

Between Central and Peripheral: The Views of amina wadud and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir on Islamic Feminism

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This article discusses two feminist thinkers, amina wadud and Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, who articulate similar ideas of Islamic feminism through different approaches. wadud represents thinkers who live in the 'central' environment of feminist discourse, while Faqih indicates how 'peripheral' currents creatively adopt and adapt such discourse. This article argues that differences in intellectual formation and socio-cultural background strongly shape how each engages the Qur'ān, which in turn affects their respective attitudes toward classical traditions, particularly tafsir and uṣūl al-fiqh. This article discusses how their hermeneutical frameworks interpret Qur'anic gender verses, where their similarities and differences lie in their approaches to tafsir, both in terms of methodology and exegetical outcomes, and especially how they resist, receive, and reconfigure the classical tradition. Ultimately, this study shows that wadud, situated within the 'central' domain of feminist theory and influenced by secular-liberal paradigms, tends toward a deconstructive posture that challenges classical traditions. In contrast, Faqih, who was educated in traditional academia and lives in a 'peripheral' context, while inspired and influenced by wadud, adapts feminist ideas in ways that are more appreciative of the classical intellectual heritage.

Keywords: amina wadud, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Qirā'ah Mubādalāh, Islamic feminism, Qur'anic hermeneutics.

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas dua pemikir feminis, Amina Wadud dan Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, yang mengartikulasikan gagasan feminisme Islam yang serupa melalui pendekatan yang berbeda. Wadud merepresentasikan pemikir yang beroperasi dalam lingkungan 'sentral' diskursus feminis, sementara Faqih menunjukkan bagaimana arus 'perifer' secara kreatif mengadopsi dan mengadaptasi diskursus tersebut. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa perbedaan latar belakang intelektual dan konteks sosio-kultural secara signifikan membentuk cara masing-masing tokoh berinteraksi dengan Al-Qur'an, yang pada gilirannya memengaruhi sikap mereka terhadap tradisi klasik, khususnya tafsir dan uṣūl al-fiqh. Pembahasan difokuskan pada bagaimana kerangka hermeneutik keduanya menafsirkan ayat-ayat Al-Qur'an tentang gender, dengan menyoroti persamaan dan perbedaan dalam pendekatan tafsir, baik dari segi metodologi maupun hasil penafsiran, serta cara mereka merespons, menerima, dan merekonfigurasi tradisi klasik. Pada akhirnya, studi ini menunjukkan bahwa Wadud, yang berada dalam ranah sentral teori feminis dan dipengaruhi oleh paradigma sekuler-liberal, cenderung mengambil sikap dekonstruktif yang menantang tradisi klasik. Sebaliknya, Faqih, yang ditempa dalam tradisi akademik keislaman dan hidup dalam konteks perifer, meskipun terinspirasi dan dipengaruhi oleh Wadud, mengadaptasi gagasan feminis dengan cara yang lebih apresiatif terhadap warisan intelektual klasik.

Kata kunci : *amina wadud, Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, Qirā'ah Mubādalah, Feminisme Islam, Hermeneutika al-Qur'ān.*

INTRODUCTION

The discourse of feminism in Islam has generated some of the most productive and extensive discussions in Islamic hermeneutics. A number of scholars in Muslim-majority countries, including those writing in European languages in minority contexts, have undertaken deep readings of Muslim religious and historical documents to counter interpretations that entrench patriarchal practices in readings of Islamic law, politics, theology and society. Notable names include Qasim Amin (d. 1908), Tahir al-Haddad (d. 1935), Huda Sharaawi (d. 1947), Nazira Zeiniddine (d. 1976), Zaynab al-Ghazali (d. 2005), and Nawaal el-Saadaawi (d. 1931), who actively petitioned for the rights of Muslim women in the Middle East amidst divisive controversies. The pioneering Muslim voices of feminism in the West were echoed by amina wadud who conducted theological readings of certain Qur'anic verses that perpetuate patriarchal currents to find a hermeneutic of justice and equality for women.¹

This discourse continues to blow into Indonesia, where Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir—hereafter Faqih, referring to his popular name in Indonesia—offers what he

¹ Ebrahim Moosa, "Arabic and Islamic Hermeneutic", in *The Routledge Companion to Hermeneutics*, 1st edition, ed. by Hans Helmuth Malpas, Jeff; Gander (New York: Routledge, 2015). 718.

calls *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*—hereafter '*Mubādalāh*'.² Although he does not explicitly refer to it as a hermeneutical theory, his ideas are closely related to hermeneutical features. This article will discuss the last two names, amina wadud and Faqihuddin in the contestation of feminist hermeneutics. Wadud has expressed her feminist ideas in two main books, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam and Qur'an* and *Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective*.³ Faqih, meanwhile, wrote a book with the same title as her idea, "*Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*". In his book, he explains how texts concerning the relations between men and women should be understood.⁴

Both wadud and Faqih attempted to reconstruct the classical interpretations of the Qur'an that were accused of being full of patriarchal values. wadud, who is troubled by the patriarchal phenomenon that has engulfed the majority of Muslims, finds domestication of space and isolation for them to be active in the social sphere. What she regrets is that the Qur'ān, which ideally campaigns for *equality*, has yet to find its realization in the realm of praxis.⁵ This article seeks to review the offer of holistic hermeneutics and *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*. Although they both voice the issue of feminism, they work in different spaces. The assumptions underlying the emergence of these two offers may be uniform, but the methods and ways of working proposed remain diverse.

