

HARMONIZING RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE AND POWER IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUALITY

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Abstrak

Pemahaman teks-teks keagamaan yang tidak komprehensif menjadi awal tuduhan atas ketidaksesuaian konsep gender dan feminisme dengan ajaran Islam. Sebagian feminis menyebutnya dengan interpretasi agama yang patriarkis. Namun seringkali feminis muslim terjebak dan hanya fokus pada pemahaman ulang atas wacana agama dan tidak memperhatikan bagaimana pemahaman-pemahaman baru tersebut dapat diterapkan. Feminis sosialis yang lebih cenderung memperhatikan aspek sosial di dalam masyarakat memiliki pemikiran yang lebih aplikatif. Penelitian ini berusaha untuk menggabungkan kedua corak pemikiran feminisme tersebut dalam rangka optimasi kesetaraan gender. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif, penelitian ini dilengkapi data primer dari karya empat tokoh yang dijadikan sampel penelitian, yakni Nawal El-Saadawi dan Michel Foucault sebagai representasi dari feminis social serta Amina Wadud dan Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir sebagai representasi dari feminis Islam. Hasilnya dapat disimpulkan bahwa pemikiran feminis Islam yang lebih menitikberatkan pada reinterpretasi agama dapat dipadukan dengan pemikiran feminis sosialis yang banyak berfokus pada kajian kekuasaan yang patriarkis. Implementasi kajian agama yang moderat dapat dilakukan melalui konsep kekuasaan yang tidak patriarkis.

Kata Kunci: Feminisme sosial, feminisme Islam, kekuasaan, kesetaraan gender, wacana agama.

Abstract

The incomprehensible understanding of religious texts is the beginning of accusations of incompatibility between the concepts of gender and feminism with Islamic thoughts. The feminists call it a patriarchal interpretation of religion. However, Islamic feminists are often trapped and only focus on re-understanding religious discourse and ignore how these new understandings can be applied. Socialist feminists who tend to pay more attention to social aspects in society have more applicable thoughts. This study seeks to combine the two styles of feminist thought to optimize gender equality. This study used qualitative research methods and used primary sources from four feminists expert, namely Nawal El-Saadawi, Michel Foucault, and as socialist feminists Amina Wadud and Faqihuddin Abdul Kadir as an Islamic feminist. The results said that Islamic feminist thought, which focuses more on religious reinterpretation, can be combined with socialist feminist thought, which focuses on studying patriarchal power. Implementing religious moderation studies can be done through the intermediary of the non-patriarchal power.

Keyword: Social feminism, Islamic feminism, gender equality, religious discourse, power.

Introduction

The discourse on gender issues is endless. Feminist fighters are not only from the feminine but also from the masculine. Various gender issues from a multidisciplinary perspective are intensified. Various feminist groups ranging from religious, socialists, existentialists, liberals, and even Marxists have contributed to raising the issue of gender and feminism. Issues about women being made into second-class human beings (the second sex) become objects of study continuously followed up by academics and scientists. Gender studies exist not only as an attempt to understand women and men separately but also as how to integrate them into the social system. Equalizing gender becomes problematic because it faces various barriers, such as the authorities' construction of culture, religion, and political policies.¹

The dichotomous human perspective on women and men begins a patriarchal civilization model. This is not only dangerous for women but also men. The patriarchal perspective creates a stigma that the strong can oppress the weak. Men who are strong can oppress women who are weak. Vice versa, if women are strong, they are permissible to oppress weak men. Even fellow women can oppress each other depending on who is stronger. Differences do not always have to be viewed dichotomously but can also be viewed synergistically. Differences between men and women should be seen as social capital that can bring progress, such as differences in ethnicity, nation, skin color, etc.²

Many studies discuss women's position in society from a social and religious perspective. From western socialists such as Foucault, eastern socialists such as Nawal El Saadawi, Muslim feminists from the west such as Aminah Wadud, to eastern feminists from Indonesia such as Husein Muhammad and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, all of these feminists have their perspective, which is undoubtedly different. However, these

differences in perspective do not create divisions but reinforce each other. The socialist perspective emphasizes how the rulers who have a total share in policy and politics fully regulate the dynamics that occur in society, so that gender inequality in a society depends on what policies are issued by the government. On the one hand, Muslim feminists' study and reinterpret religious texts more.³ Thus, there are many new interpretation models offered by feminists to free women from the negative and subordinate stigma inherited and constructed by their predecessors. Therefore, gender equality in some areas is still difficult to implement. Overall, the Human Development Index 2022 data in Indonesia shows that there is still a sufficient difference between the development of men and women where the development of men reaches 76.25 out of 100, while women's development only reaches 69.59. This is one of the factors behind the delay in increasing the Gender Development Index for the last 10 years, which only increased by 1.2 percent.⁴

This article tries to see how the combination of the two models and the perspective of feminism, namely socialist and religious, has rarely been considered by researchers and academics. The author uses a qualitative research method in which the author will analyze various points of view of the thoughts of various related figures. The data source used in this study is a secondary data source, namely library research, where the author uses various writings or works from corresponding figures accompanied by several supporting scientific works as research material. Referring to the condition of Indonesian society undergoing modernization, where there is increased awareness and attention to religious values in daily life, the researcher assumes that the combination of religious and gender discourse with policies issued by the authorities will form an ideal social system condition where one of the indicators is the realization of gender equality. Harmonizing the two models of feminism hopes

¹ Mufidah Ch, "Rekonstruksi Kesetaraan Dan Keadilan Gender Dalam Konteks Sosial Budaya Dan Agama," *Egalita*, May 8, 2012, 1, <https://doi.org/10.18860/egalita.v0i0.1910>.

² Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh (Tafsir Progresif untuk Keadilan Gender dalam Islam)*, Cetakan IV (Banguntapan, Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2021), 29.

³ Nafsiyatul Luthfiyah, "Feminisme Islam Di Indonesia," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 16, no. 1 (April 1, 2015): 79, <https://doi.org/10.14421/esensia.v16i1.988>.

⁴ Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, "Women and Men In Indonesia 2022" (Jakarta: Direktorat Badan Pusat Statistik Indonesia, 2022), <https://www.bps.go.id/publication/2022/12/16/0538dc0f9235bbe0fe792cf8/women-and-men-in-indonesia-2022.html>.

that gender equality will be more effective and applicable and not just stop at discourse.

The Dynamics of Feminism and Gender in Indonesia

Starting from Middelburg, the Netherlands, in 1785, there was the world's first women's scientific association. The word feminism was coined in 1837 by Charles Fourier, a utopian socialist activist. The movement then developed rapidly in America thanks to John Stuart Mill, who did the scientific publication *The Subjection of Women* in 1869 and marked the presence of the first wave of feminism. Movements in Europe helped initiate women in Indonesia, such as Kartini, Cut NyakDien, DewiSartika, etc. The movement arose because of the conditions that required them to fight alongside the men to defend their ancestral land.⁵

Feminists strive in every struggle to create a world without domination, oppression, violence, and discrimination. Indeed, at first, feminism was echoed in the context of fighting for the rights of women who had to experience stigma and stereotypes that were not beneficial to society. Gradually, it was realized that gender equality was needed for not only women but also men. The patriarchal system requires men to be the foundation of life in the household, so they inevitably live in the shadow of society's expectations as strong figures and will be rejected by society if they fail to meet these expectations.⁶

In Indonesia itself, feminism still cannot be said to have reached the peak of its glory. The debate about the proper role of women is still ongoing without any common ground. Gender equality is difficult to achieve, one of which is due to a lack of enthusiasm and even rejection from women themselves. The idea that women are inherently inferior to men is a big wall that must be faced.⁷ According to Ahmad Baidowi, the feminism movement in Indonesia is generally implemented in four models. The first is developing a gender study

centers in universities, seminars, workshops, training, and so on, which are carried out by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) such as the Fahmina Institute, al-Muayyad, Center for Women's Studies, Yasanti, etc. The second model is through written works with various themes and genres. The third model is to conduct historical studies of women in the past. While the fourth is the reinterpretation of religious texts.⁸

Negative perspectives related to women's five biological experiences, namely menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum, and breastfeeding, are the roots of gender inequality experienced by women. Negative assumptions about the five biological experiences then make women vulnerable to experiencing five social experiences that are not so pleasant. The five social experiences of women are stigmatization (women are labeled negatively), marginalization (forced in marriage), subordination (seen as lower than men, are sexual objects), gender-based violence, and double burdens.⁹

Socialist Feminism

Various kinds of feminist movements spread in various countries, including liberal, radical, ecofeminism, multicultural, psychoanalytic, and socialist and religious feminism, both of which are the objects of study in this research. Socialist feminism was originally the fruit of Marxist feminist discontent with Marxist thought, which was gender-blind. In addition, the Marxist tendency to respond to the oppression of the workers is still far above the oppression of women. Marxists say that women only have to wait their turn to be freed from the bourgeoisie after the workers get their freedom.¹⁰ So it is not surprising that socialist feminism has a view similar to Marxist feminism, where the

⁵ Djilzaran Nurul Suhada, "Feminisme Dalam Dinamika Perjuangan Gender Di Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Sociology, Education, and Development* 3, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 17, <https://doi.org/10.52483/ijsted.v3i1.42>.

⁶ Djilzaran Nurul Suhada, 25.

⁷ Djilzaran Nurul Suhada, 26.

⁸ Lukman Hakim, "Corak Feminisme Post-Modernis Dalam Penafsiran Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis* 21, no. 1 (January 30, 2020): 236, <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2020.2101-12>.

⁹ Arivia Adhillani, "Pemberdayaan Nalar Kritis Perempuan Dalam Forum 'Ngaji Keadilan Gender Islam KGI' (Analisis Feminisme Amina Wadud)" (Surabaya, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2021), 47–48.

