

Islamic Tradition and Feminism: A Comparative Study of Theoretical Perspective.

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Abstract

This article takes insights from feminist theory and examines the compatibility / incompatibility of women in the perspective of gender roles at workplace and in family life. This study attempts to bring out the controversial issues surrounding feminism and role of women in Islam and impact of cultural settings that define the social milieu. The compatibility of Islam with feminism has drawn important attention from Western and Eastern scholars alike. A definition of feminism is hard to find due to diversity of socio-cultural settings. Feminism, unlike other ideologies, does not derive its theoretical and conceptual framework from any single theoretical formulation. Therefore, no specific abstract definition of feminism applicable to all women at all times could be available. Feminist Movement continues to be one of the most powerful struggles for social justice taking place in the world today. Women's assertion of emancipation has taken many forms historically, ideas of self-determination, visions of mutuality, the conviction of the legitimacy of claims of livelihood and the assertion of rights can be found jostling against one another and interacting in popular movements in many countries from the late eighteenth century. Taking this broad vista enables us to situate "feminism" or indeed feminism because there have been many versions, within a wider spectrum. A historical perspective provides a useful and frequently neglected dimension not only in considering contemporary discussions of feminisms, but in thinking how women's specific experiences of subordination might illuminate the recreation of a vision of human emancipation. Feminist beliefs have existed throughout history but feminism did not become widespread in Europe and the United States until the mid 1800's¹. At that time, many people regarded women as inferior and less important than men. Such people believed a woman's proper place was in the home the law reflected this opinion. For example women were barred by law from voting in elections or serving on juries. Most institutions of higher education and most professional careers were also closed to women. Despite strong opposition, feminism grew in power during the 1800's and 1900's² and won a number of new rights for women. Many people regarded the feminist movement and the resulting change in the status of women as a turning point in the history of society.

Feminism refers to belief in and commitment to equal rights and opportunities for women. Feminists of differing theoretical perspectives differ in their beliefs about the causes and foundation of patriarchy the methods to be pursued and the nature and extent of the changes that must be made, but all agree that biological sex is not a justification for domination or subordination. Feminism, FEHM uh nihz uhm,³ is the belief that women should have economic political and social equality with men. The term feminism also refers to a political movement that works to gain such equality. The basic idea behind the feminism is that women's position in society is unequal to that of men, and that society is structured in such a way as to benefit men. These political, social, and economic structures are detrimental to women. However, feminists have used different theories to explain these inequalities and have advocated different ways of redressing inequalities, and there are marked geographic and historical variations in the nature of feminism. The women liberation movement sought to transform cultural beliefs about women, and to transform personal relationship and social structures to reflect feminist values. The women who identified with women's liberation movement envisioned an egalitarian society based on cooperation, mutual respect and the equitable distribution of resources, power and responsibility between the sexes.

Many of them were left-wing activist had been involved in the civil rights, antiwar, and students movements of the 1960's they identified themselves as radical feminists. Compared with women's right activists, they tended to be younger women with less professional and work place experience.⁴ The Women liberation movement consisted of small local non hierarchical groups. Much of their work was conducted in consciousness raising groups, which discussed and analyze the everyday experiences of women. They identified patterns of male control our women in working setting, in personal relationships, and in family life and the privileging of male perspectives and needs throughout society, through the consciousness raising process, Women came to understand how their personal issues and problems were inextricably connected to larger, social and political structure thus arose the enduring slogan of second wave of "feminism" the personal is political.⁵ Women liberationists raised the awareness of women across the country by organizing demonstration and protest marches, giving speeches and writing newsletters, books and journals.

Feminist Initiatives: From the mid of 1970's the ideological distinctions between equal rights feminist and women liberationist blurred. Most women who have identified with feminist have not adopted a revolutionary stance. They have however, taken part in collective efforts of advance women interests and to bring about social changes. Diverse groups of women have formed organization in a wide range of arenas; in academia, business, labor union, the professions, and government. For example, a number of national professional organizations for women were founded, such as a national association of black professional women and working women; a national association of office workers. In addition, many other groups developed national advocacy organizations. In the area of health care, for example, such organization included the national women health network the national black women health project, and the National Latina Health Organization. The older women league and the gray panthers represented the interest of older women.⁶ Feminists have also created service organization as alternatives to traditional health, mental health, and social services. These organizations include women centers, services for women and children who have been raped or sexually abused, shelter for battered women, feminists therapy centers, and women health clinics.

The organization takes feminists perspectives on women problems, linking them to the social context of female subordination. They are committed to respecting and promoting their clients, autonomy and competence. Often they are staffed by nonprofessional volunteers and former clients, partly in the effort to counteract the mystique of the expert professional and to foster women self reliance and self confidence. Typically services are offered to women at low cost or free of charge, so that women who cannot afford to pay are not denied services. A milestone in the rise of modern feminism was Simone de Beauvoir's book *Le Deuxieme sexe*, which became a worldwide best-seller and raised feminist consciousness by appealing to the idea that liberation for men too. Another major work was *The Feminine Mystique* published in 1963 by Betty Friedan an American. She attacked deadening domesticity the conditioning of women to accept passive roles and depend on male dominance. In 1966 Friedan and other feminists founded national organizations for women. Other women's organizations for equal rights proliferated in the United States and in Western Europe immediately thereafter. These organizations sought to overturn laws and practices that enforced the inferior status of women by discrimination in such matters as contract and property rights, employment and pay issues, and management of earnings and in matters related to sex and childbearing.

