

Inner Human Voracity and Forbearance: Debates of Feminism in the Light of Quran and Iqbal

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Abstract

In the saga of feminist history, the dawn of third decade of the present millennium is at such a juncture that it is questioning a surrogate representation of feminism. Some critics problematize the phenomenon of feminist representation and are of the opinion that truth is being displaced by certainty as displayed in ideas, pictures, and representations. Studying the progression of such representations and portrayal of feminism resulting mostly in a noise and obscenity traversing the phenomenon of an unwomanly woman this paper foregrounds the importance of actual women's rights. Making use some oracular ideas of Suleri suggesting the need for alternative answers, this paper argues that sloganeering of iconoclastic and idiosyncratic typecasting of feminism need not be imposed on such a colossal scale across academic, polemic, and cultural platforms. Presenting this pervasive issue of feminism, womanism, and women's rights in the light of alternate modes of understanding, this paper investigates the importance and relevance of revisiting the injunctions of our religious text and Iqbal's feminist philosophy.

Keywords: Feminism, womanism, women's rights, Iqbal, feminist movements

“In modernity, however, truth is displaced by certainty. Truth is no longer a relation to the world, but is located in ideas, pictures, representations and other all too Cartesian entities”¹

Introduction

In the context of feminism, a recently emerging scenario is the foregrounding of Cartesian illustrations of ideas, pictures, and representations while the truth about feminism is being compromised. Due to this burden of Cartesian representation, the feminist movement in the present times has metamorphosized into a noise and obscenity, which has mostly resulted in a picture of an unwomanly woman rather than to have focused upon the actual women's rights. It may be argued that the iconoclastic and idiosyncratic typecasting of feminism are imposed on such a colossal scale across academic, polemic, and cultural platforms that the truth about the actual women's rights is increasingly marginalized. Instead of seeing the sloganeering element (which has camouflaged the understanding of the whole situation) as alpha and omega about feminism it would be helpful to seek truth about this pervasive issue of feminism, womanism, and women's rights in the light of plurality of solutions. Lightly adapting Sara Suleri's suggestions about the plurality of solutions in her essay “Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition” (1992), this paper studies some selected Ayaat of the Holy Quran and philosophy of Iqbal as possible alternate answers. Besides establishing the importance of Quranic understanding, this exploration is also an endeavor to bring out the relevance and importance of the philosophy of a seer whose vision needs to be revisited to come out of the present conundrum about the feminist debates.

A Critique of Representation of Feminism

Contextualizing the defining features of different waves of feminism, it may be seen how the suffrage movement of the first wave of feminism to secure the legal rights of women and the right to vote became the rights to reproduction and equal pay issues in the second wave. While the third wave primarily focused on a fight against patriarchy and other gender issues. Many contemporary feminist critics problematize several modes of feminist representations. Tracing the ebb and flow of feminism, Martha Rampton, in her article “Four Waves of Feminism” asserts that in the early stages of

feminism it was generally perceived that since women were considered morally more superior, their presence “in the civic sphere would improve public behavior and the political process.” However, the voice of second wave of feminism, spanning from the 1960s into the 90s, had its major focus on issues of sexuality, reproductive rights, and equality rights. She writes about the bandwagon element of the second wave feminists who mocked the first wave feminists by crowning a sheep as Miss America and throwing “oppressive” feminine artifacts such as bras, girdles, high-heels, makeup and false eyelashes into the trashcan.² Thus, many feminist critics trace the trajectory of the political, legal, and equality rights of the three or four movements of feminism. While, in the present millennium, many are discussing about the modes of representations of these issues across academic, cultural, and polemic platforms and questioning the prevalent reliance on the representation of feminist issues.³ Investigating the idea of representation in her article “Questioning Representation,” Claire Colebrook (2000) believes that truth is displaced by a constructed certainty which has swept the contemporary world into a tunneled vision about feminism. Any well established and accepted mode of analysis is no longer of much help. Rather, the current image of feminism, due to its “neoliberal [and] consumerist culture” and due to its polemic nature, seem to have gone into disrepute and lost its valid claims of representation. In other words, she points out the internal rift between the second wave feminists who denounced everything feminine, while the third wavers, who (probably tired of portrayal of themselves as the plain Jane) came full circle to flaunt every aspect of their womanhood under the apparent rhetoric of empowerment. However, feminists like Murphy are critical of this seeming claim of emancipation and point out the actual reason of commodifying aspect of capitalist consumerist culture. Erika Adams, in a similar vein of questioning the clamour of feminism, raises quite pertinent observations in her article “Chanel Stages Feminist Protest, But Was It Genuine?” (2014) when she asks, “Enrolling an army of physically formatted women (i.e young, tall, beautiful, skinny, white) to talk about feminism feels ironic as formulaic beauty is something that feminists tend to want to separate themselves from”.⁴ Thus, she is also critical of the disparity between the walk and the talk aspects of such protests. The

