Muslim Women Seeking Power, Muslim Youth Seeking Justice

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Studies from Europe, Middle East and Asia

Edited by
Christopher Adam-Bagley
and Mahmoud Abubaker

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List of Acronyms

BEM	Black and Ethnic Minority
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CE	Citizenship Education
CR	Critical Realism
CRE	Commission for Racial Equality
CSEWC	Commercially Sexually Exploited Women and Children
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DCR	Dialectical Critical Realism
DES	Department for/of Education and Science, UK government
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education, UK
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission, UK
HRCP	Human Rights Committee of Pakistan
HRM	Human Relations Management
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICR	Islamic Critical Realism
IDDR-B	International Disease Research Centre of Bangladesh
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LEA	Local Education Authority in UK
LGBI	Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual
LMICs	Low and Middle Income Countries
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification, UK
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education, UK
PSHE	Personal Social and Health Education, UK
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
PVV	Dutch political party of the 'far right'
QCA	Qualifications and Curriculum Authority of UK government
RE	Religious Education
RSE	Religious Studies Education
SCF	Save the Children Fund
STIs	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UAR	United Arab Republic
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNWRA	United Nations Works and Association
WHO	World Health Organisation
WLB	Work Life Balance

FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This is a book of complex and cross-cutting themes, argued and illustrated through different national and local studies in which Muslims and their neighbours of different religious identities or commitments live together: the Islamic-Christian nexus in England and The Netherlands; the Muslim-Jewish nexus in Palestine; and the attempts of the Muslim-majority countries of Bangladesh and Pakistan to construct ethical states based on Islamic principles.

We evaluate the points of tension in these struggles by focussing on the Islamically-expressed aspirations of women and girls, and their hard struggle to achieve rights in education, management and professional roles in developed and developing countries. It is a matter of tragic irony that these rights have least fulfilment in the so-called Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Women in Palestine are achieving equality in business organisations through Islamically developed Work Life Balance policies, and we argue that Muslim women's experience as "strong family managers" is an asset that is fruitfully transferred to the sphere of business and professional life.

In England and The Netherlands, the research for this book shows that Muslim women still face considerable discrimination in seeking employment, in these seemingly liberal cultures. This discrimination applies to Muslim men and boys, as well as to women. The degrees of alienation this generates is, in absolute terms, unknown. But we argue that recent cases of lone terrorism do illustrate these possibilities, and give an account of Salman Abedi, the 2017 Manchester Arena Bomber, whom we knew but were unsuccessful in counselling.

In Bangladesh and Pakistan the widespread practice of child prostitution and sexual assault, child marriage, and female infanticide are a mark of shame, a fundamental denial of Islamic principles. We review localised solutions for these problems, "saving one child at a time."

We offer the Muslim tradition of peace-making and pacificism as a higher order value for human co-existence, and co-operation with Jewish and

Christian cultures in seeking a Critical Realist programme of "absenting" the many crimes which women and children are subjected to in many world cultures, in their journey towards equality and Islamic fulfilment.

We wish to acknowledge the unnamed research students who, quite literally, risked their lives in Pakistan in data collection on which we have drawn. We also thank our daughter Dr. Abbie Vandivere of Amsterdam University, for her assistance and advice in our work in The Netherlands.

Finally, Mahmoud, Wesam and Christopher wish to dedicate this edited work to the futures of their children: Zain, the Manager; Yousef, the Explorer; Mohamed, the Technologist; Khalid, the Scientist; Michael, the Artisan; Daniel, the Traveller; and Abigail, the Artist.

> *Oh Allah, we seek refuge in You, lest we misguide others, or we are misguided by others, lest we cause others to err or we are caused to err, lest we abuse others or be abused, and lest we behave foolishly or meet with foolishness in others.*
> —Hadith of The Blessed Prophet, recorded by Abu Dawud. (Sa'id bin Wahf Al-Qantani, *Fortress of the Muslim*, 2009).

Christopher Adam-Bagley and Mahmoud Abubaker,
Leeds, England, June 2019.

CHAPTER ONE

ISLAMIC ETHICS, SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE – A CRITICAL REALIST PERSPECTIVE AND A FEMINIST VIEWPOINT

CHRISTOPHER ADAM-BAGLEY AND MAHMOUD ABUBAKER

1. Introduction

> *In Islam, women should be free to become educated and to carry on any work they choose and live as equals to men in society … with regard to marriage, mutual consent is an essential aspect.* Fazeel Khan's essay on *The Final Prophet* (2014).

Here is a statement by a female scholar of Islam, which is both simple and profound, and is based on a clear and rigorous reading of The Qur'an (God's Final Message to humanity); and on The Sunnah, the life, teaching and actions of The Final Prophet, Muhammad (pbuh).[1]

We are two Muslims, both male. One of us, Adam is a convert to Islam and continues an exciting journey, discovering each day a new Scripture and a New Prophet; and a field of scholarship, commentary and ethics which brings great joy and meaning to the journey through life along "the straight path" (Esposito, 1998). Mahmoud is a born Muslim and has a name which honours Our Prophet's first companion *Abu Bakr*, the father of Aisha. Aisha was the Prophet's wife, "the red-haired one" to whom we owe so much in

[1] When we mention the name of our Prophet Muhammad, we add the prayer "peace and blessings be upon him", often abbreviated to PBUH, or (pbuh) in brackets. Dear reader, if you are a Muslim, please say this prayer when you say or read The Prophet's name in the text that follows.

the recording of Muhammad's life and teaching, the Hadith and the Sunnah (Eaton, 2008).

