

# Female Political Leadership in Islam?

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Seeing the technological and economic superiorities of west and failing to realize the wisdom of Islam due to lack of sincere independent objective research Muslims have come to misperceive the superiority of western political system as well. One of the misperceptions that caused pollution in the purity of Islam is women political leadership. Even though Islam prohibited female leadership in all organizational (comprising of men and women) capacity this paper is specifically about prohibition of women's highest political leadership in an independent jurisdiction which in today's political landscape mean prime minister, president, chancellor, queen, supreme leader and chairman who are either heads of states or governments or both. Islam's prohibition of female political leadership arises from text and reason as I will discuss God willing. First I will start by texts from Quran and Hadith of both Shia and Sunni and then I will explain the semantics of the texts and then discuss the rational aspects of why females are not allowed to be political leaders and lastly I will discuss about the alleged success of female leaders.

***Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. (Quran 4:34)***

This verse of Quran establishes that God has given something to men which make them superior to women and this "something" is the discussion of the rational part later on. The second reason is men spend on women. Now this is a prescriptive legal injunction rather than an ontological descriptive information, because by observation we know many men do not spend over women, rather many women spend over men and their families, thereby contradicting Quran's claim and making Quran a lie. That is why the latter part is not a description of fact but a prescription of law, which means men must spend on the women in their functional capacities of leader, husband and father. Quran's preference of God's giving something to men over women shows priority of the first reason from the latter. Quran

mentions men are *Qawwam* over women. *Qawwam* means caretaker; curator; custodian; guardian; keeper; supervisor; superintendent. Patriarchy is greater aspect and thus includes female leadership issue and the patriarchy can be approached from three major perspectives: political, legal, socio-economic, military and familial i.e. all organizational capacities. The exegete al-Ṭabari (d. 923), interpreted men's *qiwama* – which he defined as authority/guardianship – in this verse as being “premised on the material preference that men had been granted” (Shaikh, 1997:7). He is thus conceptualizing *qiwama* as something “contingent on a socio-economic phenomenon rather than some inherent quality of man or woman per se” (Shaikh, 1997:7). However, other Islamic exegetes like al-Bayḍhawī (d.1286) and Ibn Kathir (d. 1373) interpreted *qiwama* as men's justified superiority due to their “innate abilities and their acquired qualities” (Shehada, 2009:28). The interesting fact is both are correct, even though Bayḍhawī and Ibn Kathir did not have the backing of science, as I will discuss later on how modern science has, beyond doubt established the intrinsic superiority i.e. physical, biological, psychological and cognitive, of men over women. This shows yet again Quran is way ahead of time and Muslims must first trust Quran rather than deviate from it to satisfy populism i.e. feminism. This verse also demands men must have the resources and authority to achieve finance. Towards this end man must be thus trained and then put out in the real world to lead, manage and sustain the Islamic society. Islamic patriarchy<sup>1</sup> is about taking care of women and lessening their burden from various social roles. Patriarchy is obligated to protect and care for the woman's mental, physical, spiritual and financial wellbeing, that is failing to do so will lead to genuine prolonged harm in mind<sup>2</sup> and body of the female. So, it is clear that Quran imposes a patriarchal purpose for the welfare of women, of which prohibition of female leadership is one aspect.

***“A nation with a woman ruler will never succeed.” (Bukhari).***

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<sup>1</sup> Rahman, Mohammad M. “(PDF) The Islamic Patriarchy.” ResearchGate, 2021, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351122477\\_Why\\_Society\\_Needs\\_Patriarchy\\_A\\_Scientific\\_and\\_Social\\_Justification](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/351122477_Why_Society_Needs_Patriarchy_A_Scientific_and_Social_Justification) Accessed 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Mental disorder is a kind of feeling and/or behavior beyond one's control resulting in distressing and dysfunctional states of the individual.

