهَا، وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَاهَا

“And inspired it (with discernment of) its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it. And he has failed who instills it (with corruption)”²

If man had no control over his will, the whole point of creation a paradise and a hell would be lost. What can be said is that few people are able to rise above their circumstances, but to say that from the hundreds of men over the a period of more

¹ Amina Wadud: Qur‘an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman’s Perspective, Pg1.
² (Ash-Shams:8-10)

than 1400 years, were unable to achieve objectivity is an exaggeration bordering upon insult of mankind. The principles of interpretation are basically the efforts of traditional scholars to achieve objectivity. If we were to suppose that objectivity is unachievable then it is also unachievable by women, including those under study. Wadud recognizes and accepts this. And if such is the case then, the works of other people should also not be criticized for their supposed subjectivity. This philosophy, it may also be mentioned is itself a pointer to the direction of influence of western ideas. The sophists in ancient Greek were known for their art of oratory and their view of knowledge as relative and not absolute. While their views were refuted over time, they resurface again as the existentialism of the 20th century. If there was no way of getting to the absolute truth about God and what He wants from us, then He would be one unfair and unjust god to condemn people to Hell for not obeying Him! If it is against the justice of The Al Mighty God that he does not furnish man with the means to achieve objective truth about His commandments.

b) Hermeneutic model of Amina Wadūd:

She states that she has taken up the hermeneutical model proposed by Fazlur Rahman Malik¹ who is known to have been trained by the orientalist Toshihiko Izutsu. Wadūd follows a general hermeneutic model that entails three aspects:

1. “The context in which the text was written (in the case of the Qur'an, in which it was revealed)”²: The preface of the book sheds further light on this model where Amina states that one of her aims is to redefine the dynamics between Qur'anic universals and particulars. She says that The Qur'an was revealed in the context of seventh century Arabia

¹ Pg 4

2- Amina: Pg 3.

and hence its application is restricted to that context. From this particular historical context, general principles should be drawn for applications in a different historical and cultural context.

The view that The Qur'an was revealed as per the Arab particular context is shared by Wadūd and Barlas and it is discussed in the detail in the following pages. As for drawing universals from particulars, it seems both the writers are unaware of a branch of knowledge in jurisprudence known as "Al Qawaaid Al Kuliyyah" (The Legal Maxims). These universals have been drawn from the Qur'an and The Sunnah of The Prophet through inductive reasoning after an in depth study of 'Al Ashbah Wa Amthal'(The study of similar cases and examples within The Qur'an and The Sunnah.)¹. Following are only a few examples of such universals²:

- i) Deeds depend upon intentions.
- ii) Certainty is not voided by doubt.
- iii) The original state of things is that of permissibility unless there is evidence to indicate otherwise.
- iv) Harm has to be taken away.
- v) The accepted practice among traders is like an agreed upon condition between them.
- vi) Don't harm and don't be harmed.
- vii) Choose lesser of the two evils.
- viii) Fending off harm is preferred over the benefit.
- ix) Hardship gives way to ease.

1 - Dr.Mahmood Ghazi, Qawaaid Kulliyyah(part 1), Shariah Academy, International Islamic University, Islamabad, 2005, Pg 16.

2 - See: ibid, part 1.

Universals like these have been drawn from the Qur'an and The Sunnah and act like guiding principles for new situations. They are the result of the study of men but from what angle they seem prejudiced or potentially prejudiced against women is not clear.

2. The grammatical composition of the text (how it says what it says)¹:

Terminologies should not just be examined within the immediate textual context, syntax and language act but also in the light of “the larger textual development of the term”².

Wadūd has not made it clear what she means by the “larger textual development of the term”. Is it the development according to the order it appears in The Qur'an or the order of revelation. As for the analysis of a term in the light of the immediate text, relevant texts and the usage of the term else where in the Qur'an is nothing new to the traditional scholars. Scholars like Al Raghib Al Asfahani³, Zamakhshari⁴, Abu Hayyan Al Andulasi⁵, Ibn Aashoor⁶ were all people who emphasized on linguistic analysis of the term and were themselves experts of Arabic language and not mere people who had taken a course or two of the language.

1 - Amina: Pg 3.

2 - Amina: Pg xiii.

3 - Abul-Qasim al-Hussein bin Mufaddal bin Muhammad, better known as Raghib Isfahani, was an eleventh-century Muslim scholar of Qur'anic exegesis and the Arabic language.

4 - Abu al-Qasim Mahmud ibn Umar al-Zamakhshari. Known widely as al-Zamakhshari, He is best known for Al-Kashshaaf, a seminal commentary on the Qur'an. The commentary is famous for its deep linguistic analysis of the verses, however has been criticised for the inclusion of Mu'tazilite philosophical views.

5 - Muhammad bin Yūsuf bin 'Alī bin Yūsuf bin Hayyān an-Nifzī al-Barbārī Athīr ad-Dīn Abū Hayyān al-Gharānīfī al-Andalusi, better known as Abū Hayyān Al Gharnātī was a Muslim commentator on the Qur'an. He has earned near universal recognition as the foremost Arabic grammarian of his era. He is also notable as the only known Arabic linguist to have taken a strong interest in languages other than Arabic, authoring a number of works both on comparative linguistics and extensively analyzing and explaining the grammars of other languages for native speakers of Arabic.

6 - Muhammad Al-Tahir Ibn Ashur (1879–1973) was the most renowned Zaytuna Imam and one of the great Islamic scholars of the 20th century. He studied with reform-minded 'ulamā' and mastered classical Islamic scholarship.

For Wadūd, linguistic analysis of the verses is an essential tool in clearing up the ambiguities of verses and enhancing her understanding of the deeper meaning they carry. She feels that as an outsider to the language she can approach the text in a new and better way.

“With regard to Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, I approach the text from the outside. This frees me to make observations which are not imprisoned in the context of a gender-distinct language.”¹

Any linguistic expert will deny this claim that an outsider to a language has better access to the meaning of a text. Everywhere in the world native speaker are preferred over non-native speakers when it comes to learning a new language. Wadūd might be able to approach the text in a new way but not necessarily in a better as it is vital to understand the language as it was understood at the time of revelation. Can anyone, as an outsider, fully understand the holocaust or the incident of 9/11, without first hand experiences of the people?? Why does Wadūd feel there is a need to de-gender the language to understand Islam or any other religion? Was Bible always written in a de-gendered language? English has only adopted the neuter gender recently. Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament is still a gendered language. Why is God repeatedly making the mistake of expressing Himself in a language that does not serve the purpose?! Or is the mistake on the part of the people who are confused about the message itself? There is no confusion on the part of native speakers about what things actually have a gender and what things are linguistically gendered and not in actuality. The fact that God did not take care of this aspect is because it does not affect the message! The message of God is above these gender issues. These issues are only the product of the recent social movements like the

¹ -Amina:Pg 6.

feministic movement. They have nothing to do with how God wants humans to lead their lives. Otherwise it was not difficult for God His message in a non- gendered language as the language itself has been given to man by God.

- 3- The whole text, its *Weltanschauung* or world-view¹: Wadūd calls it a 'hermeneutics of tawhid'², "(r)ather than simply applying meanings to one verse at a time, with occasional references to various verses elsewhere, a framework may be developed that includes a systematic rationale for making correlations and sufficiently exemplifies the full impact of Qur'anic coherence."³

Thus, Amina Wadūd proposes a method of taking the unity of The Qur'an in to consideration while interpreting a verse i.e. by co-relating the verse with the pertinent theme in the rest of The Qur'an as The Qur'an is a coherent whole and thus not to be taken in bits and pieces. In the terminology of the traditional scholars this is called *Tafsīr ul Qur'an bil Qur'an*. This is in fact the first tool of interpretation used from the very inception of Islam and is still the foremost tool used before resorting to other tools. Perhaps Wadūd has mistaken the references made by scholars while explaining a verse a mere occasional references where as they are in reality a result of the inductive reasoning of a scholars who knows and understands each verse of The Qur'an by heart. Instead of listing each and every verse referred to and making the *Tafsīr* an encyclopedia rather than a book of guidance, the scholars just referred to

1 - ibid:Pg 3.

2 - ibid: Pg xii, 'Tawhid' is a term that is specifically used to refer to the unity of God as the Creator and Sustainer and unity in all His attributes as opposed to polytheism. Wadūd does not even once clarify that she by Tawhid she does not mean the Tawhid of God, which is the meaning of Tawhid that comes foremost to the mind of the reader. Alhtough she does mention it in italicized and small letters but the use of such a fundamental term in Islamic faith, Wadūd seems to allot her hermeneutic model an indirect, unconscious sanction in the mind of the reader.

3 - Ibid.

verses that were enough to shed light on the meaning they had concluded. Is Wadūd trying to say that when The Prophet explained the term ‘Zulm’(Injustice) in the Qur'an by quoting the verse 31:13(Indeed associating partners with Allah is a great injustice), he neglected all other verses that talked about injustice and just made an ‘occasional’ reference the basis of his explanation?? No..Never! The traditional scholars have always learnt The Qur'an by heart. In fact this was the first step they ever took when they started treading the path of knowledge. Only after memorizing it by heart, they would go on to other branches of knowledge such as Tafsīr and Hadīth. There is already a systematic rationale established in this regard. One only needs to look at the right books of Tafsīr. The branch of knowledge that deals with it is known as ‘Ilm ul Munasabat’i.e. the science of co- relation between verses and chapters of The Qur'an.

With regard to the verses contain reference to women, Amina is says that she has analyzed them in the light of the traditional method of ‘Tafsīr ul Qur'an bil Qur'an’ (interpretation of the Qur'an based on the Qur'an itself). She has elaborated her particular method as: ¹

“Each verse was analyzed:

1. in its context;
2. in the context of discussions on similar topics in the Qur'an;
3. in the light of similar language and syntactical structures used elsewhere in the Qur'an;
4. in the light of overriding Qur'anic principles; and
5. within the context of the Qur'anic *Weltanschauung*, or world-view.

¹ - ibid: Pg 1.

The method of Wadūd basically comes down to two principles employed by the traditional scholars:

- 1) Exegesis of The Qur'an in the light of The Qur'an
- 2) Asbab un Nuzul i.e. Occasions of revelation. This is incorporated in the context as referred by Wadūd.

We shall analyze the method of Wadūd along with Barlas as Barlas shares Wadūd's views in this regard.

1.3.2 Perspective of Asma Barlas and its Critical Analysis:

a) Polysemic language of The Qur'an:

Barlas says that the language of The Qur'an is polysemic¹ and thus it can be read in multiple modes including patriarchal² and egalitarian^{3,4}.

It is true that the language of The Qur'an is polysemic and thus it can be read in more than one mode i.e. more than one possible meaning can co-exist. However, to say that it can be read in modes that contain two opposite or clashing ideologies goes against the overriding Qur'anic principle:

(أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ عَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوْجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا)

1 - The coexistence of many possible meanings for a word or phrase, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/polysemy>

2 - A system of society or government in which the father or eldest male is head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line. Origin: Mid 17th century: via medieval Latin from Greek *patriarkhia*, from *patriarkhes* 'ruling father', retrieved on 17/07/2014, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/patriarchy>

3 - Believing in or based on the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities. Origin: Late 19th century: from French *égalitaire*, from *égal* 'equal', from Latin *aequalis*, retrieved on 17/07/2014, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/egalitarian>

4 - Asma: Pg 3.

“Then do they not reflect upon The Qur'an? If it had been from any other God, They would have found in it much contradiction”¹

The Qur'an cannot be read in patriarchal and anti-patriarchal readings at the same time. The linguistic scholars have compiled the use of the Arabic language and rules of understanding texts and hence authorial intent that were at work in the Arabic language at the time of the advent of Islam. There are terms in The Qur'an that do have opposite or clashing meanings but when the rules of literary analysis are applied the possible meanings that can co-exist in that particular texts are narrowed down while others are eliminated. That is why, having an in depth knowledge of Arabic is considered compulsory for anyone who aspires to be an exegete of The Qur'an, a qualification which completely lacks in Barlas and does not meet the required standard in Wadūd, who has only taken an advance language course during her graduate studies. A person has to be a master of the language to be able to deal with this polysemy. The insufficient knowledge of Barlas and Wadūd shall be further demonstrated when we deal with issues in their works.

b) Methodological Criteria of Qur'an according to Barlas:

Barlas claims to have used “three aspects of God's Self-Disclosure that generate liberatory readings of the Qur'ān: the principles of Divine Unity, Justness, and Incomparability”². Barlas, however, also chosen to overlook all the other ninety six aspects of God's self disclosure (since there are ninety nine name of Allah that disclose His Being to us).

In addition, Barlas points out four methodological criteria as specified in the Qur'an:

1 - (An-Nisa:82)

2 - Asma: Pg 13.

- 1) The principle of textual holism i.e. treating Qur'an as a totality. The treatment of The Qur'an as an internally coherent scripture is the same principle on which Wadūd has based her method of doing Tafsīr of Qur'an by The Qur'an itself.
- 2) Reading for the best meanings
- 3) Using analytical reasoning in interpretation.
- 4) Context of its revelation as referred to by Wadūd.

However, she fails to support her claim by verse/s of The Qur'an. Instead, Barlas quotes Farouq Sherif¹ that beyond these principles The Qur'an does not "authorize recourse to methods of explanation or logical deduction for the purpose of better understanding" however, as he notes, it does not "forbid the use of such expedients," either.²

While The Qur'an does uphold the principles of intratextuality, reading for the best meaning, analytical reasoning and contextual reading, these are not the only authorized methods of logical deduction as claimed by Sherif and seconded by Barlas. The Qur'an has also clearly authorized the use of the following method in interpreting the Qur'an:

1- Hadīth:

(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولَئِكُمْ أَنْهَاكُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرْدُوْهُ

(إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ ثُوَّمُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَخْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا

1 - Author of 'A guide to the contents of The Qur'an'.

2 - Asma:Pg 18.

“O you who have believed, obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you should believe in God and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result.”¹

2- Arabic language:

(وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ . نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ . عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ . بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيًّا مُّبِينٍ)

“And indeed, it [i.e., the Qur'an] is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit [i.e., Gabriel] has brought it down.Upon your heart, [O Muhammad] - that you may be of the warners.In a clear Arabic language.”²

3- Ijma:

(وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَتَّبِعُ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُولَّهُ مَا تَوَلََّ وَنُنْصِلُهُ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا)

“And whoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers - We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination.”³

God has prescribed upon the followers to walk the path of the believers. The most objective way possible to ascertain the path of the believers is to see what they

1(An-Nisa:59)

2(As-Shu'araa:192-195)

3(An-Nisa: 115)

have unanimously agreed upon so as to eliminate chances of human error by individuals.

4- Qiyas or Analogical reasoning:

(فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولَئِكَ الْمُبْصَرِينَ)

“So take warning, O people of vision.”¹

The word ‘i’tabiru’ basically denotes learning lesson from examples that have passed before us. However, the Muslim scholars have defined how a lesson can be obtained most objectively i.e. in order to apply the lesson learned from an example on a new situation. The two situations should share the ‘illa’, the spirit/objective/principle working behind the known example.

As for the analytical reasoning and the application of double movement of deconstruction and reconstruction of context by proposed by Rahman and related by Barlas in her book, the principle is incorporated in the method of Ijtihad. The contextual reading is contained within the knowledge of Asbab un Nuzul, a science considered most essential is understanding The Qur'an. These are the sources of Islamic jurisprudence that are agreed upon by all scholars. All of them are authorized by The Qur'an. Even the sources that are not agreed upon by all, such as: Urf(customary practice of a society), Istihsan(discretion), Istislah(deemed proper) and Istishab(Presumption of Continuity) are not rooted outside the text of The Qur'an but on the Qur'anic world view of creating ease for humanity.

(يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ لَكُمُ الْعُسْرَ)

“God intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship”¹

¹(Al- Hashar:2)

Another method claimed by Barlas to have been employed in her work is emphasis “on what it(the text) does not say (along with what it does say)....I interpret the Qur’ān’s silences in light of its expressed teachings.”² Again this hermeneutical principle is not new since the Islamic scholars have dealt with the subject in the principle of ‘Mafhoom and Mantooq’³present in all the books related to the sciences of The Qur’ān. This principle embodies reading the apparent meanings of the text as well as the implied meanings.

1.3.3 Influence of Western Hermeneutics on the Perspective of Wadud & Barlas

Interpretation of texts in the West started with the Greeks. After going through the hands of the Hebrews for interpreting the Talmud, it reached the Christian Church where at first the allegorical method dominated. However, later the Protestants tried to break away from the authority of the Church and new interpretative tools proposed by Martin Luther and John Calvin came into practice. They basically rejected the papal and allegorical interpretation of the Bible and considered the Bible interpretative of itself while focusing on historical and linguistic analysis instead as aiding tools. This method gained widespread popularity during the 17th and 18th century and later developed into free interpretation of the texts under the influence of Rationalism which culminated into the interpretation of non-religious texts along the same lines and a further change towards understanding of the meaning of hermeneutics in the 19th and 20th century. By the end of 20th century, the meaning became quite broad and tried to address the meaning and interpretation of forms of human existence in

1(Al-Baqara:185)

2 - Believing women in Islam: Pg 22.

3 - مباحث في علوم القرآن، لمنابع بن خليل القطان (المتوفى: 1420هـ)، مكتبة المعارف للنشر والتوزيع، الطبعة: الطبعة الثالثة 1421هـ - 2000م، ص 257 - 263

general. However, as far as religious texts are concerned the intra—textual and historical/ linguistic method continued to dominate.¹

The development of textual analysis described very briefly above progressed according to the evolution in the religious and philosophical thought and biblical studies. This was unique to the West. It does not seem logical to apply the same tools to literary legacy unique to another culture and society. The Muslims scholars developed tools for interpretation of the Qur'an according to the socio-historical contexts unique to the Muslim world. The purpose was the same, however, and that was to achieve objectivity in interpreting the religious texts. Wadud and Barlas seem to have overlooked this completely in trying to apply the biblical method of analysis to the Holy Qur'an. They have either rejected or strongly criticized those sciences and sources of understanding of Islam that are unique to the development of Islamic sciences. How are they justified in rejecting those tools as they are also prescribed by The Qur'an is beyond understanding. Was it just blind following of the Western hermeneutical methods used to study Bible or just a convenient way to justify their preconceived notions of gender equality? However, it will be seen later that their views are not fully justified even under these principles.

¹ Mahmood, Sadia, The Influence of Modern Western Hermeneutical Approaches to Study of Religion on Contemporary Islamic Thought: A Case Study of Woman in Islam (Master's thesis, International Islamic University, Islamabad, 2004), p.57-64

Chapter 2

Views of Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas

2.1 Views shared by Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas

2.1.1 Atomistic Approach of Traditional Muslim scholars:

The foremost hermeneutic tool mentioned by Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas is the exegesis of the Qur'anic verses in the light of the Qur'anic totality. They have emphasized that The Qur'an is a thematic whole and thus cannot be taken in bits and pieces. Traditional scholars are criticized for taking an 'atomistic' approach towards the exegesis of The Qur'an. Amina Wadūd says:

"They begin with the first verse of the first chapter and proceed to the second verse of the first chapter—one verse at a time—until the end of the Book. Little or no effort is made to recognize themes and to discuss the relationship of the Qur'an to itself, thematically. A brief mention of one verse's relation to another verse may be rendered but these are haphazard with no underlying hermeneutical principle applied. A methodology for linking similar Qur'anic ideas, syntactical structures, principles, or themes together is almost non-existent."¹

Asma Barlas supports the view by saying:

"Recent scholarship increasingly makes clear that conservative readings of the Qur'ān are a function of the methods Muslims have used—or have failed to use—to read it. In particular, argue critical scholars, Muslims have not read the Qur'ān as both a "complex hermeneutic totality" and as a "historically situated" text. Instead, says Mustansir Mir, they have relied on a "linear-atomistic" method that takes a

¹ -Quran and Women: Pg 29.

