

ZEENATH KAUSAR'S VIEWS ON WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY FROM
QUR'ĀN AND SUNNAH PERSPECTIVE

BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis critically examines Kausar's perspective on women's empowerment. Kausar is critical to feminism and all its various ideologies. Although she criticizes Western feminism so heavily, she does not spare Islamic feminist ideologies. She believes that external and internal cultural practices in Muslim societies such as patriarchy led to the emergence of Islamic feminism in Muslim world. Kausar bases her critique on feminism in all its forms on the Qur'ān and the Sunnah primarily. This thesis analyses Kausar's contributions to issues related to women and their empowerment from Qur'ān and Sunnah perspective by comparing them with Western and Islamic feminist ideologies. It analyses the Islamic Action Plan (IAP) proposed by Kausar as an alternative to Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) endorsed by the feminists. The thesis is qualitative in nature drawing its data chiefly from primary and secondary sources namely, interviews, Qur'ān, Sunnah, books, archival documents, and articles. It employs a content analysis approach in analysing the primary and secondary sources mentioned above. The thesis develops few major findings i) Kausar views Islamic feminism as a perfect image of Western feminism; ii) She represents the view of that women's empowerment on Islamic perspective is rather balanced in comparison with feminist view related to the same matter; iii) Kausar's model on issues related to women and their empowerment is drawn from the Qur'ān and Sunnah-based framework; iv) Kausar suggests the Islamic Action Plan (IAP) as alternative to Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) endorsed at the 1995 Fourth International Conference on Women. The study arrives at few significant findings; i) Kausar recommends the adoption of IAP for women's empowerment by Muslim government institutions especially constitutional and legal bodies and authorities; ii) She presents IAP for women's empowerment to be endorsed, enacted, and enforced by legal authorities in Muslim societies to maintain family and all social institutions from moral degeneration and decadence; iii) She recommends that IAP for women's empowerment to be introduced in their internal statutes and executive regulations; iv) Finally, Kausar suggests IAP for women's empowerment should be incorporated into school curricula and syllabuses to educate and nurture the children and young generation about the necessity of empowering women.

خلاصة البحث

تدرس هذه الأطروحة بشكل نقدي وجهة نظر كوثر حول تمكين المرأة. تعد كوثر نظرة حاسمة للنسوية وجميع أيديولوجياتها المختلفة. على الرغم من أنها تنتقد النسوية الغربية بشدة، إلا أنها لا توفر الأيديولوجيات النسوية الإسلامية. وأنها تعتقد بأن الممارسات الثقافية الخارجية والداخلية في المجتمعات الإسلامية مثل النظام الأبوي أدت إلى ظهور النسوية الإسلامية في العالم الإسلامي. وتستند كوثر في نقدها للنسوية بجميع أشكالها على القرآن والسنة في المقام الأول. تحلل هذه الأطروحة مساهمات كوثر في القضايا المتعلقة بالمرأة وتمكينها من منظور القرآن والسنة من خلال مقارنتها بالأيديولوجيات النسوية الغربية والإسلامية. كما تحلل خطة العمل الإسلامية التي اقترحتها كوثر كبديل لإعلان بكين ومنهاج العمل الذي أقرته النسويات. كانت الأطروحة نوعية بطبيعتها وتستمد بياناتها بشكل أساسي من المصادر الأولية والثانوية وهي المقابلات والقرآن والسنة والكتب والوثائق الأرشيفية والمقالات، وهي تستخدم نهج تحليل المحتوى في تحليل المصادر الأولية والثانوية المذكورة أعلاه. وتخلص الأطروحة إلى بعض النتائج الرئيسية؛ أ) تنظر كوثر إلى النسوية الإسلامية على أنها صورة مثالية للنسوية الغربية؛ ب) أنها ترى أن تمكين المرأة من المنظور الإسلامي متوازن إلى حد ما بالمقارنة مع وجهة النظر النسوية المتعلقة بنفس الأمر؛ ج) نموذج كوثر بشأن القضايا المتعلقة بالمرأة وتمكينها مستمد من إطار قائم على القرآن والسنة؛ د) تقترح كوثر خطة العمل الإسلامية (IAP) كبديل لإعلان ومنهاج عمل بكين (BPFA) المعتمد في المؤتمر الدولي الرابع للمرأة عام ١٩٩٥. توصلت الدراسة إلى بعض النتائج المهمة؛ أ) توصي كوثر باعتماد خطة العمل الإسلامية لتمكين المرأة من قبل المؤسسات الحكومية الإسلامية وخاصة الهيئات والسلطات الدستورية والقانونية؛ ii) تقدم خطة عمل مشتركة لتمكين المرأة ليتم إقرارها وتنفيذها وإنفاذها من قبل السلطات القانونية في المجتمعات الإسلامية للحفاظ على الأسرة وجميع المؤسسات الاجتماعية من الانحطاط الأخلاقي والانحطاط؛ ٣) توصي بإدخال خطة عمل مشتركة لتمكين المرأة في أنظمتها الداخلية ولوائحها التنفيذية؛ ٤) أخيراً، تقترح كوثر

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Women's empowerment (WE) is a contemporary issue discussed at national and international forums. This can be understood from the fact that the international document on women's rights Platform for Action was passed in 1995 in Beijing under the auspicious of the United Nations (UN), which specifically adopted women's empowerment as its goal.¹ Furthermore, achieving gender equality and empowering women is declared as the fifth goal of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs] set in 2015 by the UN General Assembly.²

Regarding Islamic response to women's empowerment, Muslim scholars from different countries have been conducting comprehensive research on the position of Islam towards women's rights and how these rights are perceived at the family as well as societal level.³ In fact, this issue has polarized Muslim scholars. Some scholars have taken an apologetic stance aligning with feminist principles compromising on various issues while others have taken a negative position on the whole issue of women's empowerment, denying women even the rights guaranteed in the Qur'ān. Hence, there are calls for a critical review of the existing literature and current studies on the concept of women's empowerment, aiming to develop an Islamic framework on women's rights and empowerment grounded in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.⁴

The scholars who advocate for critical reflections on the existing literature on women's rights in Islam assert that Islam has brought a revolutionary transformation

¹ Zeenath Kausar, *"Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment"* (Selangor Darul Ehsan: Hazrah Enterprise, 2019), 46.

² United Nations, SDG 5: "Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls," <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>, (accessed October 5, 2020).

³ Amira El-Azhary Sonbol, ed., *"Beyond the Exotic: Women's Histories in Islamic Societies"* (Syracuse University Press, 2005), 112.

⁴ Zeenath Kausar, *"Muslim Women at the Crossroads: The Rights of Muslim Women and the General Muslim Practices"* (Selangor: Thinker's Library, 2006), 12.

patriarchal and Arab society of the seventh century. The society before abhorred practices such as female children, female infanticide, sexual exploitation of women, commodification of women, and various forms of injustice against them.⁵ Despite the fact that Islam recognizes the biological and physical distinctions between men and women yet, they are equal and must be treated with honor and dignity. The Qur'ān declares that men and women are equal in humanity.⁶ Thus, women too are endowed with certain social, educational, economic, and political rights.⁷ Almighty Allah says in the holy Qur'ān:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer.⁸

﴿فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِنْكُمْ مِمَّنْ ذَكَرَ أَوْ أُنتَىٰ ۖ بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ﴾

And their Lord responded to them, "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another."⁹

One of the contemporary advocates of women's rights and empowerment is Kausar, a prominent Muslim political scientist. Kausar was born in Hyderabad, the capital city of Telangana state in the southern part of India in 1957. As a dedicated Muslim scholar, she has gained knowledge from a very early age, earning various degrees from her B.A., M.A., MPhil, and eventually PhD in Political Science, with a special focus on Western and Islamic political thought. She has dedicated herself to enlightening and training young Muslim female scholars on the Islamic position on women's rights.

⁵ Anita M. Weiss, "Interpreting Islam and Women's Rights: Implementing CEDAW in Pakistan," *International Sociology* 18, no. 3 (2003): 581-601.

⁶ Shaheen Sardar Ali, "Gender and Human Rights in Islam and International Law," (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2000), 36.

⁷ Zehra F. Arat, "Women's Rights in Islam: Revisiting Qur'ānic Rights," in *Human Rights: New Perspectives, New Realities* 69 (2000), 70.

⁸ The Qur'ān, 4:1.

⁹ The Qur'ān, 3:195.

Kausar disagreed with the so-called Islamic feminists' point of view on women's empowerment. She argues that their understanding of certain verses of the Qur'ān and Islam, in general, do not comply with the true message of the Qur'ān. She asserts the misinterpretation of the true message of the Qur'ānic verses has been influenced by the cultural norms and prevailing social traditions within Muslim societies.¹⁰

In addition, she claims that Western feminism and liberalism have also influenced Islamic feminists. Hence, their views contradict the Islamic worldview.¹¹ Thus, Kausar presents 'The Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment' and claims that her proposed Plan is an Islamic alternative to the Beijing platform for action. It is comprehensive and includes women's rights, empowerment, and a strong family institution.¹² She presents a conceptual framework which is, according to her, practical guidelines to establish an Islamic Think-Tank to materialize the Islamic Action Plan for the empowerment of women.