How come two men are attempting to offer a feminist approach to Islam? There is no paradox in this, since men and women are equal in Islam, morally, spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. Both men and women (that is, all humans, whether they acknowledge their Islamic heritage, or not) are descended from the creation of the two original human souls: one is the man Adam; the other is the woman Hawa. You and I, dear sisters and brothers, are all descended from these first two humans, created by a God who is neither male nor female, whose infinite being and dimension are beyond human comprehension. We know God only through the 99 names which God has chosen to reveal to us in the final message to The Prophet (Morgan, 2010).

Furthermore: "There does not need to be any gender injustice within Islamic societies, if you can accept the full humanity of women, the full ontological equality of women with men, right from the point of creation." (Kassam, 2014, p. 143) Taj Hashmi (2000) writing about gender justice in Bangladesh argues that patriarchy and subjugation of women has been built into ancient Greek, Hindu, Jewish and Christian theologies: and patriarchy was part of pre-Islamic culture, in which men claimed that their superior power was divinely ordained.

In this view patriarchy is a pre-Islamic cultural institution. We adduce this from the Qur'an's account of Adam and his wife. Hawa (Eve) was created equally with her male partner and was not responsible for initiating 'original sin'. In this Islamic scripture there is no theological justification for women's inequality: Islamic theology is the first set of ideas in human history which introduced gender equality, in any scriptural revelation or human philosophy.

We join with our American sister Chimanda Ngozi Adichie (2014) in affirming *We Should All be Feminists*. And for the sake of our fragile male egos, we also accept the Australian Robert Jensen's arguments in his *End of Patriarchy: Radical Feminism for Men* (2017).

For us, the most exciting trend in Islamic theology of the past three decades has been the detailed examination by feminist exegesis of The Qur'an; the Hadith (verified observations and recordings of the actions and sayings of The Prophet); and the Sunnah, the verified accounts of how The Prophet lived his life according to The Qur'anic message. Since 1980 a brilliant stream of mostly women scholars from the Islamic world, and from universities and institutes in Europe and America have offered us new or

refreshed insights into the meanings of Islam for gender equality[2]. We mention here some of the writings we have studied, and been inspired by: the work of Leila Ahmed (1992), Kecia Ali (2016), Etin Anwar (2006), Asma Barlas (2002), John Esposito (2003), Heba Raouf Ezzat (2007 & 2008); Taj Hashmi (2000); Sherin Khankan (2018); Zayn Kassam (2010 & 2014); Fazeel Khan (2014); Asma Lamrabet (2017); Irshad Manji, 2003 & 2011; Fatima Mernissi (1987 & 1999); and Amina Wadud (1999). Gray (2019) identified 75 women scholars of Islam "teaching from the tent", in various world centres, through electronic media. This growth of scholarship is exponential, extraordinary and exciting.

There is a still, for us, a rich vein of writings in Islamic feminism waiting to be explored – but it is not the purpose of this Chapter to attempt a full review and analysis of this literature. One thing is already very clear however: Islam in no way supports patriarchy, or violence towards women, or the subjugation of women and girls. And like Robert Jensen (2017) we are excited at being able to join a movement which seeks to end the oppressions by patriarchy, not only in Muslim cultures, but in all societies today.

Moreover, the feminist theology that we have consulted is both cautious and conservative in terms of its exegesis of sacred and traditional texts, in order to deal with the voices of protest from Muslim men (including some 'scholars') who perceived their power and privilege to be slipping away (De Sondy, 2015). Feminist theology in Islam does not commit the mistake of selective quotation, but seeks to interpret the Qur'an, Hadith and Sunnah as a unified whole, in which the Message from Allah is always the final authority. Nor does Islamic feminism make the mistake of saying that The Qur'an was a revelation for a desert people, and must be read differently today. Everything in the Qur'anic message was true in the seventh century, and remains true for humanity today.

Commentators on Islamic feminism point to important women in the history of Islam: first was Khadija, the first convert to Islam, a successful business woman who supported her husband Muhammad during the difficult years of receiving The Message. Muhammad was a kind and gentle man, the opposite of powerful masculinity, as the accounts of his life clearly show (Armstrong, 2006; Sardar, 2012; Al-Awadi, 2018). He preached and

[2] This feminist movement was originally an expression and by-product of Arab-Muslim nationalism. Qasim Amin (d. 1908) and Salama Musa (d. 1958) considered the liberation of women as an *"* ... essential foundation for the liberation of Arab-Muslim society from colonial rule." (Mernissi, 1985)

practised forgiveness and compromise, and the accounts of his relationship with Aisha, his fourth wife are quite extraordinary, giving us a very full insight into how this wonderful man lived The Message.

The first modern university was founded by a Muslim woman, Fatima Al-Fihri, in Morocco in 859CE. Now the Fatima Al-Fihri Open University based in Casablanca, it has continuously operated with a library and lectures, as a degree-granting institution up to the present time. It was one of the Muslim institutions which preserved Greek texts in science, medicine and mathematics which would otherwise have been lost, since Christian iconoclasm had no interest in such scholarship (Watt, 1972).

