

WOMEN IN THE QUR'ANIC COSMIC (MURTAḌĀ MUṬAHHARĪ'S INTERPRETATION OF WOMEN IN THE QUR'AN)

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Abstract:

The background for this research stems from a lack of studies on the Murtaḍā Muṭahharī's paradigm and interpretation of women in the Qur'an. The purpose of this study is to present Murtaḍā Muṭahharī's ideas on women from the perspective of the Qur'an. Additionally, it aims to neutralize and reduce biased opinions about women and encourage more research on the views of scholars who hold a moderate-progressive paradigm regarding women and their relationships with men. The main source used in this study is Muṭahharī's work entitled "The Rights of Women in Islam". The research method employed was library research, with a philosophical approach. Two results of this study: firstly, according to Muṭahharī's comprehensive paradigm of the relationship between men and women, the Quran treats men and women equally as human beings while acknowledging their differences. This influences the rights and responsibilities assigned to each gender. Secondly, the study focused on Muṭahharī's perspective on women in the Quran. He believed that a woman (Hawa) was not created from a part of a man's (Adam) body but rather from the same essence as a man. Women have the same spiritual potential as men towards Al-Ḥaq (Allah swt.) and their role is not to serve men, but to work alongside them as partners.

Keywords: *Murtaḍā Muṭahharī; Women; Qur'anic Exegesis*

Abstrak:

Latar belakang dari penelitian ini adalah masih minimnya kajian tentang paradigma dan interpretasi Murtaḍā Muṭahharī tentang perempuan dalam al-Qur'an. Adapun tujuan dari penelitian ini di antaranya: mengintrodusir pemikiran Muṭahharī tentang perempuan dalam perspektif al-Qur'an, juga untuk menetralsir serta meminimalisir pandangan bias terhadap perempuan dengan memperbanyak kajian pemikiran ulama yang berparadigma moderat-progresif. Referensi primer yang dijadikan sebagai rujukan pada penelitian ini adalah karya Muṭahharī yang berjudul The Rights of Women in Islam. Library research adalah metode yang dipakai dalam penelitian ini, dengan pendekatan filosofis. Hasil dari penelitian ini: pertama, yang terkait paradigma Muṭahharī secara komprehensif tentang relasi laki-laki dan perempuan: bahwa al-Qur'an memandang laki-laki dan perempuan secara adil, keduanya merupakan dua kesatuan yang memiliki perbedaan sekaligus kesetaraan sebagai manusia, hal ini berimbas pada bentuk serta pelaksanaan hak dan kewajiban masing masing.

Kesimpulan yang kedua terkait tema yang dikaji tentang perempuan dalam al-Qur'an perspektif Muṭahharī: perempuan (Hawa) tidak tercipta dari salah satu bagian tubuh laki-laki (Adam), tetapi keduanya tercipta dari satu esensi yang sama. Perempuan memiliki kemampuan spiritualitas menuju Al-Ḥaq (Allah swt) seperti halnya laki-laki, dan kodrat perempuan bukan untuk melayani laki-laki, tetapi saling bekerja sama sebagai mitra antar keduanya.

Kata Kunci: Murtaḍā Muṭahharī, Perempuan, Tafsir Al-Qur'an

INTRODUCTION

The Quran, as a religious text and the central scripture of the Islamic faith, transcends being merely a compendium of Islamic laws or a mere compilation of commands and prohibitions without any explanation. In addition to formulating rules of behavior in the form of law, the Quran also explores various situations and cases relevant to existence and life. In his exposition, Murtaḍā Muṭahharī begins by conveying the content or substance of the Quran when explaining the position of women in Islam.

Muṭahharī further explained that the Qur'an expresses explicit views on three main topics of philosophy: the universe, humanity, and society. Through its portrayal of creation, the Qur'an provides a unique lens through which to view the nature of humanity, the world, and life. One of the most notable aspects of this interpretation is the Qur'an's treatment of gender relations, particularly concerning women and men.