The goals of women's liberation movement have varied widely from country to country. In United States, the feminist movement was the strongest. Reaching its peak in the 1970s feminist concentrated their efforts on the passage of the equal rights Amendment. Feminism in United States and Western Europe agitated against mass-media presentations of women that seemed biased, stereotypical, or discriminatory.⁷ Role of Feminist theory: Feminist theories provide an important foundation for feminist scholarship, research, pedagogy, therapy, and activism. A multitude of feminist theories exist, providing a wide range of perspectives regarding (1) why women and men have held unequal power across time and place, (2) why knowledge has historically been accumulated by for men and excluded women and (3) how men and women can rectify these problems and achieve equality. Knowledge of feminist theoretical systems is important because these frameworks provide significant information about the various assumptions, goals and strategies that inform the work of feminists.⁸ Feminist work confronts the power of naming and challenges both the use of male measures and the assumption that women fail by them if at times feminist appear contradictory arguing both for the right of women to be included and treated like men and for the right to have special treatment. The inconsistency lies in a world and set of symbolic constructs that have simultaneously used men as the norm and denigrated any departure from the norm.

Thus, feminism demands the dual strategy of challenging the assumptions that women are too different from the unstated male norm to enjoy male privileges and those women's differences actually justify denial of privileges or benefits.⁹ For over century now, feminists have claimed that distinctive aspects of women's experiences and perspectives offer resources for constructing more representative, more empathic, more creative and in general, better theories, laws and social practices. As for as concern the Feminism It is an important to note that labels associated with feminist theories allow for efficient communication about specific ideas, but when these labels are applied arbitrarily, they can lead to artificial and inaccurate categorizations. Feminist theories are continually evolving, and the boundaries between feminist theories are fluid and overlapping. Man contemporary feminist are not influenced by a single feminist perspectives, but view themselves as eclectic and combine theories in creative and personally meaningful ways. Feminism is a broad-based philosophical perspective, accommodates a large spectrum of variety of thought. It is not possible to list all; however, feminist theorists are able to identify some of feminist perspectives as essentially liberal, Marxist, radical, psychoanalytic, socialist, existentialist, or postmodern. Keeping aside their claims, each of these provides a partial and provisional answer to the women question, providing a unique perspective with its own methodological strengths and weaknesses.

Interestingly, these partial and provisional answers intersect, joining together both to cry for the ways in which women have been pressed, repressed, and suppressed and to celebrate the ways women used to beat the system, constructed their self a new, and encourage each other to live as women. Mary Wollstonecraft¹⁰, an eighteenth century classical liberal feminist, according to Wollstonecraft, middle class wealthy women accepted captivity, sacrificed health and virtue in exchange of pleasure, power and prestige, a husband could provide. Kept women are indolent women. They had not been permitted to make decisions, lacked liberty. They have discouraged from developing their powers of reason and also lacked virtue. She argued if men were kept in these conditions they would have developed same characters. Wollstonecraft criticized Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile*, a classic on educational philosophy, in which he described the development of rationality as the most important educational goal for boys but not for girls. For Rousseau men should be educated in virtues such as courage, temperance, justice and fortitude whereas women should be educated in virtues such as patience, docility, good humour, and flexibility. The development of man's mental capabilities will make him a rational moral, self-governing; self-sufficient citizen and husband/father and that the development of woman's sensitivities will create in her, an understanding responsible wife and a caring-loving mother.

Wollstonecraft disagreed with Rousseau on the issue of girl's education. She prescribed that girls be provided with real education. It will groom them as rational and independent women.¹¹ The truly educated woman is able to manage her household efficiently.¹² Wollstonecraft proposal for educational parity between men and women rests person's autonomy. Autonomous person is a rational person distinguishable from animal. Girls have the right to education like boys because all persons deserve an equal chance to develop their rational and moral capabilities so as to achieve person hood. Wollstonecraft wanted women to be treated as autonomous decision-makers. For women's salvation Wollstonecraft suggested that women should have been economically independent of men but how to achieve this status she provided few recommendations. She recognized that to be independent women need the same civil liberties as men have. She assumed that through real education, a woman can develop and grow herself. In vindication of the rights of women 1792¹³ she powerfully argues that women capacity for rational thought has been suppressed by their lack of education. Women are everywhere in this deplorable state; for, in order to preserve their innocence, as ignorance is courteously termed truth is hidden from them and they are made to assume an artificial character before we their faculties have acquired any strength.