“verse-by-verse approach to the *Qur'an*. With most Muslim exegetes, the basic unit of *Qur'an* study is one or a few verses taken in isolation from the preceding and following verses.” As a result, the *Qur'an* is not read as a text possessing both “thematic and structural *nazm* [coherence]”¹

Such a criticism can only come about if the history and the stages through which exegesis of The *Qur'an* went through are ignored. Following is a very brief outline as mentioned by Al Zahabi² in his book *Al Tafsīr wal Mufassiroon*³:

From the very inception of Islam, The *Qur'an* has been expounded in accordance with the need of the time. During the life time of The Prophet, Sahaba (Companions of The Prophet), who were experts of the language, well aware of the Arabic culture and history and also the practices of the Jews and Christians of their time were not in need of exegesis of every word and verse of The *Qur'an*. They would simply turn to The Prophet for explanation if there was something ambiguous to them. The Prophet, who was not just acquainted with every theme of The *Qur'an* but also most well versed in the intended meaning of God in any verse, would explain it to them whatever was unclear. After the death of The Prophet, Sahabas used four major sources to do *Tafsīr* of the *Qur'an*:

- 1) The *Qur'an*
- 2) Sunnah of The Prophet
- 3) Intellect and Deductive reasoning
- 4) Judaic traditions.

1 - Believing Women in Islam: Pg 8.

2 - Muhammad Hussaein Adh-Dhababi (1915-1977), was born in Matboos, District of Kafr Al-Sheikh. He joined the faculty of Sharia at Al-Azhar University and graduated in 1939. He received in doctorate in Qur'anic Sciences with his dissertation ‘*Tafsīr wal Mufassiroon*’ which, after its publication, became one of the top reference books in the field of Qur'anic Science.

3 - انظر: *القصیر والمفسرون*، للدكتور محمد السيد حسين الذهبي (المتوفى: 1398هـ)، مكتبة وهبة، القاهرة، ج 1، ص 27-111.

The Qur'an was the first source of exegesis. In case they could not find the answer to an ambiguity or a question anywhere else in The Qur'an or the sayings of The Prophet, they would use their intellect and deductive reasoning and their knowledge of Arabic language, culture and history and the environment in which The Qur'anic verses were revealed to find the answer. Judaic traditions were used to fill up details of some of the stories mutual to both Muslims and Judaic-Christian tradition. However, only those traditions were accepted which were in accordance with Islamic principles and beliefs.

After the era of The Sahabah, their successors, Tabi'in, used the same methodology with addition of one more source; the sayings of companions of The Prophet about Tafsīr. When the compilation of Hadīth started, around the end of the first century, sayings of The Prophet and his companions, pertaining to directly to the exegesis of The Qur'an, were gathered in an independent chapter of the Hadīth books. It was not until the end of the third century and beginning of fourth century that the verse to verse (declared as the atomistic approach) exegesis of The Qur'an started by exegetics such as Al-Tabari and Ibn Majah. These exegetes, however, did not take an atomistic approach as defined by Wadūd and Barlas. Al-Tabari, the most renowned of all from this period, followed a set pattern in his Tafsīr. He would relate other verses that shed light on the meaning and also the sayings of Sahaba, Tabi'in and Tab' Tabi' regarding the Tafsīr of a verse. These sayings included the Ahadīth of The Prophet, Ijma of Sahaba, individual opinions of Sahaba and their successors. He would also refer to the experts of Arabic language. After relating all that there was about the verse, al-Tabari would state the general meaning of the verse as per the context and give his own preference of an opinion in case there was a difference between them. He would also give the reason for his preference.

Barlas and Wadūd consider the citation of one or two verses from the rest of The Qur'an as occasional references and not in line with their theory of holistic approach. They are, perhaps, unaware of the process that is required to reach one or two verses from the whole Qur'an. The process entails reviewing the whole Qur'an, pondering on all the related verses and then using their knowledge and skills to narrow down their choice to those verses that explain the meaning in the best manner. How else would they be able to cite the verses they cite? Do Wadūd and Barlas mean to imply that these exegetes would randomly pick any verse that comes to their mind and ignore the rest of The Qur'an?? The question is if they could relate all the Ahadīth and sayings of preceding scholars, what stopped them from considering all the related sayings of God?!

This trend grew with exegesis highlighting one particular discipline like linguistics, theology, jurisprudence, Sufism e.t.c. However, parallel to these separate books with thematic study of Qur'anic topics also came to surface like *At-Tibyan fi Uloom Al Qur'an* by Ibn Qiyim, book on *Majaz Al Qur'an* by Abu Ubaidah, *Mufradat Al Qur'an* by As-Fahani e.t.c. All these books and the likes of them would trace a particular topic through and through The Qur'an discussing the resulting totalities and universals in detail. Today, if one takes a look at the recent scholarships in the learning centers of the Islamic world where Islam is still taught along the traditional lines, one would find a great emphasis being laid on thematic exegesis of The Qur'an.

To say that thematic study is non-existent in traditional Islamic scholarship and the only form of exegesis that is carried is the linear atomistic approach (which is also not so linear as explained above) is a great injustice to a major portion of

scholarly work done and is still being done and that too by the same people regarded as ‘traditional’.

2.1.2 Qur‘an is a response to Arab moral and social situation

Another belief on part of the two writers is that Qur‘an is God’s response to the social and moral situation in Arabia. It was revealed as an answer to a specific social and historical back ground and hence should be interpreted as specific to them.

Amina Wadūd quotes Fazlul-Rehman words:

“Qur'an is the divine response, through the Prophet's mind, to the moral-social situation of the Prophet's Arabia... The Qur'an and the genesis of the Islamic community occurred in the light of history and against a social-historical background. The Qur'an is a response to that situation, and for the most part it consists of moral, religious, and social pronouncements that respond to specific problems confronted in concrete historical situations... ”¹

She further says:

“Some of the greatest restrictions on women, causing them much harm, have resulted from interpreting Qur'anic solutions for particular problems as if they were universal principles.”²

Barlas adds to the concept by saying:

“Conservatives theorize the Qur'ān's universalism (transhistoricity) by dehistoricizing the Qur'ān itself, and/or by viewing its teachings ahistorically. This is because they believe that historicizing the Qur'ān's contexts means also historicizing its contents, thereby undermining its sacred and universal character. In this view,

1 - Amina: Pg 58.

2 -ibid: Pg 126.

time becomes either incidental or irrelevant to explaining or understanding the Qur'ān, which is why conservatives often do not contextualize its teachings.”¹

Let us begin by analyzing the intended audience for the message of The Qur'an as per The Qur'an itself:

In Suratul Ambiyaa, God says:

(وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ)

“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.”²

This verse clearly states that The Prophet was sent as a mercy for all the worlds; not just the Arabs. This means the entire world is the audience.

In another place, The Qur'an states:

(وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأُنذِرَكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ تَلَعَّ أَنِّيْكُمْ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ آلَهَةً أُخْرَى قُلْ لَا أَشْهُدُ

قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ)

“Say, “What thing is greatest in testimony?” Say, “God is witness between me and you. And this Qur'an was revealed to me that I may warn you thereby and whomever it reaches”³

This verse shows that The Prophet's job was to warn the people, not just those who were his direct audience but also all those to whom this Qur'an reaches. This includes everyone who will ever come across this book till the Day of Judgment.

Another verse that supports the same:

1 - Asma: Pg 50.

2(Al-Ambyaa:107)

3(Al-Ann'aam:19)

(وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرْبَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَبَّ لِهِ فَرِيقٌ

في الجنة وفريق في السعير)

“And thus We have revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an that you may warn the Mother of Cities [i.e. Makkah] and those around it[i.e. all other people] and warn of the Day of Assembly, about which there is no doubt. A party will be in Paradise and a party in the Blaze.”¹

There is not a single place in The Qur'an where God has addresses the Arabs only. In fact, there are only three main forms of address used by God:

- 1) O you who believe (the most common of all addresses)
- 2) O mankind/children of Adam
- 3) O Prophet

The only exceptions are:

- 1) God's address to particular audience in a story such as O Adam and O Bani Israel.
- 2) O people of intellect
- 3) O people of the Book
- 4) O The Jinns and The Mankind
- 5) O Disbelievers

None of the addresses, however, indicates that The Arabs were the only nation addressed in that verse. The two verses, (As-Shoora:7) and (Al-An'aam:92), which say that The Prophet was sent to The Mother of the Cities (which is interpreted as

¹(As- Shuraa:7)

Makkah) and whoever is around it also do not specify what is meant by ‘around it’ since that can practically mean the whole world¹. It should also be noted that whenever God intended to address a particular nation he used a form address specific to them like O people of the book and O Bani Israel. The very idea that other prophets were sent to a particular nation and Prophet Mohammad was sent for all mankind negates the proposition that The Qur‘an is a ‘divine response... to the moral-social situation of Prophet’s Arabia’. While such a supposition might be true in case of nations who received prophets specific to them it cannot be applied to a book sent for universal guidance. And if it is argued that the guidance and the principles implicit in it are universal but the rulings or pronouncements are specific to Arabs, then that is negated by following similar syntactical structures within The Qur‘an, a method considered by both the writers as vital to their hermeneutic model. Whenever God intended a ruling to be specific He specified that Himself.

(أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَخْلَلْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَكَ الَّتِي أَتَيْتَ أَجْوَرَهُنَّ وَمَا مَلَكْتُ يَمْيِنُكَ مِمَّا أَفَاءَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكَ

وَبَنَاتِ عَمَّكَ وَبَنَاتِ عَمَّاتِكَ وَبَنَاتِ حَالِكَ وَبَنَاتِ حَالَاتِكَ الَّذِي هَاجَرَنَّ مَعَكَ وَأَمْرَأَةٌ مُؤْمِنَةٌ إِنْ

وَهَبَتْ نَفْسَهَا لِلنَّبِيِّ إِنْ أَرَادَ النَّبِيُّ أَنْ يَسْتَنِكْ حَمَلَهَا حَالِصَةً لَكَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قَدْ عَلِمْنَا مَا فَرَضْنَا

عَلَيْهِمْ فِي أَرْوَاحِهِمْ وَمَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ لِكَيْنَالِ يَكُونُ عَلَيْكَ حَرَجٌ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَفْوُرًا رَّحِيمًا

“O Prophet, indeed We have made lawful to you your wives to whom you have given their due compensation and those your right hand possesses from what God has returned to you [of captives] and the daughters of your paternal uncles and the daughters of your paternal aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncles and the

¹ المحرر الوجيز في تفسير الكتاب العزيز، لأنبياء محمد عبد الحق بن غالب بن عبد الرحمن بن تمام بن عطية الأنبلسي المخاربي (المتوفى: 542هـ)؛ بتتحققق: عبد - السلام عبد الشافعي محمد، دار الكتب العلمية - بيروت، الطبعة الأولى، ج 2، ص 322.

daughters of your maternal aunts who emigrated with you and a believing woman if she gives herself to the Prophet [and] if the Prophet wishes to marry her, [this is] only for you, excluding the [other] believers. We certainly know what we have made obligatory upon them concerning their wives and those their right hands possess, [but this is for you] in order that there will be upon you no discomfort [i.e., difficulty]. And ever is God Forgiving and Merciful.”¹

(يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ يُضَاعِفُ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضَغْفَيْنِ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا)

“O wives of the Prophet, whoever of you should commit a clear immorality - for her the punishment would be doubled two fold, and ever is that, for God, easy.”²

Since the audience is explicitly declared to be the entire world, there has to be a clear and explicit evidence to declare an injunction particular to Arabs or to any individual. The traditional scholars do not dehistoricize The Qur'an nor do they overlook the context in which it was revealed. The knowledge of ‘Asbab an-Nuzul’ (occasions of revelation) is considered necessary for an exegete for the very reason that context should not be overlooked in order to fully understand meaning. The context, however, represents the environment in which the ideal application was demonstrated by The Prophet.

The reason why the scholars view The Qur'an as outside time is rooted nowhere except within The Qur'an:

(إِنَّهُ لِقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ (77) فِي كِتَابٍ مَكْتُوبٍ (78) لَا يَمْسِهُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ (79) تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)

1(Al-Ahzab: 50)

2(Al-Ahzab: 30)

"Indeed, it is a noble Qur'an. In a Register well-protected; None touch it except the purified [i.e. the angels]. [It is] a revelation from the Lord of the worlds.¹"

The verses say that it is a Qur'an -which means one that is recited-that is kept safe in a protected book. And it is known fact that The Qur'an was compiled in a book form after The Prophet passed away. The verses also say that only the pure touch it. As for The written Qur'an with us everyone has access to it whether pure or impure. Thus, the Qur'an referred to in these verses is not the one that we know which was compiled in a book form at the time of Abu Bakr. The reference here is to The Qur'an in Lah e mahfooz:

(لَهُ هُوَ قُرْآنٌ مَجِيدٌ . فِي لَفْحٍ مَحْفُوظٍ)

"But this is an honoured Qur'an. [Inscribed] in a Preserved Slate."²

The Lah e Mafooz is the book with God in which everything that is in the heaven and the earth and everything that is going to happen in them is already written. Verse 61 in Surat Yunus clearly states that everything that we recite from The Qur'an is already written in a special book.

(وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَاءٍ وَمَا تَنْلُو مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْآنٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ إِلَّا كُنَّا عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِودًا إِذْ تُفِيضُونَ
فِيهِ وَمَا يَعْزِبُ عَنْ رَبِّكَ مِنْ مِثْقَالٍ ذَرَّةٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَلَا أَصْغَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْبَرَ إِلَّا
فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ)

"And, [O Muhammad], you are not [engaged] in any matter or recite any of the Qur'an and you [people] do not do any deed except that We are witness over you when you are involved in it. And not absent from your Lord is any [part] of an atom's

1(Al-Waqiyah: 77-80)

2(Al-Burooj:21-22)

weight within the earth or within the heaven or [anything] smaller than that or greater but that it is in a clear register.”¹

(حِمْ (1) وَالْكِتَابُ الْمُبِينُ (2) إِنَّا جَعَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ (3) وَإِنَّهُ فِي أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ لَدَنَا (عَلِيٌّ حَكِيمٌ)

“Ha, Meem. By the clear Book, Indeed, We have made it an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand. And indeed it is, in the Mother of the Book[i.e. the preserved state] with Us, exalted and full of wisdom.” (Az-Zukhruf:1-4)

Why then was the Qur'an sent in parts over a period of 23 years? It is stated in Suratul Isra:

(وَقُرْآنًا فَرَقْنَاهُ لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْبِثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا)

“And [it is] a Qur'an which We have separated [by intervals] that you might recite it to the people over a prolonged period. And We have sent it down progressively.”²

(وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِتُبَيَّنَ بِهِ فُؤَادُكُمْ وَرَزَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا)

“And those who disbelieve say, “Why was the Qur'an not revealed to him all at once?” Thus [it is] that We may strengthen thereby your heart. And We have spaced it distinctly.”³

It was not a response to a specific situation; rather God chose specific occasions to illustrate and highlight the message contained in it and to help the people relate to it more closely.

1(Yunus:61)

2(Al-Isra:106)

3(Al-Furqan:32)

2.1.2 Misplaced status of Arabic language

The view of the two writers about Arabic language also needs some attention. They are of the view that there is nothing divine about the Arabic language. With regard to the reason why Arabic was chosen as a language of revelation, Asma Barlas says:

“(T)he Qur’ān also comments on its own revelation in Arabic and clarifies that it is in Arabic because the Prophet was an Arab; God wanted the Arabs, to whom no ‘warner’ had been sent before, to understand and heed God’s teachings, and God wanted to make the Qur’ān easy for them to understand and remember.”¹

As for Amina Wadūd, she finds the Arabic language to be ineffective in conveying God’s message. She believes the gendered nature of the language is a limitation which creates problems in expressing divine ideas as they are beyond the realm of gender.²

First of all, The Qur’ān does not explicitly state anywhere that the reason for sending it in Arabic is because The Prophet was an Arab or that God wanted to make the message easier for the Arabs as no warner had been sent to them. It is an inference on part of Barlas which is not supported by any evidence. Following are the two verses from which she seems to have drawn her conclusion:

(يٰس . وَالْقُرْآنِ الْحَكِيمِ . إِنَّكَ لَمِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ . عَلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ . تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ . لِتُنذِرَ

قَوْمًا مَا أَنْذِرَ آباؤُهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ)

“Ya, Seen. By the wise Qur’ān. Indeed you, [O Muhammad], are from among the messengers. On a straight path. [This is] a revelation of the Exalted in Might, the

1 - Pg 17.

2 - Pg 13.

Merciful, That you may warn a people whose forefathers were not warned, so they are unaware.”¹

(وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِتُنذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرَى وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا وَتُنذِرَ يَوْمَ الْجَمْعِ لَا رَبَّ لِهِ فَرِيقٌ

في الجنة وفريق في السعير)

“And thus We have revealed to you an Arabic Qur'an that you may warn the Mother of Cities [i.e., Makkah] and those around it[i.e. all other people] and warn of the Day of Assembly, about which there is no doubt. A party will be in Paradise and a party in the Blaze.”²

The first verse tells us that this book, The Qur'an, has been sent down to warn a nation that has not been warned before and Barlas interprets it to be Arabs. Arabs, however, did get warned before. In fact, Quraysh the leading tribe of Arabs trace their lineage from Ismael, the son of Ibrahim, both of whom were prophets. However, Abraham and Ismael lived a long time back and their way of life was forgotten by the Arabs. So, this verse most probably refers to a warning that is still remembered by the people due to its proximity in time which was the case applicable to Arabs as they had forgotten Abrahamic ways and teachings over the passage of time. However, this does not rule out other nations who also received warners but they had forgotten the message as well just like the Arabs³. It practically includes all pagan nations.

The second verse relates that a Qur'an in Arabic was revealed so that the Prophet could warn the mother of cities and whoever is around it. It has already been discussed above that whoever, is around the mother of cities practically includes the whole world. This interpretation is further supported by verses of The Qur'an such as:

1(Yaseen:1-6)

2(As- Shuraa:7)

ارشاد العقل المصليم الى مزايا الكتاب الكريم؛ لأبي المسعود العمادي محمد بن محمد بن مصطفى (المتوفى: 982هـ)، دار احياء التراث العربي - بيروت، ج 7، مص 159. - 3

(قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ

يُخْبِي وَنَمِيتُ فَمَنْ مُنَوِّا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ النَّبِيِّ الْأَمِينِ الَّذِي يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَكَلِمَاتِهِ وَاتِّبَاعُهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهَدُونَ)

“Say, [O Muhammad], “O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of God to you all, [from Him] to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and causes death.” So believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in God and His words, and follow him that you may be guided.”¹

There is another verse of The Qur‘an that sheds further light on the matter:

(وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ . نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ . عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ . بِلِسَانٍ عَرَبِيًّا مُّبِينٍ . وَإِنَّهُ لَفِي زُبُرِ الْأَوَّلِينَ . أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةً أَنْ يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمَاءُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ . وَلَوْ نَرَأْنَاهُ عَلَى بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ فَقَرَأَهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ)

“And indeed, it [i.e., the Qur‘an] is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit [i.e., Gabriel] has brought it down. Upon your heart, [O Muhammad] - that you may be of the warners. In a clear Arabic language. And indeed, it is [mentioned] in the scriptures of former peoples. And has it not been a sign to them that it is recognized by the scholars of the Children of Israel? And even if We had revealed it to one among the foreigners[i.e., the non-Arabs or those who are not fluent in the Arabic language.]And he had recited it to them [perfectly], they would [still] not have been believers in it.”²

This verse tells us that The Qur‘an was revealed to the Prophet so that he could become a warner in a clear Arabic language. The verse further states that if it had been revealed to the Non-Arabs, they would not have believed it. Why? Because

1(Al-a’raf:158)

2(As-Shu’ara:192-199)

they could not understand Arabic language. This shows that (one of) the reasons why the Arab nation was chosen for revelation was because The Qur'an was in Arabic and not the other way around as stipulated by Barlas. This interpretation is further supported by the fact that The Qur'an was present in its Arabic form in Lah e Mahfooz (a discussion that has already passed) way before its revelation.

