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Linguistic Critique of Amina Wadud's Quranic Perspectives in Light of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Trust

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Abstract

Islamic feminism has reexamined religious texts through a gendered lens, challenging traditional interpretations. Amina Wadud's *Qur'an and Woman* (1999) advocates for gender equality in the Qur'an using philosophical hermeneutics while critiquing patriarchal exegesis. This study conducts a linguistic and hermeneutical critique of Wadud's interpretations of key verses (Q. 2:228, 4:1 & 34, 33:35, and 9:71) through Paul Ricoeur's dual hermeneutics of suspicion (critical interrogation) and trust (faith in textual meaning). Employing a critical-analytical method, the research examines Wadud's lexical, syntactic, and contextual analysis, comparing her readings with classical and contemporary exegeses. Findings indicate that while Wadud's approach promotes gender justice and holistic Qur'anic interpretation, it occasionally deviates from textual and traditional meanings due to insufficient linguistic analysis and overreliance on feminist presuppositions. From a Ricoeurian perspective, her methodology leans excessively toward suspicion, undermining trust in the text and interpretive tradition. The study argues that a balanced exegesis of gender-related verses necessitates harmonizing text-centered analysis with ideological critique, preserving textual authenticity while addressing modern ethical concerns. By systematically evaluating feminist Qur'anic hermeneutics, this research fills gaps in the field and proposes an integrative framework for gender-sensitive exegesis. Wadud's contributions remain pivotal in advancing Islamic feminist discourse, yet this critique highlights the need for greater hermeneutical equilibrium. The study highlights the importance of linguistic rigor and a dialectical engagement between suspicion and trust, ensuring both scholarly fidelity and progressive reinterpretation.

Keywords: Qur'an, Islamic Feminism, Amina Wadud, Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics, Linguistic Analysis.

Introduction

Islamic feminism, exemplified by Amina Wadud's *Qur'an and Woman* (1999), reinterprets the Qur'an through a gendered lens, asserting its egalitarian core while challenging patriarchal exegesis. Wadud's woman-centered readings of key verses (e.g., Q. 4:1, 4:34) aim to recover gender equality in scripture, but her

methodology faces criticism for perceived linguistic and hermeneutical limitations, particularly when evaluated against classical *tafsir* traditions.

This study evaluates Wadud's feminist exegesis using Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical framework, which balances **suspicion** (unmasking oppressive



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interpretations) with **trust** (affirming the text's emancipatory potential). By applying Ricoeur's dialectical approach, the analysis assesses whether Wadud's reinterpretations maintain textual fidelity while advancing feminist critique (Ricoeur, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 15-18; Barlas, 2002, p. 89).

The study (1) situates Wadud's work within Islamic feminist discourse, (2) analyzes her methodology through Ricoeur's hermeneutics, and (3) evaluates its implications for contemporary Qur'anic gender interpretation. Ultimately, it seeks a more balanced feminist exegesis that bridges ideological critique with classical exegetical traditions (Hidayatullah, 2014, p. 112; Ali, 2001, p. 45).

Literature Review

Research on Islamic feminism and gendered Qur'anic exegesis spans a wide spectrum, ranging from strong endorsements of Amina Wadud's hermeneutical approach to methodological and linguistic critiques of her work. These discussions have been advanced through books, peer-reviewed articles, and doctoral dissertations in both Arabic and English, reflecting a growing interdisciplinary engagement with feminist Qur'anic interpretation.

Wadud's (1999) seminal work, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, represents the first systematic effort to develop a gendered exegesis of the Qur'an, applying philosophical hermeneutics to key verses (e.g., Q. 4:1, 4:34). While groundbreaking, her methodology has faced scrutiny for its perceived departures from classical *tafsir* conventions. Building on Wadud's foundation, Asma Barlas (2002), in *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Quran*, contends that patriarchal exegesis has historically distorted the Qur'an's egalitarian ethos. Margot Badran (2009) further contextualizes Wadud's contributions within broader Islamic feminist discourse in *Feminism in Islam*, though recent scholarship calls for deeper interdisciplinary synthesis to bridge feminist and classical methodologies.

Despite these advances, critical gaps persist in the literature. Few studies have systematically examined Wadud's exegesis through Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical framework, which balances ideological critique

with textual fidelity (Ricoeur, 1976, vol. 1, pp. 15–18). Additionally, while linguistic and historical critiques of feminist reinterpretations abound, there remains a need for constructive engagement with classical *tafsir* traditions to foster a more balanced hermeneutic (Hidayatullah, 2014, p. 112).

Research Gaps

Despite extensive scholarship, four major gaps have been identified: (1) the absence of a balanced analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Wadud's approach, (2) a lack of systematic comparison with classical and contemporary exegeses, (3) limited application of Ricoeurian hermeneutics in critiquing feminist interpretations, and (4) insufficient attention to the diversity of non-Sunni exegetical traditions.

This study aims to address these gaps by conducting a linguistic critique of Amina Wadud's perspectives in light of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion and trust, while proposing a comprehensive framework for analyzing gender-related Quranic verses.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze Amina Wadud's feminist and hermeneutical approach in interpreting Quranic verses related to gender, including an examination of specific Quranic passages.
2. To conduct a Linguistic critique of Wadud's interpretations from lexical, syntactic, and contextual perspectives, drawing on classical and contemporary sources.
3. To examine Wadud's methodology through Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion and trust, assessing potential consistencies or contradictions in her exegesis.
4. To evaluate the compatibility or conflict between Wadud's interpretations and Islamic exegetical tradition, identifying possible weaknesses in her analyses.
5. To identify limitations in Wadud's feminist exegesis, such as neglect of historical context, insufficient engagement with interpretive tradition, and the influence of ideological presuppositions.

Research Questions

Primary Question

To what extent are Amina Wadud's feminist

interpretations of Quranic verses concerning women compatible with linguistic structure, textual context, and Islamic exegetical tradition? How can they be evaluated through the lens of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion and trust?

Subsidiary Questions

1. How can Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach provide a theoretical framework for critiquing Amina Wadud's interpretive methodology?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of Wadud's interpretations of key Quranic verses (including Q. 2:228, 4:1, 4:34, 33:35, and 9:71) from a linguistic (lexical, syntactic, and contextual) perspective?

3. How have the underlying feminist presuppositions in Wadud's readings influenced her understanding and interpretation of these verses?

4. What is the relationship between Wadud's exegetical views and classical/contemporary Islamic interpretive traditions, and where do points of conflict or convergence arise?

5. What hermeneutical and linguistic challenges emerge in Wadud's readings, and how might a balance between feminist interpretation and textual coherence be achieved?

Research Methodology

This study employs an analytical-critical approach, utilizing multiple methods to evaluate Amina Wadud's exegetical perspectives.

1. **Linguistic Analysis:** The semantic meanings of key terms and the syntactic structure of Quranic verses are examined in light of classical sources and contextual considerations.

2. **Comparative Analysis:** Wadud's interpretations are systematically compared and contrasted with those of classical and contemporary exegetes to identify points of convergence or divergence.

This methodological approach ensures a rigorous, multi-dimensional critique of Wadud's feminist hermeneutics while maintaining engagement with both traditional

and modern exegetical discourses.