Muṭahharī was a highly regarded Shia scholar and esteemed writer from Iran, holding a prominent position among Islamic writers in the country. Muṭahharī's expertise in both religious (particularly philosophy) and modern knowledge is apparent in his diverse body of work, including his publications on women. This is evidenced by his three notable works on the topic: *The Rights of Women in Islam*, *Sexual Ethics in Islam and in the Western World*, and *The Islamic Hijab*.

Muṭahharī's thought were a reaction to the Westernization of Eastern society and the Islamic world, which was perceived as damaging to Islam's existence at the time. Muṭahharī's paradigm provides an explanation of women in historical reality and a clear understanding of women's rights in Islam.

Muṭahharī's criticism of Western thought is quite sharp, for example, regarding the rights and obligations of men and women. According to him, men and women have different natures and essences, which means that they cannot have the same rights, obligations, and punishments in many matters. This perspective contrasts the Western world's approach, which aims to create parity, uniformity, and sameness between men and women, disregarding their natural and innate differences. This is where the Islamic view differs from the Western view.

The aforementioned scientific considerations were taken into account when selecting Murtaḍā Muṭahharī as the character of focus in this research. According to Abdul Mustaqim, several factors must be considered when conducting character research,

which include the character's popularity, distinctiveness or uniqueness, intensity, and contribution to the theme being studied or researched.

Other than that, based on *Dirāsah Sābiqah* (Previous Research), several studies have examined Murtaḍā Muṭahharī's perspective on women, including: Sareh Ardeshidr Larijany , Sareh Larijani , Sri Rahmadani P. , Zainal Abidin , Skar Putri . It appears that Muṭahharī's interpretation of women in the Quran has yet to be extensively explored. Based on the scientific works mentioned earlier, it appears that most of these works only provide a general overview of Muṭahharī's paradigm concerning the relationship between men and women. Therefore, these scientific works do not present a clear and distinct paradigm of the theme of women in the context of the Qur'an.

Thus, after conducting a thorough review of previous literature, this research entitled "Women in the Qur'anic Cosmic (Murtaḍā Muṭahharī's Interpretation of Women in the Qur'an)" is considered to have a novelty value and a significant contribution, particularly in the field of Quranic interpretation., Therefore, it is academically feasible to be studied and presented as a scientific work.

This scientific work is based on library research. The research material primarily consists of books written by Muṭahharī, which have been collected and analyzed in detail. This research focuses on women, and the method used is the descriptive-analytical approach. This method involves first describing the basic construction of Muṭahharī's thoughts on women from the Quran's perspective, then analyzing them critically to uncover the roots of his ideas. The positive aspects of his thoughts are also highlighted, including their implications. The philosophical approach is used to trace Muṭahharī's paradigm of women in the Quran and examine the originality and fundamental structures of his thoughts.

Biographical Sketch of Murtaḍā Muṭahharī

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī is a contemporary-legendary Iranian scholar, philosopher, and one of the prominent figures of the country's Islamic revolution. He was born on February 2, 1919, in the village of Fariman in Iran's Khurasan province. Muṭahharī's family adheres to the Shia *Isna Asy'ariyah Uṣūliya'* School. His father was a great Shia scholar, named Muḥammad Ḥusein Muṭahharī. Muṭahharī learned the basic Islamic sciences from his father and a traditional madrasah in Fariman.

In 1932, Muṭahharī pursued religious studies at Masyhad Ḥauzah , where he developed a keen interest in philosophy and ‘Irfān. In 1936, Muṭahharī moved from Masyhad to study at the Qom Ḥauzah, where he settled one year later and developed a great appreciation for philosophy. Muṭahhari extensively studied philosophy under Sayyid Muhammad Husein Thaba’thaba’i, who introduced him to various philosophical thoughts ranging from Aristotle to Sartre. Muṭahharī also studied philosophy, fiqh, uṣūl fiqh, and ‘irfān under the guidance of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Like his teacher, Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Muṭahharī had the ability to master various sciences. He was enthusiastic about studying modern science, yet he was neither inferior nor embarrassed to introduce Islamic philosophy. This is evidenced by his critical analysis of modern Western thought, which has earned him the reputation of being one of the leading critics of Western philosophy at that time.

