

Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud: Patriarchal Dominance and Misinterpretation of Sacred Texts in Islamic Countries

Cengiz KOC

Lecturer

Murat Hudavendigar University
PhD Student-English Language & Literature
Istanbul Aydın University
Istanbul, Turkey

Abstract

This article focuses on Fatima Mernissi's, and Amina Wadud's views of feminism from the Eastern perspective. These two well-known writers and thinkers believe that Muslim women suffer due to the patriarchal system and male leading figures misinterpreting the sacred texts in Muslim countries. Fatima Mernissi's and Amina Wadud's influence extend throughout the Middle East and into other Islamic countries. They are recognized as public figures in their countries and abroad, especially in France and America where they are still famous amongst feminist groups. Many publishing houses have translated their books and articles into a variety of languages, including English, Arabic, French, and Turkish. Their focus is on gender discrimination and women's issues. They always seek to supervise the publication of their books and articles on the public recognition of women in the USA, Middle East and Europe. These writers' works explore the relationship between sexual ideology, gender identity, sociopolitical organization, and the status of women in Islam; their special focus, however, is the Arabian and African societies and cultures.

Key Words: gender discrimination, patriarchal dominance, masculinity, femininity, feminist discourse

1. Introduction

Fatima Mernissi and Amina Wadud are leading feminist writers in Islamic countries. These two sophisticated writers and thinkers argue that in Muslim societies men deliberately misinterpret sacred texts and try to exclude women in those countries. In addition, these writers declared that these sacred texts should be reinterpreted by women, not men. Women must re-handle all these texts according their own experience as women. So, due to this problem in Islamic religion, all the sacred texts and books should be reinterpreted according to benefits of women and women should no longer be ignored in these texts. Obviously, Mernissi and Wadud concentrate on Muslim women's problems related to the issues of gender discrimination and the problems between the sexes in different fields, especially problems women experience in Muslim countries. Their books and works focus on poverty, illiteracy, sexual oppression, and dominance by men in Muslim societies. They choose to fight these problems in two ways. First, by being subject to the dominant Muslim male discourse related to women and their sexuality, and second, by providing the silent woman with a voice to articulate about their own narratives.

2. Patriarchal Dominance and Misinterpretation of Sacred Texts in Islamic Countries.

Mernissi is obviously one of the most important feminist writers and she has influenced other feminist Muslim writers. In *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry*, Mernissi shows her anger due to the position of women in modern Muslim societies, and she clearly blames the early Muslim scholars who misled people and manipulated the sacred texts according to their interests. She claims that Hadiths were contrived and that men took advantage of them as a political weapon to maintain what they saw as vital to them, one of these being the oppression of women. (Mernissi1995:119) She believes that Quran does not make any discrimination between men and women. In Quran, it is written as this:

For Muslim men and women — for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast (and deny themselves) for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in God's praise — for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward.(Quran 33/35)

Mernissi also looks at Prophet Muhammed's life to show the reality of the early Islamic community. According to her research, one of the wives of Muhammed, Umm Salama, led a campaign that demanded that women jointly participate in society. Umm Salama asserted that women in Medina under the guidance of Muhammad could attain full citizenship and discuss important issues with men, to struggle to gain happiness, and to play a role in the governance of military and political issues (Mernissi 1995:119). Umm Salama once wanted to learn from the Prophet the reason that so few verses addressed to women. As an answer, a verse was revealed in the holy Qur'an: "For Muslim men and women,- for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, ...and for men and women who engage much in Allah's remembrance,- for them has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward" (Quran 33:35). According to Mernissi, God spoke of the two sexes in terms of total equality as believers, that is, as members of the community (Mernissi 1995:118). After revealing, the verses which show equality between genders, Mernissi says that other verses came, which temporized on [this] principle and reaffirmed male supremacy, without, however, nullifying the dispositions in favor of women (Mernissi 1995:120). These verses resulted in a dilemma among the people and were valued by the males according to their own interests.