Taught from their infancy that beauty is women scepter, the mind shapes itself to the body and roaming round its guilt cage only seeks to adore its prison. Men have various employment and pursuits which engage their attention, and give a character to the opening mind but women confined to one and having their thought constantly directed to the most in signified part of themselves seldom extend their views beyond the triumph of the hour. But were their understanding once emancipate from the slavery to which the pride and sensuality of man and short sighted desire, like that dominion in tyrants of present sway has subjected them we should probably read of their weaknesses with surprise. Wollstonecraft is perhaps the earliest feminist thinker to challenge essentialist notion of femininity qualities which seemed neatly to oppose those rational virtues of human or male nature. She demonstrated that women were commonly viewed as ruled by the pull of their bodily function and physical attributes, and therefore mentally incapacitated.

Thought wary of asserting that given the opportunities to realize their full potential through the discipline of education, women could achieve full equality with men Wollstonecraft firmly posits what will become a vital distinction for letter day feminist; that the bare physical facts of biological differences should not be unquestionable extended to create distinction between the mental or rational capacity of men and women

Comparative analysis of Islamic Tradition and Feminism.

In order to understand the debates on feminism within Islam and to critically evaluate the role of culture specific ties that compel to women struggle to win concessions from society are analyzed. Islam changed the mentality of both men and women and created a new relationship between them based on respect and mutual understanding, taking care of women and respecting her were also emphasized.¹⁴ The status of women was also raised in Islam by granting her the legal right to enter into contracts, to run a business and to possess property independently from her husband or any kinsmen.¹⁵ From the beginning, Islam stressed that women as half of the society, should be offered all opportunities which could enable them to develop their natural abilities, so that they might participate effectively in the development of society. It also emphasized that women should be allowed to attain to the highest ranks of progress materially, intellectually and spiritually.

It is widely believed among western thinkers that Sharia'h¹⁶ and intellectual heritage of Islam do not include elements which contribute in a constructive way to promoting women rights. Some even believes that Islam may stand against the achievement of these rights or their consolidation in Islamic societies. European thinkers make no secret of the claim that the only possible origin of these human rights can only be the history of the western world with its Greek and Roman heritage followed by European recent history with its philosophical and social thinking and its consolidation of the state of law. In fact women right is the soul of Islam. Islam owes too much thanks to flourish it's thought to the international world.¹⁷ When studying the principal rights and obligations of women in Islam, it must be pointed out at the very outset that, in spite of the capacity of Muslim law to adopt itself and to develop according to circumstances, there will be no question of recognizing the extreme livery which a woman enjoys today in fact and in practice, in certain sections of social life, both in the capitalistic and the communistic west. Islam demands that a woman should remain a reasonable being. It does not expect her to become either an angel or a demon. If one wants to compare or contrast her position in Islam with that in other civilizations or legal systems, one should take into consideration all the facts, and not merely isolated practices. In fact, in regard to certain aspects of morality, Islam is more rigid and more puritan than certain other systems of life in our times.

It is within this context that Islam has granted women broad social, political and economic rights, education and training rights and work opportunity rights. To protect these rights from being abused by men, Islam provides legal safeguards. Women are considered more honorable than man in Islam. According to Abu Hurayrah¹⁸, a man came to the Prophet^(PBUH) "O Messenger of God, who rightfully deserves the best treatment from me, "Your mother replied the Prophet^(PBUH) "Who is the next? Asked the man." "Your mother said the Prophet^(PBUH) who comes next? The man asked again "Your mother, Replied the Prophet^(PBUH) who is the after that? Insisted the man "Your father, said the noble Prophet^(PBUH)¹⁹ The projection of women as the most honorable human being in the form of a mother makes it quite clear what sort of a society Islam wants to create. It is one in which a woman is accorded the maximum honor and respect. A member of such a society, who shows full respect to a woman as a regard to other women. With the creation of such a mentality, women in general will share the status accorded to a mother at home. Quran has ensured esteem of mother, "And we have enjoyed upon men concerning his parents, His mother breath him in weakness upon weakness and his wearing is in two years. Give thanks unto me and unto thy parents." "Unto Me is the journeying."²⁰

Feminists focused on women's empowerment and autonomy, it has mentioned in Quran, "O ye who believe! It is not lawful for you forcibly to inherit women." The empowerment of independent ownership is for women are present with honor and dignity. This involves the right to manage her own money and property independently. She is at liberty to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, borrow or lend, and sign contracts and legal documents. Also she can donate her money, act as a trustee and set up a business or company. The elite example in Islamic history is Hazrat Khadija (AS); the first wife of Holy Prophet^(PBUH), she was among the elite in her nation and leading) businesswomen even prior to her marriage. Khadijah(AS) was herself a lady of dignity and opulence. She inherited much wealth and then multiplied her assets by independently managing.²¹ Work outside the home, feminist activists declared, was the key to liberation. Work they argued, would allow women to break the bounds of economic dependency on men, which would in turn enable them to resist sexist domination.