Introduction to Amina Wadud

Amina Wadud (1952), a pioneering figure in Islamic feminism, initiated a gendered re-reading of religious texts through her critical engagement with traditional Quranic exegesis. Her seminal work, *Qur'an and Woman* (1999), employs a hermeneutical approach to reinterpret verses about women, systematically challenging patriarchal interpretations. Wadud's 2005 act of leading Friday prayers (*Jumu'ah*) as a female imam sparked extensive debates on women's roles in Islamic worship.

Wadud maintains that the Quran is an egalitarian text requiring contemporary reinterpretation. By integrating Islamic scholarship with modern hermeneutical methods, she has significantly influenced contemporary Islamic discourse and gender studies. Her work interrogates classical exegetical paradigms while advocating for a context-sensitive, gender-inclusive theological framework.

Amina Wadud's Exegetical Approach

Amina Wadud has developed a unique interpretive approach combining feminist hermeneutics and critical methodology. Drawing on philosophical hermeneutics - particularly Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer - she proposes a three-dimensional model of historical-contextual interpretation, linguistic-structural analysis, and existential hermeneutics.

Feminist Perspective

Wadud critiques patriarchal Quranic readings, arguing that traditional interpretations reflect cultural assumptions of their formative periods. Citing verses 4:1 (*al-Nisā'*) and 33:35 (*al-Aḥzāb*) that emphasize gender equality, she demonstrates the Quran's inherent egalitarianism while showing how historical interpretations marginalized this aspect. This approach employs Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion" to examine power structures in interpretation.

Hermeneutical Methodology

Wadud utilizes modern hermeneutical

techniques in three stages. First, structural analysis of the Quranic text and systematic examination of key terms like "khilafa" (stewardship) and "taskhir" (subjugation) to reveal how these concepts have served to justify male domination. Second, a historical-contextual analysis of verses concerning women to distinguish between Quranic constants and historical injunctions.

Finally, drawing on Ricoeurian hermeneutics, she retrieves the Quran's emancipatory meaning for contemporary women.

Innovation in Lived Experience Hermeneutics

Wadud's primary innovation involves applying the "lived experience hermeneutics" of Muslim women. She argues women's experiences can serve as a source for new scriptural understanding. This approach, termed "situational theology," has significantly influenced new generations of Muslim feminists (Wadud, 2006; Wadud, 1999; Badran, 2009).

Paul Ricoeur and His Hermeneutics

Paul Ricoeur (1913–2005), the French philosopher, stands as one of the most significant figures in twentieth-century philosophical hermeneutics. His approach, articulated in works such as *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* and *Oneself as Another*, synthesizes phenomenology, structuralism, and analytic philosophy (Ricoeur, 1981; Ricoeur, 1991).

Critiquing the Romantic hermeneutics of Schleiermacher and the existentialism of Heidegger, Ricoeur emphasizes the necessity of the "long detour of interpretation"—a path encompassing linguistic, historical, and existential analyses (Ricoeur, 1981; Kaplan, 2003).

Key Concepts in His Thought

A central concept in Ricoeur's philosophy is the "dialectic of understanding and explanation". He argues that understanding requires objective explanation through textual criticism and structural analysis (Ricoeur, 1976; Jervolino, 1990). In his theory of "living

metaphor," Ricoeur demonstrates that metaphors are not merely aesthetic but also cognitively generative, with language always containing a "surplus of meaning" (Ricoeur, 1976; Vanhoozer, 1990).

In the study of sacred texts, Ricoeur introduces the concept of the "world of the text," proposing that religious narratives open new horizons of meaning and enable the re-creation of existential significance (Ricoeur, 1980; Thiselton, 2009).

In *Time and Narrative*, he develops the idea of "narrative identity," showing how humans attain self-understanding and temporal meaning through storytelling (Ricoeur, 1984).

Ricoeur's hermeneutics, by emphasizing the interplay between critical analysis and semantic creativity, opens new possibilities for textual interpretation and human experience.

The Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Trust in Paul Ricoeur's Thought

Paul Ricoeur, in works such as *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981) and *Freud and Philosophy* (1970), develops the dual concept of the "hermeneutics of suspicion and trust". Drawing on thinkers like Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, he defines the hermeneutics of suspicion as the critical unmasking of hidden mechanisms of domination and ideology in texts (Ricoeur, 1970). In contrast, the hermeneutics of trust, influenced by phenomenological and theological traditions, emphasizes the possibility of meaning-recovery and authentic engagement with texts.

Ricoeur argues that interpretation cannot remain at the level of skepticism but must advance toward the reconstruction of meaning, enabling texts to disclose possible worlds (Ricoeur, 1984). He terms this process the "long detour of interpretation"-beginning with critique and analysis, and culminating in existential understanding.

The Dual Hermeneutic Approach in Sacred Text Interpretation

This dual approach proves particularly significant in the interpretation of sacred texts, where Ricoeur simultaneously emphasizes textual critique and the potential for existential

engagement with them (Ricoeur, 1980). As David Tracy observes, this perspective constitutes what may be termed a "critical-hermeneutical" approach (Tracy, 1981).

Ultimately, Ricoeur maintains that suspicion and trust exist not in opposition but in mutual complementarity, with complete interpretation requiring a dialectical movement from skepticism to meaning-recovery (Ricoeur, 1986).

Amina Wadud's Exegetical Perspectives

1. Linguistic Critique of Amina Wadud's View on Q. 2:228 in Light of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of Trust and Suspicion Qur'an 2:228 (Sūrat al-Baqarah):

"Divorced women shall observe a waiting period of three menstrual cycles. It is impermissible for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs if they truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. During this period, their husbands have a greater right to restore the marriage if they seek reconciliation. Women possess rights equivalent to their obligations, by customary fairness, but men hold a degree above them. And Allah is Almighty, All-Wise".

A) Classical Exegetical Views

1. General Exegesis of the Verse: Classical commentators have consistently interpreted this verse within the juridical-ethical framework of revocable divorce (*ṭalāq raj'ī*) and Islamic familial norms.

Al-Ṭabarī (2000, Vol. 4, p. 367) identifies four core legal injunctions in this verse:

- a) The ruling on the prescribed waiting period (*iddah*).
- b) The prohibition against hiding pregnancy.
- c) The husband's prerogative to revoke divorce (*ḥaqq al-rij'ah*).
- d) The delineation of spousal rights and duties (*ḥuqūq wa wājibāt mutabādalāh*).
 - Ibn Kathīr (1999, vol. 1, p. 668) regards this verse as foundational to Islamic family law (*fiqh al-usrah*), establishing principles for marital relations.
 - Al-Qurṭubī (1964, vol. 3, p. 123) underscores its emphasis on a *balanced paradigm (minhāj mu'tadil)* of rights and responsibilities within marriage.

2. Interpretation of the Phrase "And for them

[women] is the equivalent of what they owe, by reasonable norms"

a) Classical exegetes interpret this phrase within the framework of mutual spousal rights and obligations. Al-Ṭabarī (2000) notes in his commentary that women hold rights equivalent to those of their husbands, including the right to financial support (*nafaqah*), clothing, shelter, and proper companionship (2000, vol. 4, p. 370).

b) Al-Zamakhsharī (1987, vol. 1, p. 264) asserts that women, like men, are entitled to kind treatment and dignified conduct. Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (2000, vol. 6, p. 78) also grounds this reciprocal exchange of rights in principles of justice and equity, emphasizing that each spouse should treat the other as they would wish to be treated.

c) However, classical exegetes do not regard this equivalence as absolute; rather, they interpret it within defined gender roles that align with the innate and divinely ordained nature (*fiṭrah*) of human beings.