A review of her works shows that she has covered numerous critical contemporary issues concerning women's rights and empowerment in her writings. She has discussed those issues from an Islamic perspective. In her book, *Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*, Kausar identified and discussed the difference between feminist's views and Islamic perspectives on equality, identity, complementarity, and patriarchy.¹³ In addition, in *Reproduction Technology or Adultery?* She covered contemporary issues such as in-vitro-fertilization; (IVF) surrogate mothering, and partial abortion. She argued that Islam encourages to utilization of technology and advanced scientific means as long as they do not contradict the Islamic stance on reproduction. She

¹⁰ Asma Barlas, *"The Qur'ān, Sexual Equality, and Feminism Adultery"* (University of Toronto, 2004), 22.

¹¹ Zeenath Kausar, *Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Eleven Thinkers* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press 2009), 68.

¹² Zeenath Kausar, *"Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment,"* (Selangor Darul Ehsan: Hazrah Enterprise, 2019), 75.

¹³ Zeenath Kausar, *"Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization,"* 2nd ed. (2001), 24.

states any pro-reproduction and anti-reproduction device that leads to adultery is prohibited in Islam.¹⁴

In her prominent work, *Woman as Head of State in Islam*, Kausar elucidates on the issue of women's leadership while presenting the arguments of various Muslim scholars. In this book, an attempt is made to present the arguments of a selected Muslim scholars who either advocate for or oppose the political participation of women.¹⁵ She critically analysis the views of scholars and presents an Islamic Action Plan for women's empowerment.¹⁶ she is known as an advocator of women's empowerment; Consequently, Kausar has claimed that her views are fully derived from the Qur'ān and grounded by the authentic *ḥadith* literature. Additionally, according to her, she benefited from the active participation of women companions (may Allah be pleased with them) and their successors during early Muslim history. Nevertheless, as a prominent scholar in the field of women's empowerment, no one has critically analyzed her ideas. Thus, there is a need to explore and critically examine her views on the issue of women's empowerment through the lenses of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

1.2 THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Many scholars have worked on issues concerning women's rights and empowerment and have proposed their ideas on the matter. Some Muslim feminists and other contemporary Muslim scholars also presented their points of view on the matter. They have presented their interpretations of certain verses of the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, such interpretations contradict the stance taken by Kausar. Being one of the prominent scholars in the field, Kausar claims that she has adopted a critical approach on the issue and refuted the idea of feminist Western and Muslim scholars. As a result, she has presented her unique

¹⁴ Zeenath Kausar, "*Reproduction Technology or? An Islamic Alternative*," (Thinker's Library SDN.BHD.2008), 31.

¹⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "*Woman as Head of State in Islam*," A study of a few positive and negative arguments. (Thinker's Library SDN.BHD.2008), 73.

¹⁶ Zeenath Kausar, "*Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment*," (Selangor Darul Ehsan: Hazrah Enterprise, 2019), 116.

interpretation and understanding of the relevant verses pertaining to women's empowerment.

Keeping all these factors into consideration, it seems crucial to first examine how Kausar has refuted the ideas of some so-called Muslim feminists and her claim that Islamic feminism is a modern intellectual articulation on women's rights from a non-patriarchal and an egalitarian Qur'ānic perspective. After reviewing the available literature, it is safe to say that no major research has so far been done on this topic. Thus, there is a need to further explore and examine Kausar's perspectives on Qur'ānic verses concerning women's rights. One of the objectives of this present study is to fill this gap by exploring and comparing the views of contemporary Muslim feminist scholars with Kausar's ideas on the subject and to investigate the Islamic Action Plan¹⁷ proposed by her to address the issue of women's empowerment from a Qur'ān perspective.

1.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is a critical analysis of Kausar's contribution to the field of women's studies from the Qur'ān perspective. Kausar's works are profound and significant in the field. Kausar has shown her profundity in two main fields of women's studies; women in Islam and women in feminism. Scholars in women's studies demonstrate their proficiency either in feminism or women in the context of such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, or any other religion.

Kausar has demonstrated her expertise in feminism and Islam. She presents a comprehensive and critical examination of feminist ideology encompassing all prominent schools of thought in the field. Liberal, Radical, Socialist, Marxist, Psychoanalytical, gender, postmodern and consequently presents the Islamic perspective.¹⁸ She has contributed tremendously to women's issues within the field of Islamic thought.

¹⁷ Zeenath Kausar, *“Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment*, (Selangor Darul Ehsan: Hazrah Enterprise, 2019), 12.

¹⁸ Zeenath. Kausar, *“Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions Towards Islamization,”* Women's Affairs Secretariat WAFA, (Student Affairs Division (STAD) International Islamic University Malaysia 1995), 24.

The central focus of her works is women's rights and empowerment. Kausar delves deeply into the epistemic depth in her arguments and presents the Qur'ān as 'true, authentic and universal Revealed Knowledge' (TAUK), and the criterion for genuine ideas and concepts. She contends that theories based on TAUK ensure justice, peace, and success for all human beings.¹⁹ However, there is no critical examination of her ideas especially from the Qur'ānic perspective on women's empowerment.²⁰ This research, therefore, aims to thoroughly and comprehensively analyse Kausar's views and her interpretations of the Qur'ānic related to women's empowerment.²¹

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

There are some significant works associated with her writings on women's empowerment. Some of the most significant works will be reviewed here. One of the notable articles was written by Mussawar Hussain "*Women empowerment in a Muslim society: A practical Observation.*"²² He contends that the issue of women's empowerment has become a crucial topic in contemporary times in the Western and the Muslim world. As a result, women's rights and problems relating to empowering them from a parochial society and seeking to use them as professional human capital are debated in all forums, including institutions of the United Nations. However, Mussawar has failed to highlight the views of Western political thinkers on women's empowerment.²³

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women as the Head of State in Islam*"? Second Revised Edition. Kuala Lumpur. (Thinkers Library 2007)

²¹ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women's Empowerment and Islam*," (Kuala Lumpur Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka 2015), 15.

²² Syed Mussawar Hussain Bukhari, and Muhammad Asim. "*Women empowerment in a Muslim society: A practical Observation*," (Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business Vol5, no. 1 2013), 768-778.

²³ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions Towards Islamization.*" Women's Affairs Secretariat (WAFA), Student Affairs Division (STAD) International Islamic University Malaysia (1995).

There is another essential book on the strategies for empowering women by M. Irshad Khan in *Empowerment of Muslim Women*.²⁴ The author discusses various misconceptions concerning polygamy, marriage, and divorce. However, this book falls short in addressing contemporary issues in the field.

There is significant rightly commented a book that Kausar has presented the Western misogynistic concept of women on one side, and she has also made a detailed survey of the Western Feminist theories for the liberation and the development of women on the other side. To illustrate Kausar's viewpoint from her book *Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions Towards Islamization*.²⁵ Irshaad provided examples of women involved in different political endeavors during the time of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions (RA). He has investigated the case studies of a few contemporary women leaders discussed by Kausar. According to Rashaad, Kausar has pinpointed the narrow and negative images that are presented in Western political thought from classical to modern period. Thus, in accordance with Rashaad, Kausar has accomplished important tasks in this book. Firstly, Kausar has presented the views of Western political thinkers on women. Secondly, she has provided critical insights into the women's movement. Thirdly, she highlighted a few achievements of contemporary women political leaders. Fourthly, she presented a few clarifications on the general misconception of women's rights. Additionally, Rashaad has also pointed out the conceptual and practical suggestions presented by Kausar in the light of Qur'ān. Hence this book seems to be one of the pioneering works in the study of women's empowerment.

Another significant work that can be referred to in connection with women's empowerment is *Women Empowerment: Exploring the Facts*²⁶ authored by Jasprit Kaur Soni. The author deals with the social development of women in general. The author informs common people about the significant position women hold and the significant role they can play in any society. The author emphasizes that both men and women should play their role equally in making and implementing plans and decisions.

²⁴ Md Khan Irshad, "*Empowerment of Muslim Women*," (Koros Press Limited 2012).

²⁵ Muhammad Rashaad Bakashmar, "*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions Towards Islamization*." (1997), 107-110.

²⁶ Kaur, Soni, Jasprit. "*Women Empowerment exploring the facts*," (Delhi Author press 2006).

Nonetheless, the book fails to engage in a thorough comparative analysis on the issue of women's empowerment from the Qur'ānic perspective.