In the comparative context women's liberation and economic independency had proved by Hazarat Khadijah's (AS) trade. She sometimes lent money to reliable Quraish merchants on a profit sharing basis. She invested the capital of her creditors in trade caravans. When these caravans returned from their commercial expeditions, she shared the profits equitably and in a justly manner. She also had her own employees and agents in Makkah. Sometimes she hired men to carry merchandise outside the Hijaz on *mudarabah* (partnership in commendams) ²²Khadijah (A.S) was a well-known for her generosity and kindness. She appreciated all that her young salesman did for her. She always gave Prophet ^(PBUH) credit for their enterprises. After her marriage to the Prophet Muhammad ^(PBUH) she was happy, and gradually she became less interested in business. But nevertheless she continued encouraging Muhammad to deal with all the jobs independently. ²³Quite a few women prior to Islam in Arab trades were engaged in trading. Hazarat Khadijah stands out as a symbol of entrepreneurial excellence. The wife of Abdullah ibn Masud met her expenses by manufacturing and selling handicrafts. ²⁴Islam sanctions clearly running independent financial and business activities by women. In fact there were many different kinds of jobs during the days of the prophet. Farming, trading, construction, tool making, bread making, teaching, transporting goods, nursing, health care and defense of the nation were the major economic activities.

Apart from recognition of women as an independent human being, Islam has given her a share of inheritance; it allows independent status in earning and economic establishment. Women's economic independence has been mentioned in Quran ²⁵. "Her share is guaranteed by law and its completely hers. No can have any claim on it. The Quran says Men shall have a share in what their parents and kinsmen leave; and women shall have a share in what their parents and kinsmen leave; whether it be little or much, it is legally theirs ²⁶The Prophet is reported to have said the following tradition regarding mothers: Narrated Abu Hurairah A man came to Allah's Messenger! and said "O Allah's Messenger! Who is more entitled to be treated with the best companionship by me? The Prophet said "your mother." The man said, "Who is next The Prophet said, your mother." The man further said, who is next? The Prophet said "your mother" The man asked (for fourth time,) who is next? The Prophet said your father. ²⁷ The Quran reminds ceaselessly that God has created all things in pairs, and for procreation both the sexes are equally indispensable, each one having its particular function. And it proclaims: "unto men a fortune from that which they have earned, and unto women a fortune from that which they have earned." ²⁸

To avoid redundancy Nature has not willed a perfect equality among the two "Sexes, but a complemented distribution of avocations and functions. For instance, it will not be possible for man to conceive a baby; similarly the natural attributes of men cannot be exercised by women. She has a more delicate physical constitution, affecting even the weight of her brain and bones, and she will have a taste more in conformity with the need of the conservation of this delicacy. More robust, man will have greater strength and therefore more endowed to engage in the more painful parts of life. To each will be according to his (or her) requirements, both natural and reasonable. ²⁹If there is a certain natural inequality between the two sexes, in many other aspects of life they resemble each other. Therefore their rights and obligations in these domains will also be similar. This sums up, in a way, the Islamic teaching on woman: She is considered equal to man in certain respects and not so in certain others. This could be understood better in the description of her obligations and her rights. The perfect and complete individuality of the person of the woman is manifest in a most striking manner in the matter of property. According to the Islamic law, the woman possesses a most absolute right over her property.

If she has attained majority, she may dispose of it according to her will without reference to anybody else, whether it be her father, brother, husband or son or any other person. There is no difference in this matter between a man and a woman. The property of a woman cannot be touched even if her husband or father or any other relative has liabilities exceeding his assets. Similarly, these relative? Are not held responsible if she contracts debts. A woman has the same rights as man for acquiring property. She may inherit it, receive it in gift or donation, and earn it by her own work and toil; and all this remains here and hers alone. She is absolute mistress of her property to enjoy it or to give it to whomsoever she likes as a gift, or to dispose of it, by sale or any other legal means, at her will. All these rights are inherent in a woman; there is no question of obtaining them through special contracts, with the husband for instance or by an award depending on somebody else. As far as concern of Islamic feminism, it is difficult to explain to western feminists because a mutual in capability exists between the two no feminist movement can relate to western feminism because of the way feminists formed their groups. Western feminism is groundball in western values, thought, and ideology and those values differ from those of Islam and Arab tradition. Many problems exist as with western feminism and with most concepts and ideas finding a concise definition of Islamic feminism is difficult to define.

It is a feminists discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm. Islamic feminism, which derives its understanding and mandate from the Quran, seeks rights and justice for women, and for men, in the totality of their existence. Islamic feminism is both highly contested and firmly embraced. We are not going to negative criticism on western feminism, merely search out that western feminism has a goal to get all rights of women in every sphere of life, as comparative study Islamic feminism stressed that Islam has already own form consulate women in Islam have equal access to health and other social security and welfare services. It is needed to implement in Muslim society, followed by Islamic constitute not by followed by cultural and norms. The Islam gives detailed commandments regarding women and also lay down clear guidelines for the relationship between man and women. The following quotations from the Quran and Sunah highlight the most important aspects of feminism criticism and the standing which a women should have vis-à-vis her husband and father. Treat them with kindness; for even if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike a thing which Allah has meant for your own abundant good.³⁰ Women shall with justice have rights similar to those exercised against them, although men have a degree (of advantage) above women.