Previous research on this issue has tended to place the two figures in the same fragment of feminist thought and spirit, without regard to the complex details and varied particularities that make them worthy of *head-to-head* confrontation. The growing research trend in the context of amina wadud, on the one hand, seeks to confront her with traditional interpreters such as al-Tabarī, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn 'Ashūr, and Quraish Shihab;⁶ on the other hand with fellow Muslim feminists—or progressive Muslims—such as Fatima Mernissi, Zainab al-Ghazālī, Zaitunah Subhan, Farid Essack, Khaleed

² Nina Nurmila, "The Spread of Muslim Feminist Ideas in Indonesia: Before and After the Digital Era", *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 59, no. 1 (2021), pp. 97–126, <https://aljamiah.or.id/index.php/AJIS/article/view/59104>.

³ Nur Said, "Hermeneutika Amina Wadud Sebagai Basis Tafsir Harmoni Adil Gender di Indonesia", *HERMENEUTIK*, vol. 11, no. 1 (2019), pp. 128–43, <https://journal.iainkudus.ac.id/index.php/Hermeneutik/article/view/4508>.

⁴ Margherita Picchi, "amina wadud", in *Contemporary Qur'ānic Hermeneutics*, 1st edition, ed. by Georges Tamer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2025), pp. 341–60.

⁵ Amina Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006). 20.

⁶ Sudirman Santica, "Makna Nusyuz Dalam Al-Qur`An: Study Komparasi Tafsir Ath-Thabari Dan Hermeneutika Feminisme Amina Wadud" (UIN Raden Intan Lampung, 2024); Nidaul Islam and Muhammad Patri Arifin, "Komparasi Penafsiran Ibn Kathīr dan Amina Wadud tentang Hak Waris Laki-laki dan Perempuan", *Refleksi*, vol. 22, no. 2 (2023), pp. 227–56; Moh Rozin, "Bidadari Dalam Tafsir Al-Quran: Komparasi Pemikiran Ibn 'Asyur Dan Amina Wadud", *Dirosat : Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2021); Mufti Ramadhan, Wahidatun Nisa, "Konsep Adil Dalam Poligami Menurut Amina Wadud Muhsin Dan M. Quraish Shihab", *Maqashiduna: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam*, vol. 1, no. 2 (2023), pp. 53–72.

Abou el-Faḍl, Asghar Ali Engineer, and Jasser Auda,⁷ and one study with Western feminist Elisabeth Schlusser.⁸ As for *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*, no one has placed it in a space of contestation by comparing it with other figures. A study that juxtaposes wadud and Kodir reads it in an archaeological landscape; that Kodir was heavily influenced by wadud's ideas.⁹

Despite the fact of this influence, I found a divorce in attitude and thought between the two figures. Influence does not imply total duplication. I argue that intellectual background greatly influences how both approach the Qur'anic text. wadud, on the one hand, who lives in a secular environment, appears to be very liberal and progressive in her ideas.¹⁰ Faqih, as a religious figure who was born and grew up in the discourse of traditional Islamic science, apparently has not dared to come out completely from the shell of tafsir and other classical Islamic sciences. This comparative project will be carried out in several stages, starting from tracking the basic assumptions behind the emergence of this offer, continuing with recognizing the working principles and methods initiated, and ending with examples of new interpretations proposed.

DISCUSSION

The Genealogy of Feminism: Tracing the Patriarchal Chain

The emergence of a new idea that seeks to challenge an old idea is certainly not born from an empty space. There are socio-historical conditions that underlie a thinker's unrest and at a later stage initiate the birth of a new idea. Similarly, wadud's work, "*Qur'ān and Women*" was born from the womb of wadud when she experienced various kinds of discrimination because of the struggles of women of African descent in America. She then realized that the system of relations between men and women in society is full of patriarchal biases that have an impact on the lack of fair and proportional treatment for women. This experience was then internalized in her psychology and she also felt it in terms of religion.¹¹

⁷ Santica, "Makna Nusyuz Dalam Al-Qur'an: Study Komparasi Tafsir Ath-Thabari Dan Hermeneutika Feminisme Amina Wadud"; Islam and Arifin, "Komparasi Penafsiran Ibn Kathīr dan Amina Wadud tentang Hak Waris Laki-laki dan Perempuan"; Rozin, "Bidadari Dalam Tafsir Al-Quran: Komparasi Pemikiran Ibn 'Asyur Dan Amina Wadud"; Ramadhan, Wahidatun Nisa, "Konsep Adil Dalam Poligami Menurut Amina Wadud Muhsin Dan M. Quraish Shihab".

⁸ Shinta Tisia Azzahra, "Hermeneutika Feminis: Studi Komparasi Pemikiran Tokoh Amina Wadud dan Elisabeth Schlusser Fiorenza", *Jalsah : The Journal of Al-quran and As-sunnah Studies*, vol. 4, no. 2 (2024), pp. 237–62.

⁹ Widia Duwi Putri, "Genealogi Gagasan Qirā'ah Mubādalāh Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir" (Master Thesis, UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2024).

¹⁰ Siavash Saffari, "Tawhid Paradigm and an Inclusive Concept of Liberative Struggle", *Religions*, vol. 14, no. 9 (2023), p. 1088, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/14/9/1088>.

¹¹ Charles Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: A Sourcebook* (Oxford University Press, 1998). 127.