Another important work in the field that can be mentioned here is a Ph.D. thesis done by Sarvinder Kaur Sandhu; *Malaysian Employment Legislation for Women at Work: A Social Legal Study on Malaysian Secretaries / Clerks*.²⁷ The author explores various definitions of justice and equality between men and women. The focus of this work is the issues of discrimination and injustice against women's employment in Malaysia.

Another significant research on women's empowerment was by Shabnam Ahmad, an M.Phil. thesis, University of Kashmir in 2003. *Contemporary Islamic Response to Women's Issues*.²⁸ The researcher has analysed the views of some prominent scholars of the Indian subcontinent Siddique, Abul 'Ala Maudūdī, Anis Ahmad, and Zeenath Kausar. This thesis explores contemporary scholarship on women's rights. The thesis concludes that men and women should cooperate in a balanced way to enhance a Muslim society. Nevertheless, the relationship between the two is rather overlapping and should not be compromised. Kausar's views on women's empowerment from the Qur'ānic perspective stand out as a theoretical account of women's issues in the light of the Qur'ān.

Another piece of good work is by Kazi Shahadat, *Towards an Islamic Framework of Women empowerment*.²⁹ The objective of this paper is to develop a framework for women's empowerment. The author elucidates the Western point and Islamic points of view on women's empowerment. However, the author only deals with women's empowerment theoretically, without developing an actionable framework that can shape our perception of women, gender, equality, feminism, and women's empowerment, all which is the focus of Kausar's endeavors.

²⁷ Sarvinder Kaur Sandhu, "Malaysian Employment Legislation for Women at Work: A socio –Legal Study on Malaysian Secretaries/Clerks," (Ph.D. thesis, International Islamic University Malaysia, 2007).

²⁸ Shabnam Ahmad, "Contemporary Islamic Response to Woman's Issues: A study of the views of Sayyid Abul Ala Maudūdī, M. Mazheruddin Siddique, Anis Ahmad and Zeenath Kausar. (M.Phil. thesis, University of Kashmir 2003).

²⁹ Kazi Shahdat Kabir, "Towards an Islamic Framework of Women Empowerment." *Tafhim: Ikim Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World* 2, no. 2 (2007).

Nevertheless, after analyzing the previous works, it can be concluded that there are considerable works on women's empowerment; strategies for empowering women, and the role of women in societies, especially in decisions, policy making, and gender equality. All these studies are relevant to the subject matter of the research. However, the literature mentioned above largely failed to provide a critical and comparative analysis of women's empowerment from both Western and Islamic perspectives. This missing element has been addressed by Kausar which is the central focal point of this research. Thus, this study will highlight Kausar's views on contemporary Muslim feminist scholars and explore the *modus operandi* proposed by her to resolve the problems of women empowerment from a Qur'ānic perspective.³⁰

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the views of contemporary Western and Muslim Feminist scholars on women's empowerment according to Zeenath Kausar?
2. How significant was the intellectual background of Zeenath Kausar in shaping her ideas on the issue of women's empowerment in Islam?
3. How may the Action Plan proposed by Zeenath Kausar resolves the problems of women's empowerment in Islam?
4. How did Zeenath Kausar's views align with the Qur'ānic perspective on women empowerment?

1.6 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this research is to:

1. To explore the views of Zeenath Kausar on contemporary Western and Muslim Feminist scholars on women's empowerment.

³⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "*Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment*," (Selangor Darul Ehsan: Hazrah Enterprise, 2019).

2. To evaluate the intellectual background of Zeenath Kausar that has shaped her views on the issue of women empowerment in Islam.
3. To investigate the Action Plan proposed by Zeenath Kausar at resolving the problems of women's empowerment in Islam.
4. To analyze whether Zeenath Kausar's views on women's empowerment are aligned with the Qur'ānic perspective.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study employs a combination of methodologies to examine Kausar's perspectives on women's empowerment and their alignment with Qur'ānic teachings using the *Sahih International* translation as a primary reference for Qur'ān translation.

1.7.1 Phenomenological Method

This method is employed to understand and interpret Kausar's lived experiences and insights regarding women's empowerment within an Islamic context.

1.7.2 Systematic Content Analysis

A systematic content analysis is applied to scrutinize various sources, including online data, books, articles, and interviews, facilitating the identification and analysis of key themes and patterns in Kausar's work.

1.7.3 Critical and Comparative Analysis

Critical and comparative analysis techniques are used to evaluate Kausar's views against those of contemporary Muslim scholars and popular Muslim feminists, involving a detailed examination of the similarities and differences in their perspectives on women's empowerment.

1.7.4 Data Collection

Data is collected from primary sources such as Kausar's extensive works on women's issues, including her publications on women's empowerment, and contributions on social media. Secondary sources include selected works of contemporary Western and Muslim scholars and prominent Western and Muslim feminists to contextualize and evaluate Kausar's critiques and arguments. An interview with Kausar is also conducted to gather her current views on women's empowerment, providing additional depth and context to the analysis.

1.7.5 Content and Comparative Analysis

The research employs content analysis to systematically analyze the written materials, involving coding and categorizing the data to identify recurring themes and insights. The comparative analysis further examines Kausar's contribution towards advocating a non-discriminatory, non-patriarchal, and non-misogynistic interpretation of the Qur'ān on women's empowerment, which she argues is essential for a prosperous and socially oriented civilization.³¹

1.8 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this study encompasses a detailed examination of Kausar's contributions to the discourse on women's empowerment within Islamic contexts, focusing on her Qur'ānic interpretations and feminist perspectives. Key components include a critical assessment of Kausar's Action Plan, evaluating its effectiveness in advancing women's rights within Islamic frameworks.³² The study also delves into Kausar's interpretation of Qur'ānic teachings, highlighting her advocacy for an egalitarian reading of the Qur'ān and her critique of patriarchal and misogynistic interpretations. A critical analysis of Kausar's arguments will be conducted, assessing their consistency and originality through a Qur'ānic lens. Additionally, a comparative analysis will contrast Kausar's views with those of other contemporary Muslim feminists, identifying areas of agreement and

³¹ Kaukab Siddique, *"The Struggles of Muslim Women"* (Singapore: Thinkers Library Pte. Ltd. 1988), 111.

³² Zeenath Kausar, *"Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment,"* (Selangor Darul Ehsan: Hazrah Enterprise, 2019), 18.

divergence. Finally, the study will trace the intellectual evolution of women's empowerment within Islamic scholarship, situating Kausar's work within this broader context. Through these components, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Kausar's impact on the discourse surrounding women's empowerment in Islamic contexts and contribute to Islamic feminist scholarship.³³

1.9 DATA COLLECTION

The study uses qualitative methodology appropriate for the following methods:

The data collection for this study involves a multifaceted approach to thoroughly examine the trends within contemporary Muslim feminist scholarship on women's empowerment, particularly through the lens of the Qur'ān. The primary methodological tool employed is critical analysis, which will be used to scrutinize the relevant scholarship, including the works of Kausar.³⁴ This tool will also aid in categorizing Kausar within the broader spectrum of contemporary Muslim scholars focused on women's empowerment.

In addition to critical analysis, the study incorporates comparative and content-analysis methods. These methods will be applied to examine contemporary exegeses of Qur'ānic verses referenced by Kausar, allowing for a nuanced understanding of her interpretations in relation to other scholarly perspectives. The study will compare these interpretations to identify both convergences and divergences in the discourse on women's empowerment within Islamic contexts. Finally, an interview with Kausar is conducted to gather her current views on women's empowerment, providing valuable insights into her evolving thought process and contextualizing her contributions within the ongoing scholarly dialogue. This blend of critical analysis, comparative and content

³³ Zeenath Kausar, *"Women's Empowerment and Islam,"* (Kuala Lumpur Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka 2015), 109.

³⁴ Zeenath Kausar, *"Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Eleven Thinkers"* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM Press 2009), 112.

analysis, along with direct interview data, ensures a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.



CHAPTER TWO

CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONTEMPORARY TRENDS WITHIN WESTERN AND MUSLIM SCHOLARSHIP ON WOMEN EMPOWERMENT BY ZEENATH KAUSAR

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the topic of women's empowerment has garnered significant attention, igniting extensive academic discourse. Scholars from diverse backgrounds, including both Western and Muslim scholars, have contributed to this ongoing conversation. This chapter aims to critically analyze the contemporary trends within Western and Muslim scholarship on women's empowerment.

2.2 ADVANCING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: GLOBAL TRENDS AND IMPACTS

In the modern globalized world, women's empowerment has become a major issue of concern. One of the most prominent elements is the assessment of women's awareness. Women's rights and concerns related to women's empowerment are debated at all national and international levels, including the United Nations. All the nations are under pressure to emancipate women from local culture and use them as a trained workforce.¹ Although conversations on "empowerment" date back to the 1980s, the phrase "women's empowerment" first became popular in the early 1990s.² Since its inclusion UN's platform worldwide for action on women's rights at the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing in 1995, this phrase has drawn attention from the intellectual community all over the world.³ According to Naila Kabeer,

¹ Syed Mussawar Hussain Bukhari, and Muhammad Asim. "Women empowerment in a Muslim society: A Practical Observation," (Interdisciplinary Journal of Contemporary Research in Business 5, no. 1 2013), 768-778.