Allah is mighty and wise.³¹ Men shall have a share in That their parents and kinsmen leave; whether it be little or much, it is legally theirs.³² And among His signs this, that he created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts)³³ Those that do evil shall be rewarded with like evil; but those that have faith and do good works, both men and women, shall enter the Gardens of Paradise and receive blessings without measure.³⁴ Islamic precepts for men and women are based on their respective, natural constitutions. It is now an established biological fact that there is a difference in their physiological structure, a difference which gears men to work which is external to the name, and women to a life led mainly indoors within the home. This biological difference has not only been the determining factor in the societal division of labor, but has also necessitated the framing of special Islamic laws to ensure justice for both sexes. Here are some verses from the Quran and some traditions which elaborate this point. 'Live with them on a footing of kindness and equity.' If you take a dislike to them, it may well be that you dislike a thing which God has meant for your own abundant good'.³⁵ This verse draws our attention to the fact that nothing is perfect in this world and that apparent imperfection may conceal some virtue.

If in certain respects a woman is imperfect there will be other respects in which she is perfect: It is her plus points, rather than her minus points, on which attention should be focused. Only those can succeed in the outside world that have learned this lesson at home, that is, seeing light where there is darkness and discovering plus point along with minus points. Therein lies the secret of success in the modern world. Islamic democracy believes in courage, convictions, character and noble qualities of head and heart. It believes in cooperation, consensus, conciliation and peaceful coexistence and not cut throat competition, confrontation and conflict. Also in a welfare State and society, ensuring basic needs and human rights to all citizens, the majority and minority. And these are both for women and men. Thus, women are empowered through the basic needs and human rights. Of course there are endless distortions, and deviations which is the focal point of the struggle for the Islamic Human Rights of Women as granted by the Quran and Sunah and the U.N charter to the extent that it conforms to Islam. In Quran "O mankind! We have created you male and female, and made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. Lo! The noblest of you in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct.Lo! Allah is knower, aware."³⁶ In modern times, as a result of perverted thinking, managing a home is considered inferior to work done outside the home. But Islam gives the same place of honor to both kinds of work, it being a fact that both are equally important. On this score, neither man nor woman need have superiority or an inferiority complex.³⁷

In view of the divine law of balance, let us consider the relationship between man and woman. According to divine law, this relationship was set up on the principle of the division of labor, i.e. it is the responsibility of the man to carry out tasks outside the home, while the woman takes charge of tasks within the home. The Quran status that "men are the protectors and maintainers of women."³⁸ This do not make a man a woman's superior, or her master. This only means that in running a home and bringing up a family, it is for the man, with his more active capabilities, to earn a living, deal with all official matters, and, when called upon, defend his country. A man is by nature more suited to such tasks, and that is why it is in the nature of things that they should be his responsibilities and not woman's, the word "qawwam" in the above verse, is an intensive form of qa'im meaning, "one who is responsible for or take care of a thing or a person."³⁹ Thus the use of this word is indicative of the wisdom of the division of labor rather than the superiority of man over woman.

It should be conceded that if the woman finds herself in a position of responsibility in running the home, it is because her more passive nature, her talent for bow should tasks, her gentleness and affection all fit her admirably for domesticity, to which she is certainly better adapted than her male counterpart. Since time immemorial life had been equably systemized by this division of labor. Earning a living had most often meant hunting, farming, fishing, working in orchards, transporting merchandise for barter or trading, all tasks physically difficult to perform, and, therefore, better and more easily done by men. While men were thus engaged, it was simply more practical for women to stay at home and manage the household. But with the advent of the industrial revolution, condition were created which tended to break up this natural order, for now jobs came into existence which, to some extent, were suitable for women, and, since tradition in western countries did not require women to segregate themselves from men and live in seclusion, they came out of their homes and began working in offices and factories.

Gradually, the traditional pattern of living began to change. Men were no longer the sole breadwinners: women had begun to share that responsibility. With economic independence came the realization in women that they should "break out of the shackles forged for them by men" to make new and independent lives for themselves. This trend in thinking eventually paved the way for the women's liberation movement. Since feminism was given its first impetus by the industrial revolution, "women's lib" began in those countries where industrialization had first made its appearance. The first noteworthy book to demand equal rights for women was published in London in 1792. Authored by Mary Wollstonecraft, it was entitled, "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman." The industrial revolution came later to America and that is why the women's liberation movement did not begin there until the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ with the progress of the industrial revolution, women's liberation gained momentum, reaching its zenith in the 20th century. The upholders of feminist movement maintained that the cause of the difference existing between men and women in societies with ancient traditions lay not in nature but in a manmade social framework. Their contention was that a woman could do anything that a man could do but that outdated social customs prevented her that a man prevented her from coming into her own. They held that, once given the opportunity to demonstrate her capabilities, a woman would be able to work shoulder to shoulder with men in even walk of life.