Let us come to what Amina Wadūd says about the Arabic language. According to Wadūd, Arabic language is inherently flawed due to its gendered nature and this delimitation prevents it from expressing ideas that are not gendered. I will relate here three verses from The Qur'an that talk about The Qur'an being in Arabic:

(تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ . كِتَابٌ فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ)

“[This is] a revelation from the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful -A Book whose verses have been detailed, an Arabic Qur'an[i.e.revealed in Arabic language] for a people who know.”¹

(إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ)

“Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an(i.e. revealed in Arabic language) that you might understand.”²

(قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِوْجٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ)

“[It is] an Arabic Qur'an, without any deviance that they might become righteous.”³

(وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعْلَمُ بَشَرٌ لِسَانُ الَّذِي يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِيٌّ وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُّبِينٌ)

“And We certainly know that they say, “It is only a human being who teaches him [i.e., the Prophet].” The tongue of the one they refer to is foreign, and this [recitation i.e., Qur'an] is [in] a clear Arabic language.”⁴

1(Fussilat:2-3)

2(Yusuf:2)

3(Az-Zumur:28)

4(An-Nahl:103)

One cannot help but notice that in all these verses, whenever God describes The Qur'an, He describes it as an Arabic Qur'an and this description is followed by one or another positive attributes or reasons:

- 1) for a people who know
- 2) that you might understand
- 3) that they might become righteous
- 4) a clear Arabic language.

In fact, in the last of these verses, God clearly states a virtue that Arabic has over other languages and that is that it is clear! One must also not forget that one of the strongest aspects of the miraculous nature of The Qur'an is the language. It is the beautiful and extraordinary usage of the language that, when recited upon the Arabs, who were proud masters of eloquence and poetry, mesmerized them. Even those who never accepted Islam state that it cannot be the work of a man. After all, it is the word of the Creator of this universe!

Hence, to say that there is no link between the language that has been preferred by God over other languages to convey His message and which has, moreover, been worded by Him in a way that even the choice of a words, the syntactical order of the sentences and the recitation affects the meaning, is quite illogical.

2.2 Views of Asma Barlas

2.2.1 Text and Textualities

Barlas has carried out extensive discussion on texts and textualities, intertextualities and extratextualities. She criticizes the stance of traditional Muslim scholars on all these and the way they deal with them. She believes this is what is causing problems in their reading of The Qur'an. Barlas defines these terms as:

“By texts I mean ‘any discourse fixed by writing’; by textualities, how a text is read (modes of reading); by intertextuality, the internal relationships of texts to one another; and by extratextuality, the contexts of reading.”¹

Each of the four issues shall be discussed separately in the same order as discussed by the author. First the view of the author will be presented and then an analysis of that view shall follow.

1- Texts:

i) According to Barlas, even though the status of The Qur'an is that of a sacred core text, access to its teachings is mediated by other religious text such as *Tafsīr* and *Aḥadīth*. The Qur'an as divine discourse and its earthly realization involves interpretative processes and “it is the interpretive process, both imprecise and incomplete, that is open to critique and historicization, not revelation itself.”² This relationship is illustrated as follows:

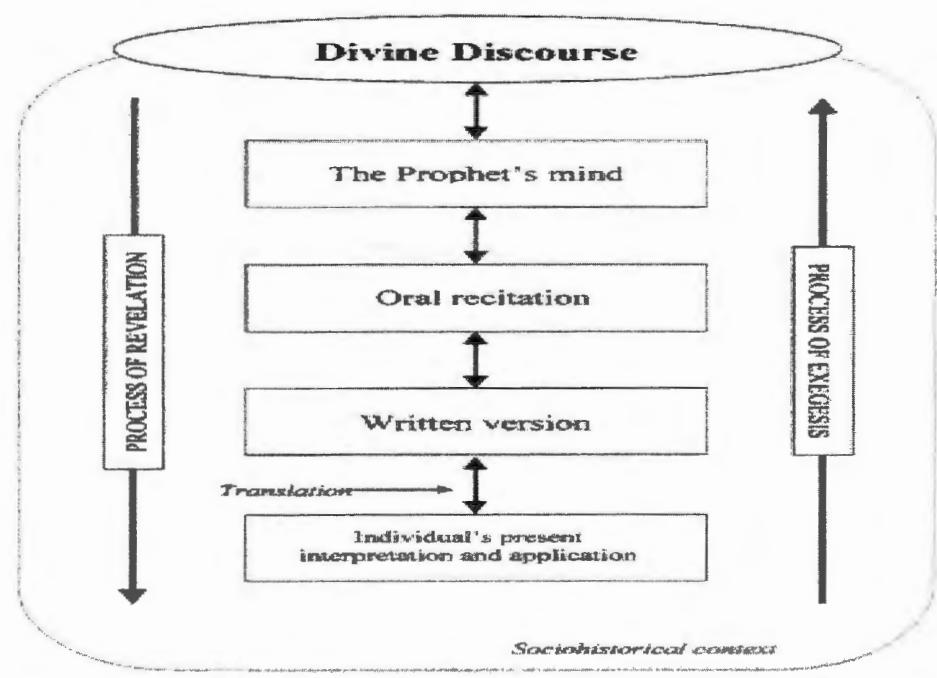


Figure 2

1 - Pg 31.

2 - Pg 34.

Barlas also comments on the polysemic nature of Qur'an¹:

Like other texts, the Qur'an also is open to variant readings since each Āyah can be interpreted differently... (and thus Qur'an) "cannot be expected 'to deliver a single authoritative usage'". Moreover, the different conditioning, cultures of authors and readers, differences in education and prejudice also plays a role in yielding different interpretations of The Qur'an. The polyvalent nature of the text is not however considered a reason for concern as it is the "ability to yield new meanings to new generations of Muslims that the Qur'ān remains a living and universal force." The Qur'an, on the other hand is its own primary arbiter and thus extra Qur'anic sources should not be used to limit the meanings of The Qur'an as is done by traditional scholars through Tafsīr and Aḥadīth. Misogyny and bias against women stems from the use of these two sources as interpreters of The Qur'an.

Analysis:

Barlas seems to be afflicted with compound misconceptions. She regards texts that have been fixed in writing to be: Qur'an, Hadīth and Tafsīr. It is surprising that a fact which is known by any student of Islamic Studies is that Qur'an and Hadīth are the only two sacred texts regarded by the Muslims. Any other text is neither considered sacred nor fixed. As for Tafsīr, it is an individual's effort to uncover the meanings of The Qur'an. In the effort to do so, he takes help from Qur'an, Hadīth, Arabic language and his own intellect i.e. he does Ijtihad provided that he has all the necessary skills. No matter how excellent his work may be, it is still regarded his individual effort and is not considered divine in any way. The only Tafsīr that is

¹ - Pg 35.

considered so is that of Prophet Mohammad and that Tafsīr is part of the Hadīth. It is only Qur'an and authentic Hadīth that has the status of Texts in Islam.¹

ii) Barlas also expresses her opinion on the concept of divine revelation and its earthly realization. She considers the earthly realization as three processes removed away from the Divine Discourse.

Analysis:

While this might be true of Bible (New Testament) which has actually been written by humans according to their perceptions of the message of Christ, it can not in any way be applied to The Qur'an. It has been explained above in the light of Qur'anic verses that The Qur'an that we have in our hands is exactly the same as the archetypal Qur'an in 'Loh e Mehfooz'. A very obvious fact that Barlas has got wrong is that Divine Discourse was revealed to The Prophet's mind while The Qur'an explicitly says:

(وَإِنَّهُ لَشَرِيكُلَّ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ . نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ . عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِّرِينَ)

"And indeed, it [i.e., the Qur'an] is the revelation of the Lord of the worlds. The Trustworthy Spirit [i.e., Gabriel] has brought it down. Upon your heart, [O Muhammad] - that you may be of the warners."²

How did Barlas mistake the word 'Qalb' with mind is beyond understanding since in science as well as philosophy the two are considered separate? After receiving the revelation on his heart, The Prophet recited from his heart verbatim what God had revealed therein. On the third stage, The Prophet had it written down in front of him by more than one scribe. These scribes after writing would read it out loud to

1 - Dr. Mahmood Ahmed Ghazi, Introduction to the principles of Usul of Jurisprudence, Part 2, pg 9-11

2(As-Shu'araa:192-194)

the Prophet to make sure there are no mistakes in the written version. In this light, the claim that interpretative processes have taken place between the archetypal Qur'an and its written version seems more like an accusation that has no evidence to support it. If the Qur'an in our hands is different from the archetypal Qur'an and has had human interpretation woven in to it, in view of Barlas¹, then it should not be used by Barlas as a source for her claims or for any kind of derivation of Islamic principles. It should have the same status as Hadīth and Tafsīr as far as her hermeneutic model is concerned. God has not just taken the responsibility of preserving the Qur'an, but also its compilation and explanation, a verse that shall be discussed later in more detail. (Al-Qiyamah:19)

iii) Regarding the potential interpretation of verses, Barlas believes that 'each ayah can be interpreted differently' and thus 'cannot be expected to deliver a single authoritative meaning'.

Analysis:

Again, lack of in depth knowledge of The Qur'anic text and Arabic language on part of Barlas becomes apparent as verses in the Qur'an, with regard to interpretation, can be divided in to two categories:

- 1) **Qat'iyuddalalah** (قطعي الدلالة): those verses that can carry one and only one possible meaning. For example:

(وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَإِنْ كَانَ لَهُنَّ وَلَدٌ فَلَكُمُ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكُنَ مِنْ
بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ يُوصِيَنَّ بِهَا أُوْ دَيْنٍ وَلَهُنَّ الرُّبُعُ مِمَّا تَرَكُنَمِنْ لَكُمْ وَلَدٌ فَلَهُنَّ
الشَّيْءُ مِمَّا تَرَكُنَمِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ ثُوْصُونَ بِهَا أُوْ دَيْنٍ وَإِنْ كَانَ رَجُلٌ يُورَثُ كَلَالَةً أَوْ امْرَأَةً وَلَهُ أَخٌ أَوْ

1 - This view has been quoted from Muhammad Arkoun's work, Rethinking Islam: Common questions, uncommon answers, 1994, Pg 36.

أَخْتُ فَلِكُلٌّ وَاحِدٌ مِنْهُمَا السُّدُسُ فَإِنْ كَانُوا أَكْثَرَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ فَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ فِي الْثُلُثِ مِنْ بَعْدِ وَصِيَّةٍ
يُوصَى بِهَا أَوْ دِينٍ)

“And for you is half of what your wives leave if they have no child. But if they have a child, for you is one fourth of what they leave, after any bequest they [may have] made or debt. And for them [i.e., the wives] is one fourth if you leave no child. But if you leave a child, then for them is an eighth of what you leave, after any bequest you [may have] made or debt. And if a man or woman leaves neither ascendants nor descendants but has a brother or a sister, then for each one of them is a sixth. But if they are more than two, they share a third, after any bequest which was made or debt, as long as there is no detriment [caused]. [This is] an ordinance from God, and God is Knowing and Forbearing.”¹

(حُرِّمَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ أُمَّهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُكُمْ وَأَخْوَاتُكُمْ وَعَمَّاتُكُمْ وَخَالَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَاتُ الْأَخِ وَبَنَاتُ الْأُخْتِ
وَأُمَّهَاتُكُمُ الْلَّاتِي أَرْضَعْنَكُمْ وَأَخْوَاتُكُمْ مِنَ الرَّضَاعَةِ وَأُمَّهَاتُ نِسَائِكُمْ وَرَبَّاتُكُمُ الْلَّاتِي فِي خَجُورِكُمْ
مِنْ نِسَائِكُمُ الْلَّاتِي دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُونُوا دَخَلْتُمْ بِهِنَّ فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَحَلَّتِ الْأَبْنَاءِكُمُ الَّذِينَ
مِنْ أَصْلَابِكُمْ وَأَنْ تَجْمَعُوا بَيْنَ الْأَخْتَيْنِ)

“Prohibited to you [for marriage] are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your father's sisters, your mother's sisters, your brother's daughters, your sister's daughters, your [milk] mothers who nursed you, your sisters through nursing, your wives' mothers, and your step-daughters under your guardianship [born] of your wives unto whom you have gone in. But if you have not gone in unto them, there is no sin upon you. And [also prohibited are] the wives of your sons who are from your

1(An-Nisa:12)

[own] loins, and that you take [in marriage] two sisters simultaneously, except for what has already occurred. Indeed, God is ever Forgiving and Merciful.”¹

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرِكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكُ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَ إِنَّمَا

عَظِيمًا

“Indeed, God does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with God has certainly fabricated a tremendous sin.”²

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

“Say, “He is God, [who is] One.”³

These are just a few examples of Qat’iyudallah. They carry only and only one meaning in them. Now, if one may ask how does any of these verses be interpreted differently and how come their meaning be non-authoritative except to someone who does not know Arabic?! As for the example of ‘bismillah ar-rahman ar-rahim’ that she has referred as being rendered in six different ways by exegetes is also misplaced since the work she has quoted from by Dr. Mushirul Haq is ‘Translating the Qur’an: Human longing for knowing God’s mind’ and it is obvious from the title that it is about translations of The Qur’an and not about Tafsīr. In translations, the phrase has been rendered in different ways. However, all of the translations are efforts by individuals to convey the world of meanings the phrase has in Arabic and all the different translations are not mutually exclusive so as to render them different.

1(An-Nisa :23)

2(An-Nisa:48)

3(Al-Ikhlas:1)

as Qur'an because what makes Qur'an beyond doubt i.e. its transmission as *Mutawatir* also makes the *Hadīth* transmitted in this manner beyond doubt. How can one sanctify a word said by a man and reject another when both have similar authenticity?? One cannot believe in the word of God without believing and accepting the word of His prophet because it the same tongue that vocalizes both the words and it is the same tongue that is telling that such and such is the word of God!

2- **Tafsīr:**

i) While defining *Tafsīr* Asma Barlas relates from Burton that: “*Tafsīr* remains an “abstract, theoretical, intellectual” and essentially literary activity”¹ reducing *Tafsīr* to an impractical activity that is good enough only as a piece of literature.

Analysis:

The word *Tafsīr* is from ‘fasr’ which literally means ‘to uncover’. Linguistically it is used to make something clear and to explain it in detail². As a religious terminology it means: a science that explores The Qur'an in an effort to ascertain the intended meaning of God to the best of human abilities³. It includes the following aspects⁴:

- 1) The method of delivery of words i.e. their correct pronunciation as taught by The Prophet.
- 2) Lexical meaning of the words.
- 3) Study of the structure of words and their compounds in the light of their etymology and semantics.

1 - Asma Barlas, Pg 38.

مناهل العرفة في علوم القرآن، محمد عبد العظيم الزرقاني (المترافق: 1367هـ)، مطبعة عيسى البليبي الحلبي وشركاه، الطبعة الثالثة، ج 2، ص 3-2

3 - *ibid*

4 - Muhammad Taqi Uthmāni, 340-341

- 4) Grammatical analysis of the syntactical structures.
- 5) The ultimate meaning of the verses with due consideration to the background of the verses and the Ahadīth in that particular regard. Knowledge of other sciences and disciplines is also used to shed light on the meaning where needed. The sciences that are associated with the *Tafsīr* of Qur'an include knowledge of:
 - i) Chronology and occasions of revelation.
 - ii) Abrogated verses.
 - iii) The verses revealed in Makkah and Madina.
 - iv) *Qira'at*(readings of the Qur'an that have been taught by the Prophet)
 - v) Sunnah of The Prophet and Ahadīth.
 - vi) The miraculous aspect of the Qur'an.

All these sciences are tools to uncover the message of God in The Qur'an so as to lead our lives and built our societies according to His instructions. A science that aims to discover how the creator of this universe wants His creation to built up the human civilization is not just an abstract, theoretical, literary piece of work!! It is the highest form service to the humanity. The knowledge of all the sciences given above promotes a better understanding of The Qur'an as it helps the exegete understand the text in its historical context while getting access to those meanings that relate to his era. This leads us to another misconception.

- ii) *Initially Tafsīr began "as an oral tradition of Hadīth transmission" founded on the opinions of exegetes.' However, with time it came to be confused with The Qur'an and thus to be given a suprahistorical status. Tafsīr also became the peg on which "sectarian and scholastic theologians were able to hang their own doctrines"*

(Poonawala). The confusion of Qur'an with Tafsīr goes back as early as the classical period.' An example is given that of Al-Tabari who would "introduce each of his commentaries with the formula 'God says . . .' postulating implicitly the perfect equation of exegesis with the intended meaning and, of course, with the semantic content of the words in each verse."¹

Analysis:

Tafsīr did start as an oral tradition of Hadīth transmission since in the beginning the only form of 'Tafsīr was Tafsīr bil ma'thoor'. When Hadīth started being compiled around the end of the first century, Tafsīr of The Prophet and sayings of his companions regarding the explanation of Qur'anic verses were gathered in a separate chapter of the Hadīth books. All that these scholars did was to gather every Hadīth they had in their knowledge and organize them in to chapters. The only part opinion had to play is in the categorization of the Aḥadīth and how to organize them. The Hadīth experts always had a set of rules upon which they would accept or reject Aḥadīth. These were not based on personal and subjective opinions. They were set up with thorough objectivity (as will be explored later) and were applied on every Hadīth to make sure it is authentic. The exegetes during the era before the compilation of Hadīth was complete around late third century would expound The Qur'an in the light of whatever Aḥadīth were available to them (which were not all the Aḥadīth as available to us now). This became the chief reason of difference of opinion among great scholars like heads of the four schools of thought in jurisprudence.

However, Tafsīr of the Qur'an, even by The Prophet, was never at any time confused with the text of The Qur'an. Only 'Mutawatir' Hadīth of The Prophet, as explained earlier, is given a similar status but that too only in the context of legal

¹-Asma Barlas, pg 39.

injunctions because he was not just a moral teacher but a law giver as well and he did not speak anything except what God approval. In fact, if he took action that was not according to God's wishes then He would immediately send down verses correcting his actions and even at times reprimanding him. As for the sayings of the companions of the Prophet in the books of *Ahadīth*, they are clearly distinguished from the sayings of The Prophet.

Emphasis on different aspects in the work of scholars of different eras has been placed in accordance to the religious and social needs of the time. During the era of the Prophet these sciences did not exist in the form of disciplines¹. It is with the passage of time and the expansion of the Muslim world that the need to do *Tafsīr* in order to cater to the needs of the new audience who did not know Arabic and had not lived the era of the revelation nor were they aware of the teachings of the Prophet and his Sunnah. The need also arose from the onslaught of foreign ideologies which came with the new audience in order to know what guidance God has given regarding them. That is why we see that the method of doing *Tafsīr* has been changing over time. As mentioned earlier, it was only around the time of Al-Tabari that complete verse by verse *Tafsīr* of The Qur'an started. After the classical period and the compilation of *Hadīth* (4th century), there did come a period of stagnation, as is observed by Az-Zahabi². During this period, original works were rarely produced by Muslims. Instead they elaborated on the works of great scholars before them and wrote commentaries on their works or even commentaries on their commentaries. It was even claimed that the door of *Ijtihad* had closed. This period of stagnation coincided with the stagnation, in fact disintegration of the Abbasid Empire. The great contributions of the Muslims to all fields of life, not just in religion, took place during this golden period of their

1 - Muhammad Taqi Uthmāni, pg 339

2 - انظر: التفسير والمفسرون، ج 8، ص 108-111

history. This period of stagnation was marked by ‘Taqlid’. Barlas is right in saying that with time *Tafsīr* acquired a super-historical status and became the peg on which “sectarian and scholastic theologians were able to hang their own doctrines”. However, she has got her timeline a bit too wrong as this phenomenon took place in the period of stagnation that has just been described and not during the classical period as claimed. The example of Al-Tabari that has been quoted is a big lie attributed to the great Imam Al-Tabari as he does not “introduce each of his commentaries with the formula ‘God says’”, he introduces it in the following way:

”القول في تأويل قوله:....” Which means: what has been said in explanation of (so and so) ayat. In fact, for every narration that Al-Tabari has quoted, he has related the complete chain of narrators leading up to the person who said it. Can a person who was so conscious of what he attributes to people, attribute something to God??!

Scholars like Khatib Al Baghdadi (d.463AH), Imam Ghazali (d .505AH), Al-Juwayni(478 AH), Fakhruddin Al-Razi (d.606 AH), Az-Zahabi (d.487 AH), Ibn Al-Jawzi(d.597AH),Ibn Rushd(d.595 AH),Ibn Arabi(Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani(d.852AH), Jalaluddin Al-Suyuti(d.911AH), Ahmad al-Faruqi as-Sirhindi(d.1034AH), were able to rise above their contemporary stagnation and think originally.

3) Hadīth:

The section about Hadīth is full of claims that have not been substantiated by examples.