Lamrabet (2016) has observed that: "The Prophet's rejection of all violence against women is recognized by all. Many hadiths denounce the mistreatment of women and condemn acts of violence committed by men. On this topic, the hadiths are too numerous to cite in their entirety but the most well-known are sufficient, to perceive the importance which the Prophet attributed to this problem and his intense action to educate Muslims in order that they behave with decency and respect towards their spouses: *The best amongst you are those who are best to their wives."* [3] (p. 156)

Consider for example the Hadith for which Aisha is the main source (and which Abu Dawud has recorded). Abu Bakr (Aisha's father) entered Muhammad's house and found Aisha scolding her husband over some domestic matter. Abu Bakr raised his hand to Aisha in order to slap her, saying 'Don't ever let me find you raising your hand to God's Messenger!'. But The Prophet stopped him, and Abu Bakr left the house, angry ... Some days later Abu Bakr returned, and found the couple had made peace, and said to them: 'Bring me into your peace as you brought me into your war!' The Prophet replied 'We have done so, we have done so.' (translated by Mustafa, reprinted by Eaton, 2008). From this action of The Prophet reflecting the divine message, comes the Islamic law that no man may strike a women (and no woman may strike a man).

Although "he" (male gender) is used in Qu'ranic translations, every Qu'ranic injunction and every hadith applies equally to men and women, except where the roles and status of women are specifically described, as for example in giving evidence, or inheriting property. Most importantly,

[3] The teaching of The Prophet on nonviolence in marital and adult-child relationships is not, alas, obvious to all of those who call themselves Muslims, as the chapters in this book on Bangladesh and Pakistan, will argue.

women have a right to become educated in a manner and to a level that is equal to that of men, and should have equality in marriage and marital relationships, including divorce. For example, if a man chooses to divorce he must maintain his wife and children at the same level as in the marriage. And a woman has equality with men in initiating divorce, with additional rights concerning property and custody of children.

Verified accounts abound of The Prophet's kindness and gentleness in personal affairs, and in the struggles of Islam to survive.[4] We are particularly delighted by the accounts of Muhammad's relationships with children, for whom he had great tenderness and tolerance. "Abu Qatadah said: I saw The Prophet leading the people in prayer with Umamah [his little daughter] on his shoulder. When he bowed, he put her down, and when he rose up after the prostration he put her on his back." (Bukhari and Muslim). These and many other examples are for us some of the hallmarks of Islam: gentleness, kindness, compromise – not the tyrannical leader of Islamophobic fiction. Many more examples are given in Hesham Al-Awadi's (2018) *Children around The Prophet*.

Muhammad was outraged too at the traditional custom of the polytheists of burying alive unwanted female infants in the desert sand.

Often the Qur'an is a kind of dialogue between Muhammad and Allah, so we are not sure whether the kindness and purity of thought which emerges comes from the joyful spirit which Allah has breathed into Muhammad, or from the wonderful personhood of Muhammad himself, giving breath to Sura and Sunnah. But in the Qur'an's Sura 81 "Shrouded in Darkness" (on the final day of reckoning) among the accusatory voices is when: " …the baby girl buried alive, is asked for what sin she was killed …"[5] Of course, the infant is without sin: the sin belongs to her murderer. (In Chapter 7 we give an account of the widespread, current practice of female infanticide in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan).

Muhammad loved all of his children, but according to Aisha he was most devoted to Fatimah, who was said to be most like Muhammad in character: "Fatimah is part of me. Whatever upsets her upsets me." (Hadith, recorded by Muslim) "One assured route to Paradise is to love and care for one's daughters." (Hadith, recorded by Al Bukhari). In Islam there is, formally

[4] Christopher Adam-Bagley, a Quaker before his conversion to Islam and the adoption of the Muslim name of *Adam*, has argued that Islam may embody the pacifist approach for which Quakers are known (Adam-Bagley, 2015a).
[5] We follow our favourite Qur'anic translator, Abdel Haleem (2005).

speaking, a strong tradition of guarding human rights (including those of non-Muslim minorities), and serving the interests and welfare of children (Sidani, 2018). Amongst the rights documented in the Prophet's Hadiths is the right of women to become educated to their full potential, to work, and to enjoy the full support of their husbands whom they, in a spirit of mutual respect, also support.

The American feminist Azizah al-Hibri (2002) in a report to the American Bar Association's Commission on Women in the Law Profession, focuses on the Islamic concept of *Adalah* (Justice), a complex, higher order concept which is the backbone of *Mizaam*, the Islamic concept of harmony and balance which emerges from the Prophet's teaching on modesty, moderation, and the middle path ordained by Islam. *Adalah* rests on a system of basic equality of all human beings (Muslims and non-Muslims – Qur'an 5:8, 17:70 & 49:13). All people were created as equals so that they would know, respect and nurture each other (Qur'an 30:22). There is ontological equality of the two genders. Islam also emphasises the value of education for all people, and the principle that men and women should become equally educated (Qur'an 20:14 & 58:11). Women are denied equality of education and achievements in some Muslim-majority countries through patriarchy, which denies the fundamentals of Islam, argues al-Hibri.

