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# A Response to Feminist Theology on Women's Access to Knowledge in Islam: A Qur'anic Reappraisal of the *Amānah*

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**Abstract:** This paper foregrounds the Qur'anic concept of *amānah* (trust) as the central theological lens for re-examining women's access to religious knowledge in Islam. It examines contemporary feminist theological critiques of Islamic epistemology that highlight the historical marginalisation of women in religious knowledge and authority. They argue that patriarchal interpretations have overshadowed the Qur'an's egalitarian message, excluding women from epistemic participation. While these critiques offer valuable insights, they often assume that Islamic epistemology is inherently patriarchal or irreversibly shaped by male-dominated traditions. This study challenges that assumption by analysing the Qur'anic concept of *amānah* (trust), which frames both men and women as rational agents equally responsible for seeking and upholding divine knowledge. The paper unfolds in three parts. First, it analyses Sa'diyya Shaikh's feminist approach to hadith and Qur'anic interpretation, identifying methodological limitations and selective readings that risk undermining the coherence of the Islamic epistemic tradition. Second, it reconstructs a Qur'anic epistemology centred on *amānah*, emphasising knowledge-seeking as a divine mandate shared by both genders. Finally, the study synthesises these insights to propose a constructive theological vision rooted in the Qur'an's ethical and metaphysical framework. Rather than merely responding to feminist critiques, this paper reclaims Islamic theology as an inclusive and universal space that mandates women's active role in the production and transmission of knowledge.

**Keywords:** *Amānah* and women, Muslim feminist, women's education, Hadith criticism, Islam and modernity, women and Islam

## Introduction

The Qur'anic concept of *amānah* (trust) provides the central theological foundation for this study, framing both men and women as rational agents equally responsible for seeking and upholding divine knowledge. This paper situates *amānah* at the heart of debates on women's access to religious authority, arguing that the trust is a universal covenant that cannot be restricted by gender.

The contemporary discourse on women in Islam is deeply influenced by feminist theology, which critiques traditional Islamic frameworks for what it perceives as gender-based exclusion, particularly in the realms of knowledge and authority. Feminist theologians such as Amina Wadud (1999), Fatima Mernissi (1992), Ahmed & Ali (2021), Ahmed (1992), and Barlas (2019) argue that Islamic interpretive traditions have historically marginalised women, especially in matters concerning religious knowledge, authority, and public agency. These scholars contend that patriarchal exegeses have been instrumental in maintaining male

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dominance in the production and dissemination of Islamic knowledge, thus depriving women of their rightful epistemological agency.

For instance, Amina Wadud's *Qur'an and Woman* (Wadud, 1999) offers a gender-inclusive hermeneutic of the Qur'an, asserting that the text itself is not patriarchal but has been read through a male-centric lens that systematically excludes women's voices. Similarly, Fatima Mernissi (1992) in *The Veil and the Male Elite* critiques the use of certain Hadith traditions to undermine women's public participation, including their access to religious and intellectual spaces. Mernissi argues that the exclusion of women from the public sphere was not a divine injunction but a human construct. Barlas (2019) furthers this argument in *Believing Women in Islam*, suggesting that patriarchal readings of the Qur'an have obscured its inherently egalitarian ethos: The Qur'an's teachings are fundamentally anti-patriarchal, yet its exegesis has been shaped by patriarchal contexts. These critiques form a core part of Islamic feminist theology, which posits that Islam, in its classical interpretive heritage, has failed to provide equitable epistemic space for women.

Furthermore, feminist theology in Islam has been instrumental in questioning the male-dominated interpretive traditions that have shaped Islamic scholarship. Amina Wadud's work, for instance, emphasises a hermeneutic that prioritises the Qur'an's ethical vision over later interpretations. She argues that the Qur'an's universal principles of justice and equality have been overshadowed by patriarchal readings that privilege male authority (Wadud, 1999). Similarly, *Women and Gender in Islam* traces the historical development of gender norms in Muslim societies, suggesting that pre-Islamic patriarchal structures were absorbed into Islamic exegesis, thus limiting women's roles in religious scholarship. It notes that the Qur'an's egalitarian potential was curtailed by the cultural norms of the societies in which it was interpreted (Ahmed & Ali, 2021).

Fatima Mernissi's critique focuses on the selective use of Hadith to restrict women's public roles. She examines traditions that depict women as intellectually inferior or unfit for leadership, arguing that such narrations reflect the biases of their narrators rather than divine intent (Mernissi, 1992; Pastner & Mernissi, 1978). Asma Barlas (2019) extends this critique by challenging the interpretive methodologies that prioritise male perspectives. She asserts that to read the Qur'an as a patriarchal text is to misread its intent, which is to liberate all human beings from oppression.

Despite the valuable contributions of feminist theology in highlighting historical exclusions of women from religious authority, much of this discourse remains framed by external paradigms that measure Islamic epistemology against secular or Western ethical benchmarks. This creates a methodological gap: while feminist critiques rightly expose patriarchal biases, they often risk overlooking the Qur'an's own epistemic framework, which emphasises universality and inclusivity through concepts such as *amānah*. Addressing this gap requires a constructive theological approach that re-engages Islamic sources on their own terms, rather than primarily through external lenses. It is within this context that the present study situates its analysis, moving beyond critique to reconstruct a Qur'anic epistemology that affirms women's equal responsibility in the pursuit and transmission of knowledge.

The paper is organised into three sections. The first section provides a critical analysis of Sa'diyya Shaikh's article, which serves as a representative example of feminist theology's interpretive approach to Islamic texts. Shaikh's work offers a valuable insight into the feminist re-articulation of knowledge and authority within Islam, particularly through her engagement with Hadith literature. However, this section will demonstrate methodological and epistemological inconsistencies in her approach, including selective readings and an overreliance on gendered hermeneutics that may overlook the internal coherence and epistemic universality of the Qur'anic worldview.

In the second section, the paper reconstructs a Qur'anic epistemology rooted in the concept of *amānah*, highlighting how the Qur'an presents knowledge-seeking as a universal moral obligation crucial for fulfilling human responsibility. This section builds a rational and theological framework that affirms the inclusion of women in the pursuit of knowledge as a necessary condition for their role as stewards of divine trust. The final section offers a synthesis of these findings, reaffirming that the Qur'an not only permits but actively requires the epistemological participation of women. In doing so, the paper seeks to move beyond reactionary readings of feminist theology and instead provide a constructive theological vision grounded in the Qur'an's own ethical and metaphysical logic.