Similar to Mernissi, Amina Wadud is definitely one of the well-known American Muslim female scholars and a feminist writer who was seriously interested in a gender-inclusive reinterpretation of the Qur'an. She is the author of the well-known book *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, and also her recent book is called the *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*. Although she has had a great influence on Muslim women because of her intellectual successes and taking part in international activism, she could not get major attention until she led a mixed gender congregation at Friday prayer in New York in 2005. That event was shocking for Muslims but also it was surprising for westerners and definitely got an enormous amount of attention not only in Muslim countries but also in Western countries. That performance of prayer had a great influence on Muslims both negatively and positively. Some Muslims were shocked because throughout the history they had never witnessed such an incident, but on the other hand, some Muslims, especially some feminist writers, were very pleased because it was the first time a woman tried to change an idea that only men could be an 'Imam'.

Amina Wadud's well-known and influential book *Quran and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* does not only concentrate on the problems of women in Islamic countries but it also portrays her own life. Before making research about women's problems in Muslim societies, she tried to focus on misinterpreting the sacred texts. According to Barlett, she was very careful in regards to Islamic rules and understanding women: "If it was true that the Koran really did view women as inferior, she could no longer be a Muslim. She would abandon the religion." (Barlett 2005:10-12) This shows that she was very determined to abandon Islam if had she witnessed anything negative about women in Islam. In the preface, she writes:

Mercifully, the more research I did into the Qur'an, unfettered by centuries of historical androcentric reading and Arab-Islamic cultural predilections, the more affirmed I was that in Islam a female person was intended to be primordially, cosmologically, eschatologically, spiritually, and morally a full human being, equal to all who accepted Allah as Lord, Muhammad as prophet, and Islam as *din*. (Wadud 1999: ix-x.)

Another book of Wadud titled *Inside the Gender Jihad*, which expresses her academic ideas and her own experiences as a Muslim woman and thinker in several countries including the United States, makes her own interests and its substantial nature even more clear. She underlines that she became a Muslim and explains the personal, intellectual, and rebellious experiences of her conversion. She also tries to focus on the reasons of converting to Islam. In the preface, she writes that the book comes out of a recent change in her life as a Muslim, scholar, activist, and female; she can welcome her faults without giving up his goals and ambitions. On the pages that follow is a lifelong fight with his identification as a Muslim looking to share the wonder of the endless dominion of Allah in all its splendor while acknowledging the different places where her fellow Muslims and she has been unable to create a believing community that reflects this beauty without being questioned as to whether it is lacking. Thus, Islam is no longer a target, but a process (Wadud 2008:6).

It is a fact that in her works, Wadud expresses the power to identify why Islam is male dominated, how males gained benefits because of using Islam according to their perspectives against public ritual leadership and even challenges a supplementary gender model depending on women's roles as mothers and wives. Her rebellion cannot be ignored very easily because she has the idea of reinterpreting the sacred texts according to women's perspective.

In feminist Quran readings, Aminah Wadud criticizes traditional understandings as they reflect the point of view of men and perspectives related to woman in their own period of time with their prejudices. According to Wadud, if problems are determined by taking the realities of past into consideration, if analyses are made in other fields of social life, and if these problems are tried to be solved in the light of eternal verities in some way, it is also very natural to show an approach to the issue of women. However, this research and area of discussion should be open so that analyses are not totally out of the context of historical and cultural knowledge or customs (Wadud 2008:11). Wadud's attempt to comment on the Quran aligned with the female perspective has been proven in this study. This attempt to comment that is aligned with the female perspective has been in Wadud's book of '*Quran and Woman*', which in some ways is an answer to the criticisms of the role of women in Islam and the problems experienced in daily life by addressing the basic principles of the Quran and setting the Quran's idea on this matter.

Mernissi and Wadud think that the inferior position given to women in some Muslim societies is based on a false and male-dominant interpretation of the Quran. For example, according to Aminah Wadud, traditional interpretations were written by men and conveying women's experiences always either rested with men or these experiences were completely excluded (Wadud, 1999: 2). Liberatory doctrine of the Quran has not been revealed in Tradition and it is falsely and domineeringly reading has not been questioned. Egalitarian readings in fact originated from secondary sources such as implementation and hadith not from the Quran, the original text of Islam. However when the Quran is understood in the context of its historical background, the fact that Quran has been equalitarian will be observed. Anti-women readings are an offense of glossators such as Taberî, Zemahşerî, Beyzâvî and Süyûtî not of the Quran (Wadud 1999:8). According to Fatima Mernissi, due to the acceptance of anti-women attitudes in Jewish and Christian traditions that took hold of canonists (fukahâ), these acceptances entered into Islamology, and interpretations and rumors narrating the life of the Prophet (Mernissi 1991: 75). Asma Barlas (2002:8), says that woman's rights such as an equal share from inheritance, working, and testimony have been taken away.