neoliberalism and consumerist culture are therefore the implicit menace which are compromising the real feminist issues. This unidimensional understanding about any phenomenon is contested by critics like Sara Suleri, who support the need for alternative realism in her article written in the last part of the twentieth century. After this brief overview about the contemporary boo ha ha aspect of feminism and its academic, cultural, and popular critique, let us turn to the main discussion of this paper. The following section serves as the main discussion about the importance of an alternate mode of addressing the *apparent* forms of feminism. I argue that this phenomenon, which is cumulating into an anti-intellectual sloganeering, instead of helping the cause of feminism, inadvertently, seem to harm its long-borne standing.

Academic Self-Censorship and Feminism: A Way Forward

Academics like Sara Suleri make the postcolonial and feminist academics mindful of their duties. She is of the view that the literary and cultural interpreters need to talk about the theoretical concerns pertaining to the “marginal groups,” of postcolonialism and feminism but should refrain from giving frivolity in solutions. In other words, for either of the two marginal groups of postcolonialism and feminism, Suleri does not favor the popular solutions that give in to the pressures of being politically correct, or those solutions that are sanctioned by the cultural criticism. Suleri’s groundbreaking essay, “Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition” in 1992 proves quite oracular in terms of the double issue of post-colonialism and feminism. Instead of giving in to “rampant and gleeful anti-intellectualism” of conjoining the concerns of post-colonialism and feminism, Suleri is of the opinion to keeping the two separate. She criticizes the bandwagon element that is usually adopted to become more subservient to the popular critique, especially in the case of postcolonialism and feminism. Otherwise, the “dreary reiterations” of anti-intellectualism of “thought police” and “multiculturalism” would get the better of academics. In other words, these modes of grim reverberations would be “demonstrative of the academy’s spinelessly promiscuous submission to correctness.” In fact, she calls it “our anathema” Contextualizing this theorizing in the current gleeful noise about women emancipation, it may be seen that it is reduced to the level of hollow sloganeering and has almost become an intolerant climate. Suleri

believes that we, as intellectuals should put this question to ourselves and should rise to the occasion of making certain clarifications. Suggesting a “two-tiered response,” lest we are “lopped” off, Suleri exhorts “the academy [to] persist in making a resolute attempt to present some firm alternative opinions.” Putting it simplistically, she suggests that “if we must be freaks, let us be freaks with a voice”. She, therefore, decries any readymade and popular solutions, which do not allow any difference of opinion. Drawing our attention of “elevating the racially female voice into a metaphor for ‘the good’”, Suleri makes one dare to stand against this rampant and pervasive rhetoric of anti-intellectual sloganeering of women’s rights. As part of the academy, like Suleri, we need to question ourselves:

how plural are we in our constructions of singularity; and how singular in our apprehensions of the plural? For until the participants in marginal discourses learn how best to critique the intellectual errors that inevitably accompany the provisional discursivity of the margin, the monolithic and untheorized identity of the center will always be on them.⁵

Thus, with these questions in mind we set to answer some issues raised in this anti-intellectual sloganeering that acts as a thought police for anyone who dares to think in any alternate forms. As discussed in the previous section, the cultural theorists and academics of the present century have exposed the disparity between the apparent sloganeering on the one hand and an armchair intellectualism on the other. Resultantly, it is not much help for any real amelioration of women. Rather than making the actual issues of women as only a metaphor, Suleri’s analogy of postcolonialism (or feminism) to be read as a “free-floating metaphor” may come handy to understand the importance of alternate opinions and plurality of solutions. We should not be afraid to address this issue with plurality of solutions and a rigorous revisionary scrutiny of our religious texts and Iqbal’s feminist approach may come as quite helpful to answer some questions regarding feminism. After this at length discussion of Suleri’s acerbic stance towards the question of specific and “metaphoric postcolonial feminism” espoused by her in 1992, we may see many examples of Suleri’s suggestion of using “local example of how realism locates its language within the postcolonial condition”. In this

context, examples like Katy Salmasi, a graduate from Art University of Tehran and her PhD in Philology, who has written 15 plays may serve as a glocal answer to the question to feminism. Her stance may be seen as truly feminist because since 1992, she has also directed 13 plays, such as *Ten Minutes at the Train Station*, *Faust*, *Medea* and many other. Salamsi believes that: The Women's Rights activists in Iran, independent of any political links, try to curb the Superpowers from poking their noses in their social affairs. This move for independence has included Secular Women as well as a few Moslem Women who have feared religious turmoil. Nowadays in Iran, Women make distinctions on matters of law, and struggle against pickets, traditions and degrading implications regarding women.⁶