3. Interpretation of the phrase "But men have a degree over them"

Traditional exegetes have interpreted this "degree" in several ways:

a) Degree of guardianship and responsibility

Ibn 'Ashūr (1984, vol. 2, p. 423) states that this rank refers to the man's responsibility in managing household affairs and providing sustenance, interpreting it as a position of leadership and guardianship in familial matters. Similarly, Al-Qurṭubī (1964, vol. 3, p. 124) emphasizes this point, considering this status to encompass the obligation of dowry (*mahr*), financial maintenance (*nafaqah*), and attending to the family's welfare.

b) Degree of virtue and excellence

Al-Zamakhsharī (1987, vol. 1, p. 264) argues that men possess a superior degree over women due to their greater rationality, judgment, and resolve. Ibn Kathīr (1999, vol. 1, p. 69) also attributes this superiority to men's inherent and creational traits, asserting that men are intrinsically superior to women, which is why prophethood was exclusively granted to men.

c) Degree in the right of revocation (in divorce)

Al-Ṭabarī (2000, vol. 4, p. 371) considers one manifestation of this degree to be the man's

right to revoke divorce (raj'ah). This interpretation aligns with the verse's context, which pertains to divorce rulings.

4. Connection with other Quranic verses

Classical exegetes relate this verse to Q. 4:34 ("Men are the protectors and maintainers of women"). Al-Ṭabarī (2000, vol. 8, p. 299) maintains that both verses emphasize a hierarchical family structure based on divine wisdom and the natural order of creation.

5. The general perspective of classical exegesis

Classical exegetes hold that Q. 2:228 establishes a balanced system of rights and duties in which equality in human dignity coexists with distinctions in roles and responsibilities. This system is founded on divine wisdom, societal interests, and the innate characteristics of each gender.

Amina Wadud's Perspective in Critiquing Classical Exegesis

1. The Theoretical Background and Framework of Wadud's Approach

Amina Wadud, in her works *Qur'an and Woman* (1999) and *Inside the Gender Jihad* (2006), presents a feminist approach to Qur'anic exegesis. She argues that the Qur'an carries an egalitarian message that has been distorted by patriarchal interpretations.

2. Wadud's Methodological Critiques

a) Critique of the Patriarchal Lens:

Wadud (1999, p. 67) contends that classical exegetes have imposed a "patriarchal lens" onto the Qur'anic text. She asserts that traditional interpretations of the Qur'an have superimposed a hierarchical gender model onto the scripture, one that is inconsistent with its original message of equality. From her perspective, these exegetes have filtered the Qur'anic text through the cultural presuppositions of their era: "Classical interpretations of the Qur'an have imposed a hierarchical gender model onto the text that contradicts its core message of equality."

b) Critique of Isolating Verses from the Qur'an's Holistic Context:

Wadud (2006, p. 45) emphasizes the necessity of a holistic reading of the Qur'an: "Qur'anic verses cannot be interpreted in isolation;

rather, they must be understood within the framework of the Qur'an's comprehensive discourse on human equality and justice." She argues that classical exegesis, by isolating verses from the broader Qur'anic context, has distorted its fundamental message.

3. Wadud's Alternative Interpretation of "Degree" (Darajah)

a) Rejection of Fixed Superiority

Contrary to classical exegesis, Wadud (2006, p. 72) interprets "degree" not as a sign of inherent superiority but as a temporary and mutable functional responsibility: "The 'degree' mentioned in the verse refers to a functional responsibility, not ontological superiority." She states: "The 'degree' in this verse pertains to a functional role rather than existential supremacy."

b) Contextual Interpretation

Wadud (1999, p. 71) argues that the "degree" mentioned in the verse must be understood in light of the socio-economic conditions of seventh-century Arabia: "The contextual nature of this 'degree' indicates that it pertains to the social and economic realities of seventh-century Arabia, not an eternal decree." She adds: "The context-bound nature of this 'degree' demonstrates that it was addressing the specific socio-economic realities of seventh-century Arabia."

4. Wadud's Linguistic Arguments

a) Analysis of "mithl": Wadud (2006, p. 69) places particular emphasis on the word *mithl* (مِثْل), considering it evidence of fundamental equality in rights. Drawing on the works of contemporary Arab linguists such as Mohammed Shahrour (1990) and Taha Jabir Al-Alwani (2001), she demonstrates that this term denotes complete equality. She argues: "The use of the word 'mithl' clearly indicates absolute equality in rights and responsibilities between spouses, not merely similarity within a hierarchical framework."

b) Critique of Hierarchical Interpretation: Wadud asserts that if the Qur'an had intended to establish a hierarchical system, it would have employed more explicit terminology. She writes: "Had the Qur'an sought to institute a permanent hierarchy, it would have used more direct language rather than the subtle term 'darajah' (degree) in a context grounded in equality."

5. Wadud's Holistic Interpretation

Wadud (1999, p. 68) emphasizes the necessity of a holistic reading of the Qur'an, arguing that verse 228 of *Surah Al-Baqarah* must be understood in light of the Qur'an's overarching message on human equality: *"This verse should be interpreted within the broader Qur'anic framework of human equality and justice. The Qur'an's emphasis on the equal spiritual worth of women and men is incompatible with interpretations that seek to establish a permanent gender hierarchy."*

She asserts that verses such as *"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while being a believer..."* (Q. 16:97) and *"Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women..."* (Q. 33:35) affirm the fundamental equality of men and women. Consequently, a hierarchical interpretation of *Surah Al-Baqarah* 228 contradicts these verses.

6. Wadud's Hermeneutical Approach

Wadud employs a distinct hermeneutical approach consisting of three stages:

- a) **"Contextual Interpretation"**: Considering the historical circumstances of revelation.
- b) **"Linguistic Analysis"**: A meticulous examination of vocabulary and linguistic structures.
- c) **"Holistic Interpretation"**: Taking into account the Quran's overarching message on justice and equality

A Linguistic Critique of Amina Wadud's Perspective in Light of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

Paul Ricoeur (1970), in his hermeneutical theory, proposes two distinct approaches to engaging with texts: first, the *hermeneutics of trust*, which is based on trusting the text and striving to understand the author's intent; and second, the *hermeneutics of suspicion*, which examines the text critically to uncover hidden ideologies and presuppositions.

Applying this framework to Amina Wadud's interpretations, it can be argued that her approach largely falls within the scope of the hermeneutics of suspicion. Wadud operates on the premise that traditional Qur'anic exegeses are influenced by a "patriarchal bias" and seek

to offer alternative meanings (Wadud, 2006, p. 88).

While this approach is valuable in facilitating a critical rereading of religious texts, its excessive focus on ideological critique deters Wadud from conducting a precise analysis of the linguistic implications of classical texts. Hidayatullah (2014, p. 134) similarly critiques Wadud's approach, stating: *"Despite its innovations, Wadud's hermeneutics often prioritizes ideological critique over linguistic precision, leading to interpretations that may lack sufficient linguistic grounding."*

Furthermore, as an exegete, unlike classical commentators such as Al-Ṭabarī (2000), who grounded their interpretations in lexical analysis and meticulous attention to terminology, Wadud directly engages in feminist readings while neglecting linguistic details. Mattson (2008, p. 156) supports this critique, noting: *"Traditional exegetes, despite their limitations, demonstrate greater attention to linguistic and semantic precision."*

In conclusion, while Wadud's hermeneutical approach strives to open new horizons in Qur'anic interpretation, its prioritization of ideological perspectives over rigorous linguistic analysis undermines its ability to provide a precise and comprehensive exegesis.