He not only explored various disciplines but sought mastery in them all. His dedication to religious studies made Muṭahharī a mujtahid in tafsīr, fiqh, uṣūl fiqh, Philosophy, and ‘irfān. In 1953, Muṭahharī established an esteemed religious institution, known as the Madrasa-yi Marvi, where he imparted his knowledge of philosophy to Iranian Islamic youth. This religious school provided a platform for students to learn and gain expertise in Islamic religious sciences, particularly philosophy. He also taught at the University of Tehran's Faculty of Theology and Islamic Sciences and served as chairman of the philosophy department. In 1954 he was designated as a professor of philosophy.

Apart from teaching and giving lectures in various places, Muṭahharī was also active in journalistic activities. He began writing for the philosophy journal Al-Ḥikmah in 1953 and his writings were well-received by the public due to their brilliant ideas and thoughts. As a result, he became a renowned author. Muṭahharī was actively involved in politics with Imam Khomeini. However, he was imprisoned in 1963 for supporting the opposition. Later, when Imam Khomeini was exiled to Turkey, He was released. Imam Khomeini then instructed him to lead the Iranian revolution, which the clerics and the Iranian people supported. He always sought advice from Imam Khomeini, especially on important political issues, before making any policy decisions.

Prior to the victory of the Islamic revolution in Iran, Muṭahharī was authorized by Imam Khomeini to form and lead the Mujahideen clerical community, as well as the head the revolutionary council. Following the successful overthrow of the Pahlevi government

by the Islamic revolution, he remained an unwavering supporter of Imam Khomeini and continued to serve as the leader of the Iranian revolutionary council.

Political opponents from the Furqon group assassinated Muṭahharī on May 1, 1979. His death was announced on May 2, 1979, through radio broadcasters. His body was taken to various locations for prayers, including Tehran University and Qom. To commemorate him, a poster was created with his image and the words of the Prophet: "The ink of a scholar is better than the fresh blood of a martyr". Despite being an active politician and preoccupied with the struggle of the Iranian Revolution, Muṭahharī was also a prolific scholar who managed to write numerous books. His work was highly regarded, and he was recognized as a contemporary scholar at an international level. Some of his notable works include: Rights of Women in Islam; An Introduction to 'Ilm Kalam; An Introduction to 'Irfān; History and Human Evolution; Human Being in the Quran; On the Islamic al-Hijab; Philosophy; Respecting Rights and Despising the World; Sexual Etichs in Islam and in the Western World; An Introduction to the Qur'an.

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī's Paradigm of Women in the Qur'an

Muṭahharī's perspective on the roles and relationships of men and women is exemplified through a phrase derived from Q.S. Yāsīn: 40, which states that "Women and men are two stars in two different orbits". In his explanation of a particular verse, Muṭahharī sheds light on the importance of maintaining the natural order in the relationship between men and women. According to him, the well-being of both genders and indeed of human society as a whole is that each individual stays true to their inherent nature and direction. He emphasizes that while freedom and equality are important, they only bring benefits as long as they are exercised within the boundaries of one's natural orbit and direction.

Muṭahharī adds his interpretation of how the Qur'an views the relationship between genders that the Qur'an, at the time of its revelation, took a long step forward for the benefit of women and women's rights as human beings. The Qur'an did not disregard the femininity of women or the masculinity of men. Instead, it aimed to elevate women to the status of human beings and make them equal partners with men in terms of their human qualities, conditions, and rights. In other words, Muṭahharī believes the Qur'an portrays women following their inherent nature. He emphasizes that the laws of

the Qur'an and the laws of nature are in perfect harmony, meaning that the Qur'an and nature's verses are in sync with each other.

Muṭahharī further said that Islam never justifies the view or attitude of privileging men and discriminating against women. However, Islam does not support the idea of equal rights for both genders. He clarified that Islam does not give equal rights to men and women in everything or impose the same laws and duties on men and women in all circumstances. Although women do not have equal rights as men in everything, that does not mean that the rights reserved for women are of lesser value.