In no respect would she lag behind. This movement is now over two hundred years old and, in modern developed countries, it has been so successful that neither the law nor tradition now places the slightest obstacle in the path of women who wish to step into the shoes of men. Yet women still lag far behind men, there being very few instances of their having actually placed themselves on an equal footing with them. In the economic sphere women who work outside the home are heavily concentrated in the lowest paying work and that having the lowest status. Women also earn less than men in the same kinds of jobs. The median pay of women workers in the U.S. was 60 percent that of men in 1982. In Japan the percentage of average pays was 55. Politically, women are greatly underrepresented in national and local government and in political parties.⁴¹ Today the social boundaries set by time honoured conventions have broken down, and all countries now have laws favoring equality of the sexes. Yet modern woman still finds herself on a lower rung than man, not having been able to achieve equal status in any of the economically or professionally important areas of modern living. This state of affairs would appear to indicate that, contrary to the women's 'libbers' way of thinking, social conditioning cannot be blamed for the centuries old difference in the status of men and women. If this had been so, surely by the end of the 20th century women would have been enjoying an equal status with men. Obviously, we must search for the reasons elsewhere.

Women possess an independent entity of her own in Islam. Because of marriage neither her personality gets dissolved altogether nor merged in the personality of her husband nor does she become his property, subservient or servant. If marriage brings some new responsibilities to her it simultaneously empowers her with some new rights. Just as she cannot refuse the responsibilities of the conjugally life, so she cannot be deprived of her rights as a wife. As a mother of fact, her rights coexist with her responsibilities and not in isolation from each other. The status of woman in Islam constitutes no problem. The attitude of the Quran and the early Muslims bear witness to the fact that woman is, at least, as vital to life as man himself, and that she is not inferior to him nor is she one of the lower species. Had it not been for the impact of foreign cultures and alien influences, this question would have never arisen among the Muslims. The status of woman was taken for granted to be equal to that of man. It was a matter of course. A matter all act and no one then, considered it as a problem at all. In order to understand what Islam has established for woman, there is no need to deplore her plight in the pre-Islamic era or in the modern world of today,

Islam has given woman rights and privileges which she has never enjoyed under other religious or constitutional systems. This can be understood when the matter is studied as a whole in a comparative manner, rather than partially. The rights and responsibilities of a woman are equal to those of a man but they are not necessarily identical with them. Equality and sameness are two quite different things. This difference is understandable because man and woman are not identical but they are created equals. With this distinction in mind. There is no problem. It is almost impossible to find even two women identical men or women, with this distinction between equality and sameness is of paramount importance; (quality is desirable. just. fair; but sameness is not.) People are not created identical but they are created equals. With this distinction in mind. There is no room to imagine that woman is inferior to man. There is no ground to assume that she is less important than he just because tier rights are not identically the same as his. Had her status been identical with his? She would have been simply a duplicate of him, which she is not. The fact that Islam gives her equal rights but not identical shows that it takes her into due consideration, acknowledges her and recognizes her independent personality.

The status of woman in Islam is something unique, something novel something that has no similarity in any other system. If we look to the Eastern Communist world or to the democratic nations, we find that woman is not really in a happy position. Her status is not enviable. She has to work so hard to live and sometimes she may be doing the same job that a man does but her wage is less than his. She enjoys a kind of liberty, which in some cases amounts to libertinism. To get to where she is nowadays, woman struggled hard for decades and centuries. To gain her right of learning and the freedom of work and earning, she had to offer painful sacrifices and give up many other natural rights. To establish her status as a human being possessing a soul. She paid heavily. Yet in spite of all these costly sacrifices and painful struggles, she has not acquired what Islam has established by a Divine decree for the Muslim woman. The rights of woman of modern times were not granted voluntarily or out of kindness to the female. Modern woman reached her present position by force, and not through natural processes or mutual consent or Divine teachings. She had to force her way. And various circumstances came to her aid. Shortage of manpower during wars, pressure of economic needs and requirements of industrial developments forced woman to get out other home to work, to learn, to struggle for her livelihood, to appear as an equal to man, to run her race in the course of life side by side with him.

She was forced by circumstances and in turn she forced herself through and acquired her new status. Whether all women were pleased with these circumstances being on their side, and whether they are happy and satisfied with the results of this course is a different matter. But the fact remains that whatever rights modern woman enjoys fall short of those of her Muslim counterpart. The legal rights and obligations of women in Islam are one such vital issue, where thoughtful discussion is needed and is of much greater benefit than emotional judgment alone. There is need to improve our understanding of the many aspects in their proper perspective, both as Muslims in particulars, and as an international community of mankind at large. Most women today exercise the right of freedom to go out independently, to work and earn, to pretend to be equal to man. But this, sadly enough, is at the expense of their families. This all known and obvious Islamic feminism stressed the equality of both sexes in rights, following mentioned verse of Quran proved the right of equality of both sexes. And women have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable. Western feminism with its emphasis on the total equality of the sexes, results in women striving to be "Super human" and, in the process, losing much of their effort whilst taking on more burdens. The success of the women's liberation movement was not even in all western nations in American setting, women are still struggling for greater gains.