Specific Linguistic Critiques

a) Analysis of the Term "Daraja" (Degree/Rank)

In classical lexical sources such as *Lisān al-'Arab* by Ibn Manẓūr (1994, vol. 3, p. 210), the term *"daraja"* carries not only the meaning of rank or level but also denotes "virtue" (*faḍl*). Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (1992, p. 167), while discussing the semantic range of *"daraja"*, interprets it as an elevated rank and traces its etymological origin to the verb *"daraja"* (to walk). He further explains that the term has been metaphorically extended to denote spiritual ranks. In contrast, Wadud's interpretation overlooks this semantic diversity and lexical history, focusing solely on the concept of "functional responsibility".

b) Ignoring the Context

In verse 228, which pertains to the rulings on divorce, Qurṭubī (1964, vol. 3, p. 125) notes that

the term "degree" (darajah) in this specific context refers to the man's right of reinstatement (raj'ah). He explains that this privilege encompasses the man's exclusive right to initiate divorce and the woman's lack of such a right, as well as the man's ability to revoke the divorce and the woman's inability to do so. However, Wadud disregards this particular context and offers a more generalized interpretation, which likely deviates from the verse's original intent.

Final Critical Analysis

A) Strengths of Wadud's Approach

a) **Emphasis on Gender Justice:** Wadud raises a significant discussion on justice and equality in Islam.

b) **Holistic Interpretation:** Her insistence on considering the Quran's overarching message is valuable.

c) **Reevaluation of Traditional Exegesis:** She introduces important arguments about the influence of cultural context on interpretation.

B) Weaknesses and Criticisms

a) **Deficiency in Linguistic Analysis:** Neglect of classical lexical connotations and insufficient analysis of etymological roots.

b) **Disregard for Context:** Inadequate attention to the specific context of the verses.

c) **Ideological Assumptions:** The influence of a feminist approach on interpretation, which may distance the analysis from the intended meaning of the text.

d) **Overgeneralization:** Extending specific conclusions to the entire Islamic family system.

A comparison of classical and Wadud's perspectives reveals that both approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Although classical exegesis demonstrates linguistic precision, it may have been influenced by the cultural frameworks of its time. Conversely, while Wadud's interpretation emphasizes justice, it exhibits certain deficiencies in linguistic analysis. A balanced approach necessitates integrating the linguistic rigor of classical exegesis with an awareness of gender justice concerns.

A Linguistic Critique of Amina Wadud's Perspective on Verse 1 of Surah an-Nisā' in Light of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of Trust and Suspicion

The opening verse of Surah an-Nisā' (4:1), which begins with "*O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul...*", is regarded as one of the most pivotal Qur'anic verses concerning human creation and gender relations. Throughout the history of Islamic exegesis, this verse has been subject to diverse interpretations, and in contemporary discourse, it has become a point of contention between traditional and reformist commentators.

A) Classical Qur'anic-Exegetical Perspective

1. In his exegesis *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, al-Ṭabarī interprets the phrase "*min nafsin wāḥidah*" (from a single soul) as referring to Adam (peace be upon him), explaining that the "single soul" denotes Adam, from whom God created all of humanity. Furthermore, based on this verse, he maintains that Eve was also created from Adam's side. (Al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 8, p. 3)

2. In his exegesis, Al-Qurṭubī (d. 671 AH) follows the same approach, noting that Adam (peace be upon him) was created as a single soul (nafs wāḥida), and his wife, Eve, was created from his left rib without him feeling any pain (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964, vol. 5, p. 1). This interpretation is based on Isra'iliyyat (Israelite narratives) and Prophetic hadiths.

3. Ibn Kathīr (d. 774 AH) also affirms this approach, referencing the relevant verse and stating that the Almighty God, in reminding humanity of His favor, alludes to their creation from a single soul—namely, Adam (peace be upon him) (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, vol. 2, p. 206). He further clarifies that this verse signifies the unity and singular origin of the human race through Adam.

4. Ibn 'Āshūr (1973), in his commentary on the term "*nafs wāḥida*" (single soul) in the verse, explains that it refers to Adam (peace be upon him), a view that is unanimously agreed upon by exegetes. He notes that the use of the term "*nafs wāḥida*" rather than "*rajul wāḥid*" (a single man) is deliberate, as this phrasing signifies the shared origin and common root of the human species (Ibn 'Āshūr, 1984, vol. 4, p.

211).

Classical exegetes unanimously affirm that:

- "Al-nafs al-wāhida" refers to Adam.
- Eve was created from Adam's rib.
- The verse emphasizes the unity of humanity's origin and the divine favor bestowed upon them.
- The issue of gender equality is not addressed in this verse.

B) Amina Wadud's Hermeneutical Perspective in Critiquing the Classical View

1. **Critique of the Traditional Linguistic Approach:** In her book *Qur'an and Woman* (1999), Amina Wadud argues that the traditional interpretation of the phrase "*min nafs'in wāhidatin*" (from a single soul) is shaped by androcentric presuppositions. She contends that the Qur'anic narrative of human creation differs from that of the Bible. The Arabic term "*nafs*" is grammatically feminine and singular, and it does not specifically refer to Adam as a male individual. Instead, the Qur'an employs this term to denote the "self" or "soul" without any inherent gender connotation (Wadud, 1999, p. 35). Wadud maintains that the word "*nafs*" in Arabic is feminine and refers to an ungendered essence or spirit rather than exclusively to Adam as a male figure.

2. **Critique of the Influence of Isra'iliyyat Narratives:** Wadud (2006), in her book *Inside the Gender Jihad*, argues that traditional exegesis has been influenced by Isra'iliyyat (Judeo-Christian narratives):

"Classical interpretation of this verse has been shaped by Judeo-Christian traditions, particularly the story of Eve's creation from Adam's rib. This interpretation contradicts the Quran's emphasis on the simultaneous and equal creation of men and women" (Wadud, 2006, p. 89).

3. **Emphasis on the Equality of Creation:** Wadud argues that the Qur'an, rather than presenting a sequential creation narrative (Adam first, then Eve), emphasizes the simultaneous and equal creation of men and women. She writes: "*The Qur'an presents an account of creation that underscores the primordial nature of both women and men as part of the divine creative process. The phrase 'min nafs'in wāhidatin' (from a single soul) indicates a shared essence from which both genders emerge simultaneously.*" (Wadud,

1999, 37).

4. **Criticism of the Distortion of the True Meaning:** Wadud argues that male interpreters, due to socio-cultural presuppositions, have distorted the true meaning of the verse: male exegetes have imposed their own preconceptions and gender biases onto the Qur'anic text—a practice that has led to interpretations justifying male superiority rather than reflecting the egalitarian perspective of the Qur'an. (Wadud, 2006, p. 91)

5. **The New Hermeneutical Approach:** Wadud proposes the adoption of a new hermeneutical approach that:

- a) Reads the Qur'anic text **free from the influence of androcentric exegetical traditions**,
- b) Takes into account the **socio-historical context** of the revelation of the verses,
- c) Bases its interpretation on the **Qur'an's overarching ethical principles** (justice, equality, and human dignity).