Salamsi is therefore, quite critical of neoliberal global dictations in Iranian perspective of feminism. She, in fact, shows the world an alternate way of upholding the true spirit of feminist ideals by pursuing her dreams and finding no local critique for her standpoint. Similar glocal examples may be seen in the entrepreneurs like Razia Sultana, an unlettered woman from Sialkot, Pakistan, who now owns a football manufacturing factory. While the innumerable examples of women professionals (Sulaiman, 2018; Nadeem, 2021) in any Muslim country (former colonial entities) may be instructing to update our understanding of the subject.

Iqbal and the Debates of Feminism:

"ولا تنسوا الفضل بينكم" or "واحضرت الانفس الشح"

In this section, I argue that apart from local examples of alternative solutions this Boo ha-ha, this noise, and this obscenity, which impels the phenomenon of feminism more towards creating more unwomanly women with the least attention to womanly women's rights, can be addressed with some more recommendations in the same direction. With the phrase "واحضرت الانفس الشح" Allah draws our attention to selfish human nature but with "ولا تنسوا الفضل بينكم" Allah calls us to the goodness that we always need to remember in all our dealings of this life. For me the importance, relevance, and revisiting the injunctions of our religious text and the Word of the Creator of all the worlds, The Holy Quran, and Iqbal's discussion on different aspects of womanhood needs to be paid a focused heed to, lest the term feminism becomes the bane of our times. A study of Iqbal's philosophy

about women, shows Iqbal as a great feminist of his times. Not only does his poetry reflect Quranic teachings but we also see him fighting for the legal rights of women. Many a times, we see him advocating for their rights as a barrister without charging any fees even. Iqbal's balanced approach towards women rights drawn from the Quranic fountain are aspects of Iqbal's philosophy that need to be foregrounded. With a gap of thirty years, 1978 and 2018, books by two women academics, Nasreen Akhtar's *Iqbal Aur Wajud-e-Zan* and Baseera Ambreen's *Iqbal: Wajud-e-Zan*, are about the feminist issues as discussed through Iqbal's feminist philosophy. We see him giving holistic examples of womanhood in the characters of Greek woman philosopher Diotima (Shahbaz, 2018, p. 56), or Safana bint Hatim (Shahbaz, 2018, p. 54), or Princess Taimoori, Queen Victoria (Shahbaz, 2018, p. 129), and many others against the metaphors of Afrangin or Nabia e Mars⁷. These women characters reflected in his poetry have a complete philosophy behind them, equated on the principles laid down in the Quran. Discussing some relevant passages may serve as an example of alternate means of addressing this monolith representation of feminism. In Ayat 21 of Surah Ar-Rum (30), Allah SWT clearly points out the origin of human being and the androgyny that may dispel the unmindful sloganeering and its unchecked acceptance in the general public, especially in terms of feminism. Allah says:

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً
وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ⁸

And among His (wonderous) signs is that He created for you from your own selves' mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you love and mercy between your (hearts). Indeed, in that are signs for a people who think and ponder.

Thus, it may be seen that instead of reducing a human entity as a "racial body.... [and] the naked category of lived experience", as we may put it in a postmodern lexicon, Allah is drawing our attention to the wonderous sign of creating spouses as reciprocating better halves for each other. Not only that but Allah is clearly indicating that He (Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala) has put *Muwada and Rehmat*, a deep and innate love and mutual mercy, between them (though a husband and wife do not have blood ties between them).

Also, in the ending words of the same passage, the repetition of the word *Ayaat* used in plural form shows Allah's emphasis on the phenomenon and process of thinking; that the thinking souls get a lot of understanding from these wonderful signs that Allah has made in the form of husband and wife. It should also be borne in mind that the word *Ayaat* need always to be understood in the closest rendering of its meaning as wonderful signs. So, when Allah calls the relationship between husband and wife as a wonderful sign, the words in which this news is given to us are also a wonderful sign of the Creator.