## **Feministic Hermeneutics in Understanding Knowledge**

Islamic epistemology is fundamentally rooted in revelation (*wahy*) and its interpretive traditions, which prioritise coherence, continuity, and fidelity to the Qur'an and Sunnah. Classical methodologies such as *tafsīr* (exegesis), Hadith criticism, and *ijtihād* (juridical reasoning) are designed to safeguard the integrity of divine knowledge by situating interpretation within a disciplined framework of textual, linguistic, and ethical principles. This epistemology is not merely descriptive but normative, aiming to preserve the universality of divine guidance across generations. By contrast, feminist epistemology often begins from external paradigms—particularly Western theories of gender, power, and social justice—which, while valuable in exposing historical exclusions, risk imposing categories foreign to the Qur'anic worldview. The divergence lies in the source of authority: Islamic epistemology derives legitimacy from revelation and its scholarly tradition, whereas feminist epistemology privileges contextual critique and experiential perspectives (Akbar, 2020; Zacky & Moniruzzaman, 2024).

This methodological distinction is crucial for understanding why feminist interpretations may be problematic when measured against Islamic interpretive practices. Feminist hermeneutics often emphasise selective readings that foreground gendered concerns, sometimes at the expense of the Qur'an's internal coherence and epistemic universality. Islamic epistemology, however, insists that knowledge must be pursued through holistic engagement with revelation, guided by principles of justice, rationality, and continuity with the scholarly tradition. While feminist critiques rightly highlight patriarchal biases in historical exegesis, their reliance on external frameworks can obscure the Qur'an's own mechanisms for inclusivity, such as the concept of *amānah*. By clarifying this distinction, the paper demonstrates that a Qur'anically grounded epistemology not only addresses concerns of justice and equality but also provides a more robust theological foundation for affirming women's rightful participation in the pursuit and transmission of knowledge (Nasr, 2004; Rahman, 2009).

An important question that must be addressed is: What occurred throughout history that led to the marginalisation of women's access to knowledge within Muslim societies? Historically, disrupting the intellectual participation of half the Muslim population would not have been possible without invoking evidence from the Qur'an and Hadith. However, it is also evident that these foundational sources can be, and have been, interpreted in both constructive and reductive ways depending on the prevailing needs and motivations of the interpreter. As the Qur'an states, "*Thereby He misleads many and thereby He guides many. And He misleads none except the defiantly disobedient*" (Qur'an 2:26). This verse highlights the dual potential of divine guidance—to lead or mislead—depending on the ethical orientation of the interpreter.

In this light, it becomes necessary to critically evaluate the arguments of contemporary feminist thinkers who approach Islamic texts through frameworks primarily shaped by Western ethical and moral paradigms. We analyse such readings not to dismiss the genuine concerns raised by feminist scholars, but to scrutinise the methodological inconsistencies that arise when

Islamic epistemology is measured against external, often secular, benchmarks. Here “methodological inconsistencies” mean that certain feminist theological readings of the Qur’an and Hadith employ selective hermeneutics that do not consistently align with the internal logic of the Islamic interpretive tradition. For instance, some interpretations highlight narrations that appear to marginalise women while overlooking other textual and exegetical evidence that affirms women’s active role in transmitting and preserving knowledge. In addition, these readings often apply categories derived from modern secular feminist theory—such as gender hierarchy and power analysis—without fully engaging with the Qur’an’s own epistemic categories like *amānah* (trust), *taqwā* (God-consciousness), and *ilm* (knowledge). This reliance on external frameworks, coupled with decontextualised readings of individual hadith, risks fragmenting the coherence of the tradition. By contrast, Islamic epistemology is characterised by its grounding in revelation (*wahy*) and its integration of rational inquiry with moral accountability. Unlike secular epistemology, which derives knowledge primarily from human reason, empirical observation, or social constructs, Islamic epistemology treats revelation as a primary source and views knowledge as a divine trust inseparable from ethical responsibility. Its purpose is not merely utilitarian but to fulfill the covenant of justice and guidance, with validity measured by alignment with revelation and its capacity to lead to moral rectitude. In this framework, both men and women are equally addressed as rational agents responsible for seeking and applying knowledge, making epistemic participation a divine obligation rather than a matter of social equity alone. We seek to offer a thorough and respectful engagement with feminist theological claims, while reaffirming a Qur’anicly rooted framework for understanding knowledge and its obligations—particularly as they pertain to women.

In her 2004 article, Sa’diyyah Shaikh (2004) analyses the “Book of Knowledge” (*Kitāb al-‘Ilm*) in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*<sup>3</sup> through a feminist hermeneutical lens, aiming to uncover underlying gendered assumptions within classical Islamic texts. One of the central Hadiths she focuses on reads:

Abd Allah ibn Anas narrated: Among the portents [or signs] of the final hour are [the following]: 1) the taking away of religious knowledge [*the notion that this happens through the death of religiously learned men is mentioned elsewhere in the chapter*]; 2) the prevalence of ignorance 3) the prevalence of illegal sexual intercourse and, 4) women will increase in number and men will decrease in number, so that fifty women will be looked after by one man. (Al-Bukhārī, Ch 22, 81)

Shaikh interprets this narration as constructing a deeply gendered discourse that links the loss of knowledge and the spread of ignorance with an increase in female presence. She writes:

The four signs of the ‘end’ which are presented as discrete conditions collectively constitute a profoundly gendered subtext. This narrative presents us with interlocking associations of knowledge, sexuality, ignorance and women. The predicted future where women dominate in terms of number is at the same time a society in which ignorance prevails. Underpinning this view is the self-evident premise that knowledge is a male prerogative. That men monopolized the knowledge discourse in the medieval period is no startling revelation. However, this Hadith also assumes that such a gender or knowledge configuration is given and unchangeable. The vision of the future is one in which women will never advance to be the purveyors of knowledge: women are ignorant and remain definitive of ignorance. A society that has an excess of women is one that de facto lacks religious knowledge and enlightenment. The envisioned dislodging of male religious authority implies the destruction of all religious authority. Implicit is the notion that maleness is exclusively and ontologically linked to the realm of religious authority. This Hadith not only reinforces the given gender hierarchy in the