This hadith prohibits female highest political leadership over a jurisdiction. Many Muslims have perhaps become apostates by denying this hadith and many hypocrites and deviant. When you twist and bend the words of God for example it is no less evil than actual forgery in God's words. This hadith was originally stated in regard to the female ruler of Persia, but the language of Hadith is general on the legal principle of *"consideration is given to the generality of words but not to the specificity of context"*. If you only give consideration to context then major laws of Islam become obsolete. Quran 4:58<sup>3</sup> was revealed in regard to Uthman ibn Talhah, Quran 2:174<sup>4</sup> was revealed in regards to Jews and Quran 16:126<sup>5</sup> was revealed in regards to martyrs of Uhud and many other verses have been revealed for specific persons or events. If you reject the generality of these verses while only taking the specificity of the contexts then it would mean we do not need to return trust of people or do not need to judge with justice, or we can conceal what God has revealed in Quran or we do not need to follow the law of proportionality, which Islam pioneered well before international law. So, one thing is clear the hadith regarding female leadership is general and applies to female gender. The second part of the Hadith is the consequence of practical female leadership. What does it mean when Prophet says, "never succeed"? There are many possibilities: will not succeed i.e. will not improve, as a nation, in any or all of spirituality, morality, governance, economy, militarily, demography and society, collective psychology and may be in more domains we may still not perceive. It may also mean "being destroyed", as a nation, i.e. affecting the nation at large, in one or more of the mentioned domains. Now female leadership may not be the only cause for not succeeding in those parameters, but it may be considered a dominant cause with other causes. Also, such lack of success may be a result in a cumulative consequence, or it may be a failure in some specific

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<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing. (Quran 4:58)

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, they who conceal what Allah has sent down of the Book and exchange it for a small price - those consume not into their bellies except the Fire. And Allah will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them. And they will have a painful punishment. (Quran 2:174)

<sup>5</sup> If you retaliate, then let it be equivalent to what you have suffered. But if you patiently endure, it is certainly best for those who are patient. (Quran 16:126)

but important aspects. Lack of success may also occur soon after female leadership is achieved, or it may occur after a long period. Explaining the verse Quran 4:34

***Imam Baqir says “Women do not have to call to prayer or perform iqamah, or lead Friday prayer, or become judges or (lead) governance” (Musatanad Al-Shia)***

The rational reason for political patriarchy in Islam is many and have been understood only recently through social sciences and genetics. Here I will list some of the features by which God has made man superior over woman. I will discuss from physical, biological and genetic, psychological and cognitive aspects. . Men have stronger muscle, bone, toughness and leadership<sup>6</sup> behavior due to higher testosterone hormone, which explains why men also have a culturally, among other things, universal tendency to be more physically aggressive and violent than women and value principles of justice and rights (*Archer & Coyne, 2005; Crick & Nelson, 2002*) while girls and women tend to focus more on issues of caring, helping, and connecting with others than do boys and men (*Jaffee & Hyde, 2000*) and value caring for and helping others (*Carol Gilligan 1982*). Women have more fat, weak muscle and bone. This biological feature conforms to their psychological construct which is women are “emotional,” women are, on average, more empathic and attuned to the emotions of others than are men (*Hall & Schmid Mast, 2008*). This is fine-tuned with their role of housewife and motherhood. Also, women become more vulnerable to diseases and health related threats when pregnant. Brain activation differs in response to negative emotions. (*Stevens & Hamann, 2012*). Data suggest that the greater strength of the men due primarily to larger fibers. (*Eur J Appl Physiol Occup Physiol. 1993;66(3):254-62*). Females grow to a certain extent and then switch to reproductive mode, investing in fat production rather than making muscle and bone (*Nuwer 2017*)

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<sup>6</sup> *Leadership is about inspiring others, taking tough decisions, taking intelligent and rational decisions, it’s about managing and deciding on important aspects of people’s lives such as finance, health, jobs, economy, legal issues and judgements, wars, peace etc. Leadership is not only about simply running an office and few people’s daily paper works. Leadership thus needs all the qualities of men specially that of rights and justice as we discussed which are priorities of men, while the women are more suited to position of care and friendly interaction under men’s leadership such as housewife.*