Unfortunately, hadiths falsely citing the Prophet in the eyes of woman have been occasionally brought to the forefront. Many hadith scholars think that these hadiths should be seriously studied. While a hadith has been related, its conditions, time, and the purpose of its being said is significant owing to hadith science. It has been stated that the Prophet said these words regarding women: "If a husband invites her wife into the bed and her wife rejects him and her husband sleeps angrily till the morning, then angels would curse her till morning. (Canan 2008: Buhari, Bed'ulHalk 7; EbuDavud, Nikah 41; Tirmizi, Rada 10.) "After me, I haven't left any instigation to man as dangerous as women" (2008: Buhari, Nikah 17; Muslim, Zikr 97,98; Tirmizi, Edeb 31, İbn Mace, Fiten 19; İbn Hanbel, 5: 100,210.) "A community in which women has been come to power will never get better" (2008: Buhari, Meğazi 82, Fiten 18; Tirmizi, Fiten 8; İbn Hanbel, 43, 47,51.). "I saw the hell, majority of the people there was women." (2008: Buhari, İman 21. Krş. Muslim Zikr 95.) When you consider these hadiths, regarding the religion of Islam and the Prophet of Islam as a woman hater and enemy to women would be very a superficial approach.

These words that have been taken away from the context in which they appeared and brought to today's equalitarian discourse environment urgently suggest a misogynous content. First of all, there have been hadiths praising tens of women and recommending men to treat them with honor and telling that there is no difference between woman and man in hadith books. Another well-known hadith orders: "Do not beat your wife like a slave and then sleep with her at night." (2008: Ibn Mace, Nikah 50) "Best of among you is the one who behaves his wife best. I am also with the ones behaving their wives best." (Acluni 2001: 335) "Paradise lies at the feet of the mother." (Canan 2008:Tirmizi, Raddat 11) "You are responsible for your wives (helpmeets) and your wives also have responsibilities for you." (2008: Ibn Mace, Nikah 50) When one looks at these hadiths, comprehending Islam or the Prophet as a women hater would be a very harsh approach. Many writers believe that the religion of Islam should not be regarded by considering a few hadiths.

Asma Barlas considers that only six hadiths from a collection including seven thousand hadiths described as authentic approach a misogynous perspective, and moreover she also found the situation of men always alleging these six hadiths in terms of gender equality in spite of there being tens of hadiths ironic (Barlas 2002:45).

According to Barlas, the Prophet is a role model for both men and women (Barlas 2002:122). The Prophet's morals have positive characteristics regarding both genders that need to be applied to real life. It is not possible to see any kind of discrimination between women and men when the life of Prophet has been studied. Both genders acted fairly in every sphere of life and the Prophet took this as norm of his life. It is a fact that the Prophet was strict in terms of justice and at the same time, he was a man of grace, kindness, and had a sensitive heart as a forgiver. By supporting Barlas and basing upon Ibn Sa'd and Taberi, Fatima Mernissi also studies the Prophet's objections and opposition to violence against women (Mernissi 1991:156). Fatima Mernissi has pointed out that the Prophet never showed his wives any injustice in any part of his life and never made any kind of discrimination between them by taking the Prophet's manner for his wives into consideration. Ibn Sa'd states that the Prophet never laid his hand on his wives or a slave or a person. The behavior of the Prophet was always an example for people around him; however, sometimes, fair, and merciful behavior of the Prophet regarding women disturbed some men who had traditional ideas. Based upon the words of Ibn Sa'd, Mernissi has also added that the Prophet always objected to women being beaten, and some people always told him that women created a chaotic atmosphere. Owing to these accusations, the Prophet declared that only the worst man could apply these kinds of cruel methods such as beating a woman.

