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THE QUR'ĀNIC CONCEPT OF *QIWĀMAH*:
A REVIEW OF COMMENTARIES ON THE VERSE: 4:34¹

Nadzrah Ahmad
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Abstract

This study elaborates the Qur'ānic verse on 'men are caretakers of women' (4:34) which legitimizes the system of qiwāmah (responsibility of man to protect and manage the affairs of woman). This is significant given the fact that the verse has been controversial since long, especially in the feminist discourse. The controversies are considerably intense often to the extent of remarking the verse and its commentaries misogynist. Employing a qualitative analysis method, the researcher has surveyed certain commentaries of both medieval and modern times, comparing them with modern Muslim scholarly interpretations of the verse. As a result, the study reveals that a blanket assertion meant to characterize the commentaries on the verse of qiwāmah as a tool of male oppression is untenable. It also finds that qiwāmah, according to the commentaries, is a theoretical foundation meant to preserve two key realms of the Qur'ānic paradigm. Firstly, to maintain a peaceful system of family with fully complementary gender roles and secondly, the protection of woman.

Keywords: *Qiwāmah*, The Qur'ānic Paradigm, Protection of Women, Harmonious Family System.

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1. Introduction

Qiwāmah never can be seen as a tool meant to legitimize the oppression or superiority of man over woman.² On the contrary, it constitutes a wide spectrum of social and familial roles carried out by both genders. Each and every role is meant to strengthen peaceful and harmonious existence of basic social institution of human being: the family. Furthermore, *qiwāmah* is a mechanism of reciprocity between the two genders. It acknowledges the biological and psychological distinctions between man and woman and allots corresponding social roles for both genders. It naturally specifies gender roles neither with a monolithic order nor with a chaotic one. Rather, it is presented in a flexible and complementary way. The role of both genders in the system of *qiwāmah* may, at times, conflate each other in order to sustain mutual harmony of family.

2. Definitions of *Qiwāmah*

Qiwāma, according to different commentaries, has been interpreted to signify several meanings. However, each meaning appears to be in terms with the other contributing each the single idea of *qiwāma* without any contradiction. Al-Zamakhsharī, a notable figure of medieval Qur'ānic commentaries, described *qiwāmah* as: “What Man does with woman is exactly like what a leader does with his followers, or a ruler with his subjects”.³ The same analogy of leader and king has also been suggested by al-Alūsī⁴ and al-Baiḍāwī⁵ of nineteenth and thirteenth century respectively.

² The complete verse of *qiwāmah* is: Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all).

³ Al-Zamakhsharī, *Tafsīr al-Kashāf* (Beirut: Dār al M'arifah, 2009), 234.

⁴ Al-Alūsī, Abū al-Faḍl Shihābuddīn, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'āzīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathānī*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār ihyā' al-Thurāth al-Arabi, 1999), 34.

⁵ Al-Baiḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Ta'wīl* vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār ihyā' al-thurāth al arabi, 1990), 72.

Another medieval classical commentator, Ibn Kathīr suggests that man is supervisor (*qayyim*) of woman. Added to this, the spectrum of meanings for *qiwāmah*, according to Ibn Kathīr, is inclusive of many aspects. It includes that 'man is leader of woman, greater than her, one who gives rulings for her sake, and who takes disciplinary action upon her'.⁶ Wahbah al-Zuhailī, a modern commentator, follows this same wording of Ibn Kathīr while defining *qiwāmah*.⁷ Muḥammad 'Abdu defines *qiwāmah* to be a leadership (*riā'sa*) where 'the one who is led conforms to the leader's decisions'. However, it does not mean, as for him, that the led one is oppressed and deprived of her right to take decisions. Rather, it is a kind of guidance (*irshād*) and inspection (*murāqabah*) upon woman.⁸

Qiwāma has been described by the medieval commentator al-Qurṭubī on the basis of responsibility of man to strive for the sustenance of woman and to defend her against the hardships (*al-dhabb anhunna*) as well.⁹ The very same idea has also been expounded by Ibn 'Āshūr, a notable modern Muslim figure. He describes the scope of *qiwāmah* as preservation, defence, earning and production of wealth, remarking all these to be fundamental duties of man for the sake of woman.¹⁰ This idea of protection is also evident in the commentary of Muammad Asad. He translates the phrase *al-rijāl qawwāmūn ala al-nisā'* as: "Men shall take full care of woman".¹¹

Ibn al-'Arabī, a Maliki scholar of eleventh century, in his *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, deals with *qiwāmah* from a perspective of human rights. He states that the spouses share common rights with each other (*al-zawjān mushtarikān fi al-ḥuqūq*¹²). Man is responsible to provide dowry and sustenance (*nafaqah*), to behave in the most

⁶ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, vol. 2 (Riyādh: Dār 'Uyba, 1999), 292.