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<sup>3</sup> All the Hadith quoted are taken from the Sunnah.com for ease of search and referencing.

sphere of knowledge but also entrenches it until the kingdom comes or, to use a Qur'anic phrase, until 'the trumpet is sounded. (Shaikh, 2004, p.101)

On the basis of this interpretation, she asserts that the hadith embeds an immutable gender hierarchy in relation to knowledge—that male authority is the assumed and exclusive bearer of religious insight, while the increasing number of women is implicitly tied to moral and intellectual decline. However, a closer examination of both the hadith and its interpretative tradition reveals serious flaws in Shaikh's conclusions. Her reading rests on questionable assumptions and decontextualised premises that neither align with the broader prophetic teachings nor the classical exegetical discourse surrounding such narrations. The classical exegetical tradition traces its roots to the foundational sources of interpreting the words of Allah—beginning with the Prophet's *sīrah* and teachings, followed by the understandings of the companions, the *tābi'īn*, and the *tābi' al-tābi'īn*. Similarly, the same applies to the interpretation of the Hadith, which is understood in the context of the Qur'an, opinions of companions, and broader socio-political development of the time. As will be demonstrated, her interpretation is not only methodologically selective but also imposes an external epistemological framework—namely, Western feminist theory—onto a genre of Hadith literature that demands an internal and holistic hermeneutical approach. Western feminist theory has been influential in critiquing patriarchal structures within its own historical and cultural context, but when applied to Islamic theological discourse, it faces several methodological obstacles. Its underlying epistemology differs sharply from the principles that ground Islamic knowledge, and it often employs selective readings that isolate gender from the broader theological and ethical framework. Additionally, Western feminist ideas emerge from social conditions distinct from those that shaped Islamic intellectual traditions. These approaches also tend to overlook the depth of Muslim scholarly heritage—including significant contributions by women—and frequently frame authority in terms of a male–female binary that does not reflect the Qur'anic emphasis on *taqwā* and moral responsibility. Together, these challenges underscore the importance of engaging with issues of gender in Islam through interpretive methods rooted in its own epistemological, ethical, and spiritual foundations (Barlas, 2019).

In the first part of the Hadith, the phrase “*the taking away of religious knowledge [the notion that this happens through the death of religiously learned men is mentioned elsewhere in the chapter]*” includes a bracketed note by the author asserting that this refers to the loss of learned men, a concept allegedly found elsewhere in the same chapter of the Book of Knowledge. However, the original Arabic text of the Hadith reads:

The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: ‘Among the signs of the Hour are: knowledge will decrease, ignorance will become widespread, adultery will become rampant, women will increase in number, and men will decrease—until there will be one man to look after fifty women.’ (Al-Bukhārī 81, Book 3, Hadith 23)

As is evident, the phrase “*learned men*” is not part of the hadith itself. Even if we momentarily accept the author's interpretation that “men” are referenced elsewhere, it is important to consider other hadiths in the same chapter that provide further clarification. For instance, another hadith from *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, also within the *Book of Knowledge*, reads:

I heard the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) say: ‘Indeed, Allah does not take away knowledge by snatching it away from the people, but He takes away knowledge by taking away the scholars (in death). Until when no scholar remains, the people will take ignorant ones as their leaders. They will be asked (about religious matters), and they will give fatwas (legal opinions) without knowledge. They will go astray and will lead others astray.’ (Al-Bukhārī 100, Book 3, Hadith 42)

This Hadith clearly states that taking away of knowledge means “*But He takes away knowledge by taking away the scholars,*” which means the scholars of Islam. It does not isolate women from being one of them. The same gender neutrality is found in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book of Knowledge:

Verily, Allah does not take away knowledge by snatching it from the people but He takes away knowledge by taking away the *scholars*, so that when He leaves no learned person, people turn to the ignorant as their leaders; then they are asked to deliver religious verdicts and they deliver them without knowledge, they go astray, and lead others astray. (Muslim 2673a, Book 47, Hadith 22).

This hadith, too, emphasises the role of scholars in preserving knowledge and does so in a gender-neutral way. It does not exclude women from being among those scholars. Therefore, the feminist interpretation that draws a gender-specific conclusion from the earlier hadith is not supported by the larger textual context. Even if one were to interpret the first hadith as implying male scholars specifically, such an interpretation would still be limited and cannot be generalised across the broader Islamic epistemological tradition. The cumulative evidence clearly refutes the assertion that the prophetic tradition equates the loss of knowledge exclusively with the absence of male scholarship.

The second assertion under scrutiny claims that “*the predicted future where women dominate in terms of number is simultaneously a society in which ignorance prevails.*” This interpretation derives from a particular sequencing of a Hadith, wherein the prevalence of ignorance is associated with the concluding statement that the number of women will surpass that of men. The methodological approach taken by some interpreters—prioritising the numerical reference to women and retroactively linking it to the other signs of the Hadith (namely ignorance, conflict, and widespread loss of knowledge)—raises critical questions. It is because Hadith scholars have understood this narration differently, such as in *Fatḥ al-Bārī* (Vol. 1, p. 236), Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalani interprets the phrase “fifty women to one man” as a sign of social imbalance, potentially caused by war, disease, or economic shifts that disproportionately diminish the male population. He explains that the term “*qayyim*”—commonly translated as “caretaker” or “guardian”—signifies responsibility and provision, not polygamy, which is explicitly limited to four wives under Surah al-Nisā’ (4:3). Ibn Hajar links this gender imbalance to the spread of ignorance, arguing that the decline in male scholars accelerates the erosion of knowledge. Significantly, he emphasises the role of women’s education in countering this decline, citing notable female scholars such as Hafsa bint Sireen.