¹⁰ M Taufiq Rahman, "Pemikiran Feminisme Sosialis Dan Eksistensialis" (Bandung, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2019), 1.

oppression of women is the fruit of capitalism. In addition, socialist feminism also assumes that patriarchy is the cause of oppression, as stated by radical feminists. So it can be concluded that capitalism and patriarchy must be responsible for the oppression of women so far.¹¹

Capitalism which produces a class system between the owners of capital and workers is often associated with the inferior position of women. This is what makes socialist feminists adopt the theory of awareness of Marxism to make women aware that they are an oppressed and disadvantaged group.¹² Socialist feminism views women in the family as men's servants. In this system, men needed women, enslaved people, prisoners, or children as the next generation or just to maintain property owned by men. Therefore, according to Marx and Engels, to realize women's freedom, the property rights of men must be destroyed by revolutionizing the class.¹³

Nawal El-Saadawi Rebellion Against the Patriarchal System

Nawal's full name is Nawal al-Sayed Habash El-Saadawi. She was born in KafrTahla, Egypt, on October 27, 1931. Nawal is a feminist, doctor, activist, sociologist, thinker, writer, and novelist. He started his educational experience in Alexandria, then, in 1943, continued his secondary school at NabaweyaMoussa and al-Twegeheya and graduated in 1945. In 1949, she continued to the College of Medicine, UniversitiKaherah, and graduated in 1954 in psychiatry. After that, she continued at Columbia University, New York, in the faculty of health. It was there that she first left Arab lands.¹⁴ The profession that she was

involved in after completing her education was as a doctor. In this profession, she interacts and exchanges information with her female patients regarding how they are treated in a highly patriarchal society. Finally, her works were published which were dominated in the form of novels as a resistance against the patriarchal system.

In 1972, Nawal wrote *al-Mar'ahwa al-Jins*, denouncing the government's violence against women, which resulted in her being dismissed from the Office of Health in Egypt. After the incident of her dismissal, she continued her service at the Higher Institute of Science and Literature, which was the starting point of her writing in the form of novels full of criticism of gender injustice. Among his works is *Woman at Point Zero*, *God Dies by the Nile*, and *Hidden Face of Eve*, which have great success in grabbing people's attention and making them aware of the inequality that occurs in the social system between men and women.¹⁵ Her reading does not spare various themes of feminism in various sectors of social life, such as education, domestic work, and family institutions.

Nawal El-Saadawi sees that today's gender inequality is caused by power and male hegemony.¹⁶ Namely, a condition in which men have greater access to cultural prestige, political authority, corporate authority, wealth, and material comfort. The hegemony gets legitimacy from social, cultural, political, and religious ideologies. Nawal also mentioned several agents of socialization in the social system that helped build and shape the gender system. These agents are parents and family, religious community groups, media and language, expression, culture, and education. According to Nawal, some of these agents are often gendered biased, so they only create gender inequality.¹⁷

According to Nawal, women face a giant enemy: the patriarchal and capitalist system. The

[org/10.17576/islamiyyat-2015-3702-02](https://doi.org/10.17576/islamiyyat-2015-3702-02).

¹¹ Jumharia Djameren and Nuraeni Nuraeni, "Feminisme Dalam Novel 'Perempuan Di Titik Nol' (Tinjauan Analisis Feminis Sosialis)," *Jurnal Sipakalebbi* 4, no. 2 (January 11, 2021): 415, <https://doi.org/10.24252/jsipakalebbi.v4i2.18551>.

¹² Ratna Megawangi, *Membiarkan Berbeda? Sudut Pandang Baru Tentang Relasi Gender*, Cet. 1 (Bandung: Mizan, 1999).

¹³ Jumharia Djameren and Nuraeni Nuraeni, "Feminisme Dalam Novel 'Perempuan Di Titik Nol,'" 415.

¹⁴ Maryam Habibah Kamis and Indriaty Ismail, "Tema-Tema Feminisme Dalam Novel-Novel Nawal El Saadawi/Feminist Themes in Nawal El Saadawi's Novels," *Islamiyyat* 37, no. 2 (2015): 108, <https://doi.org/10.17576/islamiyyat-2015-3702-02>.

¹⁵ Maryam Habibah Kamis and Indriaty Ismail, 109.

¹⁶ Benon Tugume, "Interrogating the Male-Female Gender Dichotomy in Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*," *Journal of International Women's Studies* 22, no. 4 (2021): 121.

¹⁷ Nawāl Sa'dāwī, *Woman at Point Zero*, trans. Sharīf Ḥatātah (London: Zed Books, 2015).

system is cornering women so they can no longer speak like men. In her book Nawal says:¹⁸

*Women in most countries have not achieved much because they cannot be liberated under the patriarchal, capitalist, imperialist and military system that determines the way we live now, and which is governed by power, not justice, by false democracy, not real freedom.*¹⁹

In her book, Nawal mentions the roots of oppression against women, which include sexuality, the policies of state and government authorities, and religious interpretations. Women who should be seen as human beings are nothing more than sexual objects. Humans are physical, intellectual, and spiritual beings. However, unfortunately, women who should also be seen as intellectual and spiritual beings continue to be despised as physical beings, then sexual beings, just become sexual objects. The policies of the rulers also trap women in the patriarchal system. In her book, Nawal tells that Firdaus, the main character, continues to get bad treatment from her father, and she cannot do much. This is due to the absence of laws and regulations governing this matter. She also alluded to coercion in marriage with the language “trafficking children in the name of a legal marriage.”²⁰

In addition to the rulers’ policies, religious interpretation also plays a significant role in forming patriarchal bonds. Nawal, in his book, tells how violence perpetrated by men against women is based on religious interpretations.