The latest legal reform is constitutional amendment known as the Equal Rights Amendment, which states that "Equality of rights under the law shall not be demanded by the United States or by any state on the basis of gender."⁴² Women activists as Muslim feminists also use Islamic sources, Quran and Sunna, but their aim is to show that the discourse of equality between man and women is valid, within Islam. Muslim feminists also try to steer a middle course between interpretations of sociopolitical cultural realities according to Islam and human rights discourses. "The scarcity of works that challenge the underlying paradigmatic basis of Islamic thought for the absence of gender, as a principle category of Islamic thought and as an aspect of analysis in the articulation of Islamic ideals, could not be more glaring."⁴³ In the last decade, when humankind entered into the twenty-first century, Muslim women and men were already fervently engaged in discourses, activities, and developments in a struggle for greater justice in Islamic thought and philosophy. The terms of this "greater justice" imply a belief that Islam, as an historical movement starting over fourteen centuries ago, was intended to establish and sustain a just social order. At different times throughout its past, it was successful in meeting that intention in many ways.

It also met some failures. From both its successes and failures we learn that neither justice nor Islamic thought is static. Consistently, the Islamic justice tradition refers to two predetermined sources, the Quran, as revelation from God, and the Sunah, normative practices of the Prophet Muhammad ^(PUBH) who received that revelation. These have been the foundation for continued debate, interpretation, re-interpretation, contestation, and implementation. Their continuity as references does not keep even these sources static. To continue with successful advancement and progress toward competing ideas that have developed about justice through this complex time in human history also requires thorough and ongoing re-examination of ideas of justice and their manifest forms as understood by engaging meaningfully with the Islamic intellectual tradition. This must be done in concert with ongoing interpretation of the two predetermined sources along with modern global discourse and civilization movements. (for a discussion of this aspect of Islamic tradition see Dr. Lubna Abid Ali, "Unity In Diversity" *Journal of Asian Civilization* xxx no.1 (July 2007) Gender justice is but one, albeit significant, aspect of that re-examination. Some would assert that the very idea of gender justice, as first conceived and exerted as crucial to society, along with particular practices of gender inclusiveness and mainstreaming, as well as the essential integration of gender as a category of thought, are Western ideals.

It is also considered as juxtaposition to certain central ideas and practices throughout Islamic history. Others have rushed to conclude that gender justice is impossible in Islam, as feminism originating from the West and therefore incongruent with Islamic tradition and Practices. The increased participation of women in these activities indicates a movement toward a critical mass building a variegated movement of gender empowerment, mainstreaming, and reform, including consciousness-raising, increased levels of education, promotion and protection of the rights of girls and women, movements to protect and eradicate violence against women, affirmations of women's bodily integrity, policy reforms, political empowerment and representation, religious authority, and personal spiritual wholeness.⁴⁴ Feminist movements also started in the Islamic countries, calling for improvement of the status women in society. Feminist movement in an Islamic setting has been less dramatic and far less militant than their counterpart in the west. This was not merely because of lesser educational attainment by the Muslim women. The objects of the women's movement in most Muslim settings have been to provide greater opportunities for the education of girls, better training of women in various areas, guidance in family planning, efforts greater participation in social welfare work and the efforts toward the realization of national goals.

In many Muslim societies, the belief that international standards for women's rights conflict with shari'ah is strong and pervasive. This extends to the idea that women's human rights, and efforts to promote them, are 'un-Islamic' or even 'anti-Islamic'. Thus, resistance (official and popular) to reform shari'ah, whose sources are regarded as divine, in order to accommodate international legal standards can be mounted and justified as a refusal to sacrifice or subordinate the sacred to the secular. What this reflects is not an unyielding or inflexible commitment to religion per se, but a responsive influence of conservative ideologies and interpretations of religious prescriptions about gender and family relations in the face of sweeping social transformations that characterize modernization. Although Islamic rules have been reinterpreted, modified, or simply treated as inapplicable when dealing with changing circumstances in such issues as slavery and modern commercial practices, no such flexibility has been shown with regard to women's rights. For women, the trend of interpretation has worked almost exclusively in the opposite direction.⁴⁵ The assertion on the part of governments that religious beliefs and jurisprudence justify the disregard for international legal standards illustrates persisting and onerous obstacles to women's rights.

On the one hand, under international law the sovereign prerogatives of states do provide for autonomy and independence on the legal character of rights within a country. On the other, the international nature of human rights standards and the jurisdiction of international law obligate states to conform under the doctrine of state responsibility. Indeed, the rights and responsibilities of states are legally subject to the requirements and restrictions enshrined in international law. Indeed, Islamic feminism works in ways that may be emblematic of post colonial women's jockeying for space and power through the construction and manipulation of apparently incompatible, contradictory identities and positions. The term "Islamic feminist" invites us to consider what it means to have a difficult double commitment, on the one hand, to a faith position, and on the other hand, to women's rights both inside the home and outside. The label Islamic feminist brings together two epithets whose juxtaposition describes the emergence of a new, complex self-positioning that celebrates multiple belongings. To call on self an Islamic feminist is not to describe a fixed identity but to create a new, contingent subject position.⁴⁶ As for as concern western European feminism has set agendas for non-discriminatory practices in education and employment.