The third major issue with the feminist interpretation of the Hadith lies in their conclusion that “*the envisioned dislodging of male religious authority implies the destruction of all religious authority. Implicit is the notion that maleness is exclusively and ontologically linked to the realm of religious authority.*” As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, this interpretation fundamentally contradicts the spirit and content of the Hadith. The assertion goes too far by implying an exclusive and essential association between maleness and religious authority. This claim can be refuted from multiple angles, particularly through well-known Hadiths that emphasise the importance of women’s education and access to knowledge—Hadiths that directly undermine the notion of male exclusivity in religious leadership. Notably, even the scholar (Shaikh, 2004) who supports the feminist reading elsewhere cites these very Hadiths in a different context, inadvertently highlighting the inconsistency of such a conclusion. The Hadith says:

Abū Sa‘īd al-Khudrī narrated: Some women requested the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) to fix a day for them, as the men were taking all his time. Accordingly, he promised them one day for religious lessons and commandments. Once, during such a lesson, the Prophet (pbuh) said: ‘A woman whose three children die, will be shielded by them from the hell fire.’ On that a

woman asked, 'If only two die?' He replied: 'Even two will shield her from hellfire.' (Shaikh, 2004, p.105)

This Hadith clearly illustrates that the Prophet ﷺ dedicated a specific day from his demanding schedule to teach and educate women. As affirmed in another narration, the Prophet ﷺ stated, "*Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim*" (Ibn Majah, Hadith 224). The narration reported by Abū Sa'īd al-Khudrī thus offers profound insights into both the social structure of early Islamic society and the spiritual status afforded to women within it.

This incident is significant for several reasons. First, it highlights the proactive role women played in pursuing religious knowledge, challenging contemporary assumptions that early Muslim women were passive or excluded from spiritual authority. Their request for a dedicated time to learn from the Prophet ﷺ reflects a strong sense of religious agency and a deep desire for direct engagement with prophetic teachings. Second, the Prophet's immediate and affirmative response—allocating a specific day for women's instruction—exemplifies the inclusive and egalitarian ethos of Islamic pedagogy. It affirms that access to religious knowledge and spiritual growth is a shared obligation and right for both men and women. His tailored approach to the spiritual and personal concerns of women exemplifies a prophetic pedagogy rooted in compassion, responsiveness, and inclusion.

The latter part of the narration, in which the Prophet ﷺ addresses a question posed during the session, adds another layer of depth. When he spoke of the immense spiritual reward for a mother who loses her children—stating that a woman whose three children die will be shielded from Hellfire and later extending that mercy to those who lose even two—he underscored both divine compassion and the sanctity of maternal suffering. This teaching offers not only comfort but also spiritual elevation to women enduring profound personal loss, emphasising the sacred value of their trials. Furthermore, this Hadith should be understood within the broader Islamic framework that recognises and honours the diverse roles of women—not only as mothers but also as seekers of knowledge and active contributors to religious life. This Hadith stands as an early and powerful precedent affirming women's rightful place in the pursuit of religious knowledge and spiritual leadership.

Now that we have briefly examined the methodological issues in the feminist reinterpretation of the Hadith under discussion, it is important to clarify that the intent behind such critiques—to pursue justice and rectify gender-based injustices—is not inherently objectionable. Indeed, Islam itself upholds the pursuit of justice as a fundamental value. However, such efforts must not come at the cost of undermining or reinterpreting Qur'anic and Prophetic texts in ways that are incongruent with established interpretive methodologies simply to suit a particular ideological framework. Reinterpretation must emerge from within the bounds of the Islamic epistemological tradition, not be imposed upon it from external paradigms.

The lack of widespread documentation of women scholars in Islamic history is frequently cited as evidence of their marginalisation or exclusion. However, this is a flawed assumption. The absence of documentation does not equate to the absence of contribution. As the late Dr. Mohammad Akram Nadwi has shown in his seminal work *Al-Muhaddithat: The Women Scholars in Islam*, there exists a rich and underexplored legacy of female scholarship in the Islamic tradition. Through meticulous research, Nadwi catalogued over 9,000 women scholars who were active participants in the transmission of Hadith, jurisprudence, and other Islamic sciences. These women were not anomalies; they were part of a continuous and integrated scholarly tradition. Nadwi eloquently addresses the core of the modern dilemma in the introduction to his work:

The aim of undoing injustices suffered by women (wherever they are suffered) is acceptable to Muslims. But it is entangled in the theoretical underpinning of feminist critique, which is

not acceptable, but which nevertheless invades Muslim minds. I hear it in the form and content of the questions put to me. The form is: if men can do X, why can't women do X? The X could be 'pray in a mosque,' 'interpret the law,' 'issue fatwas,' 'lead prayer,' 'travel unaccompanied,' 'behave chastely without scarfing the head,' etc. This approach succeeds in embarrassing Muslims by framing each issue as one of equity: if men can X and women can't, or if women must X but men needn't, it does appear to be unfair. Now, it is not possible here to deal properly with such questioning of Islam - as I have said plainly, I am not qualified to take on 'women's studies' discourse - but I do owe it to the women whose scholarly authority this book celebrates to say briefly what is necessary to distinguish their perspective. These were not feminists, neither consciously nor unconsciously. They were above all else, like the men scholars, believers, and they got and exercised the same authority by virtue of reasoning with the same methods from the same sources as the men, and by having at the same time, just as the men did, a reputation for taqwa (wariness of God), righteousness and strong intellect. (Nadwī, 2007, p.XIV)

This observation underscores a fundamental point: the epistemic authority of female scholars in Islam was not contingent upon gender but on adherence to intellectual rigor, ethical integrity, and methodological consistency. They earned recognition not through rebellion against the tradition, but through mastery within it. Their legacy challenges the modern framing that religious authority has always been exclusively male. If we are to correct historical injustices—such as the neglect in recording women's contributions—we must do so by restoring and strengthening the Islamic intellectual tradition, not by displacing it with frameworks that rest on epistemological assumptions alien to the Qur'an and Sunnah. True reform arises not from negating the sources of knowledge, but from re-engaging with them in their full depth and scope. This entails a revival of classical methodologies of *ijtihād*, critical reasoning, and ethical scholarship—fields in which both men and women have historically excelled. Thus, our approach to gender and knowledge in Islam must be principled, rooted in the recognition that justice and truth are divine imperatives. They are not defined by the shifting metrics of modern ideologies but by the timeless guidance of revelation and the lived example of generations of sincere and pious scholars—men and women alike.

After briefly, analysing the feministic reinterpretation approach, we now move towards the theological construction that would establish that seeking knowledge is undeniably gender-neutral based on the Qur'anic verses. So that there remains no reinterpretation to refute women's knowledge using either the Qur'anic verses or Hadith.