My uncle told me that all husbands beat their wives, and my uncle’s wife added that her husband often beat her. I said my uncle was a respected Sheikh, well versed with the teachings of religion, and he, therefore, could not possibly be in the habit of beating his wife. She replied that it was precisely men well versed in their religion who beat their wives. The precepts of religion permitted such punishment. A virtuous woman was not supposed to complain

*about her husband. Her duty was perfect obedience.*²¹

In the article, it can be seen that it is as if Islam allows husbands to beat their wives, and even this is used as a standard of piety for a Muslim. Ironically, the wife of Firdaus’ uncle supports it. This interpretation of religious discourse causes women to fall into the trap of patriarchy and continue to accept violence.²²

Nawal also wants to make women aware that the stigma of beauty should not fool them. In her book, Nawal strongly criticizes makeup, high heels, and everything used as a standard for female beauty. He said that beauty is how to be natural, creative, and honest. He also did not hesitate to criticize the phenomenon of veiled women by comparing them with naked women. He said that both are forms of oppression of women. Veiled women are in the shadow of patriarchy where women have to cover their entire body just not to be bothered by men. Even as women are naked, they are willing to undress to fulfill the desires of men.

Michel Foucault Critical Review On Power Relations

Foucault, who was a sociologist, often received criticism from the feminists who came after him. In their works, feminists think that Foucault’s analysis is too androcentric. It places too much emphasis on men and always sees women from the men’s perspective. Foucault is also criticized as an academic who does not pay much attention to gender, and because of that, he is labeled as gender blindness.²³ In Foucault’s theory of power, where gestures are regulated by modern institutions such as schools, hospitals, prisons, and others, there is no separation between the male body and the female body under control exercised by the institution. What happens is that there are different disciplines applied to men and women. It is necessary to re-question the concept of relations and power conveyed by Foucault.

²¹ Nawāl Sa‘ dāwī, 46–47.

²² Benon Tugume, “Interrogating the Male-Female Gender Dichotomy,” 125.

²³ Konrad Kebung, “Michel Foucault Versus Kritisi Kaum Feminist,” *Studia Philosophica et Theologica* 21, no. 2 (November 5, 2021): 239, <https://doi.org/10.35312/spet.v21i2.376>.

¹⁸ Arun Guleria, *Emergence of Subaltern Consciousness in Select Indian English Novels: A Study* (United States: Lulu Publication, 2020), 85.

¹⁹ Nawāl Sa‘ dāwī, *Woman at Point*.

²⁰ Nawāl Sa‘ dāwī.

Bartky concludes that the problem point is not in his power but the patriarchy of power.²⁴

Apart from the various criticisms of Foucault, he contributed to the development of body discourse in the modern era. Although Foucault does not mention the practice of patriarchy in power to generalize body discipline from a male perspective, the concepts of power relations, discourse, knowledge-power, and others are beneficial in later feminist studies. The concept of power made feminists aware that one giant element is also the root of the oppression of women. Like what was conveyed by Marxist socialists, the bondage received by workers is similar to the bondage received by women, namely the bondage of power from the owners of capital.²⁵ Foucault also introduced the terms biopolitics and biopower. Biopolitics is a condition in which the body becomes part of politics and produces norms that replace binding laws. Meanwhile, biopower is a juridical form where the sovereignty of power, which in this case is the ruler's right, can confiscate individual bodies, time, and goods.²⁶

Leaving aside the pros and cons of Foucault's insensitivity to gender, we can take the three major concepts that Foucault proposes: discourse, the relation of knowledge and power, and body discipline.²⁷ According to Foucault, the discipline of the body can be done by the authorities. At the same time, the ruler will act according to the knowledge possessed. The knowledge obtained by the ruler is processed in such a way as to become a discourse that can determine right and wrong. Therefore, the first element we examine is the relation between knowledge and power. Behind knowledge, there are the human sciences that play a role in producing a formula. Psychiatrists, criminologists, sociologists, psychologists, scientists, and others are scientists who produce knowledge. The knowledge is transferred to the

authorities for further execution en masse. This knowledge will later have power and control in society by normalizing it through the authorities.²⁸

From this, we can understand that the root of normalization is the knowledge behind the ruler. The knowledge model dramatically influences the authorities in following up on their policies. The question is who produces this knowledge? This is where feminists can interrupt and convey their ideas about gender equality. They can collaborate with other scientists to produce knowledge that does not harm any party. The authorities also have a hand in determining who the producer of knowledge that becomes material in policy making is. The authorities should provide ample space for feminists to express their ideas and thoughts. In this way, a non-patriarchal policy, as stated by Nawal and Bartky, can be achieved.

After the production process and the knowledge transfer to the authorities run, the next step is to spread the discourse. Discourse, according to Foucault, is a system that contains a variety of knowledge. Discourse is the constitution of knowledge with social practices, forms of subjectivity, and power relations inherent in that knowledge. Discourse is more than just a way of thinking and producing meaning; discourse can regulate the body, mind, and social life of the objects they want to govern. Discourse can determine what is right and wrong. Therefore, discourse can be a means and momentum for the authorities to defend the oppressed, such as women. The authorities can use discourse to express the untruth of the patriarchal system that oppresses many women. With discourse, the authorities can remove women from stigma, subordination, marginalization, and others.

Discipline by Foucault is defined as a way to control the movement and operation of the body. Body discipline is a form of power that binds the body with various rules that cover the space and time in which the body moves. Discipline for Foucault is a method that allows a rule or regulation to be implemented.²⁹ In practice, the discipline has three elements: hierarchical

²⁴ Yuris Rahman Zaidan, "Relasi Tubuh Dan Kekuasaan: Kritik Sandra Lee Bartky Terhadap Pemikiran Michel Foucault," *Jaqli: Jurnal Aqidah Dan Filsafat Islam* 5, no. 2 (2020): 134.