The same anxiety is also experienced by Faqih. Although he is not a woman, his interaction with feminist activists has created awareness of the dominance of patriarchal values in society. Women are still often underestimated, marginalized, and denied their social rights both at the individual and communal levels. Various narratives that preserve patriarchal values have been embedded into the joints of life, such as women are creations from the ribs of men, women are a source of fitnah, most residents of hell are women, must leave the house with *maḥram*,¹² must be fully obedient to their husbands, which ultimately implies harsh threats (*la'na*) for women who disobey their husbands.¹³ The various stereotypes that exist conclude one thing, that it takes collective public awareness to re-acknowledge the existence of women in the social sphere.¹⁴

The irony above is even more distressing when looking at the fact that the chain of discrimination—in addition to getting legitimacy from religious authorities—is also supported by the social construction of society which assumes that women were created "only" as ornaments for men.¹⁵ In the social level, problems that ideally are shared needs between men and women are often unilaterally confronted only by men, such as problems of fairness or unfairness, flirting or not flirting, damage or not damage, polygamy, covering the veil or not, divorce or not divorce; all these questions are asked and answered by men. Women do not get a proportional space to speak. Ideally, since these questions are relational problems, both parties have the right to express their answers.¹⁶

This is where the necessity arises to build a critical *cum* progressive reading method, where with this reading the position of women—which is seen as inferior at the level of society—is open to be reconstructed to become equal. The final result expected from this reading is that religion no longer legitimizes patriarchal values. Religion is present as a solution to end the social inequalities that have occurred so far.¹⁷ From this background, wadud offers a holistic hermeneutic, where scriptural texts must be understood as a whole based on the principle of unity. Meanwhile, Faqih offers *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh* (reciprocal hermeneutics) which voices the value of interconnectedness.

¹² *Maḥram* is a Shari'a term for people who are forbidden to marry. They are usually very close relatives such as fathers, uncles, brothers, etc.

¹³ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *60 Hadis Hak-hak Perempuan dalam Islam: Teks dan Interpretasi*, 1st edition (Yogyakarta: Ummat Sinan Mubadalah, 2017). vi.

¹⁴ Rahmah Eka Saputri et al., "The Role of Women in Marital Dynamics: Hadis Interpretation of Amina Wadud's Hermeneutic", *MIQOT: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman*, vol. 48, no. 2 (2024), <https://jurnalmiqotoj.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/jurnalmiqot/article/view/1180>.

¹⁵ Mahadab Banu and P.S. Sye. Masood Jamali, "Some reflection on paradigm shift in qur'anic, interpretation on gender issue discourse", *Hamdard Islamicus*, vol. 42, nos. 1–2 (2019), pp. 199–213.

¹⁶ Abu Bakar, "Women on The Text According To Amina Wadud Muhsin in Qur'an and Women", *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2018), pp. 167–86, <http://ejournal.iaimadura.ac.id/index.php/alihkam/article/view/1467>.

¹⁷ Amina Wadud, "Reflections on Islamic Feminist Exegesis of the Qur'an", *Religions*, vol. 12, no. 7 (2021), p. 497, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/7/497>.

The following discussion will explore the premises, assumptions, and how the two methods of interpretation work.

Epistemology of Holistic Hermenutics and Qirā'ah Mubādalāh

amina wadud grounds her assumptions by establishing a line of demarcation between the Qur'ān and tafsir. She believes that the Qur'ān has placed both men and women on an equal footing. However, the authority of interpretation that has been pinned on classical Islamic scholars, the majority of whom were exclusively written by men, has made the value of equality dim and patriarchal biases flourish. This fact has implications for the neglect of women's views and experiences in interpretation products, which in turn results in; women's vision, morality, and needs are interpreted using male perspectives and psychology. The interpretive products consumed to this day *are* nothing more than legitimization of patriarchal values, due to the absence of *women's experience* participating.¹⁸

In this case, wadud seems very allergic to classical interpretation products. She criticizes classical readings that are considered gender biased. She assumes that the birth of gender discrimination and inequality is not caused by the holy book, but the interpretation of the holy book itself.¹⁹ Genealogically, Wadud's critique was not the first. We can smell the same unrest from Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, who considers this practice as intellectual *shirk*.²⁰ A similar dictum was also delivered by Muhammad Arkoun who warned against the sacralization of the profane and the profanization of the sacred (*taqdīs al-afkār al-diniyyah*). Instead of constantly sacralizing old readings, wadud invites to continue to reconstruct and reconcile interpretation products contextually. The hope is that with this work the relevance of the Qur'ān will continue to be preserved.²¹

Another aspect that she criticizes the work of traditional-classical interpretation is its atomistic nature. An atomistic approach is an approach to text interpretation that ascribes multiple meanings to a single verse.²² The interpreter gives various options to the reader—the polyvalence feature of the text—without developing a clear epistemological framework. The characteristics of classical tafsir, whose work follows the flow of Uthmanī *mushaf*, are considered incapable of providing the main ideas

¹⁸ Asma Barlas, "Amina Wadud's hermeneutics of the Qur'an: women rereading sacred texts", in *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an*, 1st edition, ed. by Suha Taji-Farouki (Oxford: Oxford University Press in association with the Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2006). I have also written a detailed explanation of this issue in another article. See Muhammad Syamil Basayif, "Nasib Tafsir Klasik di Mata Feminis: Sudah Jatuh Tertimpa Tangga", *ibihatafsir.com* (2025).

¹⁹ Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). xii.

²⁰ Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, *Tekstualitas Al-Qur'an; Kritik terhadap Ulumul Qur'an* (LKIS PELANGI AKSARA, 2002). 9.

²¹ Muhammad Arkoun, *Rethinking Islam*, 1st edition (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1996). 55.