Marriage is not a contract of service; it is a contract of equals, of mutual love and kindness (Qur'an 30:31). Violence between spouses is forbidden by Islam. Although within the family men and women have different roles, each role is of equal status and each partner should support their spouse in their chosen roles (Qur'an 60:12)

We end this section with a quotation of Islam's popular and authoritative spokesperson of "moderate Islam", Ed Husain (who had explored most thoroughly the 'radical' version of Islam, which he firmly rejects):

> *Every erudite Muslim in the world today believes, rightly, that the Prophet was a liberator of women. All recognise their Prophet as being a feminist of his time. Abdullah ibn Abbas, the Prophet's cousin, frequently reminded Muslims that the Prophet commanded his wives and daughters to leave their homes and join the festivals of Eid … The fault with many Muslims today is to grasp the spirit of the Prophet's actions and the motives behind his divine sanctions relieving the plight of women. Many buried girl daughters [alive] … Those of today's Arabs and Muslims who have sadly clung on to that mentality have abandoned the progressive ways of their Prophet. He abolished infanticide … and he changed the rules on dowries – how the money went from the man to the woman directly, so that she owned it, and*

> *not her parents. Even in the event of a divorce, she would retain her own financial assets. Previously, divorce had been a mainly male prerogative, but the Qur'an granted women the right to divorce their husbands and inherit property.* (Husain, 2018, p. 213)

2. The 'Modesty' of Islam, and the Implications for Muslim Conduct and Social Organisation

Allah created in human beings *difference*: in terms of the biological differences between men and women (Qur'an 49:13); between ethnic groups in terms of physical appearance or language; and between human cultures, in terms of national identity, and their different religions and social organisation. Each individual is divinely endowed with a different personality, and a unique pathway to paradise, being presented with choices for action which are tailored for each individual human being, addressing the spirit which has been implanted in the human soul.

The Final Message advises that the three great monotheisms - Islam, Judaism and Christianity – should respect and tolerate one another (Qur'an 5:12-17), This is evidenced, for example, by the long history of tolerant acceptance of Jewish minorities by Islamic countries in the years of the Jewish diaspora (Lewis, 1984).

Prophet Muhammad said: "Every faith has its own identity, and ours is modesty." (An-Nawawi, 1989). Much of Islamic etiquette and social organisation reflects this principle of *modesty*. Neither men nor women may present themselves flamboyantly in dress or manner (except within the privacy of marriage). From puberty onwards the genders in Muslim social organisations congregate and organise themselves separately. In daily prayer for example, men stand in the prayer line shoulder to shoulder and foot to foot with their brothers, and move together (in the prostration of prayer) in a joyful, gendered unity which is both a metaphysical and a physical ecstasy. This physical unity in prayer is for a single gender (a man cannot, for obvious reasons, bond closely to a woman in the prayer line).

Women in their separate prayer lines may be (for modesty's sake) to the rear of men, or elsewhere in The Mosque. But for each group of men or women the prayer line is part of the Ummah, the wonderful institution of brotherhood, and sisterhood, which unites Muslims. We all pray, five times daily in the same manner and reciting the same Qur'anic texts, whether Sunni, Shia, Sufi or of some other Islamic grouping.

Remarkably too (for the Muslim who has made a journey into Islam from another religion) there is no intermediate class of priests. Each Muslim speaks about their fears, faults and aspirations directly to Allah, and Allah in turn offers a daily guide for individual actions to the thoughtful Muslim. Men greet one another with the handshake, exchanging the greeting *As-salamu alaykum* ("may peace be with you"), embodying the prayer that Allah may forgive the sins of the brother whom we greet.

For women parallel rituals exist, and one of us (Adam-Bagley, 2016a) keeps track of his gendered progress, comparing experiences with his biological sister, also a convert to Islam. We follow Mernissi's (1987) argument that the hijab, the women's head covering and her modesty in dress does not separate women from men in spiritual or ontological terms: it is a device of honour, respect and love of religion, and of man for woman, and of woman for man.

Women and men in Islam dress and behave modestly, as The Qur'an requires. This implies for women that legs and arms always be modestly covered, as well as the upper body. Hair may not be styled as an expression of sexuality, and women often cover their hair with the hijab. Neither the veil nor the hijab are compulsory, but are proud symbols of religious identity, and women and girls in the West often wear the hijab as a statement of their Islamic pride, in school, college and workplace. A Muslim woman will not touch or shake hands with a man (Muslim or otherwise), except her spouse, or a close relative such as father or brother.

These are not merely obligations, but rights (and rites) of proud men and women, tolerant of themselves and others, who are now a fundamental part of European and North American cultures. The Islamic ideal of modesty also means that Muslims in whatever culture they find themselves act with caution and restraint, following the Muslim social contract of becoming good citizens in their new cultures - giving to charity, being good neighbours, becoming educated, and seeking tolerance for certain religious customs such as fasting and diet (Khan. 2012). Muslims, like an earlier generation of Jews in Europe and North America, are seeking to integrate (becoming good citizens, while retaining religious values and rituals), following the route of integration rather than assimilation.