² Srilatha Batliwala, "The meaning of women's empowerment: New concepts from action," (Population policies reconsidered: Health, empowerment, and rights 17 1994), 127-138.

³ Zeenath Kausar, "Women's Empowerment in UN Documents neither a Safe Haven nor a Pandora's Box: Need for A Holistic Perspective." (In International Conference on Population and Development, 1994),11.

One way of thinking about power is in terms of the ability to make decisions. Disempowerment is the denial of choice, whereas empowerment is the process by which persons who have been denied the opportunity to make decisions eventually do so. In other words, empowerment requires transformation.⁴

As mentioned by the World Bank, Deepa Narayan defines empowerment as *“the growth of impoverished people's assets and capacities to participate in negotiate with, influence, control, and hold responsible institutions that touch their lives.”*⁵

The issue of women's empowerment was declared the central focus of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) during the historic conference held from 4-15 September 1995. This declaration sparked significant interest in national and international policy-making institutions worldwide. However, can it be ever ignored that a sort of informal call for women's empowerment women have been hearing in various epithets; well, if not consistently, but at least sporadically for centuries? Women have not faced disempowerment in the contemporary period, they have been suffering from it for centuries and experiencing it as their life-long struggle in their families and societies. In the West, from classical political thought to the early modern period, even several highly regarded philosophers depicted women in such derogatory terms that it was not expected from them. Women were perceived as inherently incapable and ineligible for any position anywhere beyond serving men and children. According to these Western thinkers, women could neither attain any independent position within their own families nor enjoy any social, economic, and political rights in societies.⁶

In the early twentieth century, girls enjoyed no equal educational rights compared to boys. Additionally, Women were not granted the right to vote in prominent Western countries, including the United States, and the United Kingdom.⁷ Finally, history bears witness that many proto-feminists and early feminists from different schools of thought stood against female oppression and suppression. They advocated for equal rights for women, aiming at a safe and respectful life for women

⁴ Naila Kabeer, *“Gender equality and women's empowerment: A critical analysis of the third millennium development goal 1”*. (Gender & development 13, no. 1, 2005),13-24.

⁵ Narayan-Parker, Deepa, ed. *“Empowerment and poverty reduction: A sourcebook.”* (World Bank Publications, 2002),15

⁶ S. M, Okin, *“Women in Western Political Thought,”* (Virago, London,1980), ,371.

⁷ Elizabeth Cady Stanton, M. Joslyn Gage, and Ida Husted Harper, (New York, *History of Woman Suffrage* 6 volumes, Fowleer and Wells, 1887), 586.

within families and active participation in social structure.⁸ Those courageous women's rights activists, who are known as proto-feminists and early feminists, faced all kinds of obstacles, difficulties, and deadlocks even imprisonments and inhuman tortures in prisons and in public places. It was through their huge sacrifices, that women eventually gained their rights to a safe and secure life in families, access to education, rights to vote, and their participation in the socio-economic and political fields.⁹

Yet, overcoming various challenges recent statistics indicate that women are not safe either in their houses or public places. Although women attained some rights for participation in different fields, they often face exploitation, and struggle to reach their rightful position. Hence, women in the West are continuing to fight for their rights and empowerment. However, it is disheartening that earlier some of the feminists who advocated for genuine rights of women, which were otherwise denied to them, never demanded contemporary sexual and reproductive rights. Nevertheless, as feminism evolved, feminists started demanding additional rights influence of modernity which are arguably unsuitable; and harmful to both women and society.¹⁰

2.3 ISLAM AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: TRADITION, RIGHTS, AND MODERN CHALLENGES

Islam, as a faith, recognizes the inherent dignity and equality of all individuals, regardless of their gender. It places a strong emphasis on justice, compassion, and mutual respect between men and women. Islam can be understood as the voluntary surrender and submission to the Will of Allah, which brings about peace, security, and well-being. It encompasses all of humanity, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, language, or any other differences, offering a comprehensive system that addresses all aspects of life, applicable to all periods. Allah SWT says in the Qur'ān,

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾

⁸ Richard J Evans, "The Feminists: Women's Emancipation Movements in Europe, America, and Australia 1840-1920," (Croom Helm, London, 1977), 13.

⁹ Tong Rosemanrie, "Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction," (Routledge, London, 1992),10.

¹⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions toward Islamization," 29-78.

O humanity! Indeed, we created you from a male and a female and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may get to know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.¹¹

As far as the purpose of creation is concerned, it is the same for both, men, and women to serve Allah as vicegerents (*khulafā'*) of Allah. The Qur'ān says:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

I have only created Jinns and men so that they may serve me.¹²

While interpretations and practices may vary among different Muslim communities, there are core principles within Islamic teachings that support women's empowerment. Primarily, seeking knowledge is considered a religious duty for all Muslims. Islam highlights the importance of knowledge and education for both men and women, and throughout history, numerous women have excelled as scholars, educators, and leaders in the field of Islamic scholarship. Secondly, Islam grants women a range of rights across various aspects of life. These rights encompass ownership of property, engagement in business, inheritance of wealth, and the ability to achieve financial independence. Women are encouraged to actively participate in decision-making processes within their families and communities.¹³

It is important to acknowledge that cultural practices and patriarchal interpretations have impeded women's empowerment within certain societies. However, many Muslim women and scholars are actively working to promote women's rights within an Islamic framework, determined to eliminate discriminatory practices against women and ensure that women have equal opportunities and full participation in all aspects of society.¹⁴

Before Islam, women enjoyed no rights in family and society. In their marital life, women were kept under the absolute control of their husbands. Worse than all

¹¹ Qur'ān, 49:13.

¹² Qur'ān, 51:56.

¹³ Zeenath Kausar, "Battle of books! Diverse trends in Muslim thought on women's issues." (Journal of International Women's Studies 15, no. 2, 2014), 165-181.

¹⁴ Syed Abul Ala Maududi, "Islamic Way of Life." (Lahore, Islamic Publications, 1992), 201.

these, men never wanted to accept female infants born in their families, and therefore in most cases, they followed infanticide and so female infants were buried alive.¹⁵

It was only when the last Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) was blessed with the final authentic Revelation from Allah SWT, the Qur'ān, that women experienced a revolutionary transformation in their lives. Islam offered women all genuine rights for their education; a respectable position in their families; and dynamic rights in society while following Islamic injunctions presented in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions. So, Muslim men and women were given all instructions in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah to be followed in their individual and collective lives. No discrimination is made based on gender because Islam makes it clear that both men and women are created for one united purpose of life to serve Allah SWT which underlines that they should follow all the instructions mentioned in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah in all aspects of life.¹⁶

After the period of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, (RA), gradually the Muslim Ummah passed through several problems. Muslims have steadily moved away from the original Islamic political system and several other Islamic injunctions to a certain extent in varying degrees at various times. However, it does not mean that the Muslim Ummah completely disconnected itself from all the injunctions of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. Instead, it happened that the Ummah failed to adhere to several Islamic injunctions ordained in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. As a result, the Ummah started declining from its once glorious Islamic civilization. According to Kausar, it was during this declining period of the Ummah that Muslims could also observe the gradual decline of the rights of Muslim women in family and society, which led to the further declination of Muslims. She identifies two reasons behind the decline of the original position of Muslim women during this period. (1) misinterpretations of the verses of the Qur'ān and *ḥadith* related to women propagated by some Muslim scholars (2) numerous cultural practices in Muslim societies that originated either due to the misinterpretations of those verses and Hadith as mentioned above, or some norms, traditions, and customs

¹⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "Tawhidic Framework for Family Life: Reflections on Islamic Texts." (Muslim Education Quarterly," Cambridge, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1999), 62-75.

¹⁶ Zeenath Kausar, "Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi on the Empowerment of Women: Islamic Revivalism versus Muslim Traditionalism and Feminism," Encounters, (Leicester, The Islamic Foundation, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2004), 31-54.

enforced by biased and prejudiced elements in the societies, which are not aligned with Islamic teachings.¹⁷

Despite these problems, there have always been a few Islamic revivalists and reformers whom Allah SWT had sent for His believers so that His believers are never left alone with misinterpretations and misguidance. Hence, every time, the Ummah has been enlightened with the light of the Qur'ān and Sunnah including the issues related to the rights of woman and their position in society.¹⁸ It is pertinent to mention here that in the concept of women's empowerment, as such, according to Kausar, Islam has no objection to it provided it is constructed on the spirit of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. The Qur'ān and the Sunnah are the basic and main sources of knowledge which alone can provide the rights and prominent position to women. As the Qur'ān is sent by the Creator of all human beings and everything in the universe, and the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) is sent as a 'mercy for the whole of humanity, the true guidance and understanding of human rights can only be attained from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Therefore, any project promoting popularized concepts of women's liberation and emancipation, if it contradicts Islamic injunctions in any way, would not be acceptable to Muslims.¹⁹

In case, any concept is secular and does not comply with Islamic teachings, it should be de-secularized and then Islamized to be followed by the Muslims. Islam stands against 'imposition' and 'force.' Islam neither allows its adherents to impose its concepts on other cultures forcefully nor does Islam allow its adherents to accept any idea from other cultures if it contradicts Islamic values. Islam believes in peace and encourages its followers to maintain peaceful relationships with all human beings.²⁰

¹⁷ Khurshid Ahmed, *"Islamic Approach to Development: Some Policy Implications,"* (Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad, 1994), 61.