⁷ Al-Zuhailī, Wahbah, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*, vol. 3 (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 2009), 57.

⁸ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār* (Cairo: Al-Manār Publications, 1910), 68.

⁹ Al-Qurṭubī, Muḥammad bin Ahmad, *Al-Jamī' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 5 (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Misri, 1960), 169.

¹⁰ Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 2000), 38.

¹¹ Muḥammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'ān* (Gibraltar: Dār al-Andulus, 1980), 109.

¹² Ibn al-'Arabī, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-ilmīyah), 531.

favourable manner, to preserve the conjugal relationship and to lead her to the obedience of God whereas woman is responsible to preserve her husband's property, to do favour to his family and to follow his instructions when he is absent at home.¹³

As for Sayyid Quṭub, *qiwāmah* is a system of decentralization of responsibilities for the sake of a harmonious family. He dismisses and condemns any attempt to remark and utilize *qiwāmah* as a tool to disregard the personality of woman both at home and in the society.¹⁴ The reciprocal status of family life is seriously advocated by Quṭub. To emphasize this, he claims man and woman are 'two parts of the same soul' (*shatṛai nafsin wāḥida*), which is borrowed from the Qur'ānic phrase '*min nafsin wāḥida*'.¹⁵ He remarks *qiwāmah*-based family system a 'dual institution' (*al-mua'ssasah al-zawjiyya*) that is essentially incorporative of the two spouses with specifically allotted roles, which is also an imitation of Qur'ānic verse.¹⁶ Quṭub is quite emphatic about the primary responsibilities. Woman is, according to him, neither enjoined to breastfeed her child nor to breadwin for her non-working relatives, however wealthy she is, unless she wishes. However, each man is enjoined to bear such responsibilities.

Despite all modern and medieval commentators mentioned earlier, al-Sh'arāwī puts himself in a different place. He argues that *qiwāmah* applies not only between the spouses but also between father and daughter, and brother and sister. He explicitly repudiates common trend among the former commentators to confine the application of *qiwāmah* only among spouses. According to him, the verse is not meant to denote husband and his wife at all. Father is,

¹³ Al-Andulusī, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīt*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-Ilmiyya, 1994), 249.

¹⁴ Sayyid Quṭub, *Fī Dīlāl al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1985), 652.

¹⁵ O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed Allah is ever, over you, an Observer. (4:1).

¹⁶ And among His Signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts): verily in that are Signs for those who reflect. (30:21).

therefore, *qawwām* over his daughter and brother is *qawwām* over his sisters".¹⁷

Al-Sh'arāwī's proposed criterion of *qiwāmah* is that both man and woman's roles in the system of *qiwāmah* is quite proportional while man efficiently utilizes his physical strength, resoluteness for the sake of seeking sufficient sustenance coping with hardships while woman utilizes her own qualities like affection, meekness and softness for the sake of her familial needs.¹⁸ Concluding this, he suggests that a woman who knows well all these must remain pleasant and happy while she has already been guaranteed protection and sustenance, relieving her from all the hardships in pursuit of sufficient livelihood. To imply that *qiwāmah* is one of the most important missions of man on the earth that outweighs many other missions, he infers an analogy from the story of Adam and Eve who were exiled from the heaven and sent down to earth.¹⁹ According to al-Sh'arāwī, the way God addressed only Adam using singular verbal form *fatashqā* (you will be unlucky, addressing man only) instead of *fatashqayā* (both of you will be unlucky), is something which denotes that man is responsible to protect woman from all kind of situations that may lead to bad luck and failure. Therefore, the functioning of *qiwāmah* as for him entails incessant efforts and which can be properly tackled only by man.²⁰

What we can infer from the above Qur'ānic interpretations is that *qiwāmah* is man's responsibility to rule, supervise and take care of woman in way that assures her protection, existence of a safe system of family. Sometimes, it is identified as the most important mission given to men which is meant to support women.