Even Mernissi has mentioned about a project of the Prophet about gender equality in the Madinah period. Mernissi has pointed out that Islam is as a consistent system of values and that the Prophet Muhammad's equalitarian project is based on a detail of the arising of women's free will as a situation that the organization of society should have considered. (Mernissi 1991:184). The main objective here is that a woman has her finger on the pulse that is related to society and that a woman declares her opinion about these issues. Feminist Turkish writer Fatma Ünsal has underlined that the Prophet encouraged women to attend small mosques, which were the place of university and parliament of that period, as opposed to women being separated from the congregation and being directed to their home even to the bedroom as a suitable place (Ünsal 2007). As emphasized above, the Prophet strongly encouraged women to have a voice and applied this throughout his life. Women having a say in the society means women's sovereignty and equality being accepted.

Furthermore, it means that a patriarchal mentality that made seeing a woman as an ordinary object traditionally has been swept away. The point that should not be forgotten is divine religions has manifested themselves in an environment where patriarchal attitudes and manners were strongly effective. According to many thinkers, patriarchal societies implemented religious values in accordance with their way of thinking and have then got further away from the essence of the religion. What should be mainly remembered that it is a fact that male-dominant understanding has always prioritized man and suppressed woman all throughout the history. Before the arising of Islam, the understanding that oppressed women and that did not see her as a human in the Arabian Peninsula had difficulty in Islamic values. In the course of time, some hadiths that didn't belong to the Prophet and Islam were implemented in opposition to woman. The underlying reason of this understanding was that the preconceived thought applied to religion here in order to justify its patriarchal judgements as it was everywhere. This situation led to a set of narratives which have been opposed to content mentioned before in terms of the Prophet's ideas and attitudes towards women.

The best way of Muslim feminist writers for overcoming negatives of hadiths regarding women is to have a grasp of hadith science. The functional and logical practice is that woman should express herself and shouldn't leave these studies only to men. Mernissi states that the hadith about communities where women coming to power wouldn't get better has been rejected and discussed by many people in spite of the fact that Buhari and other scholiasts have regarded it as authentic. Again, according to her, canonists have not come to an agreement about the implementation of hadiths in terms of the relation between women and politics. It has been certain that there have been ones using the hadith to keep women away from decision-making mechanisms. On the other hand, there have been others thinking the argument as groundless and far from convincing. Mernissi has said that Taberi has been one of them, and she has thought Taberi did not find the argument sufficiently grounded in terms of women's being deprived from decision-making mechanisms and isolated in politics.

The underlying reason for the development of what makes the notion of Islamic feminism mentioned today is women sharing their ideas, the increase in studies that make women take part in common platforms, and then creating a group in which they may study. Intellectual Muslim women mention social position of women and their rights and also stand aligned with Islamic religion and tradition. The most prominent factor that separate secular Muslim feminists who share the same cultural background with Islamic feminist writers is that they place religious texts primarily the main text into the discourses. It is a well-known fact that the issue of women is taken into consideration and discussed in the context of discussions on social change.

However, attention should be paid to the fact that the rights of Muslim women and their social position are focused on due to the defensive behavior stemming from colonist experience and the effect of orientalist discourse. Therefore, the issue of gender is tackled in terms of verses from the Quran that are assumed to explain the equality of woman and man. It is emphasized in the first verse of NisaSurathat there is no ontological difference between males and females: "What creates you from one creature and brings a partner into existence from him/her and then gives birth to many women and men from both..."(4:1) and HucurâtSura thirteenth verse stating "We created you from one man and one woman (49:13)." Intellectual Muslim women who also dwell on how identities of masculinity and femininity in terms of Islamic principles have questioned whether they play the role of Muslim mother/wife that is formed for them and whether men play their role of husband, father, brother, and son in a family according to Islamic ideas. Many verses clearly warn and advise men's unjust use of force on women and to the guidance of Quran, the question of how masculinity and femininity roles should be understood. In light of this, it has been pointed out that the comprehension of masculinity is to be seriously studied (Omama 1972:22). When studies are generally reviewed, it is observed that most intellectual Muslim women focus on the Quran and study hadiths (Wadud 1999). Moreover, it is also noticed that these female writers use classic and modern methods together in their studies. At the same time, Islamic feminist research has been supported by Muslim women scholars and activists who make criticism on Islamic history and the interpretations of sacred texts, and produce alternatives respecting Islamic values and seek a solution (Omama 1972:22).