¹⁸ Zeenath Kausar, *"Development from An Islamic Perspective: The Role of Muslimah in Development,"* (Al-Nahdah Quarterly Journal of RISEA, Vol. 16, No. 3-4, July-December 1996), 35-39.

¹⁹ Ibid, 29-32.

²⁰ Anis Ahmed, *"Woman and Social Justice,"* (Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad, 1991), 46.

2.4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF PROMINENT WESTERN PHILOSOPHERS: AN OVERVIEW

Though the origin of feminism is generally traced back to the 18th century, history shows that ever since the 17th century, several women writers and activists in the Western world raised their voices against male atrocities on women in family and society.²¹ These writer-activists demanded security and fair treatment of women in the family and all social structures. Hence, Kausar referred to those women's rights activists and writers who played an active role in arousing consciousness among women for their rights and stood for their emancipation as 'feminists.' Kausar believes that though the origin of feminism may be traced back to the eighteenth century in the West, there were various women in the 15th century who may be described as ones who associated themselves with feminism before this term feminism originated as a fully-fledged theory.²²

Nevertheless, Kausar does not accept feminism as a holistic theory or ideology with all its schools of thought but supports all these issues of women their deprivation of the right to vote, their participation in social structures, their exploitation and domestic violence, rape, and their psychological and physical torture, Kausar not only agreed with the contemporary women right's activists even with some of the earlier feminists who voiced against all these issues of women.²³

The disagreement of Muslim scholars began when several feminists started demanding sexual and reproductive rights as human rights arguing my body my rights and promoting the slogan that biology is not destiny; making a distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' in a way that all the roles of women based on their 'sex' are socially constructed. Kausar disagreed with the rejection of male and female complementarities, accepting, and promoting LGBTQI and other demands. Muslim scholars including Kausar highlighted that such demands and feminists' arguments do not comply with the teachings of the Qur'ān and Hadith of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and therefore they should be rejected.²⁴

²¹ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions toward Islamization," 29-31.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions toward Islamization," 29-78.

2.5 EXAMINING WESTERN AND ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVES ON FEMINISM: KAUSAR'S CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

Kausar highlights the influence of feminism on several issues in Platform for Action about women's empowerment.

Kausar explores and presents feminism; she does not present feminist theory in general; rather she goes to its few schools of thought. She also presents the views of Western political philosophers from the classical to the modern period on the position of women in the family and politics. She does this because she wants to present a comprehensive picture of the ideas of those Western philosophers on women which would help readers to appreciate why feminism emerged as a theory of women's rights. Kausar, for instance, points out that the known great classical political philosophers, Plato, and Aristotle presented women in low images.²⁵ Although Plato in some places seemed egalitarian, giving equal rights to women as men in education and for learning the techniques of wars. Nevertheless, he views women in the category of children and slaves, who according to him, belong to the class of appetites and weak people of the state. There are several other problems in Plato's Republic that need a detailed discussion which is out of the scope of this research. As far as Aristotle is concerned, though he disagreed with Plato's rejection of family as the guardian class, he linked the relationship between men and women to that of masters and slaves. Aristotle considered men superior to women and compared them as one 'ruling' and the other ruled.

In addition to it, St Augustine (354-430) believes that man is created in the image of God, while woman is not the image of God; and so, woman must join with man as his helpmate. Similarly, according to St. Thomas Aquinas, woman is subjected to man because woman is created for procreation while man is created for intellection. Further, Thomas Hobbes also perceives women as inferior to men and so men alone can make civil society and power while women should only remain obedient to male power. Other political thinkers like John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Hegel also denied any prominent position for women in the family and rights for any sort of political participation. As for Karl Marx, he takes a different stance on women's rights. According to him, the oppression of women is not something natural and unchangeable; rather it is social and alterable. He insists that women's emancipation

²⁵ Ibid, 1-28.

would come about through the emergence of the communist society through a proletarian revolution. In this envisioned society, wage labour and economic dependency would vanish, and production would be planned for the good and satisfaction of all.²⁶

Kausar critically analysed the views of these political philosophers and then she presented the Islamic stance referring to the Qur'ān on the position of women in family and society. She asserted that unlike these known Western thinkers, who portrayed women as incapable of any good position in family and society, Islam blessed women with a dignified position of love and mercy in the family and active participation in society. Kausar referred to the Qur'ān in this connection.

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

And among His signs is this that He created. For you mates from among yourselves, that ye may. Dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love. And mercy between your (hearts). Verily in that are signs for those who reflect.²⁷

Furthermore, she also referred to the Qur'ān concerning the equal rewards Islam assigned to both men and women based on their righteous deeds, not since gender difference, which shows Islam is against female discrimination.

﴿مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.²⁸

﴿وَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ﴾

And due to them [i.e., the wives] is like what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable.²⁹

As far as the socio-economic and political participation of women is concerned, Islam, unlike Western political thinkers, does not find women incapable of

²⁶ Ibid, 1-16.

²⁷ Qur'ān, 30:21.

²⁸ Qur'ān, 16:96.

²⁹ Qur'ān, 2:228.

any participation in society. For example, during the period of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, (RA) women companions (RA) participated in several social, economic, and political fields and they were never stopped; rather they were fully appreciated. The general misconception among people is that Islam stands against any outside participation of women. Thus, a careful study of her work, *Western Political Thinkers, and Islam*, in her book, *Women in Feminism and Politics*, shows that she strongly stands for women's empowerment but from an Islamic perspective.³⁰

Feminist Political Theory and Islamic Response, Kausar explored various schools of Feminism critically and presented her response based on Islamic teachings. Before exploring liberal feminism, Kausar invited our attention to 17th and 18th century Liberalism. She points out that though it is said that liberal feminism is inspired by liberalism, some liberal thinkers never supported the rights of women.³¹ For example, Rousseau who greatly influenced liberalism in his way and strongly stood for the full participation of men in politics, disagreed with the participation of women in politics. He presented his theory of education, *Emile* wherein he presented Emile and Sophy, children for their rights to education. According to him, Sophy should be given a different education from Emile because Sophy must perform her duties as an obedient wife of Emile and a devoted mother of their children.

However, Emile should get such an education that he should emerge with the qualities of courage, justice, and temperance so that he could perform a dynamic role in the state. Kausar argues that one can see here that it was the same time when a Known women's rights activist, Mary Wollstonecraft was writing about the rights of women and raising her voice against female discrimination. Wollstonecraft produced her renowned book, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. In this book, she bitterly criticized Rousseau's female discrimination for education. She argued that both men and women are equally capable of attaining the same education. Women are intentionally trained and forced to think that they are less intellectual than men. She also argued that even if Rousseau desired that Sophy should be educated only to be a good wife and a good mother, the kind of education that Rousseau suggested for

³⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions toward Islamization*," 1-28.

³¹ Ibid, 33-34.

Sophy would not be the least fitted for her even in that position as a wife and daughter.³²

Kausar however referred to a few other male philosophers during the Enlightenment period who strongly held the view that women should not be deprived of equal education and political participation. Philosophers like Marquis de Condorcet (1773-1794) from France and Von Hippol, (1741-1796) from Germany may be included among them. Kausar also referred to Catherine Macaulay (1731-91) of England who like Wollstonecraft stood for equal rights for women.³³

From early 1800 to 1900, Kausar referred to a few known liberal feminists who presented their writings on the educational, legal, and political rights of women. John Stuart Mill (1806-73), Harriet Taylor (1807-1858), and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) are included among them. Kausar also referred to the first women's rights convention, the Seneca Falls Convention, held on July 19 - 20, 1849, in Seneca Falls, New York. A few prominent women's rights activists were Lucretia Mott (1793-1880), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), Angelina Grimke (1805-1879) Sarah Grimke (1792-1873), and a few others. The Declaration presented a list of grievances, and it was passed as a Declaration of Sentiments unanimously; but the right to vote was not passed until the National Abolitionist leader, Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) gave his dedicated support for the right to vote for women.³⁴

The National Woman Suffrage Association, (NWSA) was founded in May 1869 by Susan B Anthony (1820-1906) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902). Later, in May 1869, Lucy Stone (1818-1893), Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910) and a few others founded the American Women Suffrage Association, (AWSA). Suffragettes made a lot of sacrifices to win the right to vote. They were put in jail and were inhumanly tortured. It was only after decades of hardships and painful sacrifices that the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920 which officially gave women the right to vote in America.³⁵ However, Black women were not included in the right to vote, and they were left out of the mainstream women's rights movement. However,

³² Ibid, 32-34.