Islamophobia (the hatred or fear of a people because of their religion) attracts many nominal Christians in the West today, just as anti-Semitism was the province of the grandparents of these prejudiced people, in Europe and elsewhere (Bunzl, 2007; Cherribi, 2011; ENAR, 2016). There is

considerable irony in this: the Islamophobic masses are nominally, but not actually, Christian and they often follow lifestyles of licence and blue-collar ignorance, being the failing generations of Western, capitalist cultures (Standing, 2014; Sawyerr & Adam-Bagley, 2017). For the neoliberalist forces of international capitalism, it is extremely useful if the proletarian class divert their energies from unmasking the alienation that binds them, into having a group whom they hate with profound irrationality, rather than understanding the nature of their exploitation in capitalist cultures (Sawyerr & Adam-Bagley, 2017). In the last century Jews were the convenient scapegoats: today it is those who are visibly Muslim (Cherribi, 2011; Renton & Gidley, 2017).

3. Wider Implications of Islamic Modesty

Syed et al. (2005 & 2010) have written persuasively about *Islamic modesty* and Muslim women making progress in work outside of family settings in Muslim majority cultures (MMCs). They show, from analysis of Islamic textual resources that this principle of modesty clearly applies to both genders. Only the wives of The Prophet were secluded – Aisha (The Prophet's wife) for example preached sermons in her mosque from behind a screen, for many years after Muhammad's death. For women who were not scholars or preachers, Islam made no bar to the "economic agency" of women, many of whom did become business women and traders in the early years of Islam, following the example of Muhammad's first wife Khadija (Koehler, 2011).

Gradually however (and especially in the second millennium), male hegemony re-emerged with vengeance, and the ideology of patriarchal scholars required women to remain confined as 'family managers', with little involvement in the external economy. But, Syed shows, Qur'an and Sunnah teachings and traditions have never required such a constrained role for women, whose opportunities in competing with men on equal terms must follow Islamic principles, not the self-interests of the patriarchy. Islam imposes special duties on men, but gives them no special rights or privileges above women.

In a brilliant essay Miles K. Davis (2013) offers an Islamic perspective on entrepreneurship. With the wealth that Allah has bestowed on us, Davis argues (from Qur'anic instructions) the individual, the culture and the nation must follow the religious principles of *modesty* in the creation, use and spending of wealth. Wealth creation is a form of social service, and through the principle of religious giving (*zakah*, obligatory for all Muslims) must

serve the wider community. The 'modest' Muslim entrepreneur, man or woman, does not accumulate wealth for purposes of personal power and self-aggrandisement. Muslims are stewards of wealth, and their exemplar in this is The Prophet himself. Numerous Hadiths support this view: the purpose of economic enterprise is to support the community. In the case of the business woman Khadija, her entrepreneurship supported both The Prophet during the period when he received The Message, and the growing number of Muslims.[6]

Modern businesses and commercial enterprises which are owned and run by Muslims must follow Islamic ethical principles, in whatever culture they are established. The Shari'a guidance for economic enterprise stresses that this endeavour must be integrated with all of the ethical and moral principles of Islam. As Esposito & Delong-Bas (2018) put it:

> *Economic activity, enterprise, and employment are encouraged for all people … At the same time it is recognized that some people may not be able to work, for a variety of reasons such as age or infirmity, so that welfare benefits are also to be made available … Shari'a is neither socialist nor capitalist: it takes a middle position between the two, and emphasises the common good (maslahah).* (Esposito & Delong-Bas, 2018, p. 250)

In such Islamic economic enterprise 'moderation and modesty' should ensure that profit is balanced with doing good to the community, using resources wisely, not charging interest on the giving or receiving of loans, not producing products (e.g. alcohol) which are harmful to health, and ensuring that profits made are distributed to the community and to the workers, and not to some remote group of rentiers.

Islamic norms of "respectable, subordinated femininity" which involve stereotyping women's roles as being confined to family duties alone are not compatible with Islam's teaching on the absolute equality of women, and must be renegotiated in countries such as Pakistan, in which very few professional women are able to break "the glass ceiling" of employment. The principles of "modesty" also govern how Muslim men and women present themselves and relate to other cultural groups in Western countries[7] (Roald, 2001). Muslim women in all cultures who enter the world of

[6] Imagine, Allah has bestowed an Islamic nation with considerable reserves of, say, oil. How should this nation conduct itself in the world? For a discussion of this dilemma see Sultan et al. (2011).

[7] A "Western country" we define as one in which the majority are of European descent (e.g. England, Australia, USA).

employment outside of the family need, Kamla (2017) argues, to develop "religious-based resistance strategies" in creating for themselves "authentic professional roles." Again, Kadijah is an important role model as Muslim women create for themselves professional identities which are grounded in Islamic texts.

Adam-Bagley et al. (2018) writing about sexual harassment in Western, non-Muslim organisations comment that the everyday, crude sexism which is one way in which men retain power in organisations and block the advancement of female managers (Bates, 2014) is unlikely to occur in organisations in MMCs – when women are employed as managers and specialists, they are usually afforded respect that is in line with principles of Islamic modesty (Abubaker & Adam-Bagley, 2016a). This we discuss in detail in later chapters on Work Life Benefit programmes in Palestine and Jordan, and "the glass ceiling" for women managers and professionals across Muslim and Western cultures. Unfortunately, as Chapter 11 on Pakistan will discuss, "everyday sexism" which includes verbal, sexual and physical harassment and assaults, do occur in a country which is an "Islamic Republic" in name only (Saeed, 2013).