²² Abdul Mustaqim, *Epistemologi Tafsir Kontemporer*, 1st edition, ed. by Fuad Mustafid (Yogyakarta: LKiS Yogyakarta, 2010). 67.

contained in the text. The absence of integrative dialog between one verse and another makes the understanding of the text partial, not universal. Even if there was, this reading model is not accompanied by methodological and hermeneutical analysis so that it is unable to capture the main idea of the Qur'ān.²³

wadud then emphasizes the discourse of the objectivity of the text; that every method and product of interpretation is not truly objective, in the sense that an interpreter manages to take off his subjective clothes. An interpreter basically does not start his interpretation from an empty space. There are always prejudice in him on several potential meanings of a text, which then because of his subjectivity he directs to certain meanings and forgets other meanings. wadud calls this prejudice as prior text (literally: previous text). Interpreters are often shackled by their own assumptions of truth and the background that surrounds them. The implication of the dominance of the prior text over the production of interpretation is that the content of the text and its main ideas become reduced and distorted. It is no longer the interpreter who follows the objectivity of the meaning of the text, but rather the text that oscillates in the subjectivity of each diverse interpreter.

The idea of an interdisciplinary approach is then expressed as a solution to the failure of classical interpretation. According to wadud, the ideal interpretation is one that does not ignore the current issues of the modern world, such as social, cultural, political, economic, and especially; gender issues. An approach that does not only look at the text of the Qur'ān in the landscape of Islamic sciences is needed, but there needs to be an integrative dialog between Islamic sciences and contemporary sciences that are currently developing. Reflecting on the demands of modernity, the epistemology of religious science is not only isolated to the basis of sciences such as *uṣūl fiqh* and tafsir, but needs to be understood based on human experience which includes rational-logical aspects, methodical thinking, and generating new values.

In contrast with wadud, Faqih builds his offer based on three basic premises and assumptions. First, as a religion that addresses both men and women, the teachings of Islam represented in the content of the Qur'ān must be able to accommodate both. There should be no exclusivity of the text that only looks at one and ignores the other. This is important so that Islamic teachings become inclusive; open to every gender. Secondly, the relationship between men and women is a relationship of cooperation and equality, not hegemony and power. This means that every verse that has the potential to perpetuate one's hegemony, be it feminist or patriarchal domination, must be contextualized and reinterpreted.²⁴

²³ Sahiron Syamsuddin, "Hermeneutika al-Qur'an dan Hadis", *Elsaq*, 1st edition (Yogyakarta, 2010). 57.

²⁴ Nikmatullah Nikmatullah, "Male Ulama Reinterpretation of the Gender Hadith in Indonesian Socio Cultural Contexts", *Pharos Journal of Theology*, vol. 105, no. 2 (2024), pp. 1–13, https://www.pharosjot.com/uploads/7/1/6/3/7163688/article_13_105_2__april_indonesia.pdf.

This point then gives birth to the third premise, that reinterpretation of the Quranic text is constitutionally legal. There is no prohibition in any verse or hadith that prevents Muslims from reinterpreting. Every Islamic text is always open to reinterpretation so that the previous premise points can be realized.²⁵ It seems that this third assumption is in line with the first assumption in wadud's view. Faqih—explicitly and subtly—believes that there is no sacred product of interpretation. It's just that perhaps because of the different social context he conveys it in softer and kinder diction, in contrast to Wadud who seems frontal. Based on these three basic premises, Faqih invites us to reflect on the main idea of sacred texts so that they do not contradict universal Islamic values, regardless of gender identity.

"If a text is found that only targets one of the men or women, then it is certain that the text is partial and textual which needs to be contextualized and explored the substance of its ideas to be in line with Islamic principles. This process can only be achieved through *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*."²⁶

Like many progressive Muslims, Faqih bases his proposal on the popular adage: *al-islām ṣāliḥ li kullī zamān wa-l-makān*. This value must be implemented in a relational framework between the needs of men and women. Both should be able to feel the harmony (*ṣalaḥiyyah*) of Islamic teachings, without any disadvantage. Similarly, the ideal-moral principle of Islamic law, commonly referred to as *maqāṣid sharī'a*, must be able to target each individual indiscriminately. With regard to the realization of *maqāṣid sharī'a*, Faqih then classifies Islamic texts into three categories: *mabādi'*—which refers to the fundamental-universal value of the text; *al-qawā'id*—the thematically general principle; and *al-juz'iyya*—texts that explain praxis-implementative values and teachings. The latter covers specific themes such as verses on leadership, the obligation of maintenance, and household problems.

Understanding the classification of analytical categories of verses is important as a basis for placing the material object of interpretation with the *Mubādalāh* method. This is because not every verse needs to be *mubādalāhized* (reciprocalized). The majority lies in the *juz'iyyā* category. These *juz'iyyā* verses must then be interpreted in accordance with the idea of *qawā'id* verses and *mabādi'* verses. This categorization is based on another premise that the intratextual relationship between one verse and another is affirmative and mutually reinforcing. There are no verses that have contradictory values between each other. If a verse is found that outwardly appears to be contradictory, then its significance must be explored more deeply so that it becomes in harmony with the universal Islamic values contained in the *mabādi'* verses. Thus, the teachings of Islam and its texts, as affirmed by the Qur'an, are solid, intact, and integrated with each other.²⁷

²⁵ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*, 1st edition (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2021). 196.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 197.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 199.