³³ Ibid, 36 -38.

³⁴ Ibid, 35 -38.

³⁵ National American Woman Suffrage Association. "*Susan B. Anthony, 1820-1906*", (1906). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_women%27s_suffrage, (accessed May 8, 2022).

Journer Truth (1797-1883), Mary Church Terrel (1863-1954), and many others fought for the right to vote. Consequently, they won the fight in 1965.³⁶

The right to vote for women in the United Kingdom was complicated. In 1918, only those women who were 30 years old and owned some properties were qualified for the right to vote by the UK parliament through the Representation of the People Act.³⁷ It was in 1928 the UK Parliament passed the Equal Franchise Act which gave women the right to vote. However, New Zealand was the first country in the world where all women attained the right to vote in 1893.³⁸ All of these incidents illustrate that it was after decades of struggle and sacrifices of women, that they were given the right to vote.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who fought for women's rights. The first women's rights convention, the Seneca Falls Convention, was held on July 19 -20, 1849, in Seneca Falls, New York. Stanton like Mary Wollstonecraft put strong emphasis on responsible motherhood based on equal education of women as men so that women may perform public responsibility in general. However, when Stanton presented her critique on the uncontrolled sexual lust of men which often gives rise to unwanted pregnancies and childbirth, Stanton commented that the male-dominated society is "one grand rape of womanhood." Kausar found this remark of Stanton strange. She stated: "It is extraordinary, however, that Stanton, who looked at mothering as a responsible work, regarded marriage as an unpaid prostitution and domestic labour. According to Stanton, a husband's sexual access to his wife is a root cause of women's oppression."³⁹

2.5.1 Critical Analysis of Modern Liberal Feminism

The modern liberal feminism started with Betty Friedan, (February 4, 1921 -February 4, 2006) a Feminist Icon, who is regarded as the mother of Second Wave Feminism. She was born in Peoria, Illinois to Jewish parents from Russia and Hungary and the author of numerous books and was the co-founder of the National Organization of

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Zeenath Kausar, "*From Proto Feminism to Liberal Feminism.*" (Unpublished), 25.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Direction towards Islamization,*" 35.

Women, (NOW), in 1966. Her world-known revolutionary book is *The Feminine Mystique* which was published in 1963.⁴⁰

According to Friedan women have been suffering from a self-created assumption that women get satisfaction only in their roles of wifehood and motherhood. For this reason, women spend most of their time and energy working within the house as best as possible, but they never get satisfied even working for hours. Hence, they continue working further to satisfy themselves, but the problem continues for the whole day. They neglect the issues of society and their potential contribution towards it. Friedan defines this kind of lifestyle of women as their full absorption in the house – chores, ‘a problem with no name,’ and called it ‘feminine mystique.’ Hence, Friedan motivated women to pay attention to education, career, and political issues. As a result, they can contribute to society rather than fully engage in the housework.

These galvanic and stimulating words of Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* brought a revolutionary change to American women. People witnessed women coming out of their homes in large numbers and started participating in various fields in society. However, soon they realized that despite their engagements and abilities to contribute to the different fields in society, they returned home while house chores were still pending. They became aware of their burden of balancing the work outside and domestic responsibilities. Friedan understood the issue and she came up with a new book, *The Second Stage* in 1981.⁴¹

In this book, she presented a few practical solutions to resolve this problem of balancing the workload, like arrangement for maid for child-care; shared parental responsibility; enactment of laws for pregnant ladies in their place of work; sharing different models of housekeeping including other families within the house and sharing a common kitchen and helping each other and so on. Thus, Friedan, in other words, sent a message to spouses about how they should cooperate in house chores and childcare so that women can engage in other activities.

⁴⁰ Friedan Betty, “*Feminine Mystique*,” (W. W. Norton & Company, Reprinted Edition, September 2001), 32.

⁴¹ Friedan Betty, “*The Second Stage*,” (The Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, US, 1998), 46.

However, earlier to this book, *The Second Stage*, Friedan published an inspiring book entitled: *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women's Movement* in 1976. This book not only interlaced famous speeches, articles, and personal memoirs of Friedan but also re-evaluated her own experiences. She sheds light on the history of women's rights, including her contribution to the development of history. Friedan also published another important work, *The Fountain of Age* in 1993. In this book, she disagreed with the general perception of people of old age as 'decline.' She asserts that a human being evolves into a unique 'personhood.' She portrayed her own experiences of 'aging' and those of others exhorting that one can experience possibilities of new and distinct life while aging which should be enjoyed instead of looking at old age as decline.

In her book, *Beyond Gender: "The New Politics of Work and Family,"* published in 1997, Friedan develops her arguments further that besides deciding in the family for spousal cooperation, women should also focus on restructuring the economy. She argues for a "paradigm shift" a shift from fixed gender-based activism and identity politics to launching a new political movement in America to restructure the economy for the interest of all. She also looked seriously at the problems of the loss of community life and family- a breakdown in America and emphasized the need for a new vision of community to re-structure the community for equal opportunity for all.⁴²

Friedan seems clear and concrete to a certain extent on women's rights in family and social participation. Friedan looks in disagreement with several views of Radical feminists like their stance on family that women should prefer work outside over family; their underestimation of motherhood; and their overemphasis on the promotion of LGBTQI.

While discussing Friedan, Kausar writes, in fact Friedan made her stance clear on some views espoused by the radical feminists. She asserted that the radical views of some feminists have nothing to do with the main purpose behind the origin of feminism which aimed at the liberation of women from sexual discrimination and injustices and to motivating women to realize their potential through participating actively in society instead of keeping themselves within the domestic affairs of the

⁴²Friedan Betty, *Beyond Gender: "The New Politics of Work and Family,"* (The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, US, 1997), 6-7.

house all the time.⁴³ Kausar points out that though Friedan motivates women to spare some time to work outside instead of getting preoccupied with the house chores all the time, Friedan never wanted women to leave their house or to prefer work outside over the family. However, according to Kausar, Friedan is different from all other liberal feminists in her views on these matters. Within the liberal school of feminism itself, there are feminists whose views on marriage, motherhood, family, and outside work of women are different from Friedan's and come close to the radical feminists.

In addition, Janet Radcliffe Richards's *The Sceptical Feminist* (1982) and Susan M. Okin's *Justice, Gender, and the Family* (1990) are prominent names in the field. These liberal feminists emphasized the need for greater flexibility for women in employment, legal entitlement to all, and the redistribution of all forms of work.

Gloria Marie Steinem, a contemporary leading liberal American feminist born on 25th March 1934 in Toledo, Ohio is described as a woman of 'fount of ideas' for the liberation and empowerment of women. Some of her famous books include -- *My Life on the Road; The Truth Will Set You Free, But First It Will Piss You Off!; Thoughts on Life, Love, and Rebellion; Revolution*, to name some. Besides these, mostly her views on marriage and the promotion of LGBTQI are available in her articles and interviews.

For Steinem, the Women's Liberation Movement, WLM, should stand for liberating women from marriage which according to her the traditionalists are stopping from going. However, Steinem somehow feels better that through WLM women started moving from traditional marriage to companionate marriage. She writes: "There is opposition to this kind of thinking, from women as well as men. Having one's traditional role questioned is not an extremely comfortable experience, especially for women. Marriage would not go straight down the drain, as traditionalists keep predicting. Women's liberation might just hurry up a companionate marriage that is developing anyway."⁴⁴ What is companionate marriage is? It is defined in these words:

Companionate marriage is a union in which the partners have mutual consent and equality. Its purpose is founded on companionship rather

⁴³ Zeenath Kausar, "Proto-Feminism to Liberal Feminism: A Critical Survey." (Unpublished), 111.