What Muslim feminist writers primarily reveal is not putting a blame on religion itself but on traditions of societies. The fact that intellectual Muslim women have a common approach in terms of the patriarchal feature of tradition have been particularly attributed to the egalitarian structure of the Era of Bliss. The answer to the question of why changes experienced in society where divine inspiration came and that divine inspiration started in relation to the relationship of God-human, human-human, woman-man have not gone in women's favor is also sought. Basic matter is in fact not related to religious-based references; however, Muslim men have a problematic and one-sided perspective in interpreting the holy texts. In spite of the fact that the Quran has left some room for choice and some applications have disappeared over time and in a natural way, some discussions such as polygamy, witnessing of women, and men being 'kavvam', which means men's predominance and protection of women, have continued. Furthermore, the deadlock that has appear over why the accepted characteristics belonging to women in the 'Sufic' system or the values given to woman have not penetrated, and why woman issue in dominant discourse is also one of the problems focused on. One of the reasons is surely the presence of patriarchal approaches and perspectives.

It is observed that the attitude of male commenters and scholars is generally negative while problematizing matters related to woman and different approaches stated sometimes is made invisible with the effect of dominant discourses. Muslim feminists have mainly concentrated on the rights that Islam gave women and have been taken away rather than the discussion of woman's physical oppression in the family. It would be insufficient to accept that this approach only belongs to Christianity as there is also a very similar idea in Islam. Both women and men are responsible for making each other happy, however in some sources, there is more emphasize on women making their men happy and the significance of this. "The woman dying for making her husband happy is deserving of heaven." (Tirmizî, Radâ 10. AlsolookİbniMâce, Nikâh 4)Moreover, man is much more imposed duty for taking responsibility. "All of you is shepherd. All of you is responsible for your herd shepherding. Superior is shepherd of the servants. Man is shepherd of his family. Also, women is shepherd of her house and child. As a result, all of you is shepherd and responsible for what you are managing." (BuhariCum'a 11). The idea stated in Hadith is not related to degrading and seeing a woman as a second class human. The head of the family should aim to make members of the family happy, and therefore the head of the family should teach knowledge that is true to one under their management and keep them out of harm's way.

A woman thinking that she is responsible for her husband, should keep her house in order as much as possible, should protect her husband's rights, should not waste her possession, and should keep herself away from any kind of betrayal to him. One of the main duties of hers is also to try to raise her children as good human beings, devoted Muslims, and to be interested in knowledge, good manners, education, and learning. According to the Quran women and men are ontologically equal and created as couples (Quran Nisa 4/1). There is not any difference between women and men in the context of regional responsibility (Quran Ali Imran 3/95). Considering the position of women in the society and the age in which Quran was revealed, Quran was revolutionary in terms of the status of women. Otherwise, we do not have the opportunity for a good evaluation. As it is well-known, having a daughter in the society of the Arabic pre-Islamic age of ignorance, when Quran was sent down, was seen as a shame.

Quran firstly forbade the degradation of a daughter (Quran Enam 6/151, Isra 17/31) and mentioned that there could be no difference between a daughter and a son (Quran Nahl 16/56). As a woman is also a future mother, the Quran has ordered that more value should be given to her (Quran Isra 17/23). In history of humanity, religion was really interested in the issue of women. Guidance of a religion should also require this. It emphasizes some points that are the creation of primitive man and woman, their aims of creation, and ontologic and functional relations of both genders with each other. Today, it is still a reference for them. However, the mentioned systems of religion have also continued to be a reference for any kind of oppression and restrictions against women rights. In the context of the practices of the feminist reading of the Quran, the concept of Islamic feminism points out a phenomenon arising inside the Islamic culture and the efforts of Muslim women to be individuals. The results of these attempts have been determined in studies where Muslim women, specifically intellectual Muslim women, take into consideration the position of Muslim women in terms of religion and tradition. Towards the end of the 20th century, intellectual Muslim women started to argue the issue of women in the Muslim world by also reviewing Western feminist discourse. Thus in Islamic culture, a new discourse of women has appeared, indirectly affected by feminist discourse. There is no doubt that Islam has set women in the highest position and given all her rights, there is no problem regarding women in the Islamic world, and that all these problems are experienced in the West and the defensive manner of those discussing this idea. The other is the critical manner of one reviewing the Quran as a text that reflects prejudices of patriarchal Arabic society and confines women in a second class position (Kirbasoglu 2011:271).