Linguistic Critique: Wadud (1999, p. 35) argues that the phrase "*min nafs'in wāhidatin*" (from a single soul) denotes the inherent equality of men and women. However, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn 'Āshūr in *al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr* (1984, vol. 4, p. 211) contends that, within the exegetical tradition, this phrase refers to the creation of Eve from Adam rather than legal equality. This interpretation aligns with Richard Bell's analysis in his work *Introduction to the Qur'ān*, which examines the etymology of Qur'anic vocabulary (Bell, 1953, p. 147).

Moreover, Arabic linguistics scholars such as Walid Munir al-Khuli in his work *Mu'jam al-Alfāz al-Qur'āniyyah* (2003), have demonstrated that the term *nafs* (نَفْس) appears 295 times in the Qur'an and is predominantly used to denote a "person" or "individual" rather than an abstract "soul" (Al-Khuli, 2003, vol. 2, p. 1247).

Hermeneutical Critique: Wadud's interpretation of this verse faces a challenge articulated by Ricoeur in his work *The Conflict of Interpretations*: the tension between a "hermeneutics of trust" toward the text and a "hermeneutics of suspicion" toward exegetical tradition (Ricoeur, 1970, p. 27).

Wadud (2006, p. 89) claims that male exegetes have distorted the verse's true meaning, yet she falls into the very error

Ricoeur identifies as "imposing modern presuppositions onto ancient texts" (Ricoeur, 1986, p. 132).

In *From Text to Action*, Paul Ricoeur argues that sound hermeneutics must strike a balance between textual fidelity and tradition critique: "*The hermeneutic task is neither the mere reproduction of original meaning nor the imposition of contemporary readings, but rather the facilitation of a 'fusion of horizons.'*" (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 87)

Historical critique: Wadud's (1999, p. 37) claim regarding the universality of an egalitarian interpretation of this verse conflicts with the historical research of Leila Ahmed in her book *Women and Gender in Islam* (1992), which demonstrates that the concept of gender equality is a product of modern discourse (Ahmed, 1992, p. 144). Furthermore, classical exegetes such as Al-Ṭabarī in *Jamī 'al-Bayān* (2000) interpreted this verse within the framework of creation theology rather than gender rights.

Wael Hallaq, in his book *A History of Islamic Legal Theories* (1997), demonstrates that modern human rights concepts and gender equality are rooted in Western intellectual traditions, making their direct application to classical Islamic texts problematic (Hallaq, 1997, p. 89).

Methodological Critique: Wadud's approach is also methodologically problematic. While employing modern hermeneutical methods, she overlooks their foundational principles. Hans-Georg Gadamer, in *Truth and Method* (1975), emphasizes that understanding historical texts requires an awareness of their historical horizon: "*Understanding does not mean discarding one's intellectual horizon but rather consciously integrating it with the horizon of the text*" (Gadamer, 1975, p. 307)

Amina Wadud's Interpretation of Q. 4:1: A Critical Assessment

Despite its innovative aspects, Amina Wadud's exegesis of Q. 4:1 is subject to critique on four principal grounds:

a) **Historical and Linguistic Deficiencies:** The interpretation lacks sufficient historical precision and robust linguistic evidence.

b) **Hermeneutical Inconsistencies:** It exhibits internal contradictions in its application of Ricoeurian hermeneutics.

c) **Conflict with Islamic Exegetical**

Tradition: The reading is incongruent with classical Islamic interpretive tradition and established historical research.

d) **Misapplication of Modern Hermeneutics:** It fails to adhere rigorously to the foundational principles of modern hermeneutical theory.

These critiques collectively demonstrate that Wadud's approach is more ideologically driven than academically rigorous. A credible reinterpretation of the text must strike a balance between respect for tradition and modern critical engagement.

Linguistic Critique of Amina Wadud's Perspective on Verse 34 of Surah An-Nisa in Light of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of Trust and Suspicion

Verse 34 of Surah An-Nisa, with the phrase "*And those [women] from whom you fear defiance (nushūz)...*", is considered one of the most debated verses of the Holy Quran concerning marital relations. Over the centuries, this verse has been subject to diverse interpretations, and in the contemporary era, it has faced serious critiques from Muslim scholars such as Amina Wadud.

Part One: Classical Exegetical Perspectives

A) The Traditional Interpretation of "Qawwām"

Classical exegetes such as Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH) in *Jāmi' al-Bayān* have interpreted the term "*qawwāmūn*" as denoting men's responsibility and guardianship over women. In his exegesis, Al-Ṭabarī argues, based on the relevant verse, that men are entrusted with the duty of overseeing and guiding women in matters such as upbringing and restricting their movement outside the home (Al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 8, p. 299).

This perspective is rooted in a conceptual framework elaborated in other classical commentaries, including Ibn Kathīr's *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, where it is explained under the notion of "*darajat al-wilāya*" (the degree of men's guardianship over women) (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, vol. 1, p. 492).

B) The Classical Phased Interpretation of "Nushūz" and Discipline

The classical perspective defines the process of addressing a wife's *nushūz* (defiance/disobedience) in three

stages:

1. **The Admonition Stage:** Al-Qurṭubī, in *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (1964, vol. 5, p. 162), describes this stage as "*al-wa'z bi-l-qawl al-layyin*"—admonishing with gentle speech.

2. **The Desertion Stage:** Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, in *Al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ* (2008, vol. 3, p. 277), interprets "*hajr in the bed*" as "*tark al-muḍāja'a*"—abstaining from marital intimacy.

3. **The Beating Stage:** Al-Suyūṭī, in *Al-Durr al-Manthūr* (1983, vol. 2, p. 150), cites a prophetic ḥadīth: "*wa-ḍribūhunna ḍarban ḡhayra mubarrīḥ*"—"and strike them lightly without severity", indicating the permissibility of non-injurious physical discipline.

C) Jurisprudential and Narrational Foundations

Allamah al-Hilli in *Tadhkirat al-Fuqahā* (1991, vol. 2, p. 574) and Shaykh al-Tūsī in *Al-Mabsūt* (1992, vol. 4, p. 322) have established this verse as the basis for disciplinary rulings in family jurisprudence. Numerous narrations from the Ahl al-Bayt (AS) in Shia sources further corroborate this interpretation, including in *Wasā'il al-Shī'a* by Allamah al-Hurr al-Amili (1993, vol. 21, p. 450).

Wadud's Hermeneutical-Historical Approach

In her works *Qur'an and Woman* (1999) and *Inside the Gender Jihad* (2006), Amina Wadud presents a revolutionary approach to the interpretation of this verse. She focuses on three key principles:

1. Linguistic Analysis of Key Terms

Wadud argues that the term "*qawwāmūn*" should not be interpreted as implying dominance or superiority but rather as signifying "mutual protection and support". She maintains that this word is derived from the root "*qām*", which conveys the meanings of "upholding" and "sustaining", rather than "control". Additionally, Wadud re-examines the verb "*aḍrib*" and contends that it carries multiple meanings in the Qur'an, including "separation" and "leaving". She cites verse 17 of *Surah al-Kahf*, where the same verb is used to mean "turning away" (Wadud, 1999, p. 70; Wadud, 2006, p. 76).