⁴⁴ <https://nymag.com/news/politics/46802/> (accessed June 4, 2022).

than a marriage's traditional functionalities of raising children, gaining financial support, or having security.⁴⁵

As for LGBTQI, Steinem asserts that we should move away from the binary division of sexuality, and this is possible when women and men attain the freedom to enjoy all kinds of sexual expressions. She writes: "I believe that transgender people, including those who have transitioned, are living out real lives. Those lives should be celebrated not questioned. Their health care decisions should be theirs and theirs alone to make. We move away from only the binary boxes of "masculine" or "feminine" and begin to live along the full human continuum of identity and expression."⁴⁶

According to Steinem, 'gender' has given a wrong message on things like 'masculine' and 'feminine.' She states: "Because gender has wrongly told us that some things are masculine, and some things are feminine, which bullshit is. To young feminists, I would say, what do you care about? What do you love so much that you forget what time it is when you are doing it? And do it. We are all here to support each other."⁴⁷

Steinem asserts that it is the feminist movement that has taught us 'whole humanity.' She states, I would say that each of us has only one thing to gain from the feminist movement: Our whole humanity.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, there are some crucial issues emphasized by Steinem that raise a few fundamental questions: Does not it mean that Steinem is condemning the family institution, which is religiously, legally, and morally endorsed and socially preferred and accepted? Is not Steinem promoting the concept of companionate family and LGBTQI which can only bring social chaos destroying the marriage-based family? As a result, it may cause disintegration of human civilization?⁴⁹

⁴⁵What-is-a-companionate-marriage?<https://www.brides.com/what-is-a-companionate-marriage-2303875#:~:text=Companionate%20marriage%20is%20a%20union,financial%20support%2C%20or%20having%20security> (accessed June 4, 2022).

⁴⁶ Gloria Steinem, Op. Ed: On Working Together Over Time, in ADVOCATE. Com, October 2, 2013. <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2013/10/02/op-ed-working-together-over-time>. (accessed July 4, 2022).

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Zeenath Kausar, "Proto-Feminism to Liberal Feminism: A Critical Survey and Islamic Position of Woman," 6.

In addition, the works of some Marxist Feminists are significant. Ferdinand August Babel (1840—1913), the founder of the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany, and his book, *Women under Socialism* (1878). Clara Zetkin (1857-1933) was a German Marxist theorist and women's rights activist, and Eleanor Marx Aveling, the daughter of Karl Marx. Lenin's wife Nadezhda Krupskaya and Alexandra Mikhailovna Kullantai (1873-1952) a Russian politician, and daughter of an Imperial Russian Army General, Mikhail Alekseyevich Domontovich. These Marxist feminists emphasized collective house-keeping and communal child-rearing. For Instance, according to Kullantai, women need not have to sacrifice all their lives for 'motherhood,' because in a communist society, maternity would be a question of social duty, not individual care. A pregnant woman would be looked upon by society as the producer of a new social unit of labor. The point to note here is that Marxist feminists reject liberal feminism because they look at liberal feminism as bourgeois feminism. According to them, women's liberation is possible only with the victory of a new social order with a different economic system.⁵⁰

Under Modern Marxist feminism, Margaret Benston and Dalla Costa can be included. Margaret Benston, in her work, *The Political Economy of Women's Liberation*, (1996) argues that house chores and motherhood do not allow women to perform any work outside. Hence, if women gain rights to social participation, they would not be able to perform well because they would suffer from a double workload. Therefore, unless women are freed from domestic chores and childcare duties, they will not enjoy liberation and emancipation. On the other hand, the views of Dalla Costa and a few others who authored the book, *The Power of Women, and the Subversion of the Community* (1973), differ from Benston. According to them, women's domestic work is productive enough to allow men to work outside. In other words, the domestic work of women creates 'surplus value' so women should demand 'wages for housework' and this would end the inequality between men and women.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Direction towards Islamization," 11-13.

See also: Alexandra, Kollontai. "The Social Basis of the Woman Question," (first published in 1909, Allison & Busby 1977), 68-70.

⁵¹ Mariarosa Dalla Costa, Silvia James. "The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community, Falling Wall Press", (University of Michigan, 1978), 79-80.

2.5.1.1 Modern Socialist Feminism

Under Modern Socialist feminism, Juliet Mitchell's *Women, The Longest Revolution*, 1966 can be discussed.⁵² *Women's Estate*, 1971.⁵³ and *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, 1974.⁵⁴ It should be noted here that Mitchell's book, *Women, The Longest Revolution* very much appreciated as the 'first written text of the British women's liberation. Mitchell argues that fighting for the economic and political rights of women and even the reproduction technology rights of women would not help women for their liberation. She insists that rejection of patriarchy and capitalism is the only means which may lead to women's liberation. She perceives 'patriarchy' as an ideological form of women's oppression and capitalism as one of the main sources of women's suppression. Hence, both these institutions should be demolished to achieve women's liberation and emancipation.

After exploring the viewpoints of various feminists on women's rights, several crucial points are highlighted below:

2.5.1.2 Liberal Feminism

1. Liberal feminism greatly emphasized "rationality" and asserted that women are equally rational human beings as men.
2. All forms of discrimination against girls are condemned, and equal opportunities for education and employment for women, like those for men, are demanded.
3. Many have suggested that both men and women should cooperate in their domestic and outside work, sharing responsibilities as breadwinners and caregivers for their children.
4. Some liberal feminists argue that, due to the uncontrolled lust of some men, women face unwanted pregnancies, leading them to condemn marriage viewing it as a form of unpaid prostitution.

⁵² Juliet Mitchell, "*Women the Longest Revolution*", (New England Free Press, 1966), 18-20.

⁵³ Juliet Mitchell, "*Woman's Estate*", (Random House, New York, 1971), 15.

⁵⁴ Juliet Mitchell, "*Psychoanalysis and Feminism*", (Allen Lane and Penguin Books, New York, 1974), 187.

5. For most of the contemporary liberal feminists, family based on traditional heterosexual marital relationships is imposed on women and men by those who believe in the binary sexual distinction between masculine and feminine. However, the Women's Liberation Movement, (WLM) would take all measures to provide freedom to women so that they can follow all forms of sexual expression which according to them would give women and men a feeling of whole humanity.⁵⁵

2.5.1.3 Marxist Feminism

1. Man is defined and recognized through his power of production of material life.
2. The historic defeat of women occurred when their economic power was shifted to men based on surplus value.
3. Women would face a double workload if they worked outside and performed house chores and childcare in the family.
4. This problem would be resolved through communal child-rearing and collective housekeeping, wherein the care of pregnant women would be the social duty of the communist society.⁵⁶

2.5.1.4 Socialist Feminism

1. Women's liberation is not possible unless women continue their economic dependence on men.
2. Even women's sexual relations with their husbands are based on the economic factor, which is a pathetic situation.
3. Both patriarchy and capitalism are the main sources of women's problems and should be overthrown.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Direction towards Islamization," 22.

⁵⁶ Zeenath Kausar, "Proto-Feminism to Liberal Feminism: A Critical Survey and Islamic Position of Woman," 6.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

2.6 CRITICAL ANALYSIS FROM ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE BY ZEENATH KAUSAR ON FEMINISM

All the demands for women's empowerment found in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) manifest the same demands stated above in the three schools of feminism Liberal, Marxist, and Socialist for the liberation and emancipation of women. Demand for a peaceful and cooperative relationship between spouses in the family, equal rights of girls for education as boys, and equal rights for social, economic, and political participation of women as men are the basic demands of women's empowerment. Islam generally finds no objection to such demands to a great extent. Indeed, Islam upholds the rights of women for education, and their socio-economic and political participation, but within an Islamic framework. However, these are not all what feminists demand for women's liberation and empowerment. As noted above, Feminists have additional demands for the liberation of women, but their perspectives on certain rights of women may differ from an Islamic standpoint.

1. As far as the earlier feminists' demands are concerned, the right to equal education, the right to vote, the right to political participation, and the right to social and economic participation of women, all these rights have been guaranteed by Islam within an Islamic framework.
2. Some extremely negative views of the feminists concerning marriage, motherhood, and family are deemed unacceptable to Islam. The way some feminists perceive marriage, motherhood, and family life as obstacles to women's liberation and emancipation, is not in line with Islamic beliefs. Muslim scholars reject the promotion of LGBTQI, questioning these forms of deviant sexuality from moral and religious perspectives.
3. Some Muslim scholars assert that neither capitalism nor communism and no other man-made philosophy can provide any proper framework for the liberation of women. Here, they refer to Marxist feminists, who contend that women cannot enjoy emancipation unless capitalism is abolished, and communism takes over the system.
4. Muslim scholars exhort that the liberation of women merely depends on their submission to the guidance of Allah in the same way as it is obliged to men

too. They assert that it is Islam that stands for liberation, for both men and women. The very meaning of Islam is the complete submission to Allah SWT which implies that the moment men and women enter Islam, they are liberated from their servility to creations to the Creator, Allah SWT.

5. Muslims should maintain a moderate and reasonable lifestyle in all their pursuits. It is better to devise appropriate and practical methods to translate Islamic teachings into empirical reality to witness the truth of the Islamic position of women in family and society. Muslims should be moderate in their presentation and suggest practical ways and means.