The occurrence of psychological disorders, including depression, is substantially higher for women than for men (*Chen, Wang, Poland, & Lin, 2009; Seedat et al., 2009*). These cognitive impedances are also corroboration of female cognitive lacking in terms of intellectual development and scientific aptitude. This has been corroborated by the president of Harvard University, Lawrence H. Summers who, based on the scholarly work assembled, stated women could be less genetically capable of performing science and mathematics due to genetics (*Goldin, G., Goldin, R., & Foulkes, A. 2005, February 21*). Although society may not want to hear it, [such] differences between men and women may be in part genetically determined, perhaps by differences in brain lateralization or by hormones (*Kimura & Hampson, 1994; Voyer, Voyer, & Bryden, 1995*). The fact that human cerebral cortex has differences in structure and function based on sex difference (*de Courten-Myers, 1999*) and that the cortex plays a key role in attention, perception, awareness, thought, memory, language, and consciousness definitely results in differences in male and female psychology and cognition.

A gland in the endocrine system is made up of groups of cells that function to secrete hormones and a hormone is a chemical that moves throughout the body to help regulate emotions and behaviors. Because the glands in men and women differ, hormones also help explain some of the psychological differences between men and women. Also, the sex hormones, testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone, play an important role in sex differences and thus their psychology and cognition. Men do not have a vulnerability period like women during pregnancy and women who are experiencing menopause, along with a reduction in estrogen, frequently report memory difficulties (*Chester, 2001*). This cognitive impedance can be disastrous in critical social roles such as those which need leadership, judgement skills and mental strength. Experience more guilt (*Else-Quest et al., 2012*). Experience more shame (*Else-Quest et al., 2012*). Experience more sadness (*Else-Quest et al., 2012*). Experience more social anxiety (*Caballo et al., 2014*). Seeks more emotional support (*Tamres et al., 2002*). More fearful (*Kring and Gordon 1998*). More sympathetic (*Babchuck et al., 1985; Hampson et al., 2006; McClure, 2000*). Emotionally more negative (*Bradley et al., 2001; Chentsova-Dutton & Tsai, 2007; Grossman & Wood, 1993*). Higher on neuroticism: Experience more anxiety, worry, fear, anger, frustration,

envy, jealousy, guilt, depressed mood, and loneliness. (*Feingold, 1994; Schmitt et al., 2008*). Women cry more often than men do. (*Tannen, 2001*). Women take care of children more than men do. (*Tannen, 2001*). Women smile more often than men. (*Tannen, 2001*). Women sexuality is dependent on context, environment and layered on emotions unlike male sexuality, which is direct, vivid and aggressive. (*Sine, 2009, WebMD*)

These biological, psychological and cognitive differences are scientifically established, and scientists do not disagree on these, but some say the differences are statistically small, while others say the cumulative differences are huge. This is also enforced by the theory that evolutionary theory provides reasons to expect reliable sex differences in personality, cognition and behavior (*Buss 2004; Geary 1998*) and the statistical multivariate ES indices which states when statistical differences are measured on multidimensional constructs, multivariate indices will almost invariably produce larger estimates of the statistical distance between Sex differences (*Del Giudice 2009*). What this means is, overall, there is a large statistical sex-based difference between man and woman which will also result in practical differences. Even if we hold that the sex differences between man and woman are statistically small still we have a problem of the butterfly effect. This concept of small difference making huge impact is called the butterfly effect. It describes the fact that small, barely perceptible difference can have a big, non-linear impact on a complex system. Human society is a complex system and proposing equality of sexes without considering their differences in biology, psychology and cognition have undoubtedly affected the human society in a disastrous way. The historical reality of gender roles based on biological and psychological differences have been validated and defended by many evolutionary scientists. Quran simply corroborates and enforces this divinely evolutionary process.