- i) Barlas had taken the definition of Hadith from the Goldziher. She relates that:

“While hadīth is an oral report derived from, or ascribed to, the Prophet, the Sunnah is a compendium of practical religious or legal rules regardless of ‘whether or not there exists an oral tradition for it’ (Goldziher). ”¹

Analysis:

Hadīth is every saying, action, tacit approval or characteristic that is attributed to The Prophet and Sunnah is the same, the only minor difference being that Sunnah is based upon more than one different narration while Hadīth can be based on only one authentic narration as well.² However, both the Sunnah and the Hadīth have to be backed up by oral tradition! There has to be authentic narrations proving that a particular saying, action, approval or characteristic belongs to the Prophet. What was the need of taking a definition so basic and important to the issue from an orientalist who is known for his biased study of Hadīth and whose claims have been refuted by many Muslim scholars and in the most academic manner?³ The least Barlas could have done is to take her definitions from those who defined them in the first place i.e. the Muslims!

ii) Regarding the development of the Hadith, Barlas says:

“Theorists “view most of the collection as resulting from ‘the religious, historical and social development of Islam during the first two centuries’ scholars and political rulers tried to achieve this goal not by imposing a uniform or monolithic reading of Islam or the Prophet’s Sunnah on the people, but by incorporating into the rubric of Islam existing ideas, discourses, and

1 - Asma Barlas, Pg 43.

2 - Siddiui, Dr.Muhammad Saeed, *Usool Al Fiqh:Sunnah,Shari’ah Academy, International Islamic University, Islamabad.* 2002, pg 15.

انظر: الرد على مزاعم المستشرقين جولد تسهير ويوسف شاخت ومن أيدهما من المستشرقين،لعبد الله بن عبد الرحمن الخطيب،مجمع الملك فهد لطباعة المصحف - 3 الشريف بالمدينة المنورة

practices, including some that were in tension with and even contradicted the Qur'ānic teachings.”¹

Analysis:

Every narration attributed to the Prophet is supported by a chain of narrators whose biographies and extents of reliability in narration of Hadīth has been investigated and recorded by scholars. The political, social and religious development did instigate a whole literature of Ahadīth that was attributed to the Prophet to serve religious and political goals. Moreover, Judaic traditions (the major source of misogynistic narrations) also spread among Muslims and some even found their way in to the books of Tafsīr. The Hadīth scholars, however, never incorporated them in to the rubric of Islam. In fact, from the very inception of this phenomenon, they reacted immediately and became very cautious from who they take the Ahadīth. They no longer accepted just anyone's narration. They accepted only those narrations whose chain of narrators was well known and reliable. Eventually even separate books were compiled containing fabricated and weak Ahadīth and narrations from the Judaic traditions in order to facilitate the seekers of knowledge. Today any student of Islamic studies has access to all the authentic Ahadīth as well as weak and fabricated ones due to the efforts of the classical scholars. That is why; it is of utmost importance that anyone who wants to do Tafsīr of The Qur'an has in depth knowledge of Hadīth so that he is not deceived by the unauthentic narrations that happen to be in some books of Tafsīr. As for the books of Tafsīr, that contain weak, fabricated or Judaic traditions, later scholars of this Ummah have studied them and pointed out every such narration and purified these works of their shortcomings.

¹ - Pg 44.

iii) About Shariah Barlas believes that:

“Even the Sharī‘ah was formulated not by adhering strictly to the Qur’ān, or by imposing a uniform legal code on diverse cultures, but by absorbing into the principles of jurisprudence (fiqh) doctrines on which there was communal accord but which were sometimes irreconcilable with the Qur’ān’s precepts.”¹

Analysis:

Regarding Hadīth and Shariah, it has been said that scholars and political leaders dealt with the diversity of cultures not by imposing a uniform legal code but by incorporating in to Hadīth and Shariah ideologies, practices and doctrines that were sometimes irreconcilable with the Qur’anic precepts. Barlas is contradicting the whole thesis of her book by making such a statement. One the one hand Barlas contends that the only way The Qur’ān can be made to cater to the needs of all times is by a reconstructions of the values taught by the Qur’ān in the historical context of Arabs. This implies that the application of The Qur’anic teachings cannot be replicated in our times as our societies differ from the Arab society of that time. If such is the case, then the new societies that were becoming part of the Muslim empire were also significantly different from the society in Madina. How can then a uniform code of law be implemented on all those societies??The reality is that Islamic Shariah deals with the application of two types of laws on humans: laws concerning Ibadat (worship) and laws concerning Mu’amalat (dealings among people). As for the laws regarding worship, they are universally applied while for the laws regarding dealings due consideration is given to the acceptable social practices of the society as long as they do not go against the Qur’anic teachings and principles. In fact, Imam Abu

¹ - Ibid.

Hanifa makes Urf(accepted social practices) and Imam Malik makes Masaleh Mursalah as one of the secondary sources of derivation of Islamic laws. This is very much in accordance with the Qur'anic universal:

(يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ لِكُمُ الْعُسْرَ)

“God intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship”¹

Hence, it is not the aim of Shariah to impose a strict uniform code of law without considering the natural variations in societies. While the differences were catered to by scholars in their respective geographical locations, it is seen historically Hanafi school of thought that had its roots in the Iraq was promoted by the Abbasids. This is as far as the influence of state prevailed over Shariah. It had no influence, whatsoever, on literary, intellectual and theological development of elements in religion. In fact, the famous historical dispute between Mu'tazilah, who were supported by the state and the Ash'riyah school of thought is evidence enough that the true scholars of this Ummah were never overpowered by the state to such an extent as to lose sight of Haqq (Truth).

iv) Barlas also comments on the manner in which the Ahadith were collected:

“As a result of focusing on the narrator’s integrity rather than on the historical consistency of the narrative, critics let pass “even the loudest anachronisms provided that the isnad [was] correct.”² ... “Muslims must study not just the Ahādīth, but also revelation and the Sunnah historically (his emphasis). As he says, ‘If it is historically true, then it is fraught with meaning for us now, and, indeed, for ever’. Hence, by refusing to take an historical approach to the

1(Al-Baqara:185)

2 - Quoted from Goldzieher,Pg 48.

Aḥādīth, Muslims are ruling out this possibility and propagating a ‘‘thousand year-old sacred folly’’¹ instead. ’’²

Analysis:

To have accepted such a claim from an orientalist without investigation is a show of weak academic capabilities on part of Barlas. It is a known fact among students of Hadīth that when a Hadīth is scrutinized, it is not just the ‘sanad’ that is investigated; the ‘Matn’ is also studied. If the ‘Matn’ contains any discrepancy such as contradiction with Qur’ān or Sunnah, known historical or universal facts or the kind of language that cannot have been the saying of The Prophet then such a Hadīth is also rejected.

Muslims have already studied “not just the Aḥādīth, but also revelation and the Sunnah historically” and that is why it can be said with conviction that it is not a “fourteen hundred year old folly”.

2.2.2 Intertextualities and Extratextualities

Under this heading, Barlas has carried out a detailed discussion about the role of Sunnah, Shariah and State in shaping religious meaning. According to Barlas, all the three elements pertaining to religion, have played a negative role in the defining the relations of intertextualities and extratextualities.

Sunnah:

- i) Regarding what Sunnah really constitutes of, Barlas says:

“(M)any of the customary practices, especially of the Arabs, were incorporated into the Aḥādīth and thus into the Prophet’s Sunnah since the details of the Sunnah are

1 - Quoted from Rahman.

2 - Pg 49.

recorded in the *Ahādīth*.”... “*Sunnah* is not a reflection of The Prophet’s *praxi*...Rather it is a reflection of ‘the free thinking activity of the early legists of Islam who had made deductions from the existing *Sunna* or practice and— most important of all—had incorporated’ into it *Byzantine, Arab, Jewish, and Persian elements* (*Rahman*).”¹

Analysis:

The word ‘*sunnah*’ is derived from the verb ‘*sanna*’ which means to define/establish a path.² In the Qur‘an, the word ‘*sunnah*’ is used in the context of the path the previous nations had trodden whether good or bad, such as:

(لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ الْأُوَّلِينَ)

“They will not believe in it, while there has already occurred the precedent of the former peoples.”³

(يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيَتَبَيَّنَ لَكُمْ وَيَهْدِيَكُمْ سُنَّةَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ وَيَنْهَا عَلَيْكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ (26))
“God wants to make clear to you [the lawful from the unlawful] and guide you to the [good] practices of those before you and to accept your repentance. And God is Knowing and Wise.” (**An-Nisa:26**)

It has also been used in the context of the path of action that God follows with His creation:

(سُنَّةُ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لِسُنَّةَ اللَّهِ تَبْدِيلًا)
“[This is] the established way of God with those who passed on before; and you will not find in the way of God any change.”⁴

1 - Pg 64-65.

2 المجمع الوسيط لإبراهيم مصطفى، أحمد حسن الزيات، حامد عبد القادر و محمد علي النجار، دار الدعوة، 1989، ص 455

3(Al-Hajr:13)

4(Al-Ahzab:62)

The Sunnah of the Prophet became sacred not just because he was given the role to explain and to exemplify The Qur'an but also because God declared His obedience equal to The Prophet's obedience:

(كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيْكُمْ رَسُولًا مِنْكُمْ يَنْهَا عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِنَا وَنُزِّلَكُمْ وَيَعْلَمُكُمُ الْكِتَابُ وَالْحِكْمَةُ وَيَعْلَمُكُمْ

(مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ)

“Just as We have sent among you a messenger from yourselves reciting to you. Our verses and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom[his Sunnah]and teaching you that which you did not know.”¹

(وَإِذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةُ يَعْظِمُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ

(اللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ)

“And remember the favor of God upon you and what has been revealed to you of the Book [i.e., the Qur'an] and wisdom [i.e., the Prophet's Sunnah] by which He instructs you. And fear God and know that God is Knowing of all things.”²

(مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّ فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا)

“He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed God; but those who turn away - We have not sent you over them as a guardian.”³

(وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيَطَّاعَ يَأْذِنُ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ

وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوْجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَابًا رَحِيمًا (64) فَلَا وَرَبَّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا

شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

1(Al-Baqarah:151)

2(Al-Baqara:231)

3(An-Nisa:80)

“But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [O Muhammad], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission.”¹

(قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلُّوا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حَمَلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حَمَلْتُمْ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوهُ

تَهْتَدُوا وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ)

“Say, “Obey God and obey the Messenger; but if you turn away - then upon him is only that [duty] with which he has been charged, and upon you is that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly] guided. And there is not upon the Messenger except the [responsibility for] clear notification.”²

The above verses are very clear that The Prophet has a unique status as a teacher, expounder, and as one who commands obedience. In fact, The Qur'an also states that The Prophet does not speak anything of his own accord. Everything he says is revelation.

(وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ . إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ)

“Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. It is not but a revelation revealed”³

All these verses show explicitly the sacredness God has ascribed to The Prophet and the ways in which his Sunnah is to be taken as an example. In addition, The Prophet himself had also warned the believers in very severe words of the outcome of ascribing any lie to him:

1(An-Nisa:65)

2 (An-Noor:54)

3(An-Najm:3-4)

(مَنْ كَذَبَ عَلَيَّ فَلَيَتَبَوَّأْ مَقْعَدَهُ مِنَ النَّارِ¹)

“Whoever ascribes a lie to me should make his abode Hellfire”

How can a people who rebelled against their tribal and filial affiliations, resolved against their strong traditions and bid farewell to their homes and prestige can then revert to those same traditions after The Prophet's death? These people were so particular about learning Islam from The Prophet that they would not miss a chance of being in the Prophet's company if they could help it. If they missed it they would ask each other what he had said in their absence. The Ashab e Suffa even devoted their lives to study under The Prophet and would not do anything else. The Prophet had even ordered the Muslims in the famous farewell pilgrimage to convey his message to those who are absent and had time and again told them to convey his words just as they hear to others who might understand them better.² For the companions and their successors, the word Hadīth or Sunnah meant the Hadīth and Sunnah of The Prophet only, not anyone else. The very fact that they held it so sacred denies any claim they would let anything foreign be included in it. And if there were some Arab practices that were carried on after advent of Islam and were practiced by the companions, it was because God did not forbid them! God did not send Islam to annihilate every trace of Arab civilization, Islam was sent guide them to the path of Abraham and guide them to the straight path. If their culture, or for that matter any culture, contains elements that are not against Islamic principles then it is not required of Muslims to give up those. The distinction between The Prophet's Sunnah and practices of other people was so clear among the classical scholars that when the

¹ مختصر صنحبة الإمام البخاري، أبو عبد الرحمن محمد ناصر الدين، بين الحاج نوح بن نجاشي بن أدم، الأشقروري اللبناني (المتوفى: 1420هـ)، «كتبة الشعارف المثلث» -

والتوزيع، الرياض، الطبعة: الأولى، 1422 هـ - 2002 م، ج 1 ص 58.

² السنة ومكانها في التشريع الإسلامي المخطوط بين حسني اليعاعي (المتوفى: 1384هـ)، المكتب الإسلامي: دمشق - سوريا، بيروت - لبنان، الطبعة: الثالثة، 1402 - 2

٦ - 1982 م (بیروت)، ج 1 ص 51-61

scholars saw that ordinary people have started fabricating Ahadīth, they immediately reacted and started investigating the authenticity before accepting the Ahadīth. In fact, the whole movement of compilation during the second and third centuries revolves around separating the authentic from the weak Ahadīth, fabricated and Judaic traditions from the Ahadīth of The Prophet. While, there is no denying that just narrations got incorporated in to the Islamic oral traditional, the distinction between them was clear near the Hadīth specialists and they took the necessary steps to protect the Prophetic tradition from foreign elements. This misunderstanding of Barlas which she has quoted from Rahman actually goes back to Golziher whose objections on Islam, especially Hadīth, have proven to be quite baseless by a number of scholars¹.

ii) On the relative authority of Qur'an and Sunnah, Barlas comments:

"With time the authorities of The Qur'an and Sunnah were reversed. 'Only after the third/ninth century did the maxim ' '[The] sunna rules on the Qur'an, but the Qur'an does not rule on the sunna' ' gain acceptance among Muslims, being preserved for posterity in the theory ' 'of consensus (ijma)' '(Brown). '... ' Since the Sunnah's content came to be fixed by interpreters, the Qur'an's ' applicability and thus authority [came to be] fixed by the sunnah, the sunnah by [their] opinions, and the opinions by subsequent scholarship ' '. By linking their own authority with that of the Sunnah, and the Sunnah's authority with that of the Qur'an, interpreters of sacred knowledge became its architects instead, reducing, by a series of mediations, Divine Discourse to their own interpretations of it. '²

¹ Some of them are: Ali Hassan Abdul Qadir, Mustafa Siba'I, Muhammad Al-Ghazali, Noor ud din Atar, Muhammad Hasan Jabal, Muhammad Tahir Al-Kurdi, Abdu; Fattah Shilbi, Rashad Muhammad Salim, Abdullah Abdur Rahman Al-Khateeb.

² - Pg 66.

Analysis:

This misconception of Barlas, taken from Brown, is not just a grave misreading of the aphorism but also a misstatement of facts. Ibn Abdul Barr explains this aphorism very clearly by saying that it means the Sunnah explains what is meant by The Qur'an¹. Moreover, with the passage of time, the authorities of Qur'an and Sunnah did not get reversed. In fact, the importance and authority of Sunnah began to be neglected. After the fourth century, most of the people considered religious authorities among their people became obsessed with the Taqleed of their particular schools of thought so much so that they neglected the role of the Sunnah in Islamic jurisprudence². Moreover, the theory is not based in Ijma', it is based in The Qur'an. The Qur'an specifies very clearly that the job of The Prophet was to explain and clarify The Qur'an. The status of Sunnah was understood as such from the very beginning. The relative status of the four sources of jurisprudence (Qur'an, Hadīth, Ijma, Qiyas) is agreed upon by scholars of all eras. In fact, it is exactly this order that places Ijtihad at the fourth level, that possible human error and subjectivity on part of an individual is eliminated since any opinion of an individual has to first pass the test of Qur'anic principles, then Hadīth and the agreed upon opinion of all the scholars of a given era.

iii) Barlas also expresses her views on Ijtihad:

“Ijtihād refers to a mode of reasoning that allows for ‘the interpolation of meaning’ by enabling one to determine ‘the meaning of the revealed text in its own historical context’ and therefore also ‘how to act in accordance with that meaning in changed circumstances’ (Sonn).” ‘In the beginning Ijtihad and Ijma

الجزء 1، ص189 ارشاد الفحول الى تحقيق الحق من علم الأصول لمحمد بن علي الشوكاني، دار القصبة، ط2000-1
حجۃ الله البالغة لشاه ولی الله الدهلوی، دار الجبل، ط1، ج 1، ص 260-263

worked together in balance in order to create religious meaning. However, Al-Shafi changed that. 'This move was consummated in al-Shafi's work and originated, ironically, in his attempt to protect the Sunnah's authority by establishing that of the Ahādīth on the grounds that the latter represented communal consensus, hence God's Will. Yet, the effects of his ruling were to reverse the relationship between Ijtihād and Ijmā' by a priori privileging Ijmā'. As the outcome of critical thinking (Ijtihād), consensus (Ijmā') could be progressive; as the means for proscribing it, however, consensus could only foster a tradition based in "theological censorship" (Moazzam). 'Muslims must revive Ijtihād-Ijmā', both because Ijtihād is the "central hermeneutic" of Islamic reasoning and jurisprudence (Sonn), and because the Ijmā' inherited from the past rests on an outmoded and thin consensus of jurists, not a consensus of the whole community, and certainly not of the women in the communities of Islam. '"¹

Analysis:

Barlas had taken the definition of Sonn² to explain Ijtihad. This, however, represents a limited picture of the process of Ijtihad. Muslim scholars define and practice Ijtihad as a process by which the mujtahid utilizes all his faculties and knowledge in order to derive a legal injunction regarding a practical issue³. This Ijtihad is based on the principles present in The Qur'an and Sunnah and the examples in them. As for Ijmah,

1 - Pg 68.

2 - Tamara Sonn is an American academic who specializes in Islamic and religious studies. She is currently the Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani Professor in the History of Islam at Georgetown University. She was previously Kenan Professor of Religion and Humanities at the College of William & Mary.

3 - البحر المحيط ج 8، ص 227

it is defined as the consensus of the mujtahids if an era on a particular issue¹. The very definition of the two processes shows that they work together. There is no Ijma' without the process of Ijtihad. How can then they have worked together in the beginning and then later stop working together?! Shafii changed nothing about the relationship of the two. He just the boundaries between the four sources more clear. Ijma' always had a place higher than Ijtihad. The era of the Sahaba is the biggest witness of it. Whenever Abu Bakr and Omar(r.a.), the first two caliphs of Islam, faced a new issue they would gather the prominent companions who were known for their knowledge of The Qur'an and Sunnah, each of whom would give his own Ijtihad and whatever they all agreed upon was implemented. What Al-Shafii said was that the very fact that Sahaba agreed upon an issue meant it was based on a definite source of evidence otherwise one or the other was bound to disagree². It should also be noted that Ijma in the true sense of the word only took place during the era of the rightly guided caliphs. After this, agreement of scholars in particular geographical areas has taken place but Ijma of the Ummah has not been achieved since then. It is thus the Ijma of Sahaba particularly that later generation narrated and acted upon.

The possibility of such a consensus as being wrong is ruled out because such a large number of Mujtahids could not have agreed upon something that had even the slightest possibility of doubt in it. It was not an 'outmoded and thin consensus' as claimed; it was based on the most up to date sources of revelation i.e. The Qur'an and the Sunnah of The Prophet and it was based upon agreement of all companions of The Prophet, even the women³. Omar (r.a) would gather all the people of Madina (including women) and take their opinion upon the issue and would even send for

1 - Arif, Dr Mahmood Al-Hassan, Usululfiqh: Ijma', Sharia Academy, IIUI,2002, pg 10.