It has argued for women's greater access to educational institutions and at the student level and the low rungs of academia, women have gradually found entry. Trends for equalization between sexes in educational institutions have slowly begun to materialize, but the successful translation from educational equality of opportunity into equality in the employment market is yet to be made and its story is one of puzzling complexity. With the economic boom period of several western European countries in the 1950s and 1960s, greater participation by women was welcomed.⁴⁷ In recent years a rich literature has developed around the relationship of gender and ideology. Many feminists in the Muslim world have specifically taken up the issue of women and religion. Writers such as Fatima Mernissi, Nawal el Saadawi, Farah Aziri, Leila Ahmad, Aar Tabari and Nal-lid Yahganeh are but a few. They have been among the forerunners in questioning the nature of the relationship between gender construction, religion (focusing on Islam) and society. Women in much of the world lack support for fundamental functions of a human life. They are less well nourished than men, less healthy, more vulnerable to physical violence and sexual abuse.

They are much less likely than men to be literate, and still less likely to have paraprofessional or technical education. Should they attempt to enter the work-place, they face greater obstacles, including intimidation from family or spouse, sex discrimination in hiring, and sexual harassment in the work-place all, frequently, without effective legal recourse. Similar obstacles often impede their effective participation in political life. Although all religions were initially founded with the aim of purifying men and women and helping them to lead ethical lives through prayer, it was found in some instances that blind traditions, customs and superstition often resulted in – not the cathartic effects of religion but the spread of communalism, fanaticism fundamentalism and discrimination. No doubt feminists' efforts to attain equal rights of women. When we search out the depth of Islamic feminism, so we have concluded in accordance with the dictates of the Quran and Hadith encouraging women to develop all aspects of their personality. Their much more contribution in religious studies this was the favourite subject for women in early Islam, and a considerable number of Muslim women managed to become notable figures among traditionists and jurists.

On the top of the list was Aisha, the wife of the prophet she was well renewed scholar of her time. She was great credited with thousands of traditions received directly from the prophet and is to the present day considered a great authority on Islamic jurisprudence. Remarkable feminist revolution of Islam, a noblest example of daughter's of Prophet (PBUH). Fatima, when Muhammad was on his deathbed he called for a scribe to record his wishes, presumably in connection with his succession. She calls the unbearable feminist revolution of Islam when she made women inherit, giving daughters the right to part of their father's property. Women were consulted at all levels in the period of prophet's and his companions. For example the prophet used to receive delegations of women presenting their cases to him. Among them was Asma bint Yazid al-Ansari, who used to speak and urge on behalf of her fellow Muslim women.

Conclusion

Above discussion has proved that Liberal feminists struggle to have women's equality with men recognized and actualized within society as it exists. Cultural feminists work for societal recognition of what they consider women's unique and important role as nurturer. Many other feminists seek to transform society into one in which roles and relations based on gender are deconstructed and rebuilt in a more egalitarian manner. Some feminists emphasize essential similarities between women. Others focus on difference. Comparison was taken into account between Western and Islamic feminist view of thought. The goal of Western feminism is to obtain full human rights for women in every sphere of life. Islam has established for woman is that which suits her nature, gives her full security and protects her against disgraceful circumstances and uncertain channels of life. We do not need here to elaborate on the status of modern woman and the risks she runs to make her living or establish herself. We do not even need to explore the miseries and setbacks that encircle her as a result of the so-called rights of woman. Nor do we intend to manipulate the situation of many unhappy homes which break because of the very "freedom" and "rights" of which modern woman is proud. Comparative study reveals that Islamic feminism stresses that Islam has already its own concepts of women's equality in all fields. It is needed to change societal attitudes and to focus on the implementation of gender equality. Theoretically, women are granted exceptional economic, social, political and work opportunity rights, but findings reveal that the percentage of women in trade, business etc. is not on a large scale in Pakistan.

End Notes

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Finally, a comparative analysis of the Islamic feminist and traditional Shi'i approaches is presented within the framework of the 'mega-method'. Throughout the paper, Qur'an 4:34 is used as the common reference point for illustrating how the methods and approaches under consideration are applied by their advocates. First, I argue for historical contextualization of the Qur'an as a given historical collection of discourses propagated by Muhammad as divine inspiration. Secondly, I argue for a distinction between the Qur'an and Islam, since the latter is the outcome of human efforts to construct their lives in accordance with what they understood to be the teachings of the Qur'an. Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical, fictional, or philosophical discourse. It aims to understand the nature of gender inequality. It examines women's and men's social roles, experiences, interests, chores, and feminist politics in a variety of fields, such as anthropology and sociology, communication, media studies, psychoanalysis, home economics, literature, education, and philosophy.