In this postmodern age, a monolithic representation of feminism based on the apparent feminine representations seems ironic because postmodernist analysis of feminism calls for a plurality of solutions. Iqbal models the women characters of his poetry on the principles laid down in the above Ayat. Thus, we find him commemorating the birth of a girl as blessed. For he writes

خاندان میں ایک لڑکی کا وجود / باعث برکات لا محدود ہے

That a girl's existence in a household is a means of unlimited bounties and goodness. Similarly, writing an elegy of an eleven-year-old girl, Fatima Bint Abdullah who got martyred in the Battle of Tripoli 1912, Iqbal writes.⁹

ہے کوئی ہنگامہ تیری تربتِ خاموش میں پل رہی ہے ایک قوم تازہ اس آغوش میں

There is some great havoc in this placid tomb of yours A new nation is being nursed in this lap.¹⁰ Thus, for Iqbal, a woman presence in a society is of pivotal importance. He advocates for their rights and exhorts them to know and demand for their rights. However, as Akhtar argues in her 1978 book, *Iqbal Aur Wajud-e-Zan* that any organization cannot grow if it does not allocate proper duties to its employees¹¹, we find a manifestation of this thought in Iqbal. His syllogistic poetry with this balanced approach is quite convincing to see as alternate solution of contemporary feminist challenge. Iqbal expresses this in *Armaghan e Hijaz* with these words:

جہاں را محکمى از امہات است نہادشائ امین ممکنات است
اگر ایں نکتہ را قوے نداند نظام کار و بارش بے ثبات است

[That the world gets strengthened by the presence of mothers. Their aura is the only guarantee for all future possibilities. If this point is not internalized by a nation, the whole edifice of life crumbles]. (Iqbal A. , 1997, pp. 465-6)

Iqbal, therefore, gives utmost importance to motherhood. For him motherhood is the epitome of creation of a woman. He regards motherhood (امومت) as the most noble and honorable duties of a human being. In his book, *Ramooz e Bekhudi* he writes:

حافظ رمز اخوت مادران قوت قرآن و ملت مادران

[Only mothers are the defenders of brotherhood. They are the driving force for imbibing the teachings of Quran and making a nation strong].¹² A solution for modern feminist predicament from another perspective can be to consider the words of our Lord Almighty. Allah gives a detailed account about the mutual relationship between genders and lays down the basic precepts about conjugal laws in Surah Al-Baqarah especially from *Ayaat* 221 onward. A close reading of these *Ayaat* opens a new chapter of understanding. Unfortunately, as the reality stands, these injunctions may not be seen being followed in practical ways, perhaps in most of even the Muslim countries around the world. However, if we cannot reach a certain height in our goals, we do not bring down the bar of standard down. Similarly, it is our deficiency if we are unable to implement God's words in true spirit. Repealing the laws, and that too God's laws, is not an answer. Nonetheless, it is observed through history that reiterating these laws has helped Muslim and non-Muslim¹³ societies in the past and will continue to do so in the future. Besides drawing many diverse in-depth inferences that Quran offers to its readers, even a cursory glance at the wordings of certain selected passages can be instructive for a very basic level of human existence. In Surah Al-Baqarah, after laying down the rules for selection of a spouse (221) and giving glad tidings for the ones who come in the shelter of Allah and develop a God conscious spousal sexual relationship (222-3), Allah indicates how to behave humanely in case of even a divorce (226) and why it is important for women to refrain themselves from remarrying for a certain time (228). The explicitly laid down rules of divorce (227-232) stand in sharp contrast to the mockery of marriage and divorce that is generally witnessed in some cases globally, and hence used for making uninformed slogans and jingles as is witnessed in the case of feminism. For instance, the underlying principle that Allah provides even in the case of divorce, and certainly in a balanced conjugal relationship goes

unnoticed in the ruse that transpires in feminist sloganeering. In Ayat 237 of Surah Al-Baqarah, Allah says:

وَإِنْ طَلَّقْتُمُوهُنَّ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَمْسُوهُنَّ وَقَدْ فَرَضْتُمْ لَهُنَّ فَرِيضَةً فَنِصْفُ مَا
فَرَضْتُمْ إِلَّا أَنْ يَعْفُونَ أَوْ يَعْفُوا الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ عَقْدَةُ النِّكَاحِ ۖ وَأَنْ تَعْفُوا أَقْرَبُ
لِلنَّفَقَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَنسُوا الْفَضْلَ بَيْنَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ¹⁴

And if you divorce them before consummating the marriage but after deciding on a dowry, pay half of the dowry, unless the wife graciously waives it or the husband graciously pays in full. Graciousness is closer to righteousness. And do not forget kindness among yourselves. Surely Allah is All-Seeing of what you do.