2. Socio-Historical Contextual Analysis

Wadud argues that this verse was revealed in

response to the specific socio-historical conditions of seventh-century Arabian society. She maintains that, at the time, women were economically and socially dependent on male guardianship. However, this circumstance should not be generalized as a universal or timeless mandate (Wadud, 2006, p. 201).

3. Intra-Quranic Coherence Approach

Wadud examines this verse alongside other Qur'anic passages, such as *Surah al-Baqarah* (2:228) – "*And women shall have rights similar to those against them, according to what is equitable*" – concluding that the overarching spirit of the Qur'an is fundamentally rooted in gender justice (Wadud, 1999, p. 83).

Wadud's Critique of the Patriarchal Approach

Wadud argues that classical exegetes, influenced by the patriarchal norms of their historical context, have interpreted Qur'anic verses in a manner that undermines women's status. On this matter, she explicitly states: "*Despite their well-intentioned motives, classical commentators interpreted the Qur'an through the lens of their patriarchal worldview; consequently, they failed to apprehend its emancipatory and humanistic message.*" (Wadud, 2006, p. 185).

Suggestions for an Alternative Interpretation

Wadud advocates for a revised understanding of *An-Nisa'* 4:34, proposing the following hermeneutical framework:

a) "**Qawwāmūn**" should be interpreted as denoting men's *financial responsibility* within specific historical circumstances, rather than establishing universal male authority.

b) The tripartite procedure (outlined in the verse) constitutes a *conflict resolution mechanism*, not a sanction for disciplinary punishment.

c) "**Ḍarb**" signifies *temporary separation* (between spouses), not physical violence.

Critique of Amina Wadud's Perspective

A) Linguistic Critique: Contemporary Arab scholars such as al-Sabuni in *Safwat al-Tafasir* (1997, vol. 5, p. 72) argue that Wadud's interpretation of "*qawwāmūn*" is inconsistent

with the term's historical usage in classical Arabic literature. Similarly, Tahir ibn *Āshūr* in *al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir* (1984, vol. 5, p. 72) emphasizes that the phrase "*bimā faḍḍala Allah*" denotes natural causation rather than a social condition.

B) Hermeneutical Critique

Drawing upon Paul Ricoeur's theoretical framework in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences* (1981, p. 112), scholars have leveled significant critiques against Wadud's interpretive approach. Ricoeur emphasizes the necessity of maintaining equilibrium between a "hermeneutics of trust" and a "hermeneutics of suspicion". Critics contend that Wadud disproportionately favors "ideological suspicion" in her exegesis.

Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, in *Al-Nass, Al-Sulta, Al-Haqiqa* (Abu Zayd, 1995, p. 89), cautions that feminist presuppositions risk "imposing meaning upon the text". This perspective aligns with Mohammed Arkoun's arguments in *Al-Fikr al-Usuli wa Istihalat al-Ta'sil* (Arkoun, 1999, p. 145), who similarly problematizes ideologically-driven readings.

C) Critique from the Perspective of Exegetical Tradition:

Contemporary Islamic scholars such as Wahba al-Zuhayli in *Al-Tafsir al-Munir* (2003) and Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi in *Al-Tafsir al-Wasit* (1998) emphasize that Wadud's interpretation conflicts with the broad exegetical consensus (*ijmā'*) of Muslim scholars.

A comparative analysis of the classical perspective and Amina Wadud's critique reveals that both approaches possess distinct strengths and limitations. The classical view is grounded in robust linguistic foundations and exegetical tradition, yet may fail to address contemporary needs. On the other hand, while Wadud's approach introduces significant innovations, it occasionally diverges from linguistic precision and coherence with the interpretive tradition.

The optimal solution likely lies in synthesizing the strongest elements of both approaches to develop a balanced methodology—one that remains faithful to the Qur'anic text's authenticity while simultaneously addressing modern exigencies.

Linguistic Critique of Amina Wadud's Perspective on An-Nisa' 34 in Light of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of Trust and Suspicion

The Qur'anic verse from Surah al-Ahzab (33:35) states:

"Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the devout men and devout women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their chastity and the women who guard [theirs], and the men who remember Allah often and the women who remember [Him] - Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward."

This comprehensive verse, which explicitly establishes spiritual equality between genders across all dimensions of faith, serves as a crucial intertextual reference for evaluating Wadud's linguistic analysis of An-Nisa' 4:34.

A) The Classical Exegetical Perspective

1. Al-Ṭabarī, in *Jami 'al-Bayan fi Ta'wil al-Qur'an*, interprets this verse within the framework of emphasizing otherworldly rewards for believers. He argues that the use of both masculine and feminine forms is in response to a question raised by Muslim women concerning why the Qur'an predominantly addresses men (Al-Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 20, p. 234). According to Al-Ṭabarī, this verse signifies equality in eschatological reward but does not imply any alteration in traditional social and familial roles.

2. Al-Qurṭubī, in *Al-Jami 'li-Ahkam al-Qur'an*, emphasizes that the verse indicates "equality in reward" rather than "equality in obligations and duties". He maintains that Islam has assigned specific rights and responsibilities to each gender by their inherent nature and disposition (Al-Qurṭubī, 1964, vol. 14, p. 178). Al-Qurṭubī justifies this distinction based on other Qur'anic verses, such as "*Men are the protectors and maintainers of women*" (Q. 4:34).

3. Ibn Kathīr, in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim*, emphasizes the motivational aspect of the verse. In his view, by explicitly mentioning women alongside men, God encourages them to adhere to Islamic injunctions (Ibn Kathīr, 1999, vol. 6, p. 402). However, like his predecessors, Ibn Kathīr confines this equality to acts of worship and eschatological reward, maintaining that gender-based distinctions in social roles are divinely ordained by divine wisdom.

4. Al-Rāzī, in *Mafatih al-Ghayb*, approaches this verse with a more philosophical

perspective. He argues that the repetition of both masculine and feminine grammatical forms indicates that "human perfection" is not exclusive to one gender (Al-Rāzī, 2000, vol. 25, p. 207). Nevertheless, Al-Rāzī also restricts this equality to the spiritual domain, asserting that the physiological and psychological differences between men and women justify the division of social roles.

5. **Summary of the Classical Perspective:** Classical exegetes generally agree on the following key points:

- The verse emphasizes equality in otherworldly reward.
- This equality does not imply uniformity in social roles.
- Gender-based distinctions in social duties are rooted in divine wisdom.
- Women, like men, possess the capacity for spiritual perfection in worship and piety.

B) Amina Wadud's Critique of the Classical Perspective

1. **Methodological Critique:** In *Qur'an and Woman*, Amina Wadud argues that classical exegetes were influenced by "patriarchal presuppositions" (Wadud, 1999, p. 71). She contends that while these scholars acknowledged spiritual equality, they evaded accepting its social implications.

Wadud asserts that the classical approach relies on "hermeneutical selectivity"—that is, verses emphasizing equality are restricted to the otherworldly realm, whereas those seemingly implying difference are interpreted as permanent social norms (Wadud, 2006, p. 115).

2. **Critique of Theoretical Foundations:** In her work *Inside the Gender Jihad* (2006), Wadud emphasizes that classical exegetes have committed the "fallacy of naturalistic reasoning". They have hastily translated biological differences into social distinctions without considering the possibility of change and evolution.