Many Muslim liberals give the excuse that Khadija (RA) was a woman leader. Well, when Khadijah was allegedly a leader the Quran 4:34 was not revealed and neither did Prophet mention the hadith above. It shows Islam was evolving. Obedience of God and His Messenger for the early Meccans is different from today's people as they were called to an initial

incomplete Islam while today's call is to the complete Islam. As to queen Sheba being a queen does not prove female political or jurisdictional leadership. Law of previous prophets is not an authority. We do not know whether queen Sheba gave her kingdom to Solomon thereby abdicating from her throne or she was under the dictates of Solomon. In any case it is not befitting that a leader who has submitted to God exists equally in authority with a Prophet of God.

Many feminists portray that Jacinda and Merkel are glorious examples of female success. First of all, one can say Prophet's Hadith about women leaders impeding success may be either deterministic that is all women leaders will impede success or statistical that is most women leaders will impede success. The real question is, did Jacinda and Merkel bring success and prosperity to New Zealand and Germany? On the basis of Hadith, they might not have, and it will need sophisticated social sciences studies in the micro level to know how success has been impeded. However empirically what do we know about Jacinda's and Merkel's rules? First of all Merkel "came to power in 2005, when she replaced the man Gerhard Schröder — the socialist Chancellor who implemented wide-ranging labor reforms that were unpopular with his electoral base, but which set the stage for *Germany's remarkable economic recovery*. Merkel's survival in office, therefore, has more to do with the hard work of her predecessor than with her own efforts. Speaking of her own efforts, consider her handling of the three European crises that have defined her Premiership so far...Merkel helped to generate years of economic contraction and lots of bad blood in the Hellenic Republic. Merkel insisted on maintaining her open-door policy *vis-à-vis* non-European migrants who poured into Europe in 2015 — long after it became obvious that her welcoming attitude was intensifying the flow of migrants and wreaking havoc in Central Europe. In addition to putting the entire Schengen Area at risk, Merkel set the stage for a show-down with the new EU members over the question of migrant resettlement."<sup>7</sup> The most devastating failure of Merkel is thus threatening the demography of Germany and Europe by mass immigration, considering the fact that Germany has supported Syrian rebels in various capacities.

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<sup>7</sup> Tupy, Marian L. Merkel's List of Failures Is Only Getting Longer. Cato Institute, 2018.

As to Jacinda, “inequality has increased under her Government. According to 2018 data the bottom 50 percent of New Zealanders own only 2 percent of the country’s assets. Not only has she not improved the lives of the most vulnerable New Zealanders, they are worse off under her leadership. This is what happens when you implement policies that sound kind, but you haven’t done the work to find out if they will actually improve people’s lives.”<sup>8</sup> What about the mass Muslim mosque massacre? Is it not a massive failure in the security and social perspective? Is it not attributed ultimately to Jacinda’s failure to make efficient security policies even after when Muslims repeatedly warned the authority they are in danger?

In conclusion prohibition of female leadership is part of patriarchy and Islamic patriarchy is about taking care of women and lessening their burden from various social roles. Patriarchy is obligated to protect and care for the woman’s mental, physical, spiritual and financial wellbeing, that is failing to do so will lead to genuine prolonged harm in mind<sup>9</sup> and body of the female. So, it is clear that Quran imposes a patriarchal purpose for the welfare of women, of which prohibition of female leadership is one aspect. Islamic patriarchy arises from intrinsic biological, psychological and cognitive superiority of man over woman as established by science and hinted by Quran. It also arises from man being obligated to be financiers and leaders.

I will end this discussion with a short note that is men ruin nations, but the women ruin it more. This is an important message of the Prophetic Hadith.

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<sup>8</sup> Wednesday, et al. “Jacinda Ardern Failing by Her Own Measures | Scoop News.” [Www.scoop.co.nz](http://www.scoop.co.nz), [www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA2105/S00162/jacinda-ardern-failing-by-her-own-measures.htm](http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA2105/S00162/jacinda-ardern-failing-by-her-own-measures.htm). Accessed 16 June 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Mental disorder is a kind of feeling and/or behavior beyond one’s control resulting in distressing and dysfunctional states of the individual.