Construction and Operating System of Holistic Hermeneutics

After deconstructing the classical interpretation model and its various epistemic frameworks, wadud begins to construct a reading that she thinks is ideal. She calls it holistic hermeneutics or hermeneutics of *tawḥīd* (unity). She defines this method as an attempt to interpret the Qur'ān by not only looking at how the text reads, but also dialoguing it with contemporary realities related to social, moral, economic, political, and especially, feminist issues.²⁸ In short, the process of understanding a text requires a thorough understanding of the context. This is where contextualization comes in. This aspect is the essence or main spirit of every hermeneutical method.²⁹

There are at least three main approaches offered by wadud in this hermeneutic operating system. First, the linguistic approach. Although she criticizes classical interpreters who tend to be normative, this time wadud agrees that the foundation of the interpretation of the Qur'ān text must indeed enter through the gate of linguistic analysis. The function of this approach is to analyze the language structure, syntax-morphology, used in the Qur'ān. Second, the thematic approach. The work in this approach is to classify groups of verses based on certain themes. *Tartīb mawḍū'ī* is the antithesis of the classical style of interpretation that tends to follow *tartīb muṣḥaḥḥ* (codex order). With this approach, verses that are scattered in the chronology of the codex are collected, dialogued, and interpreted based on the same universal idea. Third, social approach. The interpreter must have a complete understanding of the social context when the verse was revealed and the social context when the verse is interpreted. This means that the product of interpretation cannot be uprooted from the social dimension of the interpreter. Fourth, feminist approach. This means that interpreters must include their consciousness and ideas, and represent their ideas in the interpretation product. Interpretation products should not only represent the consciousness of men.³⁰

From these four approaches, the next work of interpretation is to understand the basic principles of interpretation. First, the interpreter must understand in what context the verse was revealed. In classical interpretation epistemology, this theory is called *asbāb al-nuzūl*. Every text must be understood based on its context. As for the verses that do not have *asbab nuzul* information, it must still be understood at what moment the text appeared. Second, the interpreter must understand the linguistic composition of a text; how the narrative format is and to whom the text is narrated. This analysis in *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* discourse is called *taḥlīl lafḍhī* or textual analysis. Third, the interpreter must understand the universal framework of ideas contained in a text; its *weltanschauung* or worldview, or what is commonly referred to as *maqāṣid sharī'a*. There is a mission and purpose behind a text. Differences in interpretation –according

²⁸ Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective*. 3

²⁹ Fahrudin Faiz, *Hermeneutika al-Qur'an: Teori, Kritik, dan Implementasinya* (Yogyakarta: Dialektika, 2019). 28.

³⁰ Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective*. 7-8.

to wadud—are often due to differences in perspective in parsing these three basic principles.

Next, wadud explains the technical steps of interpretation. The first step is to understand the context of the verse. The interpreter must understand the background of the revelation of a verse, to whom the verse is speaking, how the culture of the first audience of the Qur'ān, and how the socio-historical construct at the time of the verse appears, what ideas are being presented by the verse. Interpreters should not just read the verse and then conclude based on their own understanding, without seeing other "texts" behind the verse. In this regard, wadud's proposal is not new. Every hermeneutic figure always emphasizes the importance of understanding the context.³¹

The second step is for the interpreter to inventory the verses of the Qur'ān based on thematic similarities, understand each context of each verse, and look for common ground between contexts. This is related to the thematic approach initiated by wadud. The interpreter must read all verses under the same theme. This is important so that the interpreter does not understand the verse partially. The origin of gender bias written in classical interpretation is partial understanding. Classical commentators interpreted verses based on *tartīb muṣṣaḥfi*—thus resulting in the Quran not being understood as a whole. The point of this second step is that the interpreter must be able to summarize the context of verses with the same thematic umbrella in one clear conclusion. There must be a meeting point between contexts.³²

In the third step, the interpreter analyzes the verses based on the linguistic-grammatical approach; building an analysis based on syntactic-morphological structure (*nahw ṣarf*), stylistics (*balāghah*), and other linguistic aspects. The foundation used, of course, is the rules that apply when a text appears and how the first audience of the Qur'ān struggled using these rules. As for the diachronic aspects at a later date, it is beyond the interpreter's concentration. With this method, the interpreter tries to get an objective meaning of the text. In the fourth step, the interpreter interprets a text while ensuring that the product of his interpretation is in line with the principles initiated by the Qur'ān. There should be no interpretation that contradicts the basic principles of Islam. For example, if Islam has the principle of justice (*musāwah; equality*), then any interpretation that has the potential to undermine that principle must be abandoned.

In some aspects, the ideas wadud offers are not entirely authentic and new. She is just trying to assemble a fragmentary hermeneutical puzzle from her predecessors. In terms of the archaeology of thought, wadud adopts many hermeneutical discourses from both Muslim and Western scholars. Gadamer's idea of prejudice and no objective meaning is used as legitimization of the subjectivity of classical interpretation.³³ The

³¹ Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika dan Pengembangan Ulumul Qur'an* (Yogyakarta: Nawasea Press, 2017). 60.

³² Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective*. 2

³³ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. 277-85.

urgency of considering grammatical interpretation intersects with Schleiermacher's proposition—although this is actually not an entirely new idea, the traditionalist-conservative approach has long applied this idea—which is also agreed upon by progressive Muslims such as Nasr Hamid.³⁴ The scholar who most influenced the construction of wadud's thought—and wadud also affirms this—is Fazlur Rahman, especially with his double movement theory.³⁵

Neo-Uṣūl al-Fiqh? A Hermeneutical Exposition of Qirā'ah Mubādalah

While wadud tries to knit a red thread from the western-centric paradigm and the progressive Muslim archetype, Faqih actually makes the classical *uṣūl fiqh*³⁶ discourse as a patron of thought—which is then reformulated. In terminology, *Mubādalah* is a method of interpreting texts with reciprocal laws between the two parties. This method opens a high appreciative space for the spirit of equality between men and women. Faqih classifies this method into two categories; first is the “*cara kerja*” (how to work)—the chronological stages of interpretation. Second, the “*skema teks*” (text scheme)—the hierarchy and categorization of the Qur'ānic verses that will be the material object of interpretation. It should be noted that before touching on these two aspects, the interpreter must ensure that the three points listed in the basic premise points are well understood.