The interpretation of Islam by male writers and thinkers until today has created some misconceptions about the relationship between men and women. The perspective of making a connection between man's interpretation and the interpretation of Islam to the detriment of women up until today has also opened the 'multiple interpretation of Islam' by claiming that Islam can be interpreted differently by a woman and a man. However, liberal Westerners and the supporters of an Islam image, which is more 'internalized' and 'democratic', have paid attention and encouraged the criticisms of Muslim women promoting the peaceful interpretation of Islam, which is one of the many interpretations. There are so many prominent reasons for the West to seriously support Islamic feminist movements and feminist writers, one of which is the increasing population of Muslims in the Western world.

The issue of balance and equality between genders is a point that many feminist writers such as Amina Wadud have emphasized and discussed. Neither Fatima Mernissi nor Amina Wadud addresses the religion of Islam, the Quran, and the Prophet. The main problem is that religion and religious values are commented on owing to man's hegemony and are imposed on society. As it is known, there were various regulations about women in the first period after the Quran was sent. As a result, women had rights that they would probably never had throughout the history. However, it is true that many views about women, which are contrary to the spirit of Islam, have arisen. Approaches of traditional comments of the Quran on the issue of women in particular have shaped the perspective of the Muslim societies and as a result it is observed that there have been views and meanings to the detriment of woman inconsistent with essence, general principles, and integrity of the Quran in commentary tradition. In recent years, many feminists speaking on behalf of Muslim women in the Islamic world have been reviewing the Quran from this perspective by taking their premises from feminist theories.

Compared to the pre-Islamic understanding of religion in the Arabic society and the traditions and customs, Islam brought about significant changes to the position of women in social, economic, and legal aspects. The Quran considers man and woman as equal human beings. Allah created humankind in pairs to have more peaceful and happy lives. Islam does not accommodate the belief of the first sin being committed by a woman, which also led the man to commit the sin.

The Holy Quran mentions that Adam and Eve were both deceived by the devil (Quran El-Bakara 2/34-36). Islam, unlike Christianity, does not include anti-feminist expressions based on the first sin. In the Islamic faith, no person is born with sinful, regardless of gender, but become sinners with the sins they commit as a result of their own faults. Islam strictly forbids the old, pre-Islamic traditions that subjected girls and women and even legitimized burying girls alive. Islamic verses and traditions indicate that man and woman are equal in every aspect. As mentioned above, a person becomes a sinner not in born differences of gender but by sins committed afterwards. The Holy Quran depicts women as equal to men in terms of creation and rights and responsibilities. A woman, as a servant of Allah, is equal to a man with equal religious rights and responsibilities (Quran Ali-Imran 3/195, etTevbe 9/71). In Islamic law, a woman is not a subject of rights, but a party to rights. The verse reads “The men have share of their earnings as women have share of their earnings” (Quran en- Nisa 4/32) emphasizes not only the spiritual earnings, but also the material earnings of both genders.

As clearly expressed in the Holy Quran and the hadith, a woman’s earnings belong to her and she is not in any way obliged to share such earnings with her husband. However, a point to consider is that man and woman must act together for mutual benefit and family order. The Islamic law assigns the authority and responsibility of ‘custody’, which calls the family leadership, to the husband. The Holy Quran states that “Allah created some of the people with talents different than others and men are tasked with working and providing for the family, thus assigned as a custodian” (Quran en-Nisa 4/34). Here, the expression ‘custodian’ means the joint right and authority to protect and manage. The assignment of custody does not imply authorization of total male domination, in fact it forces the man to take responsibility and care for the family. The assignment of man as the family leader aims to prevent the chaos that may emerge in even the smallest quarrel and ensure peace. Therefore, it should be stated that this involves a functional difference of authority rather than an ontological superiority. This general rule does not preclude a different situation in individual examples where the talents and obligation to provide are exchanged. Similarly, some of the modern Islamic scholars emphasize that the obligation to provide may be exchanged, and this rule is not constant in modern days (Rahman 1966: 93-94). Islam entitles women to receive inheritance, specifying their share by the status of mother, grandmother, wife, daughter, and sister (Quran enNisa 4/11). This right is a significant change compared to the practice in the pre-Islamic period, since certain regions and tribes in the respective period mentions no rights to inheritance for women. During the pre-Islamic age of ignorance, women were not given the right to be human, let alone the right to inheritance.