## **The Theology of Knowledge in the Qur'an**

The truth of Islam, as it stands today, is often obscured by the passage of time and the layers of cultural influence that have accumulated over centuries. It is, therefore, one of the most pressing challenges for the Muslim *ummah* to devise methods that can help peel away these historical and cultural accretions to rediscover the original intellectual and spiritual clarity that Islam brought to humanity. This task requires identifying specific points in history where cultural wear and civilisational decline began to overshadow the dynamic intellectual rigor and ethical vision of Islam.

If Islam is indeed the truth—as Muslims believe—then it must not merely be proclaimed in words but also be demonstrated through the actions and intellectual integrity of its followers. Islam is not a passive or meditative tradition; rather, it is an intensely action-oriented *dīn*—a comprehensive way of life. This intensity of divine responsibility is powerfully reflected in the following Qur'anic verse:

*Indeed, We offered the trust (al-amānah) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and feared it; yet man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant. (Qur'an 33:72)*

It is *al-insān*—the human being—who dared to take on the weight of this divine trust. But what is this trust (*amānah*)? It is the Qur'an and all that it entails: divine guidance, moral accountability, and the responsibility to establish justice. As the Qur'an affirms:

*And We have explained everything in it in clear detail. (Qur'an 17:12)*

If everything has been explained in the Qur'an with clarity, then the methodology by which Muslims must seek truth—especially on questions of moral and social importance—must begin with the Qur'an itself. The very subject of this discussion, namely the role and status of women in Islamic epistemology and leadership, is tied to this foundational trust. It leads us to ask: Is the responsibility of this *amānah* exclusive to men, or are women equal participants in bearing it?

This question cannot be answered by cultural assumptions or inherited social structures. It must be answered by returning to the original source—the Qur'an—and by applying rational inquiry rooted in the Islamic intellectual tradition.

To begin this inquiry, I propose a simple, yet powerful logical argument based on the Qur'anic verse of *amānah* (33:72):

**Premise 1:** The *amānah* (trust) is a divine responsibility offered to various creations—heavens, earth, mountains, and humans.

**Premise 2:** Non-human creations lacked the free will and rational capacity to bear the trust, and their refusal stemmed from fear of failure (as explained in *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* and other classical commentaries).

**Premise 3:** *Insān* (human beings), endowed with free will and intellect, accepted the trust. However, their unjust and ignorant nature suggests a tendency toward failure unless guided by knowledge.

**Conclusion:** Since fulfilling the trust requires rational and moral capacity, and since ignorance undermines this capacity, the acquisition of knowledge is essential for all human beings—including women—who share equally in bearing the divine Trust.

This argument highlights that the moral and epistemic burden of the *amānah* is not gendered. If the acceptance of the trust is rooted in human rationality and volition, and if knowledge is the key to avoiding injustice and ignorance, then women, by virtue of their humanity, are equal stakeholders in this divine responsibility. Thus, seeking knowledge is not merely a right but a necessary condition for fulfilling the purpose of life itself. It is the foundational force that sustains the moral and intellectual order of the world.

In the following sections, I will elaborate on each premise and support the conclusion with Qur'anic, historical, and logical evidence—demonstrating that knowledge is not only a shared obligation but an intrinsic aspect of womanhood in Islam. Women are not passive recipients of divine grace; they are active participants in upholding the covenant of the trust. Their pursuit of knowledge is, therefore, not optional—it is essential to the fulfilment of Islam's vision for human society.

### ***On the first premise: Trust is divine responsibility to creation***

*Al-amānah* derives from the Arabic root (*alīf-mīm-nūn*), which conveys notions of trust, safety, security, and faithfulness. This root also forms words like *īmān* (faith), *amīn* (trustworthy), and *amn* (peace). In classical Arabic dictionaries, such as *Lisan al-Arab* by Ibn Manḍūr, *amānah* is defined as trustworthiness—the quality of being reliable and faithful in fulfilling obligations, something entrusted—an object, duty, or responsibility given to someone with the expectation of safeguarding or fulfilling it, moral responsibility—a covenant or pledge requiring integrity. The term implies a reciprocal relationship—the one who entrusts (*mu'tamin*) expects the trustee (*amīn*) to uphold the obligation with honesty.

In Surah al-Ahzab (33:72), *al-amānah* is a singular feminine noun with the definite article “*al-*” indicating a specific, significant trust. Its placement in the verse suggests a divine, universal responsibility distinct from ordinary trusts. The verb *ḥamalāt* (bore it) used with *insān* implies an active, voluntary acceptance, contrasting with the refusal (*abā* and *ashfaq*) of non-human creations, highlighting the weight and moral agency required. *Amānah* carries connotations of duty, covenant, and accountability. It is not merely a physical object but a spiritual and ethical commitment. The root's association with *īmān* (faith) suggests that *al-amānah* is intrinsically linked to belief in Allah, as fulfilling the trust requires faith and obedience.

Furthermore, Islamic scholars, through *tafsīr*, provide diverse yet complementary interpretations of *al-amānah*, reflecting its multifaceted nature. For example, key interpretations from classical and modern *tafsīrs*, focusing on Surah al-Ahzab (33:72), are as follows. According to *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Vol.6, p.431), *al-amānah* is the comprehensive responsibility of divine guidance, including obedience to Allah's commands, adherence to the Qur'an, and fulfilment of moral and legal obligations (e.g., prayer, zakat, and justice). Hence, it encompasses religious duties: The five pillars of Islam and other obligations. Moral integrity: Honesty, justice, and trustworthiness in dealings, as per Surah al-Baqarah (2:283): “*If one of you entrusts another, then let him who is entrusted discharge his trust.*” Free will: The ability to choose obedience or disobedience, which non-human creations (heavens, earth, mountains) lacked. Therefore, the refusal of other creations reflects their fear of failing to uphold the trust's demands, given the risk of divine punishment. *Insān*'s acceptance, led by the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), shows human potential, though tempered by “unjust and ignorant” tendencies without guidance. Here, the gender-neutral *insan* includes women in upholding the trust through knowledge.