3. Tafḍīl and Infāq: The Two Rationales of *Qiwāmah*

A cursory view of the verse of *qiwāmah* reveals that there are two

¹⁷ Al-Sh'arāwī, Mutawallī, Muḥammad, *Al-Khawāṭir* (Akhhār al-Yawm, 1997), 2193.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 2194.

¹⁹ According to the Qur'ānic allegory, God warns Adam to remain unyielding to the deception of Iblīs, or else he will be instrumental to exile Adam and his spouse from heaven to the earth. And if it happens Adam will become unlucky (Qurā'n: 20:117).

²⁰ Al-Sh'arāwī, *Al-Khawāṭir*, 2194

main pillars based upon which *qiwāmah* has been legitimized. The first is *tafḍīl* and the second, *infāq*. Both *tafḍīl* and *Infāq* are substantive verbal form of *faḍḍala* and *anfaqa*. The verse, therefore, means that ‘men are *qawwāmūn* of women because of *faḍḍala* and *anfaqa*’. Pikhall translates *faḍḍala* as: (Allah has) “made one of them to excel the other”²¹ while Yūsuf ‘Alī translates: “has given the one more strength than the other”.²² Arthur J. Arberry translates the verb as “God has preferred in bounty one of them over another”,²³ while Muḥammad Asad translated the phrase into “God has bestowed more abundantly on the former (men) than on the latter (women²⁴)”. Therefore, in order to delineate *qiwāmah* conceptually, it is arguably imperative to discuss it against the background of *tafḍīl*. Consequently, *tafḍīl* provides a clear picture of how gender role is conceptualized by the Qur’ānic paradigm.²⁵

²¹ Marmaduke Pikhall, *The Meaning Of The Glorious Quran: Text And Explanatory Translation*, vol. 1 (Beltsville: Amāna Publication, 2005), 80.

²² Abdulla Yūsuf Alī, *The meaning of the Holy Quran*, vol. 1 (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust 2005), 195.

²³ Arther J. Arberry, *The Holy Koran: an Introduction with Selections*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2008), 105.

²⁴ Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Quran* (Gibraltar: Dār al-Andulus, 1980), 109.

²⁵ World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY) has provided a clear comparison between the Qur’ānic and feminist paradigms regarding the status of women, in 1995 in the Beijing conference of the United Nations on the casue of women. WAMY challenged the ‘UN Platform for Actions’ which was devised by the UN for the casue of women and accused it to have included the elements of radical feminism. ‘UN Platform for Actions’ according to WAMY offers woman maximum participation for economic development as a necessary pre-requisite for their survival and wholesome development. Such a fixation of ‘economic status as the criterion of everything’ is an extremely individualistic approach which will lead to infuse a competitive spirit in woman for economic development, arouse a lust for self-aggrandisement through power-grabbing, and will reduce the complementary spirit of responsibility-sharing which is, WAMY argues, not suitable for a collaborative society. However, as for the Qur’ānic paradigm, since woman’s role as mother does not end at a specific time but is round-the-clock career, she has been exempted from attending the mosque for the five daily prayers or Friday congregational prayer. Hence, this exemption is not a case of deprivation but that of a relief, which is not available to Muslim man, WAMY asserts. In other words, the feminist paradigm, champions the amelioration of woman with a confrontational strategy with man, while the Qur’ānic paradigm advocates the same with a

As for *tafḍīl*, al-Rāzī articulates that since God has enjoined man to provide *mahr* to woman and to take charge of her sustenance after marriage, man's excellence over woman in terms of inheritance is compensated due to woman's excellence over man in terms of having entitled to the right of *mahr* and *infāq*.²⁶ Referring to this recompense, he concludes: 'Then it is as if no excellence at all in both parts'.²⁷ Interestingly, he also refers to the fact that although the privilege of sexual satisfaction is shared among both, it is only man who has been enjoined to meet the requirements of dowry and sustenance. Al-Sh'arāwī expands this idea stating that woman and man potentially share equal happiness and satisfaction in sexual relations and possession of children as well, whereas the consequent responsibilities of providing the family has not been enjoined upon the both, but rather, on man only. And this responsibility is never exempted however wealthy the woman is.²⁸