It may therefore be seen that the dower money that Allah declares to be a gift from Him that the husband is enjoined upon to pay his wife (Surah An-Nisa Ayat 4) is supposed to be carried out even in the case of divorce. It is quite important to note the cardinal principle laid down by Allah in case of discord resulting in divorce for any number of reasons; namely to never forget mutual kindness even while parting. When a society is raised on such principles of kindness, the question of mindless sloganeering about the pseudo rights would never arise. Or as Suleri would put it: “Realism of race, gender or profession gives too parochial or phantasmagoric category of addressing these issues”¹⁵

Interestingly, when we try to unpack and understand the term نَحْلَه Nihla, that is mentioned in Surah An-Nisa Ayat 4, it opens new chapters of understanding. Ironically the second part of this ayat is quite well known among Muslim scholars; namely to eat any portion that women forgo them from the dower money. However, understanding the term nihla by one of the most authentic encyclopedias of Arabic language, *Lisan ul Arab* by a lexicographer, Ibn-e- Manzoor Al-Afriqui, makes us understand that the dower money that Allah has enjoined upon men is actually a gift from Allah that HE has enjoined on men to be given to women when they go in wedlock. This meaning brings a complete paradigm shift in our perceptions. Men come to know that it is not them who are gifting the women, but it is Allah’s gift that they are supposed to give women. Imagine the amount of goodwill and rapport being generated between the opposite sexes, if men are

conscious of the fact that Allah has shown mercy on them by being mindful of their wealth status and not burdened them unnecessarily, and yet, it is HIS onerous command that they are carrying out, and women are mindful of the fact that Allah is making the men pay a gift on HIS behalf. In the beginning of the twentieth century, we see Iqbal lecturing and writing about the issues related to women. Taking Quran as the guiding principle, at a number of occasions, Iqbal reiterates the need for women to be aware of their legal and social rights. It pains him when he sees that the women are unaware of the rights given to them by Allah and therefore, we see him fighting cases as a barrister free of cost for women. In his poem entitled “عورت” “Woman,” Iqbal is deeply troubled by their plight when they are put in difficult situations and writes in Zarb e Kaleem:

میں بھی مظلومیٰ نسواں سے ہوں غمناک بہت
نہیں ممکن نہیں مگر اس عقدہ مشکل کی کشود

I am deeply saddened by the oppression of women. There seems to be no cure for this difficult question.¹⁶ He calls the awareness of women's rights as an intricate and delicate issue and therefore, exhorts the women to be aware of their rights in order to demand them with dignity when they are deprived of them. However, we do not find a mindless aping the west to demand their rights. He even has a word of advice for the western woman when, at one occasion in England he speaks thus to a congregation: “It is the duty of the women of England that they should safeguard their next generations from the clutches of atheism and materialism”¹⁷ Similarly, Allah's use of an interesting allegory in explaining the mutual relationship between husband and wife needs to be internalized for a sustainable existence in this world. Allah tells us that they complement each other as garments for each other in Ayat 187 of Surah Al-Baqarah where He uses the phrase

هٰنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَّهُنَّ

“Your spouses are a garment for you as you are for them.”

The metaphor of a garment holds the connotations of not only covering mutual shortcomings, but it also has an inference of beautifying each other. Just as a garment can provide a weather shield in harsh climates, it fulfils many other purposes, including an armor which can provide a safeguard against any physical or metaphorical enemy. The metonymical expression of

garment encompasses all possibilities of protection and a sense of fulfilment for human existence in this world. Academic feminism needs to investigate the reasons of a disregard of such pure goodness and the reasons of weakening the foundations of the means of human chapter on this earth. The contemporary postmodern world with its increasing propensities of breaking the family units, politically engineered promotion of homosexuality and directionless feminism, and reducing any phenomenon to the banality of easy dichotomies of pro and anti, as is seen in the convenient representationalism of feminist sloganeering, need not be taken on their face value. The increasing trend of such divisive strategies need be taken with a grain of salt and the “rude abrasions that Western feminist theory has inflicted on the body of ethnicity”¹⁸ need to be analyzed without any partisan approach. An academic and critic, Camille Paglia, who is well known for her fiery expression, is increasingly serving as an anathema for today’s postmodern feminist variants. Being a feminist herself, she is critical of the new tendencies in feminism, mania of gender transition, other assorted queer trends, and advocates for ruling out *men bashing* out of feminism. Through her reiterative statements in her various talks, she exposes the cult of exploitation of gender identities as a recurring sign of cultural collapse throughout the history of civilization. In her debate entitled “Feminism: in conversation with Camille Paglia” in 2016 and the subsequent section in the talk entitled “Lesson from History: Transgender Mania is Sign of Cultural Collapse - Camille Paglia” she debunks many myths that have been piling up in terms of modern-day feminism and transgender madness. In her 2017 book, *Free Women, Free Men: Sex, Gender, Feminism*, which is basically a collection of her well-known essays that she has written over her academic career, she writes:

The problem with too much current feminism, in my opinion, is that even when it strikes progressive poses, it emanates from an entitled, upper-middle-class point of view. It demands the intrusion and protection of paternalistic authority figures to project a hypothetical utopia that will be magically free from offense and hurt.¹⁹

Paglia views these present forms as “mental illness” and signs of decadence and a reason for annihilation of societies. Emphasizing on the need to learn

our lessons from history, she opines that whenever a society is on the verge of its death it indulges in criminal cults (Paglia, Lesson from History: Transgender Mania is Sign of Cultural Collapse - Camille Paglia, 2016) that may be seen in modern feministic and transgender trends and are seriously damaging the cause of actual feminism. What Paglia is describing for western society, somewhat similar idiotic scenes on the same leanings may be seen in modern-day Pakistan's feminist processions. Such events and processions are being funded and aided by oppressive social forces, which, instead of giving strength to the actual feminist ideals, are trying to steer this ship of feminism into disrepute. Suleri, in her aforementioned article, though written before the modern feminist and transgender frenzy, makes an important point: Within feminist movements Third World nationals often assume the role of mediator or interpreter, explaining the "bad" black people to their white colleagues or helping the "naive" black people to understand whiteness. ... Unwittingly assuming the role of go-between, of mediator, she re-inscribes a colonial paradigm."²⁰

Though the context in which Suleri is writing is about whiteness, but the words may befittingly be used for the subscribing mode adopted by the 'Aurat March(es)' (in Pakistan) that are getting more and more radical in their sloganeering and are a cause of damage to the real feminism that our Creator has bestowed us with. Iqbal uses the metaphoric names of Afrangin and Nabia e Mars for all the pseudo liberalized women who try to ape the western ideals unconditionally and are wary of their natural duties of wifehood/motherhood. He considers them another species, other than either man or woman, and finds them quite detrimental for human existence. A detailed analysis of the word of God to address and add to different dimensions of feminism can only be addressed in a full-length paper. Here I would restrict myself to giving only two more references that work as alternative points to ponder in order to resolve some of the ambiguities generated by pervasive cartesian entities as representation of feminism. There is one particular Ayat of Surah An-Nisa which is often misunderstood and misquoted and used as a means for confusing a very important concept about feminism. I argue that Allah is the biggest feminist (if we have to use this modern-day jargon) and no feminist agenda in the whole human history can

be this profound as given by Allah Almighty. In Surah An-Nisa ayat 34 Allah Ta'ala says:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۚ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا²¹

Men are the caretakers of women, as men have been provisioned by Allah over women and tasked with supporting them financially. And righteous women are devoutly obedient and, when alone, protective of what Allah has entrusted them with. And if you sense ill-conduct from your women, advise them 'first', 'if they persist,' do not share their beds, 'but if they still persist,' then discipline them 'gently.' But if they change their ways, do not be unjust to them. Surely Allah is Most High, All-Great.

Thus, on the onset one ambiguity that has been generated and fueled over decades is the word Alqawwamoon القوامون, generally mistranslated in Pakistani and Indo-Pak sub-continent context as a ruler over women, gets resolved. Iqbal has explained this term in exactly the same way as is meant in the Quran but even then, many eminent scholars choose not to understand it in its true perspective (Ambreen, 2018, p. 63). Investigating the real meaning of this word reveals that a man is not only a caretaker, as is written in the translation quoted above, but also a supporter, a guardian, and a manager²² These meanings change the entire fabric of our perception. This analogy becomes helpful when we see that Allah has made a man thus because of the money he spends on his family. Exceptions should not replace rules, and so, any common discrepancies that are taken as case in points to this principle are oddities and should be dealt as such. All genders are equal in the eyes of God, in fact, even the inter-gender or intra-gender, who are thus by some abnormality in birth, not a cosmetic one, as can be seen as an example of Brown University that Paglia quotes.²³

Instead of looking at this term, Alqawwamoon القوامون, antagonistically, one tends to internalize the concept of being a manager, guardian or a supporter. It becomes a simple equation of a boss and employees. One is selected as a boss by some criteria by a company and the others as employees. A boss is held responsible for any allocated task and a

boss is considered good who takes care of his team and makes them work in a congenial manner. However, this caretaker not only ensures these points of looking after his womenfolk, but also spends his entire earnings on his wife and his family. While a wife, even if she happens to be a business tycoon like Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ first wife Um-Alkhadeeja Radi-Allahu-unha, or his wife Um-Ayesha Radi-Allahu-unha, a teacher, or his wife Um-Salma Radi-Allahu-unha, a leather tanner, she is under no obligation to spend her money on her husband. Besides the liberty of working with dignity, these examples and many others stand as living examples of true emancipation for women. There can hardly be any justification of modern-day sloganeering when one understands how Allah and His last messenger, and even all His messengers, have upheld these precepts; especially when we hear Prophet Muhammad's ﷺ open declaration of love for his wife and asking the coachmen of camels to go slow because there are glass-vessels (women) sitting on the camels (Al-Bukhari).²⁴ Like any modern-day understanding, the narrator of this Hadith comments that if such a comment would have been made by any other than Rasoolullah ﷺ, the other men would have made fun of him. Such comment by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ indicates that he is clearly breaking any taboos associated with female gender and openly declaring about their preciousness and irreplicable aspect in this metonymic expression.