المستصفى في علم الأصول لأبي حامد الغزالى، ط أميرية بولاق، 1322هـ، ج 3، ص 173 - 2

الإجماع في الشريعة الإسلامية، ترشدي عليان، الجامعة الإسلامية، الطبعة: السنة العاشرة، العدد الأول، جمادى الآخرة 1397هـ ميلاد - 3 يونيو 1977 ميلاد - 3

taking the opinion of Ayesha (r.a). As for those who might not have been present at the time when the caliph was asking people for their opinion, they would later hear about it. It was unheard about the companions that if they heard an opinion against the Sunnah they would keep quiet about it. It was just not possible for them to remain silent as the Sunnah of The Prophet was not the sunnah of any ordinary person. It was very sacred for them. More, Arabs were nation known for their valour and fearlessness. Even the women of the community had enough courage and faith to speak up against the decision of a caliph like Omar.

iv) About the four schools of thoughts Barlas says:

*“the principles of jurisprudence (*usūl al-fiqh*) are derived by way of the Sunnah, hence by limiting the *Qur’ān*’s canonical authority”. An integral feature of the *Shari‘ah* is thus its eclecticism deriving from conflicts between its sources and also from the growth of four legal schools in Sunni Islam ‘founded by and named after early masters of Islamic jurisprudence,’ the Shafi, Maliki, Hanafi, and Hanbali, who ‘agreed to differ . . . and, more importantly, to accept each other’s orthodoxy’ (Peters). Far from being a ‘single, logical whole,’ the *Shari‘ah* reveals a ‘diversity of opinion’ not only across schools but within them as well (An-Naim)...’ by the sixth/twelfth century the Sunni schools had agreed ‘that these four ways of looking at the *Qur’ān* and *Sunna* were sufficient to meet the needs of the community and guide them to fulfill the will of God for the rest of human history’ (Sonn). by the sixth/twelfth century the Sunni schools had agreed ‘that these four ways of looking at the *Qur’ān* and *Sunna* were sufficient to meet the needs of the community and guide them to fulfill the will of God for the rest of human history’ (Sonn).’*

Analysis:

Any student of Islamic Studies who has touched even the basics of jurisprudence knows for a fact that Usululfiqh is derived from two primary sources: Qur'an and Hadīth. Even if it was derived only from the Sunnah, it does not limit the authority of the Qur'an as the Sunnah is the most authentic demonstration and embodiment of The Qur'an. Every principle that is derived from Sunnah has roots in the Qur'an.

Barlas claims that Shari'ah is derived from conflicting sources and that is why they have differences. What conflicting sources are they if one might ask as there is no conflict within the Qur'an or between The Qur'an and authentic Ahadīth of the Prophet! And how is a contradiction possible when the source of both is same i.e. God. The same person who gave us The Qur'an also gave the Hadīth. Did he go against The Qur'an? Not possible because God had a constant check on him and immediately reprimanded him if he did an action not in line with God's wishes. The only other possibility left is that The Hadīth did not reach us in its pure form. Such a claim can only be made by someone who has no idea about the history and the methodology of traditional scholars in collection of Ahadīth. The high standards of textual criticism that they used have been unsurpassed in the whole human history. These scholars did not only investigate the reliability of the narrators but also analyzed the text critically. Any Hadīth had to pass the following test¹:

- 1) The chain of narrators had to be continuous i.e. there has to be proof that every narrator in the chain has actually met and heard from the narrator above him in the chain.

- 2) The narrators had to be upright, practicing Muslims whose life demonstrated that their actions did not contradict the teachings of Islam.
- 3) They had to be known for possessing sound knowledge and good memory.
- 4) The content should not go against the narrations of the majority of the scholars.
- 5) Devoid of any kind of defect related to Matn or Sanad like misunderstanding on part of a narrator.

The four schools of thought do have differences but these differences are not regarding the sources of Islamic jurisprudence. Nor are these differences over principle issues of religion. There are more than twenty thousand precepts pertaining to principle issues on which there is agreement compared to less than a thousand precepts on which there is disagreement¹. These concern the off shoots of certain issues and not the principle issues. Why the four schools of thought agreed to differ and accept the views of other; it is because they were aware of the dynamic element of Shari'a which necessitates difference of opinion as per the need of different communities. This difference that exists in the minor details of issues cannot, with any logical chain of reasoning, negate the whole Shari'a corpus. On the one hand, Barlas is criticizing the closure of the door of Ijtihad and on the other hand she negates the difference of opinion that originates with the doors of Ijtihad open. This is clearly a most non academic way of dealing with any issue.

- v) Regarding the principles of Istihsan, *Istislah* and *Istishab*, Barlas says: “*Extratextual sources of Istihsan, Istislah and Istishab allow necessity to overrule*

1 البحر المحيط في أصول الفقه،أبو عبد الله بدر الدين محمد بن عبد الله بن بهادر الزركشي (المتوفى: 794هـ)،دار الكتبية،طبعة الأولى، 1414هـ - 1994م، ج 6، ص 384

texts. 'Not only does the Sharī'ah not always adhere to the Sunnah, then, but it embodies 'medieval principles of reason and objects of public good [that] may no longer be valid today'" (*An-Naim*)'¹

Analysis:

The extratextual sources of Istihsan, Istislah and Istishab are based in the Qura'nic verse of :

(يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْيُسْرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ لَكُمُ الْعُسْرَ)

"God intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship." (Al-Baqara:185)

All the three sources are considered secondary which means that they are bound by the rules of the two primary sources of Al-Qur'an and Sunnah. No Ijtihad that is based on any of the three sources but goes against the two primary sources is acceptable. This, however, is only possible if the Mujtahid, despite his effort, made a mistake of judgment. Otherwise, his opinion cannot be in contradiction with the texts. Even if we do accept that the four schools of thought erred upon an issue, their agreement on it still does not invalidate Shari'ah. It is still not considered Ijma' of the Ummah which is the third agreed upon source of Shari'ah. Their opinions are still open to scrutiny. In fact, all the four Imams have clearly said that any opinion of theirs found to be against The Qur'an or Sunnah should be rejected². As for those decisions that were taken for public good, they were works of Ijtihad suitable for that time and community. The mujtahids of today can always revise those and give their

1 - Pg 74.

2 - الحديث حجة بنفسه في المقلدة والأحكام لناصر الدين ألباتي، مكتبة المعرفة النشر والتوزيع، الطبعة الأولى، 1425هـ، ص 75-76.

opinions as per the needs of today as Ijtihad continues to be one of the sources of Islamic law.

2.2.3 The State and Knowledge Creation

Barlas believes that the Islamic state manipulated the way the public viewed Islam and its injunctions:

'(T)he Abbasid state helped to foster... the rise of a "proto-Sunni elite" and a legacy of collaboration between the state and religious scholars... '¹

'As Mernissi argues in this context, every "claiming of Islam as a tradition is a political act. Every 'tradition' is a political construct, a sophisticated editing of 'memory.' " If this is so, then the most sophisticated editing of this memory occurred during the reign of the Abbasids through reconstructions of history itself.'²

'The Abbasids suppressed dissenters 'with a determination hitherto unknown in Islam' (Kennedy), even having some ulama flogged for political dissent. Their persecution quashed the pluralism inherent in different readings of Islam'.³

Analysis:

During the life of The Prophet and the era of The Rightly Guided Caliphs the political head and the religious head of the Muslim state was one and the same. The political government and religious authority had started parting ways with the beginning of Ummayyad caliphate. While the state constantly moved away from the model example set by The Prophet and the caliphs, not just in their way of governing but also in their adherence to Islamic practices, the jury remained specialists of Islamic law as it was this law that was implemented. The state had little control over

1 - Pg 81.

2 - Pg 84.

3 - Pg 85.

the jury. The jury remained independent especially during the golden period of the caliphate (132-247A.H)¹. Even during this time, the renowned scholars kept themselves aloof from the post of judge and hence remained free and independent of the pressures associated with it. Hence, the state had little incentive to control these scholars.

The scholars of that era too had little interest in obliging the state. When Khalifah Mamoon proposed Imam Malik's Muwatta to be made state law, the great Imam refused saying that the scholars of other areas also took their knowledge from the companions of The Prophet before them and hence their Ijtihad must be respected².

The 'fitna' of 'Khalaq e Qur'an' and the efforts of the Abbasid state that tried its best to propagate the Mutazali doctrine on a state level and suppress the Ash'aree doctrine, is the greatest witness of the unflinching faith and courage of the scholars in the face of political pressure and the independence of their thought. If the state at this time had any control over propagating its views it would have definitely caused Mu'tazili doctrine to win over the Ash'ri doctrine. However, it was not successful despite its vehement efforts that went to the extent of flogging scholars publicly. If the state could edit or had edited the memory of the nation by controlling the content of the history, it would have edited the elements that went against it by eliminating the democratic elements of early Islamic history, by eliminating the bloodshed that accompanied its coming to power and that has been preserved in history books forever, by hiding the non religiosity of its rulers and their extravagance that has been condemned in Muslim books of history and religion.

مجلس القضاء في العهد العباسى.بلر حمن حسين على إبراهيم،مجلةالأستاذ،العدد 2012-2003م،ص 551 - 1

تاریخ تدوین السنۃ و شبیهات المستشرقین لحاکم عییسان المطیری،اجنة التألیف والتعریف والنشر،2002،ص 150-151 2 -

What is claimed here about the collaboration of religious authorities with the state did take place after the end of the golden period of Abbasid caliphate (fourth century)¹. The people who were considered religious authorities did fall in to a long period of stagnation to the extent that they started abusing religious sources to justify their beliefs and propaganda². Barlas has misplaced her facts and ascribed a much earlier date to this phenomenon. While this phenomenon put a stop to the dynamic growth of Islamic religious corpus as well as the societies in general, it did not have any negative effect on the primary religious sources and the work of the great scholars of classical period since they were already complied and preserved in writing. The authorities of these stagnant periods did produce a lot of useless literature and deviated from Sunnah³ but there is not a single incident in the whole history where they tried to temper with the sources of Islamic knowledge! The texts and the works of early scholars are still intact and every student of Islam has access to it i.e. every student who is searching for the truth will find it in these sources. Moreover, if the Abbasids were so successful in suppressing religious thought, then they would have been even more successful in suppressing any other kind of anti-government rebellious thoughts. How is it possible then that they were not able to ‘sophistically edit’ the memory of historians who recorded all the bloodshed and the injustices they did when they came to power? Those who criticize the Islamic religious texts as being manipulated and edited, from there what source are they getting their historical ‘facts’? Is it not the Muslim historians themselves? How then the history written by these Muslims becomes more reliable than the religious texts for which Muslim scholars made special efforts to safeguard in their original form? Seen in the light of

الدهلوi, ص 261 - 1

2 - ibid

3 - ibid

Islamic principles of checking reliability, history books are not at all as reliable as the books of Hadith. And how come these patriarchal minded men eliminated female voice from the exegesis of the Qur'an but struggled to gather the Ahadith of Ayesha(r.a) who turned out to be the third in line of the most narrated Sahabis for Ahadith including those containing meaning of the Qur'anic verses?

Chapter 3

Perspective of Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas on Issues Related to Women

3.1 Family and Marriage

The topic of family and marriage is a much debated topic in today's world. While the ideas attached with the concept of marriage and family has drastically changed in western societies. Both the writers discuss the topic in detail, focusing on two verses of The Qur'ān (2:228 and 4:34) as they are thought to be closely related to sexual inequality and bias attributed to Islam. The view of Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas is very similar to each other. Wadūd contends that:

“1. There is no inherent value placed on man or woman. In fact, there is no arbitrary, pre-ordained and eternal system of hierarchy. 2. The Qur'ān does not strictly delineate the roles of woman and the roles of man to such an extent as to propose only a single possibility for each gender (that is, women must fulfil this role, and only this one, while men must fulfil that role and only men can fulfil it)”.¹

In her effort to demonstrate this, Wadūd says that women are not just biology. “There is no term in the Qur'ān which indicates that childbearing is 'primary' to a woman. No indication is given that mothering is her exclusive role.”... “This function becomes primary only with regard to the continuity of the human race. In other words, since only the woman can bear children, it is of primary importance that she does.”² She further discusses two terms closely related to the topic in detail: ‘darajah’ and ‘faddala’. With regard to ‘darajah’, which means step, degree or level, Wadūd says:

¹ - Pg 63.

² - Pg 64.

On the one hand, the Qur'ān supports distinctions on the basis of deeds, but on the other hand, it does not determine the actual value of specific deeds. This leads to the interpretation that the Qur'ān supports values of deeds as determined by individual societies. Actually, the Qur'ān's neutrality allows for the natural variations that exist.

Each social context divides the labour between the male and the female in such a way as to allow for the optimal function of that society. The Qur'ān does not divide the labour and establish a monolithic order for every social system which completely disregards the natural variations in society. On the contrary, it acknowledges the need for variations when it states that the human race is divided into nations and tribes that you might know one another'. (49:13). Then it gives each group, and each member of the group—the males and the females—recompense in accordance to deeds performed.¹

(وَالْمُطَّلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَبَّصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ قُرُونٍ وَلَا يَحْلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْخَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبِعَوْنَاهُنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرَدَّهُنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلْمُرْجَحِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ)

“And due to them [i.e., the wives] is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men [i.e., husbands] have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And God is Exalted in Might and Wise.”²

As for ‘Faddala’, Wadūd takes the stand that Sayyid Qutb³ has taken in his *Tafsīr* of the the verse and extends is further to a more universal meaning. Sayyid Qutb considers ‘*qiwamah*’ an issue of concern for the family within society. He restricts verse 4:34, in some ways, then, to the relationship between the husband and

1 - Pg 40.

2(Al-Baqarah:228)

3 - Sayyid Qutb was an Egyptian author, educator, Islamic theorist, poet, and the leading member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood in the 1950s and 1960s. Author of 24 books, including novels, literary arts critique and works on education, he is best known in the Muslim world for his work on what he believed to be the social and political role of Islam, particularly in his books *Social Justice* and *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq*(Milestones). His magnum opus, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade of the Qur'ān), is a 30-volume commentary on the Qur'an.

the wife. He believes that providing for the females gives the male the privilege of being ‘*qawwamuna 'ala*’ the female. “*The child-bearing responsibility is of grave importance: human existence depends upon it. This responsibility requires a great deal of physical strength, stamina, intelligence, and deep personal commitment. Yet, while this responsibility is so obvious and important, what is the responsibility of the male in this family and society at large? For simple balance and justice in creation, and to avoid oppression, his responsibility must be equally significant to the continuation of the human race. The Qur’ān establishes his responsibility as *qiwanah*: seeing to it that the woman is not burdened with additional responsibilities which jeopardize that primary demanding responsibility that only she can fulfil.* ”¹

Asma Barlas also discusses verse 34 of An-Nisa. She rejects the idea of the male being the head of the household, “especially as the term has been understood in western feudal cultures.”² She also criticizes Yusuf Ali’s commentary on the verse that describes Qawwamun as maintainers and Maududi’s translation as managers as these words establish the husband as a ruler or at the very least head of household and this ignores the Qur’ān’s description of men and women being ‘awliya’ i.e mutual protectors of each other. She chooses Wadūd/Azizah Al-Hibri and Riffat Hassan’s choice of the meaning of Qawwamun and breadwinners and also points out that The Qur’ān “*itself does not use this concept or term (men as head of household) to speak about either husbands or fathers.* ”³

As for the permission to strike in case of ‘Nushuz’, both the writers agree that it does not give men the permission to batter their wives. While Wadūd says, it is not permission but a restriction put on the practice prevalent among Arabs, Asma, after

1 - Pg 73.

2 - Pg 160.

3 - Pg 160.

relating different views says that “*The fact that there are so many different readings of this Ayah means that it is ambiguous and, to that extent, we should be willing to rethink our commitment to its centrality in our own understanding of the Qur’ān’s teachings, as well as to an exegesis that reads sexual inequality and husband privilege into the Qur’ān.*”¹

Concept of Family & Marriage is Islam:

In Islam, marriage is considered a social contract between two people of equal but opposite genders i.e. male and female. While the attraction between the two sexes is natural, God has made the coming together of the pair an institution so that the continuity of human race takes place in a healthy and secure environment. Since, this institution is the basic unit of any society and the progress and development of other institutions in the society depend upon it God has given certain very explicit guidelines to ensure the smoothing running of this basic unit. The purpose of sending guidelines and not leaving it upon mankind to work out everything for them is to minimize the possibilities of conflict within the institution of marriage as conflict leads to disharmony and disharmony hampers the progress and development of any society. God sent guidelines regarding the running of a marriage. He divided the responsibilities between the two members and decided upon a head of the institution and also stated how to go about resolving conflicts in case they arise. If we analyze any institution in the world, for example the government or the army, a school or a hospital, a business or a welfare organization, we shall see that each of these is organized in the same manner. There is division of labor, rules for dealing with conflicts or external and a head who has to sanction the final decision. The division of labor is done as per the qualifications of the people. A soldier from the infantry, for

¹ - Pg 162.

example, is not chosen to fly the plane or a lawyer is not chosen to do the work of the police. This of course does not mean that the work of the infantry is of lesser value than the pilots or the work of the police is more important than the lawyer. This is a division of labor so that the system can operate at its optimum. If this is the case with all the other inferior institutions of life then “It is only logical that the same rule be applied to the family, the institution that looks after the upbringing of the noblest creature in the universe, namely, man.”¹

The division of labor within the institution of marriage is such that the man is primarily supposed to provide for and maintain the household while the woman is supposed to manage and take care of the home. The man is supposed to take care of external and material affairs and the woman is supposed to take care of domestic and incorporeal affairs, child birth and nurturing being the most important. In order to facilitate and optimize the performance of these roles, God has been merciful on both the genders and given them constitutions that will make the execution of their roles easier. The difference in the biology of men and women is a known fact among the specialists of field². If we look at the two most basic differences that has nothing to do with environment and socializing, the difference in the genetic make-up (the X and Y chromosome) and the hormonal differences between the two sexes (testosterone in men and estrogen and progesterone in women) and the effects they have over their respective genders, it should be enough for any sensible person to realize that the two genders are not the same!³ Even studies based on the biosocial models that question

1 - Qutb, Sayyid, In the shade of Al-Qur'an by, Vol 3, pg 111, <http://kalamullah.com/shade-of-the-Qur'an.html>, retrieved on 7/8/2015.

2 - And these specialists are definitely not the feminists who love to theorize their notion of equality between sexes while they have no scientific research in the field to support their theories.

3 - See textbook: An introduction to Behavioral Endocrinology by Randy J.Nelson, Fourth edition, Sinauer Associates, Inc. Publishers Sunderland, Massachusetts

the link between behaviors associated with the two genders and their natural tendencies towards such behaviors have been unable to completely rule out the connection gender specific characteristics such as strength, dominance in men and nurturing behavior in women and biology¹. Yes, a woman is not just biology but if dissociated from her biology would she remain a woman? Would she be able to maintain her uniqueness amongst the creation as the procreator of the human race?! By trying to be like men and taking on their responsibilities, they are not only overburdening themselves but also degrading themselves to a lower level. The roles that God has assigned to the two sexes complement their constitution very well and show that these roles are not just primary to them but also ideal for them. This, however, does not set up a hierarchy nor does it say that this is the only role possible for each and every individual for the two genders. Individual circumstances and variations occur and in view of this variation God has not prohibited roles for any gender usually associated with the other. These variations, however, do not change the guidelines that are given for the whole society in general as there is wisdom behind these guidelines. The variation that usually occurs due to differences in cultures of different societies, they can be very easily be accommodated while keeping in line with these guidelines. As for the example that Wadūd gives of the post-slavery American society and how women were preferred in the job market and men could not cope with it and this doubled the burden on women and lead to increased domestic violence, it is a clear example of what happens to a society when they deviate from the guidelines given by God. Yes, men could have shown more cooperation and understanding but the fact is that they could not and that is because they have a natural tendency to dominate and a natural this-is-my-territory attitude. The women, on the other hand,

1 - Testosterone and Social Behavior by Alan booth and others, *Social Forces* Volume 85, Number 1 • September 2006

despite being empowered by money could naturally not retaliate by force because they are physically weaker than the men. One could argue, as Barlas does, that that was a transition period from a patriarchal society to a modern society and that man has become more civilized now and we have laws to protect women. If that is the case, then why does America, the most advanced of all countries, has one of the highest rates of domestic violence and rape in today's 'post-modern civilized' world??