²⁵ M Taufiq Rahman, "Pemikiran Feminisme Sosialis," 1.

²⁶ Daniel Susilo and Abdul Kodir, "Politik Tubuh Perempuan: Bumi, Kuasa, Dan Perlawanan," *Jurnal Politik* 1, no. 2 (February 21, 2016): 325, <https://doi.org/10.7454/jp.v1i2.19>.

²⁷ Konrad Kebung, "Michel Foucault Versus," 30.

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, 2nd Vintage Books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 3.

²⁹ Michel Foucault, 2.

observation, normalizing, and examination.³⁰ Body discipline, as explained earlier, has a lot to do with institutions or institutions. An institution or institution can run conducive by applying the three elements of discipline (disciplinary power) formulated by Foucault.

As Foucault put it, becoming a gender-literate institution is the transfer of knowledge about gender by experts. If the institutional stakeholders comprehensively understand the concept of gender, they can make a policy within the institution that is not gendered unequal. Furthermore, the process of disciplining colleagues and employees in an industry can begin with observation. Such supervision can be carried out with the intervention of a third party or from within the institution. Supervision can run more effectively and efficiently with the panoptic surveillance model introduced by Jeremy Bentham.³¹ Namely, the concept of supervision that makes the object being monitored feels continuously under control and supervision without having to supervise directly at all times. In this era of technological sophistication, CCTV can be installed in every room corner. That way, supervisors do not need to always surround every room with the level of supervision and control if there is unfavorable treatment between male and female employees.

Furthermore, the company can carry out normalization by providing sanctions (punishes) for anyone who disobeys and violates the rules that the institution has made. That way, colleagues and employees will slowly understand what should be done and what should be avoided. If implemented, it will create a condition where the oppression of women is no longer normal, and the perpetrators will be labeled abnormal. The last element that Foucault offers is an examination which in this case can be done through evaluation. The evaluation can be in the form of evaluating institutional policy policies or evaluating the performance of colleagues, employees, and stakeholders. With this evaluation, it is hoped that a conducive and comfortable condition will

be created for anyone in the institution. Foucault also reveals that sexuality results from power relations through discipline.³²

Amina Wadud Reinterpretation of the Qur'an

Amina Wadud, born in 1952 in America, tried to reinterpret the gender-sensitive interpretation of the Quran and produced a work entitled *Qur'an and Woman*. The book contains a methodological reconstruction and his reading of women in the Qur'an. The reinterpretation of Amina Wadud was inspired by FazluRohman, who has a neo-modernist and hermeneutical perspective.³³ In her writing, Amina Wadud opposes some of the Qur'an's attitudes and interpretations that indicate men's arrogance in that they demand honor and dignity for themselves. Amina Wadud classifies the interpretation of the Qur'an on women into three categories: traditional, reactive, and holistic.

In the first interpretation model, Amina Wadud said it was rare for the traditional interpreter to link (*munasabah*) between one verse and another or one letter to another. Interpretation begins with the first verse in the first surah, then continues to the second verse, and after the first surah is finished, then proceeds to the second surah and continues without regard to its themes. Amina Wadud calls it an atomistic interpretation.³⁴ The interpretation model is, of course, different from the hermeneutical interpretation brought by Amina Wadud. In traditional interpretation, there are hardly any compatible ideas, structures, principles, or themes. What concerns Amina Wadud more is that these traditional interpretations are written exclusively by men, making them vulnerable to patriarchy.

The second model is active interpretation, in which modern thinkers will interpret the Qur'an as a reaction to the actions accepted by women,

³⁰ Michel Foucault, 1.

³¹ Misbah Mustofa, "Analisis Disiplin Dan Kuasa Tubuh Michel Foucault Dalam Kehidupan Santri Pondok Kebon Jambu Al-Islamy Pesantren Babakan Ciwaringin Cirebon," *Jurnal Yaqzhan: Analisis Filsafat, Agama Dan Kemanusiaan* 3, no. 1 (2017): 165.

³² Pinky Saptandari, "Beberapa Pemikiran Tentang Perempuan Dalam Tubuh Dan Eksistensi," *Biokultural*, no. 1 (2013): 68.

³³ Dedi Junaedi, Muhammadong Muhammadong, and Sahliah Sahliah, "Metodologi Tafsir Amina Wadud Dalam Menafsirkan Al-Qur'an," *Ta'dib: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (November 30, 2019): 654, <https://doi.org/10.29313/tjpi.v8i2.5229>.