Abu Ḥayyān al-Andalusī in his *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, acknowledges a possibly common interpretation in his time that the *tafḍīl* does not apply on each and every individual of male and female, but instead, in general.²⁹ For there are countless women who proved to be better, more efficient than men are, he argues.³⁰ Rashīd

co-operational strategy. See The World Assembly of Muslim Youth, *Woman and Family life in Islam: a position paper highlighting the status, rights and role of the Muslim woman according to the basic sources of Islam*, (Riyadh: Abrar Press, 1995), 35. Some commentators like Ibn Ashsur expanded the notion of 'relieving woman' to an extent that men are the default protectors of women. Ibn Ashsur advocates protection of woman as an essential part of man's responsibility irrespective of her strength. Moreover, certain modern scholars like Sayyid Quṭub, al-Sh'arāwī and Muḥammad al-Ghazālī interpret *qiwāmah* in a way that man is never exempted from the responsibility of breadwinning his wife however her financial status is. See Ibn 'Ashūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār Ihyā al-Turāth, 2000), 39; Sayyid Quṭub, *Fī Dilāl al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1985), 650-651; Muḥammad. Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Mar'a fī al-Islam*, (Akḥbār al-Yawm: 1991), 76.

²⁶ Al-Rāzī, Fakhruddīn, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, vol. 10 (Beirut: Dār al-fikr, 1981), 90.

²⁷ *fa ka a'nnahu lā faḍla albattah*. See *Ibid*.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 2194.

²⁹ This interpretation has been advocated by Amina wadud as she explained the term *faddala*. See Amina Wadud, *Quran and Woman: Reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 71.

³⁰ Al-Andalusī, *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ*, vol. 3, 249.

Riḍā, while explaining Muḥammad ‘Abdu’s commentary, attests the same view of al-Andulusī.³¹ In addition, it is to imply this fact that Qur’ān, according to Andulusī, uses an absurd structure of sentence that is ‘made one of them to excel the other’³², instead of an unequivocal usage, which is possibly, ‘made men to excel women’.

It is seemingly to rule out a possibility of oppressing woman within the system of *qiwāmah* on legal ground that al-Qurṭubī explains: “The benefit of *tafḍīl* eventually returns to the women”.³³ Hence, al-Qurṭubī implicitly rejects such a *tafḍīl* that does not benefit woman, in terms of providing sufficient livelihood and protecting them from all perils and hardships. This notion of ‘the benefit of *tafḍīl* returns to woman’ is important given the fact that al-Qurṭubī has prepared his exegesis from a legal perspective. The notion situates parallel to that of al-Rāzī ‘it is as if no excellence at all in both parts’ (*fa ka a’nnahu lā faḍla albatta*)³⁴ as mentioned earlier. A considerable similarity between al-Qurṭubī and al-Rāzī is that al-Qurṭubī perceives woman naturally weaker than man in terms of physical strength, intellect and management skill. He suggests that man intrinsically possesses a quality of hardness (*yabūṣah*) and firmness (*ḥarārah*) whereas woman possesses and inherent softness (*burūdah*) and tenderness (*ruṭūba*)³⁵. It might be due to this reason, as for him, that men are enjoined to take charge of such a risky responsibility of breadwinning and supervising over women.

As for Sayyid Quṭub, one of the most popular Muslim intellectuals of the twentieth century, family is the most precious social institution in which human being, the most civilized created being is nurtured and prepared. If other less comparatively valuable institutions like financial, industrial and commercial are handled by those who are accredited to be the most efficient candidates, human being’s social institution (family) is also supposed to get the same consideration, not least while he is the most valuable creation of the

³¹ Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, 68.

³² *bimā faḍḍala Allāhu ba’ḍahum ‘alā ba’ḍ.*

³³ Al-Qurṭubī, Muḥammad bin Ahmad, *Al-Jami’ li Aḥkām al-Qurān*, vol. 5, 169.

³⁴ Al-Razī, *Maḥāṭib al-ghayb*, vol. 10, 90.