Modesty is a principle which permeates Islamic life and is certainly not confined merely to how the Muslim man or woman presents themselves in terms of dress and physical appearance. Mufti & Salman (2006) offer an overview of Islamic modesty from a scholar's viewpoint: modesty is part of faith, and involves the avoidance of all bad deeds. The exemplar of modesty is The Prophet: "A strong person is not one who throws his opponent to the ground. A strong person is the one who contains himself when he is angry." Al-Bukhari (quoted by Mufti & Salman, 2006)

Modesty is the means by which, for the Muslim in whatever culture he or she finds themselves, the overwhelming importance of morals and ethics in society is pursued and maintained. Modesty involves love and respect for all human beings, and all of nature. Modesty is the "underlabouring" principle we offer in our critical realist analysis of both Muslim social institutions, and of society as a whole.[8]

[8] In previous writing on abused, oppressed and neglected children we used the concepts of "child-centred humanism" as the Hobbesian underlabouring principle in critical realist analyses (Sawyerr & Adam-Bagley, 2017). In our current writing, we use "modesty", "child-centred humanism" and "non-violent peace-making" as underlabouring principles.

4. Islamic Justice and Shari'a Principles: Prelude to Case Studies of Bangladesh and Pakistan

In a later Chapters of this book we consider how two Islamic nations, Bangladesh and Pakistan provide through Islamic observance: the translation of Qur'anic principle and The Prophet's example (in Hadith and Sunnah) for the care and treatment of children, girls and women. We will discuss profoundly non-Islamic practices firstly in (sexual prostitution of children, girls and women; child marriage; and high rates of suicide in girls and young women); and then in Pakistan (high rates of female infanticide; culturally ordained murder of young women for reasons of 'honour'; and the stoning and burning to death of abused girls and women). In Bangladesh and Pakistan today, many thousands of girls and women are abused, tortured and murdered each year, and are denied the basic protection which Muslim cultures should offer.

Surely these practices conflict with the care which Islam offers to children, and the respect and equality which The Qur'an gives to women? Yes, is the definite answer. In this regard we refer to the declaration of 200 women religious scholars from all regions of Pakistan after their meeting in Lahore in June, 2016 (Mahmood, 2015). The scholars, under the leadership of Jamia Sarajia Naeema of Lahore, declared:

> *Islam does not allow the killing of a mother, sister, daughter or any woman in the name of a family's honour, by any family member or by their agency.*
>
> *We condemn the most heinous acts of burning of women, of acid attacks or beating of a woman for any purpose.*
>
> *Any Muslim man or woman who has reached the age of majority [18] may if both parties freely consent, enter into marriage with a believing Muslim. All Muslim women (and men) have the right to refuse to accept any man as a marital partner, whatever their family's wishes.*
>
> *Vani*[9] *belongs to pre-Islamic times. No woman may be forced to marry, or be required to marry to compensate for the sins of her male relatives.*

[9] *Vani* (from the Pashtu word for "blood") involves the surrender of a child as compensation for inter-family conflicts which involved the spilling of blood. In 2012 'only' 13 girls aged 4 to 16 were sacrificed for this purpose according to official data. As always in Pakistan, the real figure is likely much higher.

> *Islam requires that all, male and female alike, shall become educated to the fullest of their potential.*
>
> *Shari'a divorce law should make men and women equal in seeking divorce, with a woman's special right for maintenance for herself and her children at the same material level as before the divorce. Qur'anic prescriptions on dowry payments (which the Qur'an requires shall be paid by the husband to the wife) must be followed.*
>
> *Family members **may not** impose stoning, beheading, other forms of execution, cutting off limbs, or whipping, on members of their family. If punishment is necessary, it can only be imposed by Judges of an Islamically-guided court.*

There is some evidence that women in migrant Pakistani families in Europe, having options in marriage and divorce beyond those of Shari'a law, are able to negotiate a more just and Qur'anically accurate form of divorce settlement than would be available to them in Pakistan (Mehdi, 2003). There are broader issues here too, of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women seeking avenues of personal equity, higher education, and occupational advancement following migration to Western countries (e.g. Hussain & Bagguley, 2007; Archer, 2009; Hussain, 2017). We would expect (or hope) that these Qur'anically-focussed activities of the Ummah (the international sisterhood and brotherhood of Islam) involving both modesty, and the desire for occupational and educational progress, will spread amongst Muslims across the world.

On this theme, further important points emerge in Ayesha Shahid's (2013) comparative study of divorce laws in Pakistan and Bangladesh. On the "plurality" of systems, in which Qur'anically derived principles are mixed with secular ideas in framing divorce customs and legislation which disadvantage women, she comments:

> *In both Pakistan and Bangladesh the patriarchal ordering at the state, judicial and societal levels exacerbates this situation … patriarchy has silenced the more egalitarian aspects of Islam … It is therefore pertinent to maintain a clear distinction between the normative teachings of Islam and the male-dominated patriarchal norms prevalent in Muslim societies.* (Shahid, 2013, pp 211-212.