³⁴ Amina Wadud, *Inside The Gender Jihad: Women's Reform In Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006).

both individuals and groups of society, based on the Qur'an. Unfortunately, in this interpretation model, many interpreters do not carry out a comprehensive analysis of the Qur'an, which sometimes makes them justify women who are unnatural on the pretext that this opinion is in line with the position of women in the Qur'an. This interpretation often fails to understand the Qur'an's values because they are too concerned with their respective egos. By Amina Wadud, this interpretation must be suppressed for success in proving the harmony between women's freedom and the principles of the Qur'an.³⁵

The third interpretation model is a holistic interpretation that not only reconsiders existing interpretations but also relates them to other scientific disciplines such as social, economic, moral, political, and of course, femininity. Amina Wadud puts her interpretation of the Qur'an in this model of interpretation. Amina Wadud reinterpreted the verses of the Qur'an, which contained a discussion about women by eliminating the stereotypes that men in several previous interpretations had built. Many of the results of interpretations are anti-mainstream with existing interpretations. Hermeneutics leads him to be able to interpret events that he did not experience directly in the past and present them according to the context of the present.³⁶

According to Amina Wadud, Hermeneutics is always related to three things: in what context a verse was revealed, how the grammar of the language is, and how the overall text of the verse sounds. An example of Amina Wadud's interpretation of the Qur'an which also talks about women is Surah an-Nisa verse 1, which means:

O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from a single person, and from him, Allah created his wife, and from both of them, Allah gave birth to many males and females. Moreover, fear Allah with whom you ask one another and maintain a friendly relationship. Verily Allah is always watching over you and watching over you.

Wadud wants to say that in the case of

³⁵ Dedi Junaedi, Muhammadong Muhammadong, and Sahliah Sahliah, "Metodologi Tafsir Amina Wadud," 659.

³⁶ Sudarto, *Metodologi Penelitian Filsafat* (Jakarta: Rajawali Press, 2002).

the creation of man in the Qur'an, Allah never planned to create man starting with a male and did not state that the beginning of man was Adam. The verse never even states that Allah created man with a nafs that Adam, a man, owned. Therefore, the Qur'an never mentions one of the genders in the Qur'an when it describes the creation of man.³⁷ Wadud rejects the notion that humans were created starting with men so that men are better than women. Wadud said that the creation of man mentioned in the Qur'an is gender-neutral. The three points that are the focus of Amina Wadud's discussion are the words *min*, *nafs*, and *zauj*. Although the Qur'an distinguishes between men and women, there is no difference in value between the two.³⁸

Starting from the word *min*, according to him, there are two possible meanings of this word. The first interpretation can mean "from", which means the process of extracting the value in something else. In comparison, the second interpretation is to show the exact origin. The two meanings certainly produce different interpretations depending on who the interpreter is. Wadud gives an example of the interpretation given by al-Zamakhshari, who interprets the verse by stating that humans are created from the same type as the *nafs*, then the partner (*zauj*) of the *nafs* is taken from the *nafs* itself. This interpretation will lead to the understanding that the first human is a man who has been created entirely and perfectly, and the second human is a woman who is descended from the creation of the first human and must face the consequences of deficiency. This kind of interpretation, according to Wadud, is influenced by the Bible, which says that Hawa (Eva) was created from Adam's rib and the interpreters seek justification for their rationalization with the Bible.³⁹

The second term that is the point of discussion is the *nafs* which has been associated with one type of human. According to him, it is not related to any male and female human being. Humans have the same origin, although they eventually breed and spread in various

³⁷ Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbit Fajar bakti Sdn Bhd, 1993), 19–20.

³⁸ Haifaa Jawad, "Muslim Feminism: A Case Study of Amina Wadud's 'Qur'an and Woman,'" *Islamic Studies* 42, no. 1 (2003): 116.

³⁹ Haifaa Jawad, 118.

countries. Linguistically, the *nafs* are feminine; conceptually, the *nafs* are neither masculine nor feminine and are the essence of both male and female parts. The next word is *zauj* which generally means a partner, friend, or group. Many interpretations state that the word *zauj* refers to the second human, Hawa. Linguistically, the word *zauj* is masculine, while conceptually, the word *zauj* can be masculine or feminine or not both. The word *zauj* is used in the Qur'an for plants and animals.⁴⁰

Wadud emphasized that Allah mentions the relationship between God and the individual, not with gender. For him, the Qur'an does not explicitly or implicitly mention the differences between men and women regarding spirituality, individual capacities, and aspirations. Only one essential thing can distinguish between the two: piety, not wealth, nationality, ethnicity, and gender.⁴¹ In the end, Wadud tried to present an interpretation of the Qur'an with a different point of view from the previous one, where he got rid of all patriarchal interpretations to produce a more objective and gender-just interpretation, even though Wadud himself did not prepare a systematic analysis or compare various traditional interpretations, which made him vulnerable to criticism.⁴²

Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir and His Qiraah Mubadalah

Born in Cirebon, West Java, on December 31, 1971, Faqihuddin studied at the Islamic boarding school at Dar al-TauhidArjawinangun from 1983 to 1989 under the leadership of KH. Husein Muhammad and KH. Ibn Ubaidullah. Furthermore, he studied at Abu Nur University Syria from 1989 to 1995 and Damascus University from 1990 to 1996 by studying Islamic Law. He briefly studied at Khartoum University Damascus and International Islamic University (IIU) Malaysia from 1997 to 1999. He then took a doctoral program in religious studies at Gadjah Mada University Yogyakarta. He graduated in 2015 with a dissertation entitled *Interpretation*

of Hadith for Equality between Women and Men: Reading Tahrir al-Mar'ah fi al-Risala by 'Abd al-Halim Muhammad Abu Shuqqa (1924-1995). Two scholars who later inspired him in sparking a new reading model of the Qur'an called "Qiraah Mubadalah" were KH. Husain Muhammad and Abu Shuqqah.⁴³