The second concept, which is problematized by some feminists is نشوز Nashooz, which is translated here as 'ill conduct.' One of the reasons of associated common misunderstanding of beating etc. in this context is simply because the mention of this term in the context of men is never foregrounded and never brought under discussion. If we juxtapose the use of this term in the above ayat, and then the following one, we see that the edifice built around this term crumbles completely. In the same Surah An-Nisa, ayat 128, Allah says:

وَإِنْ أَمْرًا خَافَتْ مِنْ بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَنْ يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا^{٢٥}
وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنْفُسُ الشُّحَّ وَإِنْ تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

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If a woman fears indifference or neglect from her husband, there is no blame on either of them if they seek 'fair' settlement, which is best. Humans are ever

inclined to selfishness. I But if you are gracious and mindful 'of Allah', surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do.

Here the word 'Nashooz,' used for men, and the clear indication that human beings (not just men nor women) have the inherent propensity towards selfishness. The Creator, knowing well His creation, lays down the cardinal principle of being gracious and God conscious and the problem can be resolved quite amicably; just like the manager knows that he cannot mistreat his team of employees because he would be answerable to the owner of the company he is working for. Furthermore, we get a better understanding of Nashooz in the light of *Lisan ul Arab* and Professor Zulfu's dictionary rendering which describes this term as to have emotions of hatred and aversion for his or her companion (spouse) and lead ugly and sour, unhappy and uncomfortable life. Thus, this hatred is reciprocal and cannot be on the part of women only as is generally perceived and then contested needlessly.

Here the concept of a human being, irrespective of male or female genders, as given by Iqbal comes handy. Deriving his concept from Quran, Iqbal takes a human being in the meanings of an individual (فرد) (Iqbal M. ..., 1959, 1908) irrespective of gender. Thus, the above concept of Nashooz would surge in societies if the individuals are not educated properly. Iqbal believes that every individual determines the fate of a nation. His famous poem (عورت اور تعلیم) in *Bal e Jibreel* is a clear indication of losing the true spirit of being a human being. He writes:

تہذیب فرنگی ہے اگر مرگ امومت	ہے حضرت انساں کے لیے اس کا ثمر موت
جس علم کی تاثیر سے زن ہوتی ہے نازن	کہتے ہیں اسی علم کو ارباب نظر موت
بیگانہ رہے دیں سے اگر مدرسہ زن	ہے عشق و محبت کے لیے علم و ہنر موت

If the western civilization deems the demise of motherhood as proper then its fruit is a death knell for a human being. People with deep knowledge considers that education a death sentence which makes a woman unwomanly. If a mother's academy is bereft of any proper way (دین) then any education and skill acquired in such an academy is going to bring only death to any learning capability using passion and zeal. ²⁶

The above discussion offers a fresh perspective to understand the complexities of representational feminism unless we want to turn a blind eye to a possible solution given by no less than the Creator of this and all the

other worlds, of which human existence is a considerable, and yet just a part. And lest our intellectual selves fall prey to what Allah has pointed out in Surah Al-An`am ayat 91 when Allah states:

وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ إِذْ قَالُوا مَا أَنزَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَى بَشَرٍ مِّن شَيْءٍ ۚ قُلْ مَن أَنزَلَ الْكِتَابَ الَّذِي جَاءَ بِهِ مُوسَى نُورًا وَهُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ تَجْعَلُونَهُ قَرَاطِيسَ يُبَدُّونَهَا وَنُحْفُونَ كَثِيرًا ۖ وَعَلَّمَنَّمَا لَمْ تَعْلَمُوا أَنْتُمْ وَلَا ءَابَاؤُكُمْ قُلْ اللَّهُ تَعْلَمُ ذُرُّهُم فِي خَوَاصِّهِمْ يَلْعَبُونَ²⁷

And they have not shown Allah His proper reverence when they said, “Allah has revealed nothing to any human being.” Say, ‘O Prophet,’ “Who then revealed the Book brought forth by Moses as a light and guidance for people, which you split into separate sheets—revealing some and hiding much? You have been taught ‘through this Quran’ what neither you nor your forefathers knew.” Say, ‘O Prophet,’ “Allah ‘revealed it!’” Then leave them to amuse themselves with falsehood.