5. The Crucial Importance of Ethnography in Understanding Muslim Women's Search for Justice and Social Power

Problems in elevating issues of "Muslim women's rights" to the level of political and international action, or the level of debates between the religious scholars of Islam must be acknowledged. Several important scholars have urged that we cannot understand how and why Muslim women are making some progress in MMCs without an ethnographic, or sociological understanding of how people at the grassroots level experience and assert their rights and duties (which they believe to be derived from their traditional understanding of Qur'an and Sunnah – or in the case of Pakistan, from pre-Qur'anic tribal cultures). Thus for example Mounira Charrad (2011) in her sociological review of the status of women in Middle Eastern countries argues that assertions about gender equity expressed through international agencies ignore (or miss) how women's agency is expressed as part of kin-based solidarities.

The crucial importance of the ethnographic analysis of the "women's rights" movement in Islam is expressed by Lila Abu-Lughod (2010 & 2013) in what for us, is a powerful analysis of the social movements in Egypt and Palestine which have been emerging and developing at the local levels, and form the basis of real social change in the movement of Muslim women achieving the equality rights afforded them by Qur'an and Sunnah. Abu-Lughod, a Palestinian-born, American-based anthropologist offers a *realist* understanding of the movement for the realisation of women's rights in Muslim cultures. She makes a detailed analysis of how ordinary women liaise with ordinary men, in the sphere of Muslim worship, ritual and social relationships in asserting and achieving the gender equality that reflects Qur'anic principles.

Abu-Lughod criticises international bodies advocating 'women's rights', based on Judao-Christian ethics (e.g. the UN Convention "on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women") offered as an often hidden but barely-negotiable part of World Bank, Ford Foundation, UN and other aid packages channelled through Non-Governmental Agencies (NGOs) to Egypt and Palestine.[10] The pressure from these NGOs to adopt a certain brand of 'women's rights' can be counter-productive, just as the attempt to impose Western models of democracy are reluctantly received by Middle Eastern countries which have fallen, through warfare, colonialism or chronic

[10] This problem also pertains in Pakistan – see Chapter 11, below.

poverty, under the European-American sphere of political guardianship and influence. NGOs were, according to Abu-Lughod becoming imbricated (like the layers of fish scales) with government policies which still deferred to Western influence. The grassroots Egyptian agency analysed by Abu-Lughod, works in parallel to the Egyptian Center for Woman's Rights, a UN-sponsored agency which campaigns against spousal violence.

Ordinary women in the grassroots agency studied by Abu-Lughod express and perceive their Islamic rights quite differently from those advocated by international aid agencies, ignoring the "growth industry" of internationally financed NGOs whose actions were interlaced with government policies. Instead there has, since 2000 been a growth of low-budget, indigenous organisations such as the Centre for Egyptian's Women's Legal Assistance (CEWLA) whose activities Lughod describes in detail. Shari'a compliance is emphasised, and Qur'anic texts are emphasised which guarantee educational, social and occupational equity between genders. Evidence shows, for example, that the pressures of ordinary men and women within an overtly authoritarian state have in fact achieved remarkable achievements for women's rights in the female-friendly (and Shari'a compliant) Egyptian law on divorce described by Sonneveld (2019), discussed later.

Abu-Lughod (2010) is deeply critical of mainstream American writing on Palestine, which largely ignores the condition of the lives of ordinary people. Writing of the situation in 2009, she introduces the section of her writing on Palestine thus:

> *... the Israeli attack on Gaza that was launched in December 2008. In 23 days, over 1300 Palestinians were killed, buried alive in houses bombed by F-16s, shot at close range in their beds, machine-gunned from the sea, shelled by tanks using flechettes, and burned by white phosphorus, which acts like napalm. How many were women? We know that over 300 of the dead were children. Human rights groups say 900 of the men killed were civilians. No one gives a separate count for women but cases of women killed or wounded are described in all the reports.* (Abu-Lughod, 2010, p. 17)

This is the reality of life in Gaza, repeated in 2012 and intermittently every year since that time. Within this matrix of violence, ordinary people struggle to achieve their Islamic rights and to cope in non-violent ways with external aggression, since it seems clear that this is the bravest (and only effective) way to face a violent and unprincipled enemy, as Wesam Abubaker argues in Chapter 4.

Some rather similar points are made by Nadera Shalhaub-Kevorkian (2004 to 2015). Shalhaub-Kevorkian, a Palestinian social scientist and Professor of Public International Law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, writes powerfully about women's experience of loss as their homes are destroyed, and their loved one's murdered by Israeli terrorists: " … watching your son's brain spill on the ground as Israeli soldiers trample his body … the quiet, stunned children trapped … overwhelmed by the smell of blood and urine." Like Abu-Lughod, she laments the political silence amongst Western feminists about the "slavery" imposed on women and children in Gaza and the Palestinian West Bank.

Abu-Lughod (2010) cites a variety of international organisations campaigning against violence expressed towards Muslim women, by Muslim men: "But where is the global feminist campaign against killing such significant numbers of (mostly Muslim) women, by the Israeli army?" Abu-Lughod describes the "organic feminism" of ordinary women who incorporate stories of loss, of tradition, of suffering, of Islamic principle and assistance as it affects the everyday lives of folk. Institutional arrangements like *qayma* (the value of house and household goods at marriage) which will form part of a woman's property if she is divorced had been ignored by what she terms "the femocracy" of Egypt and Palestine, the foreign-born or foreign-trained women who run the international NGOs. The alternative model of women's rights, in this argument, is built from below through centuries of tradition, with powerful religious roots. Everyone in every Arabic culture has a manual of guidance for such radicalism: this book is called The Qur'an.