Qira'ah mubadalah, as stated by Faqihuddin, is an attempt to interpret and place men and women as subjects addressed by the texts of the Qur'an and Hadith. The mubadalah approach is to offer interpretation and meaning of the texts of the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical scientific heritage (*turas*) using the perspective of mutuality between women and men. This interpretation is based on a reciprocal perspective that places men and women consciously as complete and equal human subjects, supporting each other, and there is no hegemony. In mubadalah interpretation, religious practice or interpretation cannot be used as the basis for the domination of one party over another. This interpretation focuses on the balance of relations and mutuality in interpreting gender issues based on religious texts.⁴⁴

Faqihuddin, in his book, lays out several arguments that form the basis for formulating the qira'ah mubadalah. There are surah al-Hujuraat (49) verse 13, surah al-Maa'idah (5) verse 2, surah an-Nisaa' (4) verse 1, and surah al-Anfaal (8) verse 72, in which the four verses show how the Qur'an recommends mutual relations, partnerships, and cooperation. The verses that show mubadalah explicitly are at-Taubah (9) verse 7, Ali Imran (3) verse 195, an-Nisa (4) verse 19, al-Baqarah (2) verse 187, and ar-Ruum (30) verse 31. In addition to the verses in the bag, many other verses and hadiths are used as the basis by Faqihuddin in his qiraah mubadalah. It is a lesson in re-use that emphasizes that women are subjects to whom the Qur'an speaks (*mukhathab*).⁴⁵

This method of reinterpreting the Qur'an with a mubadalah perspective is based on three fundamental premises. Islam is present for both men and women, the texts must with targeting both. The principle of the relationship between

⁴⁰ Dedi Junaedi, Muhammadong Muhammadong, and Sahliah Sahliah, "Metodologi Tafsir Amina Wadud," 664.

⁴¹ Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman*, 34–38.

⁴² Haifaa Jawad, "Muslim Feminism," 124.

⁴³ Lukman Hakim, "Corak Feminisme Post-Modernis," 235.

⁴⁴ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*, 49–51.

⁴⁵ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 60–72.

the two is interdependence, not hegemony. For the third, Islamic texts are open to reinterpretation. It is possible to include the two premises above in each interpretation.⁴⁶ The way qira'ah mubadalah works consists of three steps as follows: *First*, finding the basic principles in the Koran by understanding the value contained in universal verses as a foundation for further meaning. Both general principles (mabadi') and specific principles (qawa'id); *Second*, find the principal or main idea in the texts to be interpreted. Because the relational text has a partial-implementation style, it is necessary to find the meaning, which is the main idea correlated with the meaning in the first step; *Third*, reducing the ideas obtained from the second step to the gender not mentioned in the text. That way, these texts do not just stop at one gender but cover all genders, both male and female.⁴⁷

In its implementation, we can see Faqihuddin's reading of the letter Ali-Imran (3) verse 14:

(The heart) of man has been adorned (with) love for what he desires, namely women, children and grandchildren, abundant gold and silver, good horses (mounts), livestock, and fields. That is all the adornments in the world, and with Allah is the best place to return.

In verse, it seems as if only men are invited to talk, even though in mubadalah, women were the subject being spoken to by the verse. As explained earlier, the first step of qira'ah mubadalah is to find the basic principles of the Qur'an. The principle that can be taken is the Qur'an recommends doing good and being vigilant as not to slip into evil deeds. In addition, men and women are both subject to Allah's commands, prohibitions, and warnings, as stated in at-Taubah (9) verse 71 and Ali-Imran (3) verse 14.

The second step is finding the main idea in verse 14 of Ali Imran's letter. The main idea that can be found is that there is a warning to humans always to be aware of the charms (*fitnah*) of life in the world, not to fall into them and then deviate from the way of Allah. Faqihuddin offers a practical way to do this second step by eliminating the subject and object contained in verse. It is because the subject and object are technical and

contextual, while the message and meaning are contained in the predicate. In the third step, we can derive the subject of gender, which is not mentioned in verse. The verse shows the idea of guarding men from the slander and temptations of the world. Reciprocally (*mubadalah*), the verse warns both men and women to always be aware of the slander and temptations of the world. The warning for men to be aware of the slander of women applies the opposite, namely that women are asked to be aware of the slander and temptation of men. With readings like this, the stigma of women as a problem for men will be broken and stopped. The rules were issued to only control women as not to spread charm to men even though both have the same potential.⁴⁸

Faqihuddin endeavored to reproduce new language symbols where he put text symbols in mutually supportive roles. The principle of a common symbol is used as the basis for reading religious texts by placing women and men in the same role. Women who are often used as objects are placed in the subject's position and vice versa that are both of them experience each other's experiences experienced by the opposite sex. It plays a vital role in changing the order of subjects and objects in the interpretation of the Qur'an. The mention of masculine (*mudzakkar*) in the religious texts, which represents feminine (*muannats*) is generalized by many people to only refer to one type.⁴⁹

Harmonization of Socialist Feminism and Religion

Nawal El-Saadawi, who believes that the root of the oppression of women is sexuality, the policies of the rulers, and religious interpretations, recognizes and believes in the existence of male hegemony as a result of the convergence of capitalism and patriarchy. The patriarchal system that has penetrated various lines of people's lives affects the pattern of life that oppresses many women. Sexuality, the rulers' policies, and patriarchal religious interpretation are what Nawal calls the root of the oppression against women. Nawal's view as a socialist feminist aligns with the thoughts of Amina Wadud, who

⁴⁶ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 196.