Under the verse 32:72, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (Vol. 19, pp. 196–205) states that, scholars differ on its meaning, but a common interpretation is that Allah offered His obligations and commands—referred to as the “trust”—to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains. If they had fulfilled them, they would have been rewarded; if neglected, they would have faced punishment. These entities, however, refused out of reverence for the greatness of Allah's law and fear of failing in duty. Adam accepted the trust, thereby taking on responsibility, and in doing so, became “unjust and ignorant” in the sense of committing error. So according to this interpretation, the trust is a universal responsibility, encompassing all religious obligations and duties toward others. These interpretations highlight that both men and women are equally accountable before Allah in fulfilling their religious duties, regardless of gender or physical differences. Similarly, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* (Vol.9, p. 288) states that *al-amānah* is the covenant of *tawḥīd* (oneness of Allah) and the responsibility to follow divine law, as established in the pre-eternal covenant (Surah al-A'raf 7:172): “Am I not your Lord? They said, ‘Yes, we testify’. It includes intellectual responsibility: Understanding and applying divine guidance. Moral accountability: Acting justly, as injustice (*ẓalūman*) stems from neglecting the trust. Prophetic mission: The Prophet's heart, purified per *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1:314), was uniquely equipped to bear

the Qur'an's revelation. Hence, non-human creations, lacking free will, feared failing the trust's moral demands, as their role is fixed submission (Surah al-Ra'd 13:15). Women, as *insan*, share this covenant, as seen in Surah al-Tawbah (9:71), where they enjoin good, requiring knowledge.

In al-Qurtubī's *tafsīr*, volume 14, pages 253–258, regarding the meaning of "*al-amānah*" in Surah al-Ahzab (33:72), it is stated that "According to the majority of scholars (the opinion of *al-jumhūr*), the term '*amānah*' includes all religious duties—that is, everything God has entrusted to His servants, such as acts of worship, obligatory deeds, and legal responsibilities. Al-Tirmidhī al-Hakīm Abū Abdillāh narrated from Ismā'īl ibn Naṣr, from Ṣālih ibn Abdullāh, from Muḥammad ibn Yazīd ibn Jawhar, from al-Dahhak, from Ibn 'Abbās, who reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said, 'God Almighty said to Adam, "O Adam! I offered the trust (*amānah*) to the heavens and the earth, but they were unable to bear it. Will you take it upon yourself with all that it entails?' Adam asked, 'O Lord, what does it contain?' God said, 'If you fulfill it, you will be rewarded; but if you neglect it, you will be punished.' Adam said, 'I accept it with all that it entails.' Yet he did not remain in Paradise for long—only for the time between the noon and afternoon prayers—until Satan caused him to be expelled from it. Thus, the *amānah* is the religious obligations and duties that God has made mankind responsible for." In this explanation, there is no gender distinction—Eve (Hawwa) is not mentioned by name—and therefore it cannot be claimed that the interpretation is patriarchal. According to the consensus of the majority of scholars (*jumhūr al-'ulamā*), these duties and obligations apply equally to all human beings, men and women alike. And this is the true meaning of *amānah* in this verse.

On the other hand, *Tafsīr* al-Qurtubī (Vol.13, p. 162) states that *al-amānah* is the trust of rational agency, including the Qur'an, shariah, and ethical conduct. It is a test of human free will, distinguishing *insān* from other creations. The trust requires knowledge to overcome "ignorant" (*jahūlan*), as per Surah al-Zumar (39:9). Justice to avoid "unjust" (*ẓalūman*), aligning with Surah al-Nisā (4:58): "*Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due.*" The Prophet's acceptance, supported by *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (60:441) (revelation's weight), exemplifies perfect stewardship, while women like Umm al-Dardā' fulfilled it through fiqh scholarship. The verse's universal call mandates women's education to uphold shariah, countering cultural restrictions.

The core part of the verse is that *insān* was 'unjust and ignorant.' That they have taken the trust of Allah without knowledge, which made them both unjust and ignorant. Since Allah already mentioned that "*And Allah brought you out of the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He gave you hearing, sight, and hearts that you might give thanks*" (16:78). To shatter the quality of unjust and ignorant from *insān* who knew nothing, Allah has given them methods to acquire knowledge. From knowing nothing to something is a departure from ignorance to knowledge, so whatever you hear, see and hearts contemplates brings you towards the knowledge because "*wherever you turn, there is the Face of Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing*" (2:115). Using these methods Allah says, "*We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that this is the truth*" (41:53).

Now, the question one should ask is, where did our Lord mention the gender? Or isolated women from seeking knowledge using the methods He himself bestowed? If Allah, the lord of *al-amānah* did not discriminate between man and women when it comes to preserving the trust and allowed running the affairs of the world through joint efforts based on justice for each, who has created the mess that seeking knowledge for women is not a requirement or even not permissible? Not that our lord says, "*The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong*" (9:71). The Qur'an categorically reminds Muslims of a joint venture between men and women to lead the caravan of Islam towards the future, yet the masculinity of man keeps dragging that collaboration into

a mess by denying rights to women. How are women going to stop society from doing wrong and help them doing right if they themselves have no knowledge? Is not the rule of Allah—“*This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight (baṣīrah)*” (12:108). Without insight that comes with deep knowledge, it is impossible to invite people towards Allah or find Allah wherever you see.

The above discussion clearly demonstrates that in terms of sharing the responsibility of *amānah* Allah has not made any distinction between men and women. Ergo, the Lord has allowed this responsibility to be shared by both, an emphasis that only the collaboration with the guidance of Allah can give them success in the endeavour. Hence, the curtain of ignorance and culture must be removed to see the clear caravan of men and women leading towards the future.

### ***On the second premise: Non-human creations lacked rational capacity to bear the trust, as their refusal stemmed from fear of failure***

The refusal of the heavens, earth, and mountains to bear *al-amānah* is rooted in their lack of free will, rational agency, and the capacity to handle the moral and intellectual demands of the Trust. Islamic sources elucidate this through Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and *tafsīr*, emphasising that knowledge is essential for *insān* to succeed where other creations could not.