The choice is ours, whether to hide the instruction manual and try to lead our lives on hit and trial principles, or to take help from the Creator of our machinery’s guidelines.

Conclusion

We have seen that any monolithic representational claims of feminism that are causing a storm in a teacup may be seen as a sloganeered boo-ha-ha, a noise, and even an obscenity. These postmodern cults which are causing an uproar in the present millennium are countered by many feminist academicians, literary, social, and cultural critics. A postmodern obsession to understand and propound a certain brand of feminism erected on self-righteous principles can therefore, be misleading. Instead of “enacting strategies of belligerence that at this time are more divisive than informative” and scaling down any other possibilities of alternative modes of understanding may be detrimental for the very existence of human life of which man and woman are a pivotal part. Any parochial understanding has had devastating consequences in history. As a kind of concluding remark for any conformist attitude adopted by any postcolonial society, which eventually proves detrimental for it in the long run, a translated stanza may be instructive for our understanding. Iqbal’s Persian poetry book, *Pyam e Mashriq*, the selected poems of which were translated by Faiz Ahmad Faiz in

1977, may serve as may be seen from the preceded discussion. I write here, first, the Urdu translation done by Faiz and then I translate it in English.

مے پلاتا ہے کسے طائفہ شیشہ گراں
بے خبر چھوڑ بھی دے نخل نوائے
مدرسے میں ہے تجھے ذوق و حقیقت کی تلاش
لاکوی نغمہ جسے تیری زمیں پہچانے
دیگراں

You try to find Truth and Zest in a School? Look! Who is being served the potion by the troupe of glass makers? Bring a song that would be understood by your glocal realm. O Airheaded! Stop harping the tune of others.²⁸ This stanza shows that Iqbal, in a rhetorical comment to his usual addressee and reader, who is also a seeker of truth, asks him to stop following others in a conformist manner and exhorts him to think and bring ingenious solutions that are grounded in a deep understanding faculty that a human being is endowed with. Summing up the whole discussion, it may be said that this paper adds to the criticism of many academics, literary and cultural theorists who are problematizing the rampant and gleeful anti-intellectualism of some feminist factions as manifested in the postmodern sloganeering. An alternative lens of an everlasting instruction manual for human being and Iqbal's feminist philosophy adds discursive possibilities in the field of feminism. It can be helpful to root out the causes of this continued obsession in some factions of feminism, which, instead of helping the cause of feminism in a healthy dimension, is, quite devastatingly, damaging its very idea.

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at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZPRdzMssKtU5yByk6iepAA>.

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⁷ Shahbaz, H, *Zikr-e-Zan* (Islamabad: National University of Modern Languages, 2018), p. 117

⁸ Al-Room, 30: 21.

⁹ Ambreen, B, *Iqbal: Wajood e Zan* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 2018), p. 20

¹⁰ Mohammad Iqbal. *Kuliat-e-Iqbal*. Islamabad: National Book Foundation, 2011. This Kuliat has the books of *Bang e Dara*, *Bal e Jibreel*, and *Zarb-e-Kaleem*, and selected portions of *Armaghan e Hijaz*. However, since there are different versions of Iqbal's books available, the page numbers and poem numbers may be different in different versions. Henceforth, except when I am referring to any other work of Iqbal, it will be referenced as 'Iqbal,' which may or may not be followed by the page numbers, especially if the title of the poems is mentioned then the citation may not be followed by page numbers. P. 243.

¹¹ Akhtar, N, *Iqbal Aur Wajud-e-Zan* (Lahore: The Institute of Research and Writing Pakistan, 1978), p. 5.

¹² Ambreen, B, *Iqbal: Wajood e Zan*. Lahore: Iqbal Academy, 2018), p. 43.

¹³ Aamir, R. Women's Rights, p. 39-61.

The example of Native American, African Americans, and Mormons may be cited as examples. These principles have been discussed about Native Americans in the paper, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348351583_Contemporary_Native_American_Literature_and_the_World_Issues_Debates_and_Representation_in_Selected_Literary_Texts. And see

<https://www.history.com/topics/religion/mormons#:~:text=Mormons%20are%20a%20religious%20group,than%2016%20million%20members%20worldwide> for some explanation about Mormons.

¹⁴ Al-Baqarah, 2:237.

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Associate Professor of Middle East Languages and Cultures, Columbia University, New York, USA. In the preface of this dictionary, he writes that he started this project in 1959 which gets finished in 1973 when he is writing the preface.

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