In the discussion of “*cara kerja*”, Faqih explains that there are three steps that are ideally chronological; sequential from the first. However, there are circumstances where the interpreter can jump to the second or even the third step when the awareness of knowledge (*malaka 'ilmiyya*) has penetrated into the interpreter's mind. This is because the first step is closely related to the construction of thought—not the work of action.³⁷

The first step is to reflect the ideal-moral principles of Islamic teachings—as the discursive foundation-of universal texts. Faqih analogizes his proposal to an epistemological construction that stands on the foundation of Islamic universalism, whether it transcends all themes (*al-mabādi'*) or principles related to only one specific theme (*al-qawā'id*). This is because the object of *Mubādalah* primarily targets texts that are *juz' iyyāt in* nature. This principle will in turn inspire every process of interpretation in *Mubādalah* epistemology and works regardless of gender differences. For example, the principle that faith is the foundation of deeds, good will be rewarded, bad will be

³⁴ Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, *al-Naṣṣ wa al-Sulṭah wa al-Ḥaqīqah* (Beirut: al-Markāz al-Ṣāqafī al-ʿArabī, 2000). 108.

³⁵ Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 2nd edition, ed. by Ebrahim Moosa (London: University of Chicago Press, 2009). 45.

³⁶ Ilham Majid, Ahmad Zukhruf Nafis, THE CONCEPT OF AL-ʿILM AL -UṢŪLIY: The Significance of Usul Fiqh in The Paradigm of The Unity of Sciences. *Jurnal Moderasi*, Vol 04, No. 01, 2024. 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jm.2024.41.01>

³⁷ Kodir, *Qirā'ah Mubādalah*. 59-60.

punished, justice must be done, and so on. All the principles mentioned above never differentiate between the sexes.³⁸

From this understanding, the interpreter moves to the next stage of interpretation by holding this universal principle as an initial awareness. For verses that already contain this universal principle, the work of interpretation is sufficient up to here. The ultimate goal of universal verses is to find the basis of equality, balance, and fair relations between men and women, where this value will be lived in the process of interpreting parsil texts (*juz 'iyyāt*). At this level, *Mubādalāh*'s work is essentially the same as the last step of holistic hermeneutics, where both build an egalitarian spirit based on universal Islamic principles and assume that all humans are equal.

The second step is to record the main ideas in the *juz 'iyyāt* texts, draw out the ideas, and harmonize them based on the principles contained in the first step. In general, *juz 'iyyāt* texts on the relations between men and women describe aspects that are praxis-implementative, not discursive-theoretical-and that are limited to a specific time and space. Therefore, it is necessary to work on investigating the main idea. The technical work can start from eliminating the subject and object contained explicitly in the text, and then embedding the predicate as the main idea to be *reciprocalized*.³⁹ This proposal is in principle a form of epistemological reflection and modification of the concept of *masālik al-qiyās* in *usūl fiqh*; a methodological procedure to trace the *'illat* (reason)-or in the hermeneutical context, the *maghzā* (significance; main idea).

The products of the interpretation of partial texts by classical scholars were then classified into two categories. First, interpretations that already contain universal meaning (*taghlīb; universalization*). This category refers to a situation where classical interpretations have placed men and women in an equal corridor, even though this verse is literally only addressed to men. Thus, the work of *mubādalāh* is no longer needed. Second, verses whose interpretation still leaves room for gender bias; there is no parallel and reciprocity between men and women. It is this kind of verse that Faqih underlines to reciprocalized.

The third step is to close the gap left by the second step. The technical procedure is to relegate the idea or predicate (traced in the second step) to the abstaining gender in the text. The verse format is "reconstructed" so that each of the men and women can be the subject and object simultaneously. *Mubādalāh*'s interest in this regard is to emphasize that verses addressed to men are actually addressed to women as well. And vice versa, as long as the interpreter manages to get the significance or main idea of the text and can find the relevance between the two. This main meaning must always be in line with the basic principles contained in the first step.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Ibid.* 200.

³⁹ *Ibid.* 201.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 202.

The description of the technical procedure above is the formal object within the framework of *Mubādalāh*. As for the material object (the *juz'īyyāh* verses to be interpreted), Faqīh explains the concept of “skema teks”. Referring to this overview, Quranic verses whose content is praxis-implementative are dichotomized into two categories. First, *manṭūq*, verses that explicitly mention the two sexes relationally. An example can be found in QS. [9]: 71, QS. [3]: 195, QS. [2]: 187, and 233; QS. [4]: 19; and QS. [30]: 21). Second, *mafḥūm*, verses that do not mention relational relationships explicitly, but implicitly. For example, the words *al-mu'min* and *al-mu'minīn* and *al-rijāl* in QS. [9]: 108, QS. [24]: 37, and QS. [33]: 23, whose general meaning includes both male and female sexes. The work of interpretation is considered complete in the first category, and targets the second category.⁴¹

The second category of verse, implicit (*mafḥūm*), is then searched for references to its interpretation in classical tafsir literature and is further divided into two. First, the verse to which the classical interpreters have applied the *taghlīb* method—redactions that are addressed to men are also addressed to women. For this category, the work of interpretation is considered complete and it is enough to rely on classical literature because the spirit of parallelism is already present. Secondly, verses where the classical interpreters did not mention this relationship. It is on this aspect that *mubādalāh* works. Simply put, just as classical interpreters applied the concept of *taghlīb*, contemporary interpreters with *mubādalāh* glasses also need to apply the concept of *tabdīl* (literally; replace). The *tabdīl* referred to here is the replacement of subject as object and object as subject while maintaining the predicate.