The verse in Surah al-Ra'd (13:15), “*Whatever is in the heavens and earth prostrates to Allah, willingly or unwillingly...*,” establishes that non-human creations operate under fixed divine laws, submitting to Allah without choice. Their refusal of *al-amānah* in Surah al-Ahzab (33:72) reflects this lack of free will, as the trust requires voluntary acceptance and moral accountability. Knowledge enables *insān* to exercise free will rationally, distinguishing humans from the heavens and earth. Surah al-Zumar (39:9)—“*Are those who know equal to those who do not know?*”—underscores that knowledge is critical for fulfilling the trust's demands, which non-human creations could not undertake. Surah al-Zalzalah (99:4-5) says, “*That Day, it [the earth] will report its news, because your Lord has inspired it.*” The earth's role is to bear witness to human actions under divine command, not to act autonomously. The “fear” (*ashfaq*) in Surah al-Ahzab (33:72) indicates non-human creations' recognition of their inability to bear the trust's accountability, which includes upholding divine guidance like the Qur'an. Knowledge equips *insān* to navigate accountability, as Surah al-Nahl (16:89) describes the Qur'an as a “*clarification for all things.*” Without knowledge, *insān* risks being “unjust and ignorant” (*ẓalūman jahūlan*), failing where non-human creations prudently declined. Surah al-Anbiya (21:19) says, “*To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth, and those near Him are not too proud to worship Him, nor do they tire.*” Non-human creations are designed for specific roles (e.g., the heavens as a canopy, mountains as stabilisers), lacking the versatility to bear a dynamic responsibility like *al-amānah*. Their refusal reflects their fixed nature, as opposed to *insān*'s adaptability. *Insān*'s intellect, cultivated through knowledge, enables adaptation to the trust's demands, as Surah al-Alaq (96:1-5)—“*Read... who taught by the pen*”—encourages learning to overcome limitations.

Furthermore, in *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (Vol.6, p.431), Abū al-Fida Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr al-Dimashqī states the reason for refusal. The heavens, earth, and mountains declined *al-amānah* due to their fear of failing to uphold its demands—obedience, justice, and adherence to the Qur'an. Their fixed roles (Surah al-Ra'd 13:15) preclude moral agency, unlike *insān*'s free will. *Insān*'s acceptance, led by the Prophet, requires knowledge to avoid “unjust and ignorant” failures. Surah al-Mujādila (58:11) elevates the knowledgeable, including women like 'Ā'ishah, who taught Hadith to fulfil the trust. *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī* says that non-human creations recognised their inability to bear the intellectual and moral burden of *al-amānah*, which includes the covenant of *tawḥīd* (Surah al-A'raf 7:172). Their fear stemmed from the risk of

divine punishment for non-compliance. *Insān*'s rational capacity, cultivated through knowledge, enables them to uphold *tawhīd* and shariah. Women, as *insān*, share this duty, as Surah al-Tawbah (9:71) mandates their role in enjoining good, requiring education. This is also supported by *Tafsīr al-Qurtubī*, the trust's moral and legal demands (e.g., Surah al-Nisā' 4:58) require rational engagement, which non-human creations lack. Their refusal reflects their limited, deterministic roles. Knowledge counters *insān*'s "ignorant" nature, as Surah al-Isrā' (17:12) provides "clear explanation."

Therefore, the refusal of the heavens, earth, and mountains to bear *al-amānah* underscores their lack of free will, rational agency, and moral accountability—essential attributes that define the human condition. While these non-human creations fulfil their roles in fixed submission to divine command, they prudently declined a responsibility that demands conscious choice, moral reasoning, and the capacity for error and reform. In contrast, *insān*, endowed with intellect and free will, accepted this trust, making knowledge not only a distinguishing trait but a divine imperative for fulfilling the demands of *al-amānah*. The Qur'anic verses and classical *tafsīr* demonstrate that only through the acquisition and application of knowledge—spiritual, moral, and rational—can humans rise to the challenge of this sacred responsibility. The trust involves upholding *tawhīd*, administering justice, and embodying divine guidance, all of which require a dynamic, learning, and reflective being. Thus, *insān*'s success in bearing *al-amānah* lies in embracing knowledge as the means to transcend ignorance and injustice, fulfilling a role that even the grandest creations of the cosmos chose to forgo.

***On the third premise: Insān (human), endowed with free will and intellect, accepted the trust, but their "unjust and ignorant" nature risks failure unless guided by knowledge***

In the Qur'anic worldview, *insān* (human being) is a unique creation, endowed with *'aql* (reason), *ikhtiyār* (free will), and the capacity to learn. These faculties elevate humans above other creations in potential but also expose them to the risk of moral failure. Without proper guidance and knowledge, this potential can easily turn into injustice and ignorance.

The Qur'an affirms this dual nature of humanity in several verses. For instance, it says, "*And He taught Adam the names—all of them...*" (2:31). This verse is foundational in establishing that knowledge was the first divine gift to *insān*. According to classical commentators like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī and al-Ṭabarī, this knowledge not only included the names of physical things but also the capacity for abstract understanding, classification, and moral discernment. It is this divine instruction that made Adam superior to the angels in function, though not in essence. Yet, the Qur'an also acknowledges that humans are inherently inclined to forget, transgress, and err. In Surah Ṭaha (20:115), Allah says, "*And We had already taken a covenant from Adam before, but he forgot; and We found not in him determination.*" This highlights the vulnerability of the human condition—*insān* may possess the tools of intellect, but without discipline, memory, and moral clarity, these tools falter. The Prophet Adam's forgetfulness is a symbol of human fallibility, even when endowed with divine knowledge. This tension between potential and peril is also reflected in Surah al-Isrā' (17:11), "*Man prays for evil as he prays for good, and man is ever hasty.*" Hastiness (*'ajalah*) is here depicted as a defining trait. Ibn Kathīr explains that humans, due to their impulsive nature, often pursue what they think is good without true understanding—unless guided by revelation. This impulsivity demonstrates that intellect alone is insufficient; it must be regulated by knowledge, patience, and divine guidance. The Qur'an continuously links moral success with the possession and application of knowledge. Surah al-Zumar (39:9) asks rhetorically, "*Are those who know equal to those who do not know?*" This verse implicitly answers in the negative

and emphasises the Qur'anic epistemology, that those with knowledge are not only superior in rank but also more capable of fulfilling divine responsibilities. Classical *tafsīr*, such as that of al-Qurtubī, emphasises that this knowledge must include awareness of divine commands and moral discernment, not merely technical expertise. Moreover, knowledge is the basis upon which *taqwā* (God-consciousness) is built. In Surah Fāṭir (35:28), the Qur'an says, "... *Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...*" This verse directly links moral accountability with intellectual awareness. Without *ilm*, fear of God (*taqwā*) is shallow, and ethical decision-making becomes arbitrary. As a result, the Qur'an presents *ilm* not as a luxury but as a prerequisite for fulfilling the responsibilities uniquely assigned to humans. Lastly, the human need for divine guidance is made explicit in Surah al-Insān (76:3), "*Indeed, we guided him to the way, be he grateful or ungrateful.*" This verse reaffirms that, although humans are guided and equipped with faculties, the choice remains theirs. But it also implies that without divine guidance (*hidāyah*), the correct path cannot be sustained solely through rational intuition.