From Wadud's perspective, this approach contradicts a fundamental Qur'anic principle—**human vicegerency (khalāfah)**. She argues that if both men and women are God's *khalīfah* (vicegerents) on earth, then they must possess **equal capacities** to fulfill this responsibility (Wadud, 1999, p. 76).

3. **Linguistic Critique:** Wadud, drawing upon contemporary linguistic research—including the works of Mohammed Arkoun (1999)—emphasizes that the parallel structure of verse 35 in Surah al-Ahzab itself testifies to

the Qur'an's egalitarian approach. She argues that classical exegetes, due to the limitations of the linguistic tools available in their era, failed to grasp this crucial dimension of the verse (Wadud, 2006, p. 118).

4. **Contextual and Social Analysis:** Amina Wadud describes this verse as the "Qur'anic manifesto of gender equality", revealed in a society where women were considered second-class citizens.

She argues that the Qur'an, through this revolutionary declaration, "recognized women's full religious and social rights" (Wadud, 2006, p. 121).

Wadud contends that classical exegetes effectively neutralized the Qur'an's reformist message by reducing this Qur'anic revolution to mere "otherworldly reward".

5. **Theological Analysis:** Wadud interprets this verse within the framework of her tawhidic (monotheistic) theory, which posits that all human beings possess equal worth before God. She emphasizes that, from the Qur'anic perspective, piety and righteous deeds—not gender—constitute the criteria for valuation in Islam (Wadud, 1999, p. 88).

Wadud's tawhidic approach stands in direct contrast to classical interpretations that tend to emphasize "natural differences" and "role differentiation".

C) Critical Analysis of Amina Wadud's Perspective

1. **Linguistic and Methodological Critique:** Although Wadud's analysis of the parallel structure of the verse is noteworthy, it faces certain challenges. The repetition of masculine and feminine forms indicates the presence of women in religious spheres, but by itself, it does not signify "structural equality" in rights and social roles. As scholars of Arabic linguistics have pointed out, the language of the Qur'an at times adheres to the linguistic conventions of the Revelation era, even if it seeks to transform their underlying meaning (El-Awa, 2011, p. 56).

2. **Critique of Contextual Basis:** The verse is intended to express otherworldly rewards for righteous deeds, not to legislate social rights. Mohammad Shahrour, in *The Quran, Ethics, and Critical Reason* (2009), emphasizes that eschatological verses should not be simplistically extended to the domain of worldly laws.

3. **Hermeneutical Critique:** Based on Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of trust and suspicion,

Wadud, while claiming fidelity to the Quran (hermeneutics of trust), in practice employs a "hermeneutics of suspicion", as her underlying assumption is that patriarchal exegetical traditions have distorted the Quran's true meaning (Aslan, 2005, p. 89).

Ricoeur, in his work *From Text to Action* (1991), warns that absolute suspicion toward a text can lead to "hermeneutical violence"—that is, interpretations that serve the interpreter's ideology more than they remain faithful to the text (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 156).

As Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd has also noted, some feminist readings impose their own intended meanings rather than uncovering the meaning of the text (Abu Zayd, 1995, p. 201).

A comparative analysis of verse 35 of Surah al-Ahzab reveals that both classical and modern approaches have their strengths and weaknesses. The classical perspective, with its emphasis on spiritual equality while preserving role-based distinctions, favors stability and continuity. In contrast, Wadud's approach, with its focus on social justice and structural equality, prioritizes change and reform.

What remains certain is that this verse, as one of the Quran's clearest statements on the equal human worth of men and women, continues to offer possibilities for reflection and re-examination. This necessitates further study and a balanced approach—one that remains faithful to the authenticity of the text while also addressing contemporary needs.

A Linguistic Critique of Amina Wadud's Perspective on Verse 34 of Surah An-Nisa' in Light of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of Trust and Suspicion

"And the believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong..." (Q. 24:71)

Classical Exegetical Views

1. **Ibn Jarir al-Ṭabarī**, in *Jami 'al-Bayan 'an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an* (2000, vol. 10, p. 234), interprets this verse as follows:

a) The term "*awliya*" (أُولِيَاءُ) denotes mutual support and assistance, meaning that believing men and women aid one another.

b) However, Al-Ṭabarī maintains that this guardianship (*wilayah*) operates within the bounds of Islamic legal rulings and predefined gender roles.

2. **Ibn Kathīr**, in *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azim* (1999, vol. 4, p. 156), emphasizes:

a) The verse signifies the cooperation of believers in enjoining good and forbidding evil.

b) Yet, this cooperation remains structured by Islamic legal principles and the division of roles between men and women.

c) He argues that women primarily hold authority in private and domestic spheres.

Key Hermeneutical Considerations

- The classical exegetes frame gender relations within a *complementarian* (rather than egalitarian) paradigm, where spiritual equality coexists with differentiated social roles.

- Their interpretations align with a hermeneutics of trust toward traditional authority, whereas Wadud's approach—questioning patriarchal readings—reflects a hermeneutics of suspicion.

Al-Qurṭubī in *Al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an* (1964, vol. 8, p. 281) states that the guardianship (*wilāya*) mentioned in this verse encompasses affection, support, and cooperation. However, he clarifies that such cooperation remains within the boundaries of Islamic legal prescriptions. He explicitly notes that this verse does not negate the distinct roles of men and women, but rather emphasizes cooperation within the framework of these divinely ordained roles.

Fakhr al-Din al-Rāzī in *Mafatih al-Ghayb* (2000, vol. 16, p. 89) maintains that this verse indicates the unity and solidarity of believers. However, he argues that this unity manifests within the structure of the Islamic social order, where each gender has specific roles. Al-Rāzī emphasizes that equality in faith does not imply identical social responsibilities.

Summary of the Classical Perspective: Classical commentators emphasize the following points:

a) Mutual guardianship within the framework of Islamic legal rulings and defined social roles

b) Distinct social roles for men and women

c) Restrictions on women's public activities to specific domains

d) The primacy of motherhood and spousal roles for women

e) Interpretation of the verse in light of other Quranic verses, such as Surah An-Nisa (4:34)

Amina Wadud's Perspective in Critique of Classical Interpretation

Wadud's Fundamental Critique: Amina Wadud interprets this verse—which refers to the mutual guardianship and supportive relationship between believing men and women—as one of the strongest Quranic affirmations of women's active participation in social and religious affairs. She argues that this verse establishes the foundation for the equal partnership of men and women in building an Islamic society (Wadud, 1999).

Conceptual Analysis of the Verse from Wadud's Perspective:

In her work *Qur'an and Woman*, Wadud asserts that verse 71 of Surah At-Tawbah (9:71) signifies not only spiritual brotherhood but also "the active alliance of women and men in all religious and social spheres". She emphasizes that the phrase "*ba'dhum awliyā'u ba'd*" (some of them are allies of others) denotes a reciprocal rather than hierarchical relationship (Wadud, 1999).

Critique of Traditional Interpretations:

According to Wadud, this verse stands in contrast to traditional exegeses that confine women to passive roles. Citing Al-Ṭabarī's commentary (Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 10, p. 234), she notes that certain classical exegetes did emphasize women's participation in *al-amr bi-l-ma'rūf wa-l-nahy 'an al-munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil). However, this perspective has historically been overshadowed by patriarchal interpretations (Barlas, 2002).