This *tabdīl* process is then also divided into two: the replacement of the male structure in order to address the female (*tabdīl al-dhukūr bi-l-ināth*) and the replacement of the female structure in order to address the male (*tabdīl al-ināth bi al-dhukūr*). The implementation of the first work can be seen in verses such as earning a living (QS. [62]: 10), seeking knowledge (QS. [3]: 137; QS. [16]: 36; and QS. [29]: 20), giving alms and charity (QS. [2]: 267 and QS. [65]: 7), as well as amar ma'ruf, nahi munkar and community education (QS. [3]: 104 and QS. [9]: 122). The second work can be found in themes such as the slander of women (QS. [3]:14, women lacking intelligence (HR. Bukhārī 304), taking care of children (HR. Bukhārī 6061), the standard of pious women (HR. Abū Dāwūd 1666), and the wife's disobedience to her husband (QS. [4]:128.) The final result expected from this procedural step is to raise a common awareness that the Qur'ān is inclusive and voices the principle of gender egalitarianism.

Same Destinations, Different Interpretations: A Crossroads

The First Human Creation: QS. [04]:01 and [30]:21

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 215.

Finished with the theoretical framework and hermeneutical construction, the two feminist activists then explain how the praxis realization of the conceptual procedure. Their common ground can be seen in the critique of the theological and social convention that Adam was the first human being. With the theological stigma of the precedence of Adam's creation over Eve, there is a sociological implication that men are superior to women. wadud traces two verses that narrate the creation of the first man, namely [04]:01 and [30]:21.⁴² In more complexity and detail, Faqih inventories more verses, namely [21]:30; [6]:99; [24]:45; and [25]:54 which all explain the creation of everything from water, [55]:14, [15]:26, 28-29; [23]:12 which explains that everything comes from the ground, and [75]:37, [76]:2, [32]:8 which explains that the origin of humans is due to biological reproduction. In all of these verses, there is not a single verse that explicitly explains that Adam was the first human being—let alone the narrative that explains Eve came from Adam's rib. These meanings are not expressions of scripture, but interpretations of it.

The root of the problem stems from the diction "*nafs wāḥidah*". According to wadud, the word *nafs* does not describe any gender identity. It is neutral, neither masculine nor feminine. Even grammatically, the gender connotation of '*nafs*' is *mu'annath* (female), so she asked "why then did the classical *mufasssirs* refer it to Adam (male)!" wadud's view is also confirmed by Faqih. Both also offer the same middle ground that the creation of the first human being was neutral. It does not allude to any gender. The Qur'ānic version of creation of humankind is not expressed in gender terms. Faqih added, besides the neutrality of gender identity, chronologically, the creation of humans also contains elements of water and soil, then conceptually due to biological reproductive activities.

Male Superiority and the Reconceptualization of *Nushūz*: QS. [04]:34

The starting point for feminist interpretations of this verse lies in the words "*bi mā faḍḍāla*" and "*bi mā anfaḳū*". Both interpreters agree that this verse should not be interpreted simply as "Men are responsible (*qawwāmūna*) for women". However, in more detail, there is a reason why men are considered as *qawwām*. Here, wadud explains that in grammatical analysis, "*bi*" in the verse means *sababiyyah* (causality; cause and effect). The statement that comes before "*bi*" is caused by the statement that comes after "*bi*". Thus, the superiority of men is only realized after they can prove two things; their superiority and their provision. This means that if men fail to prove these two aspects, their superiority over women is undermined.⁴³

Slightly different, Faqih emphasizes that this verse is not talking about superiority only on the basis of gender. Rather, the verse demands that those who have

⁴² Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text From a Woman's Perspective*. 15-28.

⁴³ Zainab Saleem, "Addressing Qur'an 4:34: Muslim Feminists' Hermeneutics vs. Mahmoud Muhammad Taha's Hermeneutics", *Hawwa*, vol. 22, nos. 3-4 (2024), pp. 266-90, https://brill.com/view/journals/haww/22/3-4/article-p266_2.xml.

virtue (*faḍl*) and wealth (*nafaqah*) take responsibility for and support those who are unable and do not have wealth. This could mean either men's protection of women or women's protection of men—depending on the extent to which both have virtue and are able to provide. However, the reason why the diction of the verse explicitly uses the words “the stronger man” is because the socio-cultural construction at the time of the verse's revelation was that men had hegemony over women. By using *Mubādalāh* glasses, every scriptural text that talks about seeking sustenance and livelihood is time to be addressed to both men and women. Because nowadays's socio-cultural conditions have opened the door wide for women to work and develop careers.

Nevertheless, Faqih realizes that in the aspect of earning a living, men are one step freer because they do not have the mandate of biological reproduction so that they can have more time to work. Therefore, this verse demands (firstly) men to work. Analytically, what *Mubādalāh* offers seems more progressive than holistic. Because *Mubādalāh* does not only interpret apologetically that women should not be subordinated, but also offers a reconciliation of how this view is implemented into the realm of praxis. While holistic seems to only reject the old opinion and does not offer substantial novelty what is ideally understood.