³⁵ Al-Qurṭubī, Muḥammad bin Ahmad, *Al-Jami’ li Aḥkām al-Qurān*, vol. 5, 169.

universe.³⁶ To fulfill this need, God has taken *fiṭrah* (the inherent nature of human being) into the highest consideration, he argues. Woman cannot be compelled, to conceive, to deliver, to breastfeed, to take care of her children and yet again to strive working for the sustenance of herself and her child at the same time. Therefore, it is, according to Quṭub, quite sensible aspect of divine justice that man and woman have been provided with certain particular physical and psychological qualities which are meant to carry out their own fundamental duties in different areas of the family.³⁷

What makes Quṭub distinguished from others is that he never uses the phrase 'woman is weaker than'. Rather, he uses 'better than' with regard to both genders.³⁸ He suggests that woman is better than man with qualities of softness, tenderness, tendency to respond faster without much deliberation, a quality which is, according to him, more beneficial for child care, whereas man is better than woman with those of hardness, toughness, tendency to respond slower with much deliberation before they move on.³⁹

Tafdīl has been characterized by Ibn Ibn 'Āshūr as a necessary mechanism since it has been proved, he argues, by generation after generation that woman needs man in terms of preservation of herself

³⁶ Sayyid Quṭub, *Fī dīlāl al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, 650.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Whatever it may be the reason, the natural distinction between woman and man has been often conceived through a prism of 'woman is weaker than man' criterion. It is interesting to note WAMY's acknowledgement of Rosmarie Tong in this regard. She states: "how equality should be accorded to woman while considering some of the natural differences between men and women? See World Assembly of Muslim Youth, *Woman and Family life in Islam: a position paper highlighting the status, rights and role of the Muslim woman according to the basic sources of Islam*, (Riyadh: Abrar Press, 1995), 35; Jamal Badawi, in his famous article, also addresses this question and differentiates between equality and equity in Islam. He dismisses a universal criterion of 'absolute equality' and puts forward an Islamic framework of equity that affords a 'proportionate equality' in which both man and woman enjoy duties and have exemption of duties at the same time in a flexible manner. 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Abū Shaqqa in his notable work exclusively prepared on Muslim woman also affords a comprehensive apprehension of this framework. See Jamal Badawi, *Gender Equity in Islam*. (IDM Publications, 2015), 12; 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Abū Shaqqa, *Taḥrīr al-Mar'ah fī 'Asr al-Risāla*, vol. 1 (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1999, 126.

³⁹ *Ibid.* vol 2, 651.

whether she is strong or weak. He defines the rationale of *tafḍīl* to be the ‘biological distinctions’ (*al-mazāyā al-jibilliyyah*) of woman that necessitates her dependence on man in terms of defending herself and preserving her causes.⁴⁰ It is noteworthy that he does not rely upon the wide spectrum of medieval terminology that explicitly affirm the idea of ‘weakness’ and ‘inferiority’ in case of woman, but rather concisely uses the term ‘biological distinctions’. He asserts that to earn for the sake of livelihood is commonly related to man and woman has a rare relevance in this regard.⁴¹ As regards *tafḍīl*, Wahbah al-Zuhailī considers man to have been provided with perfect creation, powerful comprehension, strong intellect, balanced emotion and flawless structure. It is, according to him, these qualities that made man better than woman. However, the compulsory injunction of *infāq* and *mahar* on man for the sake of woman has been characterized by Wahbah al-Zuhailī as signs of dealing woman with respect.⁴²

Therefore, from the previous interpretation of *tafḍīl*, we could conclude that all of the commentaries are just allusive of natural distinction between man and woman whether it is physical, psychological, although some of the commentators termed these inherent distinctions as part of *fiṭrah*. It is clear that none of the commentators had attempted to establish any patriarchal norms.

On contrary to the *tafḍīl* which has a wide spectrum of meanings coalescent to signify the ‘natural distinction between man and woman’, *infāq* purportedly stands for only two meanings. The first is *mahr*, something valuable a bridegroom provides his bride to lawfully solemnize the marriage contract. The second is maintenance (*naḥāqah*) provided by man for woman. Both of them legally constitute man’s unavoidable responsibility according to the commentators. When *qiwāmah* comes to be specifically interpreted in terms of *infāq*, it gains an economic importance. For example, Al-Qurtubī emphasizes that “Once man turns unable to manage

⁴⁰ Ibn ‘Āshur, *Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, vol. 5 (Beitut: Dār Ihyā al-Turāth, 2000), 38.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Al-Zuhailī, Wahbah, *Al-tafsīr al-munīr*, vol. 3 (Damascus: Dār al-fikr, 2009), 57.

woman's sustenance, the man's status as a *qawwām* gets automatically nullified".⁴³