⁴⁷ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 200–202.

⁴⁸ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 203–203.

⁴⁹ Lukman Hakim, "Corak Feminisme Post-Modernis," 250.

has an agenda to free religious interpretations from patriarchy. It is proven by her writing which became a phenomenal work and was widely studied by academics entitled *Qur'an and Woman*. In his writings, he tried to reinterpret the Qur'an from a women's perspective, which has always been interpreted from a male perspective, resulting in a patriarchal interpretation.⁵⁰

In addition to Amina Wadud, who gave a new interpretation that was fresher and different from the previous one, there was another reinterpretation of the Qur'an initiated by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir in which he argued that the status of the Qur'an, which was revealed as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all creation) should be read as a revelation that greets male and female. The male pronoun (*mudzakkar*), which the Qur'an dominantly uses for the part of academics, encourages commentators to produce interpretations that are superior to men. The idea of Nawal and Amina Wadud, who tried to eliminate the patriarchal mindset, was continued by Faqihuddin to produce a new reading of the religious text called *qiraah mubadalah*. *Qira'ah mubadalah*, a reciprocal reading of religious texts,⁵¹ is the right step in producing new interpretations and thoughts in Islam, which are more gender-just. Nawal means these interpretations as the interpretations needed to abolish patriarchy and male hegemony.

It is understood that Foucault's idea of power relations allows these new interpretations to reach a much wider object. Foucault's argument that a very close relationship between power and knowledge becomes a bridge for Islamic feminists who focus more on reinterpreting religious texts to be bolder in pouring out their thoughts to the authorities. Therefore, before the government produces discourses and policies, they need to open the most expansive possible space for interpreters as the human science⁵² to produce knowledge that is not gendered or unequal. The government will consider that knowledge to produce discourses and policies. Discourses and policies originating from religious interpretations free from patriarchy will have a far more beneficial and non-oppressive impact on both

men and women, which can then be produced in the form of legislation with constitutional value.

Nawal, who has a thesis that there are social agents who contribute to social construction in the community, needs to be considered. Parents and families become the first social agents where treatment, clothing, toys, etiquette, and others help children to digest social constructions that will stick together for a long time as they grow. After that, community or environmental groups play a role with specific rules or norms that they previously made. Religion becomes another social agent where interpretations and religious language greatly influence individuals to make decisions that they make every day. Furthermore, the media and language currently is developing the faster than significantly influence individuals' mindsets, which will later develop into social action. Expressions brought by community stage holders such as female police officers, female journalists, and others that can disseminate their thoughts and opinions to the public and individuals. Cultures that lean towards masculinity or femininity play a significant role in building individual mindsets in society. The last is education, in which a student is taught how he or she lives life and forms their character. All these social agents should not be gender biased to create an ideal social life, and there are no oppression of certain groups or people.

Conclusion

Socialist and Islamist feminism have a different styles. Socialist feminists emphasize how ingrained patriarchy in the power system can be overthrown. Nawal El-Saadawi said that sexuality, the policies of the rulers, and religious interpretations were the roots of oppression aimed at women. In her novels, she criticizes the policies of the rulers, interpretations of religion, and the myth of beauty as a patriarchal trap. She wants to make women aware of the falsehoods that have been running fast in society, such as men protecting women, women's value can be seen in their appearance, and others. Therefore, she emphasized to feminists that the key to women's liberation from oppression is in the awareness of women themselves, women's solidarity, and the courage to reveal the truth. Women can be aware of this oppression by providing a new interpretation of religion that is more humane for

⁵⁰ Amina Wadud, *Inside The Gender Jihad*.

⁵¹ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*, 49–51.

⁵² Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 3.

women. An interpretation that is not gendered biased and fair to both men and women. After achieving liberation, women can be empowered with creativity, knowledge, and writing.

Foucault, as a sociologist, had brilliant ideas in the study of women, although feminists widely criticized him after that. He believes that knowledge and power have a solid and binding relationship. Namely, where power is very dependent on what knowledge surrounds it. While knowledge itself is the result of production carried out by scientists. Here, gender-sensitive experts, especially religious scholars, can transfer religious values that are more gender-just.

For this reason, the authorities should provide a vast space for these religious scholars to aspire to their ideas before the authorities' issue policies. The discourse, which Foucault defines as the process of constituting knowledge, is a critical point in the flow of the ruler's policy. Suppose the knowledge obtained is based on universal goodness values that do not harm men or women. In that case, society will inevitably be free from oppression, as previously stated by Nawal.

The reinterpretation of religious texts has a significant role in producing knowledge. Amina Wadud, with her reinterpretation of the Qur'an through the hermeneutic method, and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir using the qira'ah mubadala method, are two of the many religious scientists who are competent in interpreting religious texts that do not gender biased. With this model of religious interpretation, society will avoid a patriarchal system, from the minor institution, namely the family, to the largest, namely the state. Of course, this can happen if accompanied by the right and proper socialization. The most effective socialization is by adopting these universal religious values into policies that the authorities will issue by the ideas of power relations and patriarchy presented by Foucault and Nawal as a representation of socialist feminists.

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