Hence, the Qur'an affirms that humans, while uniquely privileged with intellect and volition, are morally and existentially at risk when knowledge and divine guidance are absent. Their capacity for learning and ethical discernment distinguishes them from other creations, but this very distinction demands responsibility. Without *ilm*, humans remain vulnerable to injustice (*ẓulm*) and ignorance (*jahl*), making the acquisition and application of knowledge not only a virtue but a divine necessity.

### ***Humans, including women, must cultivate knowledge to fulfill the trust, as ignorance undermines their capacity to uphold divine guidance***

The acceptance of the divine trust (*al-amānah*) by humans is a profound metaphysical and moral commitment, demanding intellectual, ethical, and spiritual readiness. As established in earlier premises, the Qur'an and Islamic tradition consistently present knowledge as the defining criterion that enables humans to bear this burden. Without knowledge, the moral capacity to uphold divine guidance collapses, resulting in the unjust and ignorant failure that the Qur'an warns against.

The Qur'an repeatedly establishes knowledge (*ilm*) as the foundation for fulfilling divine responsibilities. Surah al-Zumar (39:9) states, "*Say: Are those who know equal to those who do not know?*"—emphasising the moral and epistemic superiority of the knowledgeable. Similarly, Surah al-Nahl (16:89) describes the Qur'an as a "*clarification for all things, and a guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims,*" indicating that guidance cannot be separated from understanding. Surah al-Isrā' (17:36) warns, "*And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart—about all those [one] will be questioned.*" These verses establish a foundational Qur'anic principle, that the trust cannot be fulfilled blindly. It demands intellectual engagement and awareness. The human capacity for knowledge distinguishes them from other creations and is essential to their divine mandate.

The Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ emphasised knowledge as a religious obligation upon all Muslims. In Sunan Ibn Mājah (Hadith 224), he says, "*Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.*" Scholars agree that this includes both men and women and covers religious knowledge as well as worldly knowledge necessary to fulfill one's duties. The Prophet's ﷺ relationship with 'Ā'ishah (RA), who transmitted over 2,000 Hadith and was considered a legal scholar in her own right, demonstrates that women are equally tasked with upholding the trust through knowledge. The Prophet ﷺ also prioritised education in Madinah, freeing prisoners of war in exchange for teaching literacy (Al-Bukhārī, Book 59, Hadith 139). These examples show

that the Prophet ﷺ laid a civilisational foundation where moral agency and accountability were inseparable from knowledge.

In Islamic jurisprudence, *farḍu ‘ayn* (individual obligation) includes the knowledge necessary to perform obligatory acts, such as prayer, fasting, and justice. The *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence) posit that actions are only valid with knowledge of their conditions. Imam al-Ghazālī in *Ihyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* asserts that ignorance is a disease, and knowledge is the only cure for ensuring sincerity and correctness in action. Ibn Rushd (Averroes), in *Fasl al-Maqāl* defends the compatibility of reason and revelation, arguing that rational inquiry is essential to understanding divine law. Theologically, scholars like Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī stressed that the intellect (*‘aql*) is the first faculty through which divine accountability is realised. Hence, without knowledge, the human being fails to fulfill the trust and risks becoming *ḡalūman jahūlan* (unjust and ignorant).

From the premises presented, it becomes evident that the divine trust is not merely a spiritual metaphor, but a real moral responsibility that requires intellectual, ethical, and volitional capacity. Humans were entrusted with this responsibility because they possess free will and rationality—qualities that make them accountable for their choices. But this same potential for greatness is also what makes humans vulnerable to failure if not guided by knowledge and understanding.

Now, if knowledge is what empowers humans to fulfil this trust responsibly, it follows that both men and women—equally human—must be equipped with it. There is no logical basis for assuming that only men are meant to uphold divine responsibility while women remain passive or uninformed. The trust was not given to men alone; it was given to humanity. To deny women access to knowledge, or to discourage their development, is to weaken humanity’s collective ability to uphold the trust.

Furthermore, the complexities of the world—its ethical challenges, its demands for justice, mercy, leadership, compassion, and truth—require the participation of all capable minds. Women, being equally endowed with intellect and moral sense, are not only capable of sharing this burden but are essential to its full realisation. A society that suppresses half its moral capacity is a society that undermines its own foundations. The divine trust is too immense, too sacred, and too consequential to be shouldered by only a part of humanity.

Therefore, the logical conclusion is this: Women, empowered with knowledge, are not optional participants in fulfilling the divine trust. They are necessary, equal, and indispensable. The affairs of this world, the pursuit of justice, and the establishment of moral order cannot endure if women remain ignorant or excluded. Only through the shared, informed, and intentional participation of both men and women can humanity hope to fulfil the responsibility it willingly accepted.

## Conclusion

This article has re-examined the feminist theological claims regarding women's access to knowledge in Islam through the Qur’anic concept of *al-amānah* (the trust). By analysing Surah al-Ahzab (33:72) and related verses, we demonstrated that the trust is a divine responsibility requiring rationality, free will, and moral accountability—qualities shared equally by both men and women. The argument that women are excluded from religious knowledge or leadership lacks Qur’anic basis and often stems from cultural biases rather than authentic Islamic sources. On the contrary, the Qur’an affirms that knowledge is essential for fulfilling the human duty of carrying the *amānah*. Thus, seeking and upholding knowledge is not a male-specific duty but a universal obligation in Islam. Women are not only rightful seekers of knowledge but are also

entrusted with its ethical application and dissemination. Any attempt to limit women's intellectual and religious contributions contradicts the very spirit of the Qur'anic message. It is time to shift the narrative from exclusion to empowerment, grounded in the Qur'an itself to interpret the Qur'an and Hadith in its real spirit and messages, which are really words of the divine books or revealed knowledge. Rather than critiquing blindly and rejudging or looking for unreliable sources in Islamic books to impose personal understanding of the divined book's contexts.

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