The importance *qiwāmah* in the economic realm becomes even higher when it is related to the law of inheritance. Al-Rāzi, one of the famous classical commentators conceives *qiwāmah* as Qur'ānic wisdom behind the disparity between man and woman in the right of inheritance. He clarifies that the verse 4:32 affirms this disparity and enjoins woman not to covet what Allah has assigned for men according to his wisdom.⁴⁴ According to al-Rāzi, *qiwāmah* happens to be the reason of disparity between man and woman in the case of inheritance right.⁴⁵

Al-Alūsī affirms the aforementioned views of al-Rāzī that the verse of *qiwāmah* is an indication of why men are entitled to the right of possessing more than what women gets from the inherited property.⁴⁶ Wahbah al-Zuhailī also confirms the view of al-Rāzī and al-Alūsī that it is due to the economic burden of man in terms of *mahr* and *naḥaqah* that woman's legal capacity is to possess only half of what man possesses from the inherited estate.⁴⁷

Al-Ūabari, one of the most prominent early commentators of Qur'ān is quite different from this common interpretation. He provides a number of narrations from companions of the Prophet to explain the status of *qiwāmah* in terms of *tafḍīl* and *infāq*. He, however stresses on the latter, and with no considerable reason, omits explanation of the former. Nonetheless, something interesting about Al-Ūabari is that he quotes a narration of Ibn Abbās,⁴⁸ the famous cousin of Prophet who infers a converging point between *infāq* and *tafḍīl*. Ibn Abbās "His (man) excellence upon them (one woman or more than one in case of polygyny), is due to the fact that he is

⁴³ Al-Qurtubī, Muhammad bin Ahmad, *Al-Jami' li Ahkām al-qurān*, vol. 5, 169.

⁴⁴ The verse is: And do not covet that by which Allah has made some of you excel others; men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn; and ask Allah of His grace; surely Allah knows all things.

⁴⁵ Al-Rāzī, Fakhruddīn *Maḥāṣin al-Ghayb*, vol. 10, 90.

⁴⁶ Al-Alūsī, Abul Fadl Shihabuddin, *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm wa al-Sab' al-Mathānī*, vol. 5, 34.

⁴⁷ Wahbah Al-Zuhailī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Munīr*, vol. 3, 57.

⁴⁸ Ibn Abbās is usually remarked as 'head of commentators' (*ra'īs al-mufasssīrīn*).

responsible to breadwin for the sake of family”.⁴⁹ Clearly, instead of considering *tafḍīl* and *infāq* two separate reasons of *qiwāmah*, Ibn Abbās finds a converging point between the two. This convergence shows that the term *faḍḍala* in the Qur’ānic verse does not stand for any kind of oppressive disposition of man over woman. Instead, it is a divine enjoyment of responsibility upon man.

4. Conclusion

Qiwāmah in the Qur’ān is not an indicator of female oppression. Rather, a compulsive injunction upon man for protection woman and the family system. All of the given commentaries analysed in this article directly assert that the *qiwāmah* functions with a lot of risks and this is the main reason that Allah has enjoined men for functioning it. Therefore, it is flawed to perceive a Qur’ānic acknowledgement of the natural biological distinctions of women and their consequent sociological roles in the functional level as androcentrism. It is also evident from the given commentaries that man excels woman in certain roles in family and society while woman excels man in certain other roles, although the Qur’ānic implication in the verse of *qiwāmah*, in particular, is explicit only about man’s role.

All the commentators characterize *tafḍīl* and the subsequent *qiwāmah* as a natural corollary of woman’s biological distinctions and dismiss the idea of male oppression. This dismissal is for three main reasons. The first is assurance of the protection of woman, and the second is harmonious and peaceful maintenance of the family system. The third reason is that *qiwāmah*, being the tutelage of man guaranteed for woman, is a matter of combination of both duties and rights which are reciprocal, not only rights or duties which are one-sided. Hence, the assumption of many Muslim societies that their women should be legally deprived from several key social areas must be undergone for introspection.

⁴⁹ Al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī: Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl āy al-Qur’ān*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 2005), 2287.