One important implication for Abu-Lughod's ethnographic approach for our understanding of the struggles of the women of Gaza and Palestine for Islamic justice and equality is that these concepts and ideas are embedded, and have their genesis from interactions *within the extended family*. In an extended family dwelling, several daughters or sons of the senior couple will live with their children, incorporating several families. Often a married couple will have their own flat in a multi-story building, with other couples of the extended family living in flats in this shared building, but often eating together and caring for each other's children. In this family intimacy, values are generated and shared (sometimes mediated through the never-ending TV soap operas from Egypt, so beloved of Palestinian families).

Often a woman will choose to follow higher and professional education, with the support and encouragement of her brothers and sisters, and of her husband. She will be a valuable person of prestige as well as an income resource, and her sisters will often offer childcare for her. From our

ethnographic work in Gaza we can observe that violent or dissenting husbands can be expelled from this tightly-knit household system, which observes the five daily prayers of Islam, and instructs children in reading of the Qur'an, giving them accounts of the life and teaching of The Prophet. As Sania Ahmed and Sally Bould (2004) put it, based on their ethnographic work with women in the external labour force in Bangladesh: "One able daughter is worth 10 illiterate sons."

That such quiet but strong value change can flow from wishes and expressions of ordinary people is exemplified by recent changes in Egyptian law on divorce (Sonneveld, 2019). The most conservative interpretation of Shari'a canon law had in the past clearly disadvantaged women. But the new law which is Shari'a compliant (in Egypt at least) permits women to declare a non-consensual, permanent end to the marriage (i.e. the husband cannot nullify his wife's wishes). Such a divorce is also non-fault, in that a woman does not have to prove any grounds for wanting the divorce. The woman acquires the material assets of *qayma* – the material assets provided by various family members at the beginning of the marriage (including ownership of house or flat, if she has children). The *dower* given by the husband at marriage will be returned to him upon divorce: this is the equivalent of the cost of gold approved in traditional canon law, and cannot exceed about US$30.

In the Egyptian case, the husband must move out of the marital home under the order of the Shari'a divorce court, and the woman retains custody of both male and female children until they are 15. At that age the children may choose which parent to live with. If the husband has continuing wealth he is required to make maintenance payments for children, with some guardianship rights such as approving choice of a school. Sonneveld (2019) offers interesting case studies of weak, occupationally failing and sometimes violent husbands whose career-successful wives have found them unbearable to live with.

This new law, while entirely compatible with Qur'anic guidance, is quite different from how Shari'a canon law viewed divorce in Egypt and Palestine in previous decades and centuries (Hallaq, 2009). The critic can appreciate international changes in Shari'a family law by comparing the accounts of such law by Esposito & DeLong-Bas published in 2001, and then in revised form in 2018. The Qur'an remains across the ages, unchanging. *Exegesis*, interpretations of the Holy Qur'an, is in a constant flux of debate, criticism and change.

For a further understanding of how "honest Muslims", the ordinary people and women in particular, engage in local democracy we must turn to "realist studies of oppression, emancipation and resistance" (O'Mahoney et al., 2018); and to accounts of *morphogenesis*, how ordinary and often oppressed people (including "Muslim women seeking power") engage in conversations and movements which bring about social change, through *critical realism*.

6. Critical Realism and a Value-Based, Islamic Understanding of Society

The concept of Critical Realism (and its later development using ideas from Hegel and Marx) known as dialectical critical realism (DCR), comes from philosophy, and not from social science. It uses philosophical language and reasoning, which is often challenging for the social scientist who has had no grounding in formal logic, or in the discipline of philosophical analysis. DCR is not an account of social science, but rather a philosophy of how knowledge about people and their social structures may be construed, interpreted, described and fitted together. DCR assumes that although the ground of knowledge is real, it also has a value base: there is no such thing as value-free social science. Moreover, what are often regarded as "facts" by positivist social science (and indeed by its post-positivist manifestations) is merely a superficial description of the real ontology of a phenomenon:

> *Critical Realism (CR) clearly prefers social science research which employs qualitative, case-study methods, but acknowledges that multiple methods (including surveys and statistical analyses) can be used in order to gain the fullest information about "a case".* (Alderson, 2013)

Critical Realism emerged from the writings of the philosopher Roy Bhaskar who was seeking an alternative to what he saw as ambiguous and often confusing models of scientific methodology, particularly the Popperian doctrine of "falsifying hypotheses" (Popper, 1992). He extended his critique to the methodologies of social science (Bhaskar, 1978), attempting to find a way forward from what he saw as the stultification and confusion of "positivism", "phenomenology", "post-modernism", and "social constructionism" as forms of analysis and explanation of the world of social relations, and social reality.

Critical realism has been attractive to social researchers and theorists who are committed to a firm ideological basis for viewing human action (e.g. Marxists, Muslims, Catholics) in asserting that *structures* within society are real and although their influence may be debated, their *being* or ontology