Islam clearly gives great importance to women because in the Holy Quran, in the Prophet’s practices, and throughout the Islamic history it can be seen that women are seen to have earned the most exalted value in Islam except for some malfeasances because of individual mistakes. Women have a unique status in Islam that cannot be encountered in other systems. Even today’s so called modern societies accepted as the most modern societies are so backward in this matter that never can be compared with Islamic societies. Although women in these societies have a particular freedom, this freedom is such a freedom of satisfying physical desires that it is acceptable for no human natality and for no celestial religion. In recent centuries, difficulties in living that international wars brought about and the pressure of economic needs have forced women to step into the business world and the streets. Following to this step, women started to provide her own board and gained a little amount of financial independence as an individual, however in many places, she could not escape becoming an object open to exploitation for some capital environments trying to get a benefit especially due to her physical attraction. In order to reach the reality, correct it, and transform these confused fallacies, some Muslim feminist thinkers started to take their main position and reinterpret the holy books and texts. In fact, they definitely believe that reinterpreting the holy Quran is only the first step, and they believe that by interpreting the Quranic text, they can get their rights in the societies and they can take part in different fields in the public. Obviously, most of Muslim women cannot see their real problem, are not aware that there is a great problem, and continue to live their lives as if the problems do not concern them. They think that if they have enough food to eat, enough money to buy whatever they want, or they can be satisfied, they do not need anything more. It is true that in many Islamic countries they have right to go to university and graduate. Colin Brock says:

Muslim women get formal university degree and participate in the labor market, but Muslim women have remained a passive force in changing the negative practice and misuse of Islamic thoughts. The reality is that the majority of Muslim women could not take in part to intellectual and scientific fields after graduation from the universities, especially after marriage and child procreation. (Brock & Layers 2007:39). In fact, the idea of restoring the rights of women has always remained in the air.

The clearest proof of this is women being exposed to a great marginalization in social life and the administrative field, even in the most modern-looking countries. The position of women in so called modern countries raise questions such as that how many countries' parliament do women have the opportunity to represent people's rights for the population appropriately? How many women are there among spiritual leaders and representatives of world religions? Have the numbers of women employed in areas such as courthouses, civil services, police departments, or secret services reached the number of men? Why do those who never stop talking about women's rights and deem to be their radical defenders are not in the situation to give positive answers to these questions? Above all, should those who claim that Islam limits the woman's rights not interrogate themselves and their social structures? Those questions with no plausible answers may lead someone to think that Islam is not the source of the problem, but the very characteristic of the patriarchal hegemony structures lead this to happen in modern societies. Nimat Hafez Barazangi underlines that Muslim women have had great progress in the reinterpretation of the Quran and sacred texts in recent decades, but despite of these improvements, the positions of women have not changed significantly in Islamic societies.

She mainly blames patriarchal readings of the Quran, and she especially emphasizes that the Prophet's hadiths and Sunnah have been deliberately misinterpreted and transformed by Muslim men. She believes that in order to change those patriarchal and negative views, they need to change paradigms of studying Islam and reconstructing Muslim societies. She underlines that the best way to reconstruct perspective of the Islamic societies is through reinterpreting sacred texts and the Quran according to women's perspective. (Barazangi 2004:157). Although there have been a lot of attempts to reform Islamic countries after the eighteenth century, the conditions for the majority of Muslim women are still the same, and we cannot see a remarkable change in these countries. These struggles might have been not very effective because of them being polarized on certain issues. Despite many attempts to improve the rights of women in Muslim countries, Muslim women could not reach their target of carving a space in Muslim societies. Because of this reality, most of the living conditions of Muslim women did not change remarkably, and still they have great problems such as equality, right of education, getting high position in the companies, and so forth.