Qiwamah & Fadl:

God does not stop women from doing any work that the men usually do even as masculine a work as fighting in a war, He has, however, set a bottom line for the relationship of man and woman within a marriage. It should be emphasized once more that this bottom line is not for all the men and women; it is only for that man and woman who, by their free will, choose to enter the contract of marriage, which is not an obligation but a Sunnah (Practice of The Prophet). The Qur'an says:

(الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَّبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَاتِنَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفَظَ اللَّهُ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُورُهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ

فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطْعَنْتُكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سِيَّلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ أَكْبَرًا)

"Men are in charge of women (this applies primarily to the husband wife relationship) by [right of] what God has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what God would have them guard i.e. (their husband property and their own chastity) But those [wives] from whom you fear

arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them (As a last resort. It is unlawful to strike the face or to cause bodily injury.). But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, God is ever Exalted and Grand.”¹

Wadūd discusses the verse in detail and takes from and extends the explanation of the verse by Sayyid Qutub beautifully:

*“The child-bearing responsibility is of grave importance: human existence depends upon it. This responsibility requires a great deal of physical strength, stamina, intelligence, and deep personal commitment...For simple balance and justice in creation, and to avoid oppression, his responsibility must be equally significant to the continuation of the human race. The Qur’ān establishes his responsibility as *qiwamah*: seeing to it that the woman is not burdened with additional responsibilities which jeopardize that primary demanding responsibility that only she can fulfil.”²*

Barlas, on the other hand, rejects the idea of the head of household, “especially as the term has been understood in western feudal cultures.”³ She also criticizes Yusuf Ali’s commentary on the verse that describes Qawwamun as maintainers and Maududi’s translation as managers as these words establish the husband as a ruler or at the very least head of household and this ignores the Qur’ān’s description of men and women being awliya i.e mutual protectors of each other. She chooses Wadūd/Azizah Al-Hibri and Riffat Hassan choice of the meaning of Qawwamun and breadwinners and also points out that The Qur’ān “itself does not use

1 (An-Nisa:34)

2 - Pg 73.

3 - Pg 187.

this concept or term (men as head of household) to speak about either husbands or fathers.”¹

Let us then see what the western feudal head of household was like²: In the Roman world, the father was the absolute head of household. He held the power of accepting or rejecting his offspring when put in his feet after birth. No law required him to support his biological children. Fathers represented the entire family politically and the sons received citizenship only through the father. The sons became independent after the father died and the father exercised control over the daughter's life even after she got married. Father has all property rights as long as he lived. In the middle ages, “Inheritance and thus fatherhood underwent a revolution in the eleventh century that resulted in a stronger patriarch.” Property rights passed directly from father to the eldest son... Women lost all but the most fleeting control over property as dower became only a lifetime grant and a husband's consent was required to sell any land a wife had inherited prior to her marriage.³ Although, Christianity did bring about a little improvement as “fathers were now expected to support and protect their offspring, even their illegitimate children” but the overall situation was centuries away from what it is now in the west.

Given the back ground to the western feudal concept of head of household, Islam is definitely not in support of the kind of head that they had. The Islamic head of household is supposed to provide for his offspring in every way. Sons do not have preference over daughters. Every one's share in inheritance is fixed and the father does not have any right to take any one's inheritance away. After a girl is married, father loses all control over. The husband does not have any say in the property of the wife and so on. None of the notions attached with the concept of feudal western

1 - Pg 187.

2 - <http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Fa-Gr/Fathering-and-Fatherhood.html>, retrieved on 12/1/2015.

head of household apply to the Islamic head of household. What Barlas is rejecting, however, is not just that feudal head; she is rejecting the concept of any kind of head of household in the Qur'ān.

Let us analyze the key words in the verse to ascertain what the Islamic head of household is like. The two key words in this verse are: 'quwwamun' and 'Faddala'. The word 'quwwamun' is the plural of 'quwwam'. 'Quwwam' means caretaker, guardian, and supervisor¹ when it comes with the particle 'ala while independently it also has the meaning of executing a deed with beauty. The word is from the verb 'qaama'. When Arabs say: 'Qaama 'ala ahlihi', it means he took up the responsibility of running family affairs and taking care of all their needs.² And when they say: 'qaam 'ala amr', it means to persevere and continue doing the work.³ 'Faddala' is from the word 'Fadl' which carries quite a few meanings: favor, grace, gift, merit, excellence, superiority, preference and surplus.

Al-Tabari comments on the verse by saying that 'qiwamma' for the man means he has to manage and run the affairs of the women and discipline them if they disobey God or refuse to pay those rights of his that have been ordained by God. As for their 'Fadl' over women, it is because of the responsibility of managing and spending on the women and because of the dowry that has been paid.⁴

Shafi Uthmāni says⁵: "The gist of the matter is that, as seen from (وللرجال علیهنْ) " (الرجال قوامونَ علی النساء) "and for men, there is a step above them" and from (ذرجه) "men stand caretakers of women", the message is that the rights of women are as incumbent

1 - Dr. Rohi Baalabaki, Al-Maurid: A Modern Arabic-English Dictionary. Dar El-Ilm Lilmalayin. 20th edition. 2006, pg 876

2 - Al-Mo'jam Al-Waseet, pg 767-768

3 - Al-Mojam Al-Waseet says dama wa thabata. This is the translation from al-Maurid.

4 - جامع البيان في تأويل القرآن. محمد بن حمود بن حمير بن يزيد بن كثير بن ثالث الأطلي، أبو جعفر الطبراني (المتوفى: 310هـ)، المحقق:أحمد محمد شاكر، مؤسسة الرسالة، الطبعة الأولى، 1420هـ - 2000م، ج 8، ص 290.

5 - Muhammad Shafi, Maariful Qur'an, Translated by: Muhammad Hasan Askari, Prof. Muhammad Shamim volume 2, Pg 218, http://www.maarifulqur'an.net/index.php/maariful_qur'an/maarifulqur'an-english-pdf

upon men as the rights of men are upon women, and the rights of both are similar to each other, with only one exception that men have a certain precedence in functional authority, although this too is hemmed with other balancing factors.” This authority is given to them because of their Fadl which is for two reasons. One is God given grace with regard to some qualities and there is divine wisdom behind it (a discussion on this wisdom has passed above) and the other is earned by the man due to what he spends on them as dower and to maintain them.

Al-Zamakhshari takes the meaning of ‘quwwam’ to be like a guardian, ruler, caretaker (وله) over his subjects and this governorship is due to a surplus of certain qualities that man has. It cannot be achieved by tyranny or force. He further elaborates on qualities that men generally have in abundance as compared to women: intellect, strength, determination, prophet hood, inheritance, right to divorce e.t.c. ¹

Al-Razi says the man has the authority of disciplining the wife and taking decision regarding on her behalf and this right is due to two reasons: natural abilities and religious injunctions, the natural qualities being based on more knowledge and more physical capabilities. He also mentions that the reason why this verse was revealed because some women complained about men getting a larger portion of the inheritance. This verse makes it clear that the larger portion is due to the larger share of responsibility upon their shoulders. It is as if there is no ‘Fadl’ because it is equaled out by the extra responsibility.²

Al-Qurtubi makes it very clear that the understanding of scholars from the part of the verse that says ‘they spend of their wealth’, is that the inability of the husband

الكشف عن حقائق غرائب التنزيل، أبو القاسم محمد بن عمرو بن أحمد، الزمخشري جاز الله (المتوفى: 538هـ)، دار الكتاب العربي - بيروت، الطبعة: الثالثة - 1 - 505 هـ/1407 م

مفاتيح الغيب = التفسير الكبير، أبو عبد الله محمد بن عمر بن الحسن بن الحسين التبعي الرازي الملقب بفخر الدين الرازي خطيب الري (المتوفى: 606هـ)، دار إحياء - 2 - التراث العربي - بيروت، الطبعة: الثالثة - 1420 هـ/10 مـ، ص70.

to spend on the family results in a loss of this ‘qiwama’ and Imam Malik and Shaf’i are even of the opinion that this leads to a nullification of the marriage contract.¹

Al- Baedawi has the almost the same opinion as Al-Razi.²

While the opinion of exegetics varies from each other, none of the meanings go beyond the lexical meaning of the words or their usage in Arabic language. All of them agree that the men are ‘quwwam’ over their wives (only) and this is due to ‘Fadl’ of men over women. This ‘Fadl’ is God given in the form of some natural abilities and some religious injunctions. This ‘qiwamah’ also gives men a certain level of authority over their wives. The difference among the exegetics comes with the elaboration of the natural capabilities which men have more than women. They have elaborated these as they witnessed in their current societies. They also differ in their choice of words to explain what ‘quwwamun’ means. It is the word ‘Quwwam’ and its meaning that defines what kind of a role a man is supposed to assume within the family. Barlas takes the meaning of ‘breadwinners’ or ‘those who provide a means of support or livelihood’ and rejects all meanings such as managers, maintainers, rulers, caretakers on the basis that such notions “ignores that the Qur’ān appoints women and men each other’s ‘awliyā’, or mutual protectors”. The verse that declares the believing men and women to be awliya’ states clearly what this relationship of mutual protection entails:

(وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أُولَئِكَ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَاونَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيَقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ

(وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطْبِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيِّرْ حَمْهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ)

الجمع لأحكام القرآن،أبو عبد الله محمد بن أحمد بن أبي بكر بن فرج الأنصاري الخزرجي شمس الدين القرطبي (المتوفى: 671هـ)، تحقيق: أحمد البردوني وابراهيم .أطفيش،دار الكتب المصرية - القاهرة،الطبعة: الثانية،1384هـ- 1964م،ج5،ص169.

أنوار التغزيل وأسرار التأويل،ناصر الدين أبو سعيد عبد الله بن عمر بن محمد الشيرازي البيضاوي (المتوفى: 685هـ)،المحقق: محمد عبد الرحمن المرعشلي،دار - 2 أحياه التراث العربي - بيروت،الطبعة: الأولى - 1418 هـ،ص 72.

“The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayer and give zakah and obey God and His Messenger. Those - God will have mercy upon them. Indeed, God is Exalted in Might and Wise.”¹

This clearly tells that the obligation all believing men and women have towards each other is that of ordaining good and forbidding wrong. What Barlas seems to have overlooked is the context of the verse under discussion. It particularly discusses the relationship between husband and wife only and the concept man as an Islamic head of household does not exclude this meaning for either of them. The wife is still supposed to council her husband and the husband is supposed to consult her regarding matters that concern them both. (عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْهُمَا وَتَشَاءُونِ) (Al-baqarah:233).

The **husband** and wife remain each others ‘libas’ and the relationship remains that of mutual love and mercy. The concept of the man as (أمير) or (ولاة) also does not negate this as both are supposed to take care of all the needs of those under their authority. The exclusive authority that the man is given as ‘quwwam’ in all those meanings rejected by Barlas is in case of conflict that cannot be resolved mutually and it is becoming a source of disharmony in the family. In that case the man will have the final say as any head of an institution has. God had to appoint one of two as the final authority because two authorities of equal power only increase the discord as God says about the most harmonious of the institutions; The universe:

(وَكَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفِسْدَتَا فَسَبَّحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ)

¹(At-Tawbah:71)

"Had there been within them [i.e., the heavens and earth] gods besides God, they both would have been ruined. So exalted is God, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe.¹"

God chose the man to be that authority for a reason and that reason is 'Fadl'. Even if that reason was just providing for the livelihood of the family which entails "securing the necessities of life"² a person who is doing all this has more right to the authoritative position than someone who is not. Thus, to say that the authority of the man decreases if the women can support herself in monetary terms, is quite illogical because any sane person can tell that money is not the only necessity of life! Women have the right to be protected from all kinds of harm and discomfort since they are responsible for nurturing the human race and their constitution does not allow them to protect themselves. It is a necessity of life for a woman for which the man has been appointed. She cannot match him in physical strength even if she tried to, just as the man cannot match her in her ability to give birth. As for the laws and protection provided by the police, they usually come when harm is already done. Every woman has a right to be protected and every woman cannot be assigned a policeman for her protection only!

What most of the traditional scholars have not made clear in their exegesis is that the 'qiwamah' they are talking about is restricted to the context of marriage. They have also mentioned the general qualities that men at that time seemed to carry in surplus. However, scholars like Al-Qurtubi, Shafi Muhammad and Sayid Qutub have elaborated on this point and made it clear that the 'qiwama' is only in the context of marriage and is based on certain reasons. If those reasons cease to exist, 'qiwama' also ceases to exist. Perhaps, what the traditional scholars of today need to emphasize

1(Al- Ambiya: 22)

2 - <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/livelihood>

are how to deal with the situation when the man of the house is not fulfilling the responsibilities that he is supposed to fulfill, when the woman is also earning like the man, when the man treats her unjustly and does not give her rights or mistreats her in any way. Being a 'qawwam' does not give man the right to order her around a slave or sheep. The woman of today has an independent spiritual and intellectual constitution and she knows more about the worldly affairs than the woman of the past. The man of the house should take that into consideration and treat her accordingly.

As for the claim about 'misogynistic' interpretation of the traditional Muslim scholars, it is quite surprising that while Barlas emphasizes so much on reading the text in its historical context, she fails to understand the interpretation of the exegetics in *their* historical context. While the concept of gender differences is as old as we know human history to be, the concept of sexual inequality is only very recent. Even if one considers some of the elaborations of the concept 'Fadl' of men over women by modern (or rather feminist) standards as misogynistic, these elaborations were just a demonstration of the contemporary beliefs of the people or the personal opinions of the exegetics. None of the exegetics claimed their explanations to be the word of God or divine in any way. How can then, an interpretation be considered misogynistic, when even the concept did not exist at the time they were written! Applying the standards of a different era to judge the ideologies of another era is utterly inconsistent with objectivity of textual analysis! Furthermore, Barlas on the one hand, claims that all the traditional scholars interpreted the verse with a patriarchal mindset and on the other hand she quotes Al-Tabari (a scholar whose *Tafsīr*, according to traditional scholars, cannot be disposed by anyone trying to interpret The Qur'an) as sharing the views of Al-Azizah al-Hibri and Riffat Hassan's on the concept of 'Qiwamah'. If patriarchal thinking was so much ingrained in the minds of traditional

scholars then how did one of the most prominent scholars come up with the same interpretation as them ‘enlightened’ new age scholars?

Nushuz:

Another discussion regarding the verse pertains to the last part to which the infamous wife battering is attributed to. As for the permission to strike in case of Nushuz, both the writers agree that it does not give men the permission to batter their wives. While Wadūd says, it is not a permission but a restriction put on the practice prevalent among Arabs, Barlas, after relating different views says that “The fact that there are so many different readings of this Āyah means that it is ambiguous and, to that extent, we should be willing to rethink our commitment to its centrality in our own understanding of the Qur’ān’s teachings, as well as to an exegesis that reads sexual inequality and husband privilege into the Qur’ān.”¹ Barlas, has also raised a question on the traditional meaning of the word ‘daraba’ in the verse with is translates as ‘to strike’. She relates meaning of ‘daraba’ as “to prevent” (Rafi Ullah Shahab²) and “holding in confinement” (Riffat Hassan). Riffat Hassan also claims that the verse refers to the child bearing potential of women as ‘salihat’ is related to the word ‘salahiyyah’ which means capability and ‘qanitat’ also has the meaning of a water container which is a metaphor for the womb. “She thus reads this Āyah as referring to “women’s role as child-bearers” and argues that only if all the women rebel against this role must they be disciplined by the community, not their husbands.”³

1 - Pg 189.

2 - Author of ‘Auraton ke bare main qur’ani ahkam’ and ‘Mansab e hakumat aur musalman aurat’

3 - Pg 189.

It needs to be made very clear that none of the traditional exegetics to whom misogynistic readings are attributed sanction wife battering¹. In fact all of them, when interpreting this verse, relate the Hadīth of The Prophet about the restriction that is put upon the husband when he strikes his wife and that Hadīth is clear that the striking should not hurt the woman in anyway and the face has to be avoided at all costs. It is as Wadūd says a restriction put on the prevalent practice and Imam Shafi says that although it is permissible but it is better not to hit the wife at all.² As for the interpretations of Shahab and Riffat Hassan regarding ‘daraba’, the meanings they have given are not used in Arabic language in the syntactical structure used in this verse. The meaning of preventing or confining comes when ‘daraba’ is used with the article ‘ala and noun ‘yad’ (literally upon the hand) where as the structure used is verb-subject and this structure in no way means prevention or confinement. The reading of Hassan regarding ‘salihat’ and ‘qanitat’ is even more far-fetched. It is unclear from where she came up with this meaning of ‘qanitat’ as this meaning is neither found in Lisanul Arab nor Taj ul uroos nor in any of the other renowned Arabic dictionaries!

Let us analyze the verses that relate to the topic here:

(وَالْمُطَلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَكَّنْ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةَ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَّ أَنْ يَخْتَمِنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَّ إِنْ كُنَّ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبِنُوْلَتِهِنَّ أَحَقُّ بِرِدَاهِنَ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ)

“Divorced women remain in waiting [i.e., do not remarry] for three periods, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what God has created in their wombs if they

1 - Means: to strike repeatedly with hard blows, (often as noun battering) Subject (one's spouse, partner, or child) to repeated violence and assault, <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/batter>, retrieved on 5/09/2015.

2 - مفتتح الغيب، ج 10، ص 72

believe in God and the Last Day. And their husbands have more right to take them back in this [period] if they want reconciliation. And due to them [i.e., the wives] is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable (The wife has specific rights upon her husband, just as the husband has rights upon her.). But the men [i.e., husbands] have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And God is Exalted in Might and Wise.”

Al-Tabari agrees with the *Tafsīr* of Ibn-Abbas on the word ‘darajah’ and says that it means the man should overlook any shortcoming on the part of the wife with regard to his rights because his ‘darajah’ is mentioned right after his rights over her. It is also delegating the men to treat women with ‘fadl’ (benevolently) so that they might become deserving of the ‘darajah’.¹ Some exegetics take the meaning of ‘darajah’ to be that of authority and responsibility (as can be seen in the translation above) while others take the meaning to be more general i.e. all the rights which men have been given more in certain contexts like that of pronouncing divorce, double inheritance, witness etc. Some like Al-Razi has even mentioned ‘Aql (usually translated as intelligence) as some men have more than women. Sayyid Qutub, however, rejects such general interpretations and restricts the meaning to divorce as the preceding and the following verses pertain to issue of divorce.

The point that concerns us is not so much as which of these meanings is the correct but which of them is misogynistic as claimed by the writers. As far as an interpretation does not attain a consensus, it remains an opinion that can be either right or wrong. However, to label the whole Muslim tradition as misogynistic on the basis of a few opinions is grave injustice to the tradition.

¹ جامع البيان في تأويل القرآن، ج 4، ص 535.

3.2 Origins of Mankind

Wadūd contends the traditional Muslim view that God created man first and then from him He created his mate, the woman, is wrong. She discusses the following verse of The Qur’ān in detail:

“O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear God, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs.¹³⁶ Indeed God is ever, over you, an Observer.” (An-Nisa: 1)

Wadūd says the word *min*, usually translated as ‘from’, in the verse has two meanings:

- 1) extraction of one thing from another
- 2) Of the same nature as

Wadūd rejects the first meaning on the basis that something that is a derivative of another thing is inferior to it and hence this meaning is not suitable.

Wadūd also comments on the word ‘nafs’ and ‘zawj’ and says it is wrong to ascribe a gender to the two words since they do not specify any gender. The fact that God did not specify the gender also shows that He never planned to begin the creation with a male. In fact, the creation of mankind is beyond human grasp and hence cannot be expressed in gendered terms. The view of scholars that Eve was created from the rib of Adam is taken from biblical accounts.¹

It is true that the words ‘nafs’ and ‘zawj’ do not refer to a specific gender. However, what is clear from the verse is that there were two of the mankind in the beginning and from those two the rest of mankind was created. The concept of the

¹ - Pg 17-20.

pair is not alien to the human senses so as to be declared from the world unseen since God has said that He created everything in pairs. The very concept of the creation to be in pair shows that God intended the creation to be gendered.

It is also clear from this verse and others pertaining to the same theme that there was one of the two in the beginning and then the other was created and hence it can be very easily deduced that the one was either the male or the female. So we have two possibilities:

- 1) Man was created first and then the woman
- 2) Woman was created first and then the man.