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TRANSLITERATION TABLE

CONSONANTS

Ar=Arabic, Pr=Persian, OT=Ottoman Turkish, Ur=Urdu

Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	Ar	Pr	OT	UR	
ء	ء	ء	ء	ز	z	z	z	گ	—	g	g	g
ب	ب	ب	ب	ژ	—	—	ʀ	ل	l	l	l	l
پ	پ	پ	پ	ژ	—	zh	j	م	m	m	m	m
ت	ت	ت	ت	س	s	s	s	ن	n	n	n	n
ث	—	—	ṭ	ش	sh	sh	ʃ	ه	h	h	h¹	h¹
ث	th	th	th	ص	ṣ	ṣ	ʃ	و	w	v/u	v	v/u
ج	j	j	c	ض	ḍ	ḍ	ʒ	ی	y	y	y	y
چ	—	ch	çh	ط	ṭ	ṭ	ṭ	ة	-ah	—	—	-a²
ح	ḥ	ḥ	ḥ	ظ	ẓ	ẓ	ẓ	ال	al³	—	—	—
خ	kh	kh	kh	ع	‘	‘	‘	—	—	—	—	—
د	d	d	d	غ	gh	gh	ğh	—	—	—	—	—
ڈ	—	—	d	ف	f	f	f	—	—	—	—	—
ذ	dh	dh	dh	ق	q	q	k	—	—	—	—	—
ر	r	r	r	ك	k	k/g	k/ñ	—	—	—	—	—

¹ – when not final
² – at in construct state
³ – (article) al - or l-

VOWELS

	Arabic and Persian	Urdu	Ottoman Turkish
Long	ا آ و ي	ā Ā ū ī	ā — ū ī
Doubled	ي و	iy (final form i) uw (final form ū) uvv (for Persian)	iy (final form i) uv uvv
Diphthongs	و ی	au or aw ai or ay	ev ey
Short	ا ا ا	a u i	a or e u or ü o or ö i

URDU ASPIRATED SOUNDS

For aspirated sounds not used in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish add h after the letter and underline both the letters e.g. چ jh گ gh

For Ottoman Turkish, modern Turkish orthography may be used.

Contents

ARTICLES IN VOL. 23 No. 1, 2018

THE PHENOMENON OF <i>IRHĀB</i> (TERRORISM): MEANING, HISTORY AND CAUSES <i>Thameem Ushama</i>	1
FORM AND CONTENT: A HISTORICAL AND ARTISTIC ASSESSMENT A 17TH CENTURY ILLUSTRATED SHAHNAMEH FROM S. M. N A. LIBRARY, MALAYSIA <i>Amir H. Zekrgoo</i>	41
SEPARATION OF CONJOINED TWINS FROM THE COMMON LAW AND <i>SHARI'AH</i> PERSPECTIVES: THE LEGAL AND ETHICAL CONUNDRUM <i>Puteri Nemie Jahn Kassim</i> <i>Fadhlina Alias</i>	67
THE CRITICS ON THE HISTORY OF ARABIC GRAMMAR <i>Solehah Yaacob</i>	97
CAN THE EYE TRACKER REVEAL HOW THE QUR'AN CAN BE LEARNED BY HEART? <i>Khazriyati Salehuddin</i>	125
THE RELEVANCE OF <i>WAQF</i> TO THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF <i>MAQĀSID</i> <i>AL-SHARĪ'AH</i> (HIGHER OBJECTIVES OF <i>SHARĪ'AH</i>) <i>Rawaa El Ayoubi Gebara</i>	149
THE QUR'ĀNIC CONCEPT OF <i>QIWĀMAH</i> : A REVIEW OF COMMENTARIES ON THE VERSE: 4:34 <i>Nadzrah Ahmad</i> <i>Muhammad Abdul Rasheed</i>	169
THE ANTI-ISLAMIST DISCOURSE: THE CASE OF AL-BŪTĪ <i>Bachar Bakour</i> <i>Abdelaziz Berghout</i>	183
THE ROLE OF SHAYKH ABD AL-RA'UF AL-FANSURI IN THE RECONCILIATION OF SUFISM AND <i>SHARĪ'AH</i> OF 17 TH CENTURY THE MALAY WORLD <i>Abdul Salam Muhamad Shukri</i> <i>Ridwan Arif</i>	207
THE HISTORY OF ISLAM IN THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF ABDULLAH BIN NUH'S WORKS <i>Mohammad Noviani Ardi</i> <i>Fatimah Abdullah</i>	247
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS	269