Wadud argues that many commentators, by privileging other verses (such as Q. 4:34), have undermined the principle of *mutual guardianship (wilāya)* in Q. 9:71. In contrast, she contends that this verse unequivocally establishes the *shared moral responsibility of women and men* (Wadud, 2018).

Furthermore, Wadud draws upon contemporary scholarship, such as Margot Badran's work *Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences*, which demonstrates how modern Islamic movements have utilized this verse to justify women's political and social participation (Badran, 2009).

Wadud's Hermeneutical Approach:

Wadud's interpretation of verse 71 of Surah al-Tawbah constitutes a *feminist rereading* of the Qur'an, asserting that women are not only obligated to fulfill religious duties but also entitled to active participation at all levels of

social and religious life. Grounded in classical sources and modern scholarship, this approach seeks to advance an egalitarian interpretation of religious texts.

Linguistic Critique of Amina Wadud's Perspective in Light of Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics

Linguistic Analysis: From Wadud's perspective, this verse signifies the full participation of women in social and religious affairs. However, from a linguistic standpoint, several points warrant consideration:

1. **The Concept of *Wilāyah* (Guardianship) in the Verse:** As Abdullah Yusuf Ali emphasizes in his work *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an*, the term "*awliyā'*" in this verse primarily denotes a bond of faith and moral responsibility rather than complete equality in social roles (Ali, 2001, p. 456).

2. **Historical Context of Revelation:** Wael Hallaq, in his work *The History of Islamic Legal Theories*, argues that this verse was revealed within a specific historical context and should not be interpreted without considering the circumstances of its revelation (Hallaq, 1997, p. 67). This critique aligns with Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical perspective in *From Text to Action*, which emphasizes the significance of context in interpretation.

a) **Hermeneutical Analysis:** Within the framework of Ricoeur's theory, Wadud's interpretation of this verse oscillates between two approaches:

b) **Hermeneutics of Trust:** Wadud ostensibly adheres to the Qur'anic text, yet in practice employs hermeneutics of suspicion toward the exegetical tradition.

c) **Hermeneutics of Suspicion:** Wadud approaches the text with a presupposition of gender equality, an approach that risks imposing meaning onto the text. As some scholars have cautioned, such interpretations may diverge from the Qur'an's linguistic and historical framework (Ramadan, 2003, p. 74).

Wadud's interpretation of verse 71 of Surah al-Tawbah faces significant challenges from both linguistic and Ricoeurian hermeneutical perspectives. On the one hand, it inadequately considers the historical and linguistic context of the verse, while on the other, it falls into a contradiction between the hermeneutics of trust and suspicion. In contrast, classical exegeses—by emphasizing the occasion of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) and the Quranic context—

offer a more balanced approach to this verse, one that underscores cooperation among believers while also acknowledging distinct social roles.

1.1.1. Summary and Responses to Research Questions

This study has demonstrated that Amina Wadud's interpretations of women-related Quranic verses, despite their emphasis on gender justice, occasionally conflict with the actual meaning of the verses and the exegetical tradition due to their excessive reliance on a critical-ideological approach and neglect of rigorous linguistic and contextual analysis. Her methodology leans too heavily on hermeneutical suspicion, with insufficient trust in the text and tradition. To achieve a balanced interpretation, a more equitable integration of ideological critique and text-based analysis must be established.

1.1.2. Responses to the Research Questions:

a) Inconsistency with Quranic Language and Interpretive Tradition:

Wadud's exegesis, in certain instances, proves incompatible with the linguistic and contextual framework of the Qur'an as well as established exegetical tradition.

b) Ricoeur's Hermeneutics Exposes Methodological Weaknesses: Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical theory reveals critical shortcomings in Wadud's interpretive approach, particularly its imbalance between suspicion and textual fidelity.

c) Strengths and Weaknesses of Wadud's Approach: While her methodology demonstrates strengths, such as its emphasis on gender justice and holistic engagement with the text, it suffers from lexical oversimplification and insufficient attention to contextual analysis.

d) Influence of Feminist Presuppositions: Feminist presuppositions have significantly shaped her interpretations, at times leading to a departure from the Qur'an's apparent meaning.

e) Conflict with Classical Exegesis: Her readings frequently diverge from, and at times contradict, mainstream interpretive tradition (tafsīr).

f) Need for a Revised Methodology: Due to its prioritization of ideology over textual analysis, Wadud's approach requires critical reassessment. Future

interpretations should adopt a more balanced, textually grounded methodology while retaining a commitment to gender justice.

Research suggestions

Based on the critical analysis of Amina Wadud's hermeneutical approach in interpreting gender-related Quranic verses and the identification of strengths and weaknesses in her methodology, the following suggestions are presented for future research:

1. Comparative Hermeneutical Studies

Conducting comparative studies to analyze Wadud's exegetical approach alongside contemporary Shi'a and Sunni interpretive schools to identify points of convergence and divergence in understanding Quranic gender concepts. Such studies could contribute to the development of a more comprehensive framework for discerning methodological differences between feminist and traditional approaches.

2. Re-examination of Historical-Social Context

The necessity of interdisciplinary research to reconstruct the historical, social, and cultural conditions of the Revelation era more accurately, utilizing reliable historical sources and archaeological findings. These studies could provide a firmer basis for evaluating contextual claims in feminist exegesis.

Recent research supports interdisciplinary approaches to feminist exegesis, integrating historical and sociological methods.

3. Development of New Hermeneutical Models

The application of modern hermeneutical frameworks, particularly Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion and trust", in analyzing a broader range of gender-related Quranic verses. This approach may foster a balance between critical analysis and respect for the sacred text.

4. Qualitative Research Based on Lived Experience

Conducting ethnographic and phenomenological studies with Muslim women across diverse Islamic cultures to examine the influence of lived experiences on the reinterpretation of Quranic verses. Such research could enrich situated theology and experience-based interpretations.

5. Comparative Studies on Islamic Feminism

A comparative analysis of different approaches among contemporary Muslim feminists,

focusing on methodological differences and their impact on exegetical outcomes. These studies could contribute to the formulation of a more cohesive theory for feminist Quranic interpretation.

6. Assessment of Socio-Cultural Impacts

Investigating the influence of feminist exegesis on social, legal, and cultural developments in contemporary Muslim societies, employing sociological methods and discourse analysis. This research could enhance the understanding of the relationship between religious interpretation and social change.

The above suggestions are formulated to strengthen the theoretical and methodological foundations of feminist exegetical studies, addressing existing gaps and presenting a more balanced and scholarly approach to understanding gender-related Quranic verses. Implementing these suggestions could advance knowledge in the fields of Quranic hermeneutics and gender studies in Islam.

Future research should compare Wadud's approach with diverse Islamic traditions and employ interdisciplinary methods to enhance hermeneutical balance.

1.1.3. Conclusion

This study, through a linguistic and analytical critique of Amina Wadud's interpretations of gender-related Quranic verses, demonstrates that despite her emphasis on gender justice, her exegetical approach—due to its excessive reliance on feminist presuppositions and insufficient attention to linguistic and contextual analysis—conflicts with both the textual meaning of the Quran and the Islamic exegetical tradition.

Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical framework, with its emphasis on balancing suspicion and trust, offers a more methodologically sound approach to Quranic interpretation. Ultimately, the study underscores the necessity of adopting a balanced and systematic methodology in interpreting gender-related verses, one that remains faithful to both the text and tradition while simultaneously addressing contemporary ethical concerns.

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Holy Quran.

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