Let us look now to the verse about the story of Adam and Satan:

“And [mention] when We said to the angels, “Prostrate before Adam”; so they prostrated, except for Iblees.¹⁸ He refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers. And We said, “O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat there from in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers.” (An- Nisa: 34-35)

These verses show that before Eve was created there was only Adam, the man. The story of narrated above took place between Adam and Satan and there is no mention of Eve anywhere in this story, neither in these verses or any other verses relating the same story. However, we know from these verses that Adam did have a *zawj* i.e. his wife before the two entered Paradise. While this might not be so clear from the verses Wadūd has discussed. It does become very clear from other related verses of The Qur’ān and Wadūd’s choice to ignore those verses goes against her holistic and thematic approach to interpreting The Qur’ān.

As for the narrations in this regard, Wadūd says they are biblical accounts. Wadūd does not seem to have much knowledge of Hadīth as said earlier. These narrations do include some biblical accounts while others are Prophet's sayings in Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim which are known for not containing any biblical narrations.

What then of the assumption that the woman becomes inferior to man if we accept this interpretation? This assumption does not have a logical basis as a derivative of a thing does not necessarily have to be inferior. The whole process of creation is based on derivation. Every generation is derived from the generation before it. Does this mean that every coming generation becomes one grade inferior to that before it? And that the last generation is going to be the most inferior? Or That Muhammad (s.a.w) was inferior to all the other Prophets???

If God had created the woman first and then the man it might have been a man writing this book today and arguing against the facts. The fact that God uses non gender specific words is because it is insignificant to the whole idea that is being expressed in these verses. The emphasis is the single origin of all mankind and their resulting equality as humans and not which of the two genders was created first!

3.3 Equity of Recompense

Wadūd and Barlas both have dealt with the topic of equity of recompense. While Barlas broadly views the Qur'ānic treatment of men and women is the same, ontologically and morally/religiously, Wadūd carries out a more specific and detailed discussion about the equality of men and women in creation, hereafter, death, resurrection, judgment and final abode. In this regard, both the writers are in complete agreement with the traditional scholars. However, when it comes to the discussion of

Heaven and the bounties of God in it, Wadūd takes a stance different from the scholars.

Wadūd sees the description of God's bounties in Heaven as specific to Arab mentality and emphasizes that it should be interpreted for its general moral implications now. She argues that the description of Hur-al-Ayn, which refers to a woman whose whiteness of the eye is in stark comparison to the blackness of the eyeball¹, is meant specifically as an incentive for Arabs and has limited application for other audiences. Even the description of springs flowing from beneath the dwellers of Heaven, Wadūd says, has meaning for the desert Arab and cannot have any incentive for someone living in Malyasia.²

While there is nothing wrong with extracting general moral implications from the verses, just like Sufis have done, however, in doing so, the genuine Sufis have never rejected the obvious meanings of the verses. How many people, if asked to describe the most beautiful place they can think of and the most exciting pleasures that they would want to have there, would describe a barren –place like a desert. They would almost all describe a place with greenery, springs and birds etc and to complete the picture a beautiful companion to share all that with. Is it not how Coleridge described the kingdom of Kubla Khan? And if men are specifically asked, they would rarely leave out the eyes when describing a beautiful woman! Sleeping beauty, Snow white, Anastasia, little mermaid, Cinderella, Pocahontas all are created with a great emphasis on the ayes! Big eyes with a clear whiteness are considered to be a beauty across cultures not just the Arabs! Hence, the description of 'hur' can be held as a special incentive for men, all men; not just the Arabs.

التحرير والتبيير «تحرير المعنى المسدید وتنوير العقل الجديد من تفسیر الكتاب العجید»، محمد الطاهر بن محمد بن محمد الطاهر بن عاشور التونسي (المتوفى : ١ - ١٣٩٣ھ)، الدار التونسية للنشر – تونس، ١٩٨٤ھ، ج ٢٧، ص ٢٧٣

2 - Chapter 3.

This leads us to the discussion of the inequity ascribed to the traditional view that men are given ‘hurul Ayn’ in Jannah. Wadūd sees that the word *zawj* in the verses that refer to the bounties in Jannah means: “whoever is paired with you because of like nature, deeds, faith etc”. While majority of the traditional exegetes explain the word ‘*zawj*’ to be a female, Al-Razi and Ibn Ashoor clarify that *zawj* refers to male or female¹, implying that the *zawj* referred to in these verses actually refers to pure companions for both the believing men and women. However, what Wadūd contends is the word ‘*zawj*’ refers to companions in general people who have similar deeds, faith etc and not as men and women. Why this cannot be a probable interpretation is based on two other verses that pertain to the same theme:

(رَئَنَا وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدْنَاهُمْ وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ أَبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ

(الْغَنِيْرُ الْحَكِيمُ)

“Our Lord, and admit them to gardens of perpetual residence which You have promised them and whoever was righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their offspring. Indeed, it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.”²

(جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ أَبَائِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ)

“Gardens of perpetual residence; they will enter them with whoever were righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their descendants.”³

This interpretation of course does not exclude the fact that men will have ‘*Hurul Ayn*’ in Jannah so does that mean that women are being recompensed

1 - التحرير والتفسير، ج 1، ص 357

2(Ghafir:8)

3(Al-Rad: 23)

unequally? Firstly, ‘Hurul Ayn’ is a form of reward like other rewards; they will not hold the status of the spouses who will be equal partners/companions to the people of Jannah. Women would have earned Jannah as a recompense for their own good deeds, they themselves are not meant to be a form of reward for men. The women will actually preside over the ‘hoors’ like a queen. Having said this, Ibn Aashoor holds the view Hur ul Ayn also includes a man wives in the world as they will be recreated in a young and beautiful form before entering Jannah. Secondly, the explanation of the word *zawj* as wife (this is how most of the traditional scholars have interpreted the word *zawj*) does not in any way imply that the men have the power to directly determine the fate of his spouse as claimed by Wadūd. The Qur’ān is very clear on the definition of family. Only a believer is considered to be family while non believers, even if blood relations are not family. Men will make it to Jannah on the basis of their own deeds and women on their own deeds. Moreover, we also know from The Qur’ān that if a person, man or woman, is able to make it to Jannah and he or she happens to be on a level higher than his parents, spouses or children then those lower in status will be joined to those higher, irrespective of gender.

(جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمَنْ صَلَحَ مِنْ أَبَانِهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذُرِّيَّاتِهِمْ)

“Gardens of perpetual residence; they will enter them with whoever were righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their descendants.”¹

So how does this particular form of interpretation imply that men control the fate of their wives? Thirdly, Allah clearly stated that in Jannah, the residents are going to have whatever they desire:

(لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيدٌ)

¹(Al-Ra’d:23)

“They will have whatever they wish therein, and with Us is more.”¹

This verse over rules any kind of proclaimed inequality as there cannot be a greater and a more just form of equality than this. You get what you desire. Of course, what men desire can be different from women just as it is in the world. God has specified and described in more detail one of the things that men desire in the world so as to give them an incentive to work for Jannah. The concept behind Paradise is to give the creation whatever they desire in the afterlife as a reward for living according to God’s wishes in the worldly life and refraining from crossing limits in pursuit of things which they desire. Everyone knows that one of the things men desire most is a beautiful woman.

Howsoever a ‘Hoor’ maybe described, it is obvious from the verses and what is unanimously agreed upon by all scholars is that no one is going to be without companions in Jannah whether men or women. Individual scholars might have interpreted ‘Hoor’ in the way that Arabs view it; none of the interpretations exclude the fact that they are going to be beautiful. And who would not want that? As for the interpretation of *zawj* as wife, it is not an agreed upon interpretation and hence cannot be used as an argument.

3.4 Divorce

Wadūd and Barlas, both have discussed the topic of divorce. Barlas, however, has basically echoed the views of Wadūd and Hassan so we shall see what Wadūd says in this regard.

Wadūd comments on the following verse of The Qur’ān:

¹(Qaf:35)

(وَالْمُطَّلَّقَاتُ يَتَرَكْضُنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَ ثَلَاثَةُ قُرُوءٍ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَهُنَ أَنْ يَكْتُمْنَ مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ فِي أَرْحَامِهِنَ إِنْ

كُنَّ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَبِعُولَتِهِنَ أَحَقُّ بِرَدَّهُنَ فِي ذَلِكَ إِنْ أَرَادُوا إِصْلَاحًا وَلَهُنَ مِثْلُ الَّذِي

عَلَيْهِنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ)

“Divorced women remain in waiting [i.e., do not remarry] for three periods, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what God has created in their wombs if they believe in God and the Last Day. And their husbands have more right to take them back in this[period] if they want reconciliation. And due to them [i.e., the wives] is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men [i.e., husbands] have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And God is Exalted in Might and Wise.” (2:228)

The ‘darajah’ has been translated here as the degree of responsibility and authority in general. Al-Tabari has related a number of interpretations for this part of the verse and said that the scholars differ in their *Tafsīr* of the verse. Sayyid Qutub, however, has rejected all the general interpretations and taken the word to be particular to the topic to divorce as the preceding and the following verses show. While Wadūd takes up the interpretation of Sayyid Qutub and says that it refers to the right of the man to be able to singularly pronounce divorce, she goes a step further and says:

“...this consideration of repudiation is clear in view of the practices as they existed at the time of revelation, and not only for Muslim marriages. There is no indication that the unilateral right to repudiation needs be continued, or if continued, that it need be only for the husband.”

Wadūd believes that since marriages have evolved and women are no longer considered subjects, there is no need to continue the man's singular right to divorce.

Let us analyze the concept of divorce in Islam. Islam considers divorce as the last option to resolve conflict in a marriage. Since the marriage is a mutually beneficial contract, it seems only reasonable that any ending of the contract should also be based on equity and none of the parties involved should suffer. There are two ways for divorce to take place:

1) Both the parties mutually agree to end the contract. There is no doubt that such an agreement is based on equity. The following verses in The Qur'an indicate to such an agreement:

(وَإِنْ امْرَأَةً حَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُسُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ

خَيْرٌ وَأَخْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَيْرًا... وَإِنْ يَتَفَرَّقَا

يُغْنِ اللَّهُ كُلُّا مِنْ سَعَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا

“And if a woman fears from her husband contempt or evasion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of settlement between them - and settlement is best. And present in [human] souls is stinginess. But if you do good and fear God - then indeed God is ever, with what you do, Acquainted... But if they separate [by divorce], God will enrich each [of them] from His abundance. And ever is God Encompassing and Wise.”¹

2) Divorce comes from the side of one of the parties. In this case, it should be made sure that the process takes without any injustice to any of them.

¹(An-Nisa: 128 and 130)

In the second of the two cases, divorce can either be from the man's side or it can be from the woman. As for the man, he can pronounce the divorce without recourse to authority. In the case where the basis is not 'Nushuz' of the woman, he cannot reclaim anything that he has spent on the woman, neither the dower, nor any other material spending such as gifts and regular financial expenditures. The woman, on the other hand, has to go to a judge to get a divorce. In case, she wants the divorce on the basis of personal dislike and not on the grounds of Nushuz, she has to return the dower the man gave her. It is here that the claim of inequity surfaces. Why the woman cannot pronounce divorce without recourse to authority. The fact of the matter is that Islam takes into consideration the position of the one who is at stake in a particular situation. Since, it is the man who is spending on the wife and might have given expensive gifts to her or might even have transferred the house they are living in to his wife's name, if the wife could pronounce divorce without any authoritative intervention, the man would surely be at the receiving -or more like the loosing- end. He is the one who would be at the risk of being treated unjustly. On the other hand, the woman is not supposed to spend on man. What is hers remains hers. The man has no right over it. That is why when the man divorces a woman she is not losing out on anything material. And that is exactly why the man will be more deliberate than the woman when pronouncing the divorce because the woman has nothing to lose while the man does.

Of course, there still remains the fact that men can abuse that right as it had started happening during the khilafat of Omar. Too many men had started taking the matter of divorce lightly. Omar solved the problem by declaring three divorces pronounced in one go as three instead of one and thus irrevocable.¹ The purpose of

1 - Muhammad Shafi, vol 1, Pg 586.

sighting this example is to tell that the jurists at any time can take measures to prevent the abusing of any Islamic law which basically happens when people as a nation become disconnected from the teachings of the Qur'an.

3.5 Polygamy (Polygyny)

The topic of polygyny has also been discussed by both Wadūd and Barlas. They have discussed the topic in the light of two verses:

(وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَإِنْكُحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ مَئْنَىٰ وَثَلَاثَ وَرُبْعَ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ

أَلَا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكْتُ أَيْمَانَكُمْ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَلَا تَعْوُلُوا)

“And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry those that please you of [other] women, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one or those your right hands possesses [i.e., slaves]. That is more suitable that you may not incline [to injustice].”¹

(وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمُنْيَلِ فَتَنَذَّرُوهَا كَالْمُعْلَقَةِ وَإِنْ

تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَقْوُا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَّحِيمًا)

“And you will never be able to be equal [in feeling] between wives, even if you should strive [to do so]. So do not incline completely [toward one] and leave another hanging. And if you amend [your affairs] and fear God - then indeed, God is ever Forgiving and Merciful.”²

According to both the writers, the traditional scholars have misinterpreted the verse about marrying two, three or four wives. The two verses together actually act as

1(An-Nisa:3)

2(An-Nisa:129)

a prohibition of polygyny rather a sanction of it. The first of the two verses is in the context of orphans, that is to say, it permits marrying more than one only if a caretaker of an orphan fears injustice towards her. Marrying her would prevent that injustice. The verse also says that if the men fear they will not be able to do justice between the women they marry, then they should keep to one wife. From the second verse they extract the part that says they will never be able to do justice between the wives and as long as that is the case then the practice of marrying one woman is clearly not allowed.

Wadūd and Barlas have very conveniently done away with a permission that has had sanction in the whole human history and in all the religions. Islam is the only religion that tells its followers to marry only one in case they fear they will not be able to do justice. However, the permission of marrying more than one has not been repudiated. It has been limited to four with the condition of just treatment between the wives.

In an effort to prove their point, Wadūd and Barlas both have gone against their own proclaimed method of exegesis in the light of all relevant verses of The Qur'an. In the very chapter from which the above verses have been quoted, there is another verse that pertains more directly to the topic of orphans being discussed in the verse about polygyny.

(وَيَسْأَفُونَكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ قُلِ اللَّهُ يُفْتِنُكُمْ فِيهِنَّ وَمَا يُنَلِّي عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ فِي يَتَامَى النِّسَاءِ

الَّتِي لَا تُؤْتُونَهُنَّ مَا كُتِبَ لَهُنَّ وَتَرْغَبُونَ أَنْ تَنْكِحُوهُنَّ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفَاتِ مِنَ الْوِلْدَانِ وَأَنْ تَقُومُوا

(لِيَتَامَى بِالْقُسْطِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِهِ عَلِيمًا)

“And they request from you, [O Muhammad], a [legal] ruling concerning women. Say, “God gives you a ruling about them and [about] what has been recited to you in the Book concerning the orphan girls to whom you do not give what is decreed for them- and [yet] you desire to marry them – and concerning the oppressed among children and that you maintain for orphans [their rights] in justice.” And whatever you do of good - indeed, God is ever Knowing of it.”¹

This verse very clearly explains that what has been revealed before regarding the orphans concerns the women orphans whom their caretakers want to marry without giving them their due rights. The first verse would then mean that if the caretakers fear that they will not be able to treat such orphan women justly then they should *not* marry them. Ignoring this verse has lead Wadūd and Barlas to interpret the verses in a complete opposite way.

The writers have further gone against another methodological tool i.e. reading the verses in context of the revelation. The Arabs at the time of revelation would not be conscious of doing injustice to the orphans in their financial matters. If they had an orphan in their caretaking, and she was pretty and wealthy, they would want to marry her without giving her any dowry. In this way they could benefit from her wealth without having to give away anything from their own wealth. This is what has been forbidden in the verse. Instead of marrying orphans and doing them injustice, the men should marry women other than these orphans.²

A third tool that the two writers have disregarded is the textual context of verse 129 while applying the same tool to verse 3. About verse 3 they have pointed out- and correctly too- that the topic being discussed in the verses before and after is about orphans and their rights. However, they ignore this same textual context in

1 (An-Nisa:27)

التحرير والتفسير، ج 2، مص 212 - 2

verse 129 which they use to negate polygamy. The verses that precede and follow the verse are as follows:

(وَإِنِ امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُورًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ

خَيْرٌ وَأَخْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَقْوُا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَيْرًا . وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِعُو

أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَضْتُمْ فَلَا تَمِيلُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُّوْهَا كَالْمُعَلَّقَةِ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوا وَتَتَقْوُا فَإِنَّ

اللَّهُ كَانَ عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا . وَإِنْ يَتَقَرَّبَا يُغْنِي اللَّهُ كُلُّا مِنْ سَعْيِهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ وَاسِعًا حَكِيمًا)

“And if a woman fears from her husband contempt or evasion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of settlement between them - and settlement is best. And present in [human] souls is stinginess. But if you do good and fear God - then indeed God is ever, with what you do, Acquainted. And you will never be able to be equal [in feeling] between wives, even if you should strive [to do so]. So do not incline completely [toward one] and leave another hanging. And if you amend [your affairs] and fear God - then indeed, God is ever Forgiving and Merciful. But if they separate [by divorce], God will enrich each [of them] from His abundance. And ever is God Encompassing and Wise.”

The topic being discussed here is treatment or complete evasion of a woman by her husband. In such a case, the two are recommended to come to a mutual agreement of peace and if that does not come to be about that the two can choose to separate. The context shows that the part where the verse says ‘you will never be able to be equal between wives’ is not about material matters but about non material aspects of relationship and in this regard God says that they can never treat all wives emotionally equal. However, the solution that God has given is not to marry more

than once but not to incline towards one and leave the other hanging in case such a situation arises after marrying. A further option given is that of divorce if the two cannot live in less than the ideal way. A situation like the one described i.e. ill treatment or loss of interest, can take place even in a monogamous situation. If this happens then the man can either choose to marry a second woman and keep the first or, divorce the first and marry a second. Islam has preferred the second while keeping the option of divorce open for the first woman in case she does not want to live in such a setup. How is then polygyny be violation of women rights when the woman is neither forced to marry a married man nor is she forced to remain in a polygamous marriage??

3.6 Witness

The discussion of witness revolves around the women's testimony being considered half to that of men. Wadūd claims the following¹:

- 1) The following verse about testimony of two, wording of the verse both the women are not called to witness.

(وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالَكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمْنُ تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
أَنْ تَضْلِلَ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتُذَكِّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى)

“And bring to witness two witnesses from among your men. And if there are not two men [available], then a man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses - so that if one of them [i.e., the women] errs, then the other can remind her.”²

1 - Pg 112 and 113.

2(Al-Baqarah:282)

The witness is one while the other woman is their only to remind her if she errs and not as a witness.

- 2) The verse pertains to financial matters only. The andocentric interpretations generalize the formula and take every mention of witness in the The Qur'ān to mean male witness exclusively.
- 3) The injunction about the two witnesses being equal to one is obsolete as women are now well conversant with financial matters and thus the possibility of forgetting is not as it was before.

First of all, attention needs to be paid to a very important aspect which both the writers seem completely oblivious to, that is the fact that going to court and bearing witness is a liability and not a privilege. Both of them have treated it as a right and not a responsibility. This completely reverses the perspective on the issue. When two women are called to witness instead of one, they are basically being lightened of a burdened. So it seems that what they are contesting is not the right but why are women given less burden than men, they should be equally burdened with the liability of bearing witness in court.

As far as the wording is concerned, the verse does not say at all that one of the women bears witness while the other has a passive role. In fact, the wording tells us totally otherwise. Instead of saying: If one of the two forgets then the other can remind her, the verse says: If one of the two forgets then one of the two can remind the other. This is not the way of Arabs. The Arabs do not repeat the noun in the same sentence. The apparent repetition here is not really a repetition but indicates that the act of forgetfulness can happen on part of either¹. Thus both are considered equal

¹ التحرير والتفسير، ج 3، ص 110 . - 1

witnesses as any one of the two can forget some of the facts and the other is supposed to supply those facts or correct them. This obviously requires both of them to play an active role.