Another issue that is debated in this verse is the reconceptualization of *nushūz*. *Nushūz*, in classical *fiqh* terminology, is defined as the wife's disobedience to her husband. This definition paradigmatically implies that defiance in the household only arises from one direction; the wife. wadud deplores the mainstream narrative that focuses too much on the discussion of *nushūz* in [04]:34 that shows women as rebellious, while ignoring another verse, [04]:128, where *nushūz* can also arise from men. Classical *fiqh* terms that make women the only passive object, for wadud, must be reformulated. She offers a redefinition of *nushūz* based on the perspective of the perpetrator; if it arises from women, *nushūz* is defined as female disobedience; if it arises from men, *nushūz* is defined as the husband's harsh attitude towards his wife who does not give her her rights properly. With this assumption, *nushūz* is generally defined as the disruption of household harmony.

In terms of *Mubādalāh*, *nushūz* is the opposite of obedience. Both *nushūz* and obedience are reciprocal, as both husband and wife are required to have a joint commitment to bring goodness into the household (*jalb al-maṣālih*) and avoid any harm from it (*dar' al-mafāsīd*). This commitment can be referred to as obeying—which is represented in *jalb al-maṣālih*—and avoiding *nushūz*—which is the realization of *dar' al-mafāsīd*. Thus, obeying in the context of couple relationships is every effort to reconcile the relationship to become more harmonious and committed to realizing *sakīnah*, *mawaddah*, and *rahma*. On the contrary, any negative action that has the potential to weaken the emotional relationship between husband and wife, which can lead away from the three principles of marriage above. Both obedience and *nushūz* are thus open to be committed by each husband and wife.

Justice in Inheritance Verse: QS. [04]:11

Another theme that is often used to legitimize the superiority of men over women is their greater share in inheritance; two to one. In wadud's view, two to one is a mathematical comparison that is not absolute—just a ‘sample’—and is still open to other possibilities because the parameters of inheritance distribution are the principles of justice and usefulness. That is, rather than relying on a mathematical calculation of two to one, it is better to first review who has the potential to get greater benefits. The fact that the Qur’ānic verse explicitly uses this term is not an apology for a rigid and literal interpretation. Instead, what must be seen in the verse is the spirit (significance) and moral ideal behind the sacred text. The technicalities must be harmonized with cultural acculturation and the times. In this case, wadud’s steps seem too progressive in reforming the classical fiqh order.⁴⁴

In contrast, Faqih is reluctant to simply break the classical paradigm, he actually reads the formulation of inheritance distribution initiated by the Qur’ān as a revolutionary step because in the classical Arab tradition at the time the verse was revealed, women did not get a share at all. This means that a reading based on the socio-historical context leads to the conclusion that the Quran’ān’s offer is actually a revolutionary and progressive endeavor. Faqih also does not directly advocate that inheritance be reformulated and divided equally. According to him, the mathematical calculation of two to one does not only benefit men, but also women. Because women will actually get a living from two doors; the door of inheritance and the door of living from men. However, he also does not rule out the potential, if later on in the social level women are also involved in bearing a living, then the adjustment of this inheritance share, according to Faqih, “can be considered”.⁴⁵

This inheritance problem shows that the two feminist figures above are at a crossroads. On the one hand, wadud frontally invites to understand the verse not from the literal aspect which has implications for the reconstruction of the fiqh order, on the other hand Faqih still holds a literal interpretation even though it does not rule out the possibility that the calculation can change its application in the realm of praxis.

CONCLUSION

The discourse of hermeneutics with a feminist approach is the most discussed study today. The fusion of patriarchal values in society has made the initiators of feminist hermeneutics work hard to reconstruct the interpretation of the Qur’ān, especially in verses related to gender. amina wadud offers holistic hermeneutics based

⁴⁴ Fauzan Zenrif and Syabbul Bachri, “Critical Study of Amina Wadud’s Thought in the Issue of Inheritance”, *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum dan Syar’iah*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2023), pp. 39–53, <https://ejournal.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/syariah/article/view/22217>.

⁴⁵ Reni Nur Aniroh, Khoiruddin Nasution, and Ali Sodiqin, “The Bilateral Inheritance System in Islamic Family Law: Fairness, Equality, and Mutual Exchange Perspectives”, *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga dan Hukum Islam*, vol. 8, no. 2 (2024), p. 891.

on the principle of *tawhid*. Faqihuddin initiated *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh* which seeks to revive the value of equality in the relationship between men and women. Each of them has two different methods and perspectives, although both agree that the verses of the Qur'ān that literally show a patriarchal bias must be reinterpreted so that equality occurs. This is because the central tenet of Islamic teachings is never gender specific.

wadud, who lived in a secular environment in America and grew up under the auspices of academic studies in the West, on the one hand, it is clear that she positioned herself as the antithesis of classical heritage such as *tafsīr* and *uṣūl fiqh*, which according to her is the source of patriarchal values. Meanwhile, Faqih, who was born and raised in a *pesantren* and educated in the Middle East, on the other hand, positions himself more as a complement to classical heritage. The method serves nothing more than to patch up the patriarchal gaps that—probably—arise from classical *tafsir*. Therefore, he still often holds on to classical interpretation as long as it is in line with the spirit of feminism. Including their attitude towards the jurisprudential order (*fiqh*) is also likely to be born from the socio-cultural differences that surround them. wadud's view is completely deconstructive towards *fiqh-ushul fiqh*, while Faqih is more adaptive by still accommodating it as an inspiration for *Qirā'ah Mubādalāh*.

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