In academic terminology, Muṭahharī argues that equality and freedom for both men and women are fundamental human rights. According to him, these rights are based on the fact that all human beings, including women, are created free. The principles of equality and freedom are enshrined in the status of human beings as such, and women are entitled to enjoy the same rights as men. However, Muṭahharī also warned that women are human beings who have certain conditions, while men are human beings who have certain conditions that are different from women. Women and men are human beings with distinct conditions. They share equal standing as human beings but possess different psychological and characteristic traits. These differences are not caused by social, historical, or geographical factors but rather are inherent in the natural design of the cosmos, as decreed by the Creator.

Muṭahharī suggests that recognizing the inherent nature of both genders and acknowledging their equality as human beings, along with the universal rights of all individuals, can result in a favorable and empowering position for women. This approach can prevent the oppression of their individuality and personality. Muṭahharī highlights again the need to re-examine women's rights in both the household and society. He asserts that past and current assessments of this issue are inadequate and incomplete. The divine nature should serve as the guiding principle, while past and present experiences, whether positive or negative, must be taken into account. If this task is accomplished, justice and equality between men and women will be achieved following Islamic teachings.

RESULTS

Entity and existence of women in the Qur'an

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī raises an essential point about women in the Qur'an: the creation of women and men. He argues that the Qur'an has expressed its stance on women, and one of the topics it covers is this issue. In his explanation, Muṭahharī cites several verses from the Qur'an to support his statements. One such verse is al-Nisā' verse 1: "We created woman from the nature of man and the same essence as the essence of man." About the creation of Prophet Adam (peace be upon him), he says that the Qur'an explicitly states: "Who created you from a single essence and created from it his spouse." Muṭahharī continued, also In other verses and at various places in the Qur'an, Allah swt. has said: "Allah swt. created your partners from your kind."

In his interpretation of this, Muṭahharī asserts that no evidence or indication in the Qur'an suggests women were created from an inferior variety compared to men. Furthermore, there is no indication that women were given a parasitic and inferior status. It is also worth noting that there is no mention of Adam's spouse, Eve, being created from one of the left parts of Adam's body.

In conclusion, Muṭahharī contends that within Islam, as expressed in the Qur'an, women are not viewed in a diminishing manner with regard to their inherent qualities or innate makeup. Thus, the Qur'an does not hold any negative views about women based on their essential or fundamental nature.

Women's Spirituality in the Qur'an

During this discussion, Murtaḍā Muṭahharī offers examples of female figures who have achieved immortality within the pages of the Qur'an. These examples include the wife of Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him), the mother of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), the mother of Prophet Isa (peace be upon him), and the wife of Pharaoh. Furthermore, Muṭahharī draws attention to female figures from the era of the Companions, such as Sayyidah Khadijah ra. and Sayyidah Fatimah ra.

Muṭahharī explains this more clearly by conveying Q.S. al-Qaṣaṣ verse 7. According to him, in this verse, the Qur'an shows that Maryam has reached such a high spiritual level. So, the Qur'an portrays angels lovingly visiting her in the mihrab and conversing with her. Muṭahharī states that the mention of these figures demonstrates the Qur'an's deliberate attempt to maintain a balance between men and women in history. It supports the idea

that women have played important roles in history and that their contributions should not be overlooked.

Muṭahharī raises several concerns and biases regarding women's spirituality, including the demeaning view and misconception that women are the source of sin and temptation and that they are unable to achieve closeness to Allah swt. or reach spiritual enlightenment, like men. Additionally, it is suggested that Satan uses women to deceive men into sin.

However, these issues are refuted by Muṭahharī by giving the example of the story of Adam and Eve enshrined in the Qur'an. The Qur'ān, according to Muṭahharī, does not portray Eve as the main responsible culprit and does not absolve Adam of his sin. The Qur'an says: "Hey Adam, dwell you and your wife in paradise and eat from wherever you wish." (Q.S. al-A'rāf: 19).