Secondly, Wadūd's claim that the verse pertains to financial matters and thus cannot be generalized, as is done by andocentric interpretations, does not seem to be based on facts. She does not substantiate her claim by evidence. Al-Tabari, Ibn Kathir and Ibn Aashoor clearly state that the verse pertains to financial matters while others like Al-Razi, Baedawi and Al-Zamakhshari simply state their reasons for the witness of two being equal to one. They do not comment about the injunction being general or specific. The traditional scholars do not generalize the two to one formula. The judicial cases near them are divided in to three types:

- 1) Those cases in which only the men's witness is accepted such as 'Qisas' and 'Hudood'. Some of scholars like Imam Al-Ghazali do not agree to this and consider the witness of women as acceptable¹. Hence, this opinion does not fall under 'Ijma'.
- 2) Those cases in which women can witness along with men. These refer to financial matters which is the domain of men generally.
- 3) Those cases in which women alone can witness. These refer to matters which are the domain of women in general such as birth and suckling.

Hence, the formula of two to one is not generalized at all. In fact, in the case of 'Zina' the wife's testimony is given precedence over the man's testimony. If a husband sees his wife in sexual course with another man and he is unable to produce four witnesses then he is asked to swear that he is right in his claim. However, if the

السنة التبرية بين أهل الفقه و أهل الحديث لمحمد الغزالي، دار الشروق، القاهرة، ط2006، 14، م، ص66 -

woman rejects his claim and also swears then her word takes precedence over the man's word!

The fact of the matter is that it is irrelevant whether a man is giving the testimony or the woman, what is critical is the rights of the people that are to be safeguarded by these injunctions. That is why there are cases that require four male witnesses, some require two and for some cases one is enough. In the case of financial matters, the requirement of two female is because it is the domain of men in general and the women are not well versed in such matters, thus woman's witness might not be enough to safeguard the right of someone.

Thirdly, the claim that now women have become active participants in the financial arena so this injunction has become obsolete, it is somewhat of a misunderstanding of the injunction itself. Firstly, the injunction is addressed to those who are involved in the financial transaction. It is not addressed to the judges who are supposed to judge as per the available evidence. If the judge sees that the evidence of one woman is reliable in any given case then there is nothing in the verse that stops him from doing so. However, it is recommended to those who make the contract to take two women as witnesses if they cannot find two men because the women have a greater chance to forgetting facts when it comes to money dealings. The injunctions of The Qur'ān, just as any laws of a country, are based on majority trends. While women have become more active than before in the financial circles, there still remain significant occupational differences. Moreover, studies show that women and men both have different interests and when they are recalling past events, they tend to remember different details. Men are also known to have better long term memories while women are able to recall recent events better than past events. Even if we were to accept that women become well conversant in money matters, the fact remains that

women easily come under stress and thus their eyewitness accounts have a chance of being more inaccurate than men¹. Thus for safeguarding the interest of people, the verse still applies and will continue to apply as long as women are women and men are men.

1 - Who remembers what? Gender differences in memory, Michigan Quarterly Review, 26,pg 64-85,
www.fas.harvard.edu/~mrbworks/articles/1987_Loftus_MQR.pdf, retrieved on 7/08/2105.

Conclusion

In a world that has become a global village, different cultures and civilizations are bound to interact with each other. It has become more necessary than ever that those societies with different historical and cultural background understand each other and learn to live and grow with each other in a harmonious way. Instead of a clash of civilization, it should be a mutually beneficial co-existence. This, of course, is only possible if the historical particularity, social identity and intellectual contribution of each society is acknowledged, accepted and judged with parameters that take all such factors in to account. Every society is a product of its unique historical experience and it is not fair to judge it upon the values or principles of a society with a totally different historical background.

It is very appreciable that the Muslim intellectuals of today are daring to study what the West has to offer of its wisdom. However, to accept it without critical scrutiny and to apply it on a society that did not experience what the West has experienced, is somewhat of a shallow and unproductive academic exercise. In order to carry out an impartial study of the Islamic tradition, it is vital that any researcher studies the two streams of academic traditions, the western and the Islamic individually, as per the requirements of that tradition. In fact, they need to experience the tradition in an orthodox manner, from the inside, in order to fully understand and grasp the tradition and only then they can strive towards a more holistic critical approach towards its study.

The critical analysis of the works of the two writers, Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas, has lead to some observations and conclusions:

- 1) **Affirmation of belief in Qur'an:** Both the writers, Wadud and Barlas, claim to approach the Qur'anic text as believers in its divinity. They suggest that the problem lies with the interpretation of the Qur'an and not with the Qur'an itself. However, Barlas seems to contradict her claim in practice when she states that the written text within our hands is three processes away from the actual word of God.
- 2) **Academic Qualification of Asma Barlas:** Asma Barlas is a journalist by profession and specializes in International Studies and politics. She lacks one of the most essential tools to unlocking the meaning of the core text of The Qur'an, the Arabic language. In addition, her knowledge of Hadīth, Tafsīr, Usool Al Fiqh, Usool Al-Hadīth, Usool Al-Tafsīr and the development of all these sciences seems non-existent. Her academic credentials raise significant doubts about her ability to understand the original Islamic works let alone judge them.
- 3) **Academic qualification of Amina Wadūd:** Wadud seems to have seriously pursued the field of Islamic Studies. In addition to her PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies, she spent a year in Egypt and during her stay she took an advanced course in Arabic language and attempted to study Qur'anic Studies and Philosophy. However, her academic pursuits show that she did not delve into the study of Hadīth, its principles or the development of this science.
- 4) **Influence of Feministic ideals:** Both, Amina Wadūd and Asma Barlas, have studied in Western institutes and seem heavily influenced, Western philosophy and feminist ideals prevailing there. Although, Amina Wadud agrees with the traditional scholars in her perspective of gender equity and not equality; she believes that Qur'an has defined the same individual roles to both but the socio-functional roles for both are different but equally important. However, differences arise when it comes to the application of this theory while dealing with individual issues. An effort

to align the Qur'anic text with her idea of gender equity becomes apparent when a traditionally accepted view is rejected and categorized as being particular to that historical time and place and hence no longer applicable. No textual justification for the view is cited. As for Barlas, her work is completely derived from the works of those who studied in the West. Only a glance at her bibliography is enough to conclude that.

5) **Influence of Western (Biblical) Hermeneutical models:** The hermeneutical models employed by the two writers basically revolve around an intra-textual approach along with historical and linguistic analysis of the verses. They have tried to apply the Western hermeneutical tools that have resulted from the biblical studies carried out over centuries to The Qur'an and Islamic tradition, disregarding those elements and tools that developed and became part of Qur'anic studies as a result of the unique historical development of this tradition. She has clearly stated that she has taken up the hermeneutical model proposed by Fazlul Rahman Malik who is known to have been trained by the orientalist Toshihiko Izutsu. They have either rejected or strongly criticized those sciences and sources of understanding of Islam that are unique to the socio-historical development of the Muslim world.

6) **Over-Generalization and Partial research:** Criticizing the whole corpus of Islamic tradition and rejecting the works and efforts of generations of great scholars is a very bold, though not a new, step. While there are individuals who can be said to express patriarchal views, such views were not found among those books of Tafsir that are renowned in the traditional academic circles. On the contrary many aspects of issues discussed by the two writers were in agreement with views of the traditional scholars. Their claims have not been substantiated by sufficient evidence to label the

whole tradition as patriarchal. Wherever the judgments of orientalists have been quoted, the matter has not been investigated in an academic manner.

- 7) **Reliance on secondary sources:** Barlas has completely and utterly relied on secondary sources of information despite the availability of primary sources pertaining to the object of her study. She has not consulted a single original work of *Tafsīr* or *Hadīth* (except an English translation of Al-Tabari). While there is nothing wrong with consulting secondary sources, study of those texts about which they are making their claims was essential to ascertain an impartial view. Barlas has not done that with any of her claims. Her works seems like a patch work of different theories that are not substantiated by evidence. Wadūd, too, has consulted just three books of *Tafsīr*, citing only two of them as evidence for her claims and one book of *Hadīth*. While she has consulted some Arabic books, a few even regarded as primary works in their respective field, majority of her sources belong to the same category as that which Barlas has relied on.
- 8) **Denigrating Islamic Sciences:** Both the writers have done grave injustice and disrespect to the works of Muslims scholars and their efforts in the development of Islamic sciences. Despite the fact that these sciences include the most comprehensive and advanced tools of textual interpretation, the writers have classified them as mere works of a bunch of patriarchal minded men and thus not deserving any value or attention whatsoever.

Recommendations:

- 1) More women interpreters of the Qur'an who are well grounded in the knowledge of Islamic sciences need to come forward and take up the task of Tafsir as female interpreters do seem to be almost non-existent.
- 2) A need to take the Islamic sciences to the masses and not just keep them within academic circle so that the common Muslim has a better idea of the efforts and progress our traditional scholars have made in their pertinent fields.
- 3) The Islamic method of textual analysis and interpretation has developed and perfected over a long period of time. It ought to be extended beyond the religious texts and applied to other fields of knowledge where textual interpretation is required.
- 4) Ijtihad of well conversant scholars should be more actively publicized because the social fabric of society is changing and the mainstream scholars need to help the Muslims deal with matters accordingly.
- 5) The women in many Muslim countries are oppressed despite the fact that Islam is not the source of this oppression. The scholars should come forward and help improve the status and condition of women. They should speak up against the injustice done to women in the name of Islam and tradition so no one can attribute it to Islam or its scholars and the new generation's faith in Islamic injunctions is restored.
- 6) The status quo of Muslims in today's world is that they are not following Islam in its true spirit. When a woman comes to a scholar and asks them the solution to a marital problem specific to her, instead of giving her an age old fatwa that was given in a different social set

up and in a different time, they should advice her as per the social conditions of today. Today's generation need practical Islamic solutions to the problems they are facing, not bookish answers that are no longer applicable in today's world.

LIST OF QUR'ANIC VERSES

No	Surah Name and verse	Verse No	Page No.
Al-Fatiha			
1.	(صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ عَيْرَ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ)	7	30
Al-Baqarah			
2.	(كَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْكُمْ يَنْذُرُوكُمْ أَيَّاتِنَا وَيُنَزِّلُكُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمْ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمْ مَا لَمْ تَكُونُوا تَعْلَمُونَ)	151	87
3.	(يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ بِكُمُ الْيُسُرَ وَلَا يُرِيدُ بِكُمُ الْعُسُرَ	185	52,84,97
4.	(وَالْمُطَّلَّقَاتُ يَرْعَصْنَ بِأَنفُسِهِنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ فُرُوعٍ)	228	75,102,117,125
5.	(وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَالْحِكْمَةِ يَعْظِمُكُمْ بِهِ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلَيْهِمْ	231	87
6.	(وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِنْ رِجَالِكُمْ فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِنْ تَرْضُونَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ أَنْ تَضْلِلَ إِحْدَاهُمَا فَتَذَكَّرَ إِحْدَاهُمَا الْأُخْرَى)	282	133
Al-Imran			
7.	(إِنَّ أَوَّلَ بَيِّنَتٍ وُضِعَ لِلنَّاسِ لِلَّذِي يَسْكُنُهُ مَبَارِكًا وَهُدًى لِلْعَالَمِينَ)	96	30
8.	(لَقَدْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ بَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ يَنْذُرُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَيَّاتِهِ وَيُنَزِّلُهُمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلِ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ (مُبَين)	164	35
An-Nisa			
9.	(وَلَكُمْ نِصْفُ مَا تَرَكَ أَزْوَاجُكُمْ إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ هُنَّ وَلَدٌ...)	12	73
10.	(خَرَقْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ أَمْهَاتُكُمْ وَبَنَائِكُمْ وَأَخْوَائِكُمْ وَعَمَائِكُمْ وَخَالَائِكُمْ ...)	23	74
11.	(وَسَتَفْتَنُنَّكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ فِي الَّلَّهِ يُثْبِتُكُمْ فِيهِنَّ ...)	27	130

12.	(الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ إِمَّا فَضَلَّ اللَّهُ بِعَصْمَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ ...)	34	107
13.	(إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَعْفُرُ أَنْ يُشْرِكَ بِهِ وَيَعْفُرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكُ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ افْتَرَى إِنَّمَا عَظِيمًا)	48	74
14.	(يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولُو الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ ...)	59	36,50
15.	(وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفِرُ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوْجَدُوا اللَّهُ تَوَابًا رَحِيمًا)	-64	88
16.	(وَمَنْ يُطِعِ اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ فَأُولَئِكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّنَ وَالصَّدِيقِينَ وَالشُّهَدَاءِ وَالصَّالِحِينَ وَحَسُنَ أُولَئِكَ رَفِيقًا)	69	31
17.	(مَنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ تَوَلَّ فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِظًا)	80	88
18.	(أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ الْقُرْآنَ وَلَوْ كَانَ مِنْ عِنْدِ غَيْرِ اللَّهِ لَوْجَدُوا فِيهِ اخْتِلَافًا كَثِيرًا)	82	48
19.	(وَمَنْ يُشَاقِقِ الرَّسُولَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُ الْهُدَى وَيَتَّبِعُ غَيْرَ سَبِيلِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ نُولِهِ مَا تَوَلَّ وَنُصْلِيهِ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا)	115	51
20.	(وَلَنْ تَسْتَطِعُوا أَنْ تَعْدِلُوا بَيْنَ النِّسَاءِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتُمْ فَلَا تَمْلِأُوا كُلَّ الْمَيْلِ فَتَذَرُوهَا كَالْمَعْلَقَةِ وَإِنْ تُصْلِحُوهَا وَتَتَّقَوْا فِإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَفُورًا رَحِيمًا)	129	129,131
21.	(وَإِنْ امْرَأٌ خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُورًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ وَأَخْبِرُوهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ الشَّرُّ)	-128	127,131
	Al-Maidah		
22.	(وَاللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ بَأْبَيِّنَ أَدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتَبَعَّلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَلَمْ يَتَعَبَّلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتَلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَعَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَعَبَّلِينَ)	27	31
23.	(فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ عَرَابًا يَبْحَثُ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِتُبَيَّنَ كَيْفَ يُوَارِي سَوْءَةَ أَخِيهِ)	31	32
	Al-An'aam		
24.	(وَأُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ لِأَنْذِرُكُمْ بِهِ وَمَنْ بَلَغَ أَنْتُمْ كَمْ لَتَشْهَدُونَ أَنَّ مَعَ اللَّهِ	19	59

	أَلَهَةُ أُخْرَى فَلَمَّا أَشْهَدُ فَلَمْ يَأْمَنَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بِرِيَّةٍ بِمَا تُشْرِكُونَ		
25.	(وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّحُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ)	97	33
26.	(وَعَلَى الَّذِينَ هَادُوا حَرَثَنَا كُلَّهُ ذِي ظُفُرِّ ...)	146	33
Al-A'raf			
27.	(فَلَمَّا يَأْتِهَا النَّاسُ إِلَيَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَيْكُمْ جَمِيعًا ...)	158	66
At-Tawbah			
28.	(وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أُولَئِكَ بَعْضٌ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ...)	71	113
Younus			
29.	(وَمَا تَكُونُ فِي شَأْنٍ وَمَا تَأْتُلُ مِنْهُ مِنْ قُرْآنٍ وَلَا تَعْمَلُونَ مِنْ عَمَلٍ ...)	61	63
Yousuf			
30.	(إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ)	2	68
Ar-Ra'd			
31.	(جَنَّاتٌ عَدْنٌ يَدْخُلُونَهَا وَمِنْ صَلَحٍ مِنْ أَبَابِيهِمْ وَأَزْوَاجِهِمْ وَذَرَّيَّهِمْ)	23	123,124
An-Nahl			
32.	(وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْذِكْرَ لِتُبَيَّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزَّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَكَبَّرُونَ)	44	34,76
33.	(وَلَقَدْ تَعَلَّمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يَعْلَمُهُ بَشَرٌ لِسَانُ الدِّيْنِ يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمٌ وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ)	103	68
Al-Isra			
34.	(وَقُرْآنًا فَرَقْنَا لِتَقْرَأَهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ عَلَى مُكْثٍ وَنَزَّلْنَاهُ تَنْزِيلًا)	106	64
Al-Ambyaa			
35.	(وَكَانَ فِيهِمَا أَلْهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ أَكْفَسَهَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ)	22	114
36.	(وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ)	107	59
Al-Noor			

37.	(قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِنْ تَوَلُّوا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حَمَلَ ...)	54	88
Al-Furqan			
38.	(وَقَالُوا مَا لِهَا الرَّسُولُ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْسِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ تَذِيرًا)	7	32
39.	(وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً كَذَلِكَ لِتُشَبَّهَ بِهِ فُؤَادُكُمْ وَرَتَنَاهُ تَرْتِيَالًا)	32	64
As-Shu'raa			
40.	(وَكَذِيلَكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِتُنْذِرَ أُمَّ الْقُرْبَى وَمَنْ حَوْفَهَا ...)	7	59,65
41.	(قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ)	23	31
42.	(وَإِنَّهُ لَتَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ نَزَّلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْنِدِينَ بِلْسَانٍ عَرَبِيًّا مُبِينٍ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَيْرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْمَعَ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ أَيَّةً أَنْ يَعْلَمُهُ عُلَمَاءُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَوْ نَرَنَاهُ عَلَى بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِيَّةِ)	192-199	51,67,72
Al-Ahzab			
43.	(يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ مَنْ يَأْتِ مِنْكُنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيِّنَةٍ يُضَاعِفُ لَهَا الْعَذَابُ ضِعْفَيْنِ وَكَانَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرًا)	30	62
44.	(أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَخْلَقْنَا لَكَ أَزْوَاجَكَ الْأَلَّا يَتَّبِعُ ...)	50	61
45.	(سُنَّةُ اللَّهِ فِي الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِ وَلَنْ يَجِدَ لِسُنَّةَ اللَّهِ تَبَدِيلًا)	62	87
Ya-Seen			
46.	(يَسْ وَالْقُرْآنُ الْحَكِيمُ إِنَّكَ لَمَنْ أَمْرَسَلِينَ عَلَى صِرَاطِ مُسْتَقِيمٍ تَنْزِيلَ الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ لِتُنْذِرَ قَوْمًا مَا أَنْذِرَ أَبْوَاهُمْ فَهُمْ غَافِلُونَ)	1-6	65
Az-Zumur			
47.	(قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا غَيْرَ ذِي عِرْجَعٍ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقَوْنَ)	28	68

Ghafir			
49.	(رَبَّنَا وَأَدْخِلْهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ عَدْنٍ أَلَّيْ وَعَدْنَهُمْ وَمَنْ صَاحَ مِنْ أَبَائِهِمْ وَأَرْجِهِمْ وَذُرْيَّتِهِمْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ)	8	128
Fussilat			
50.	(تَنْزِيلٌ مِنَ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ . كِتَابٌ فُصِّلَتْ آيَاتُهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ)	2-3	68
Qaf			
51.	(لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَنَا مَزِيدٌ)	35	124
An-Najm			
52.	(وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهُوَى . إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَى)	3-4	89
Al-Waqiyah			
53.	(إِنَّهُ لَقُرْآنٌ كَرِيمٌ . فِي كِتَابٍ مُكْتُوبٍ . لَا يَمْسِثُ إِلَّا الْمُطَهَّرُونَ . تَنْزِيلٌ مِنْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ)	-77 80	62
Al-Hashr			
54.	(فَاعْتَبِرُوا يَا أُولَى الْأَبْصَارِ)	2	52
Al-Mulk			
55.	(وَلَقَدْ رَبَّنَا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحٍ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ)	5	33
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57.	(فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا، قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَعَاهَا، وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَاهَا)	8-10	41
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58.	(قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ)	1	74

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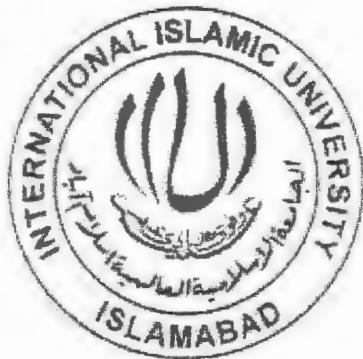
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نظرة آمنة ودود وأسماء بلالس إلى تفسير القرآن فيما يتعلق بالمرأة

(دراسة نقدية)

دراسة مقتربة لنيل درجة الماجستير في التفسير وعلوم القرآن

إشراف: فضيلة الأستاذ الدكتور شاه جنيد أحمد الهاشمي حفظه الله

تقديم الطالبة: ثناء إفتخار

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