The reforms that the governments wanted to implement seemed to be polarized primarily because they only focused on changes in the role of women. Ingrid Mattson underlines that "throughout the history all the women were discussed, new waves of patriarchal interpretations even by some women were generated but women did not have any right and they did not lead the congregational prayer, with the excuse that the hadith orders such a practice." (Mattson 2006) In any reform implemented by government, they should think about the pros and cons. The governments should avoid any attempt to discriminate between males and females and must give more opportunities to women to express themselves. Furthermore, women need to understand the complex methodological issues in verifying the validity and reliability of a hadith, and they should reinterpret these sacred texts. In reality, women have suffered greatly throughout the history because all the texts were written by males, and women were excluded. My arguments centered upon how some religious people have come to define some religious sources to dominate women according to their patriarchal interpretations that claim men's guardianship over women. It is clear that one of these sources is the hadith and these hadiths were mistranslated by men, and since the hadith is used more often instead of the Quran, this article suggests that all the sacred texts must be reinterpreted.

3. Conclusion

Today, women are struggling with gender inequality throughout the world. Gender, which is different from biological sex, is discriminatory patterns of masculinity and femininity that societies have produced. Gender is structured via the implementation of culture of society and depending on this, the expectation of society from man and woman sex is shaped. Within the context, Islamic feminist discourse can be regarded as an approach that struggles with the tradition that produces gender inequality in Islamic countries and places emphasis on Islam being an equality-grounded religion based on the Quran. Generally, Muslim feminists underline that the Quran should be reinterpreted in terms of a sensitive approach to women in the direction of general global perspective by taking the culture and conditions of the society. Thanks to a feminist hermeneutic method, these have been historically emphasized by implementing some verses that Islam has increased woman's position. They have been trying to prove that Islam in its original form is a religion based on equality between women and men but this Islamic tradition has been deliberately veiled by the misinterpretation of Islamic teachings.

The studies made according to a woman's perspective are mainly about the Quran. Accordingly, there have been studies made in the field of hadith and Islamic law. The difference of Islamic feminist discourse from western feminist discourses is that Muslim women prioritize their religious identity while western feminists regard religion as an origin of the patriarchal system. Severe criticisms made by western feminists against family have been broken by Muslim feminists, and family as one of the central institution of the society has still maintained its prestige. Muslim feminists have not in general been interested in demands such as sexual freedom and abortion which are matters that western feminists consider in discussions about the female body. When women rights are considered from an Islamic point of view, it is impossible to make discrimination between men and women. No gender is undervalued by Islam. It considers both genders as complementary elements to each other. From this point of view, both genders generate a unity by coming together. Men and women make a perfect system when they agree to work in harmony by helping each other. From the point of the creation philosophy of men and women, rather than considering women's creation to complete missing parts of men, they must be considered as matches that form a perfect family when they come together with men. This perfect stature lies in the creation of human being. But it is certain that both genders have some differences.

Allah has created living beings with their partners, but we cannot say that they are exactly the same: "We created everything with a partner so that you can have a lesson." (Qur'an Zariyat, 51/49). Men and women are not biologically or physically the same, but they are complementary to each other. The prophet once stated that "women are the half of the men." (Ebu Davut, Taharet, 94; Tirmizi, Taharet, 82) One part that forms the other part of a whole is the complementary part with no missing point. Neither are men biologically or physiologically more developed nor are women less superior. Their responsibilities may have created some differences between their roles in society, but this is not something negative. Biological or social differences do not make one gender superior to the other. It is not possible to show a verse in the Quran saying that women cannot work. But the prophet warned people not to give a heavy work load that women cannot do. Considering the principle of equality, women and men are equal in front of law, business life, social life, heritage, however, it is not possible for a woman to work at any jobs that require physical strength. Employing women for such jobs is an injustice against them. While women can be a perfect teacher at schools and wife at home raising her children, they are also supposed to learn how to stand on their feet. When women are employed in some certain areas, it is certain that they contribute more than men do. Jobs must fit women's biological condition, physiology, and spiritual life. Offering jobs that women cannot do has nothing to do with humanity or equality. But men should not exclude women from the jobs that women can do. This is against equality. Limiting women has no place in Islam.

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