Wherever the Qur'an describes the topic of Satan's temptation, it employs a distinctive method of referring to both actors using dual pronouns. For instance, in Q.S. al-A'rāf: 20: "Satan tempted them both.", and Q.S. al-A'rāf: 22: "Setan membujuk mereka dengan tipu daya." "Satan enticed them with deceit." Muṭahharī also mentioned Q.S. al-A'rāf: 21: "Satan swore to them both that I am a sincere counselor to you both."

Muṭahharī reiterates that the Qur'an undeniably states that proximity to Allah and the rewards of the afterlife are not contingent on gender but instead on one's faith and deeds, irrespective of whether one is male or female. In addition, the Qur'an explicitly highlights the virtues of both genders, not just men, emphasizing that piety and good conduct are qualities exhibited by women as well as men.

Muṭahharī further describes by stating that the Qur'an does not differentiate between men and women in their journey as fellow servants from the world to Al-Ḥaq (the truth, namely Allah swt.). According to him, Islam only makes a distinction between men and women in terms of prophethood. He asserts that Islam recognizes men as more suitable to hold the prophetic message.

The Nature of Women in the Qur'an

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī's views on the role and nature of women in a patriarchal culture are biased and limiting. Women are regarded as a means of producing offspring and have no meaningful role in bringing offspring into the world.

However, these issues for Muṭahharī are not aligned with the teachings of Islam. The Qur'an emphasizes that the earth, sky, clouds, wind, plants, and animals are all created for human beings and that men and women were created for each other. The Qur'an never suggests that women were created solely for the benefit of men but instead emphasizes the mutual dependence of men and women, as found in Q.S. al-Baqarah 187.

According to Muṭahharī, it is essential to note that the Qur'an does not consider women as mere parasites of male existence when referring to the creation of men and women. He strongly emphasizes that there is not even a hint, evidence, or reflection of such views or ideas in the Qur'an's rules and verses regarding men and women.

In contrast, the Qur'an explicitly states that women are a blessing and grace for men. It further adds that women are a source of solace and comfort for men. Moreover, Muṭahharī notes that the union between husband and wife, which is the foundation of their togetherness, is not just about fulfilling carnal desires. Instead, it is a bond that is more significant and vital than mere lust. The Qur'an refers to this bond as *mawaddah dan rahmat* in Q.S. al-Rūm 21, highlighting the importance and value of the relationship between husband and wife.

Muṭahharī argues that it is misleading if relations and interactions between men and women are based on exploitation and domination to the detriment of one of them. He asserts that it is clear from a philosophical point of view as well as from the Qur'anic explanation that Islam does not hold a demeaning view of women. Instead, the religion aims to eliminate biased views and discriminatory practices that place women in subordinate and inferior positions.

CONCLUSION

Murtaḍā Muṭahharī is a contemporary Iranian scholar known for his progressive ideas regarding women and their relationship with men. Besides being concerned with philosophy, Muṭahharī also mastered religious subjects such as *tafsir* and applied his knowledge to analyze the issue of women with a unique perspective grounded in the Qur'an. In his book, "The Rights of Women in Islam," he devotes a particular chapter to this topic.

Muṭahharī is able to implement universal messages in al-Qur'anic texts, namely justice and equality, to counter biased views of women. He argues that discrimination,

exploitation, and subordination of women must be avoided. By conveying relevant Qur'anic verses, Muṭahharī highlights the importance of implementing these values in society.

The basic premise owned by Muṭahharī about women and their relationship with men is that the Qur'an has made it clear that women and men are two distinct entities originating from the same source. Each has its own unique characteristics and peculiarities that cannot be compared. This difference, as Muṭahharī believes, influences their rights and responsibilities.

For Muṭahharī, the difference between the two must be based on justice and equality as well as cooperation or partnership in life together. Gender should not be a determining factor for the quality of an individual. Instead, Muṭahharī asserts that the Qur'an emphasizes that both men and women are judged on the quality of faith and righteous deeds and their ability to realize them in an attitude of taqwa.

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