Kausar argues that restoration of the prominent status and role of women in family and society as per ordained in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah should be an unavoidable agenda for the twenty-first century.⁵⁸ It is urgent and essential for the Islamic movements such as the "Islamization of knowledge" movement to include this issue in their agendas. Such movements should work together in close harmony to achieve this noble but hitherto neglected goal: to give women their due recognition and position in Muslim societies that is ordained in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Thus, exemplifying "the best of peoples" portrayed in the Qur'ān.⁵⁹ The Qur'ān says:

﴿كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ﴾

You are the best of peoples evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah.⁶⁰

2.6.2 Double-Work Load

The issue of the double workload on women is no doubt troublesome. Muslim scholars contend that some of the suggestions presented by various feminists such as the spousal cooperation within the family for house chores and child-care are palpable. Nevertheless, their suggestions, for example, advancements and promotion of such reproduction technological devices should help women to facilitate them to get children with no proper marital relationship. So that they can focus on their work

⁵⁸ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Direction towards Islamization," 77-78.

See also: Qur'ān, 3:10.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Qur'ān, 3:110.

outside for their economic development and social position are unacceptable in Islam. Furthermore, the promotion of LGBTQI-based marital relationships to avoid the responsibilities of marriage-based heterosexual relationships to facilitate working outside for material development is also not acceptable to Islam. These types of suggestions would bring serious problems to society instead of solving the issues of women.⁶¹

The first point is concerned with the complementary roles of men and women in Islam. The Qur'ān where men are assigned the financial responsibility for the family, which implies that women are exempted from it. Yet, it does not mean that women are not allowed to participate in financial services. There are several historical examples to show that women companions participated in several fields during the period of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), the rightly Guided Caliphate (RA), and later in Muslim history. The noteworthy point here is there was cooperation and coordination between men and women in household chores and childcare. The best practical example of this is found in the family life of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH).

There are complementarities in the assignment of responsibilities to men and women. There are reciprocal obligations towards each other. The work of both is honored and acknowledged without condemnation. Hence, a Muslim woman, even if she does not earn to increase the family income, is equally respected. Yet, if women can take on work outside with appropriate arrangement of the housework, and husband and wives are agreeing to cooperate, then they can pursue the opportunities outside.⁶²

Muslim scholars insist on cooperation between spouses and emphasize on mutual understanding between them. Lack of mutual understanding and cooperation leads to various issues. One problem follows the other while the root problem remains unsolved.⁶³

⁶¹ Zeenath Kausar, *Proto-Feminism to Liberal Feminism: A Critical Survey and Islamic Position of Woman*, 49.

See also: Zeenath Kausar, *Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards (Islamization, Leeds Publication,* Second Edition, 2001), 73.

⁶² Ibid, 74.

⁶³ Ibid, 73.

Muslim men and women should be aware of their Islamic mission towards humanity to serve Allah SWT with their entrusted capabilities. Hence, it is crucial to remember that whatever work they undertake, the purpose should be to serve Allah SWT. So, men should support women in every possible manner to enable them to perform their work effectively. As a result, their cooperation may help them in a balanced upbringing of their children.

2.6.3 Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a very crucial term always used by feminists and is believed to be one of the root causes of multiple problems women have been facing. Patriarchy stands for absolute male domination in family and society. The concept of patriarchy may be traced back to the term, Patriarchal coined by Sir Robert Filmer (1588—1653) an English political theorist who defended and promoted the Divine Right Theory of Kings in the early 17th century.⁶⁴ However, his theory was later condemned and rejected by many political philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries, including John Lock (1632- 1704), one of the most influential thinkers of the Enlightenment period.⁶⁵

Robert Filmer professes that God has given the counsel only to the King to govern the people. The Commons should never interfere with his power because the King alone possesses the rights of law, and he is above consultation. According to this concept, the father governs the whole family while all the others are rest of the male members, women, and children are obliged to follow him. Hence, when the term patriarchy is used in the Western world in the context of family and society, it gives no rights to women and children because the father is assigned absolute and irresistible power over the family. However, it is disheartening to observe that many Muslim scholars use the term patriarchy for Muslim family often mistakenly referring to the verse of the Qur'ān,

﴿الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ﴾

⁶⁴ <https://pages.uoregon.edu/dluebke/301ModernEurope/FilmerPatriarcha1680.pdf>. (accessed Jan 4, 2023).

⁶⁵ <https://www.libertarianism.org/articles/john-locke-patriarchy-critic> (accessed Jan 4, 2023).

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.⁶⁶

The term ‘*qawwāmūn*’ is often used in misleading terms, as ‘superior,’ which makes men superior to women. But, the term, *qawwāmūn* is related to the word, ‘*qama*,’ meaning to stand; to take care as overseer. It is not acceptable to make a ‘caretaker,’ a superior person over any person.⁶⁷ A caretaker, in the context of family, is given the responsibility to take care of women and children. It is crucial to distinguish between both worlds, “responsibility” and superiority. A responsible person must perform his duties through consultation with others in the family and work mutually; not through forcing and imposing anything on others as a dictator. As far as the term, patriarchy is concerned, it is clarified above that it denotes the absolute rights of a masculine man over women and children without any consultation or coordination.

Many Muslim scholars including Kausar disagree with the term patriarchy, the absolute rights of men over women, and matriarchy, the absolute rights of women over men. They underline that Islam gives no place to patriarchy or matriarchy because Islam teaches its believers to practice “*shūra*”, Mutual decision-making, and consultation. For example, Kausar writes:

We disagree with the use of this term in the context of family and society in Islam. The term in Western political thought and feminist political philosophy has negative connotations of absolutism and authoritarianism, whereas Islam emphasizes the method of *Shūra* (consultation) in all socio-political institutions including family. (Qur’ān ,42:38; 65:6; etc). Hence, even though the male is made in charge of the females and children in the family, he cannot become sole authoritarian or despotic. He must take suggestions and seek opinions from the rest of the family members to decide on any given issue. Therefore, the institution of family in Islam is neither patriarchal nor matriarchal, but rather consultation, (*shūra*-based).⁶⁸

On certain crucial issues concerning women, their rights and status, Islam is against patriarchy both in the family and society. Allah SWT says in the Qur’ān,

⁶⁶ Qur’ān, 4:34.

⁶⁷ Fathi Othman, “*Muslim Women in Family and the Society*,” 47-48.

⁶⁸ Zeenath Kausar, “*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*,” 75-76. See also: Qur’ān, 42:38; 65:6.

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

And of His Signs is that He has created mates for you from your kind that you may find peace in them, and He has set between you love and mercy. Surely there are Signs in this for those who reflect.⁶⁹

﴿هُنَّ لِيَاسَ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِيَاسَ لَهُنَّ﴾

They are clothing for you, and you are clothing for them.⁷⁰

﴿أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِنْ وَجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُّوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ﴾

Lodge them where you are lodging, according to your means, and do not press them, to restrict them.⁷¹

﴿وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهْنَ مَقْبُوضَةً فَإِنْ أَتَى بَعْضُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْضٍ فَلَئِنَّ الَّذِي أُوْتِيَ الْأَمْنَةُ وَلاَ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلاَ تَكُونُوا الشَّاهِدَةَ وَمَنْ يَكُنْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ﴾

If they both desire to wean through mutual consent and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them. And if you wish to have your children nursed by a substitute, there is no blame upon you if you give payment according to what is acceptable. And fear Allah and know that Allah is Seeing what you do.⁷²

2.6.4 Patriarchy in Muslim Families

Muslim scholars stressed that if the family does not adhere to the system of *shūra* and ignores mutual interaction and cooperation, it risks becoming a patriarchal family and even a mini monarchy. Kausar writes:

However, this institution of family can become patriarchal or can even be reduced to a mini monarchy if there is no consultation, no interaction, and no communication between the male and the rest of the family. Here, one should comprehend the difference between family in Islam and family in Muslim societies in general which may not be necessarily Islamic.⁷³

From the above, Kausar's suggestion for a 'double workload' of women and her rejection of the term, patriarchal family shows that she stands for women's empowerment in Islam. The book, "*Women in Feminism and Politics*," by Kausar was in early 1995, a little earlier than the Fourth World Conference FWCW in

⁶⁹ Qur'ān, 30:21.

⁷⁰ Qur'ān, 2: 187.

⁷¹ Qur'ān, 65: 5-6.

⁷² Qur'ān, 2:233.

⁷³ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*," 76.

September 1995 and its passing of the Platform for Action and its declaration that women's empowerment is the agenda of Platform for Action.

Therefore, during this period the popular terms which were used and promoted for the promotion of women's rights were liberation of women and emancipation of women. Some of the common arguments promoted by the feminists during this period and even earlier were equal rights for education to women as men, cooperation and coordination between men and women for house chores and child-care, and no discrimination against women in socio-economic and political participation including leadership. Muslim scholars including Kausar backed these arguments based on the Islamic perspective, grounding the arguments with the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. It is a different issue that Kausar differentiates between Islam and feminism in all these arguments and emphasizes that it is solely the Islamic stance on the liberation, emancipation, and empowerment of women that is morally, intellectually, and practically appropriate, and viable.⁷⁴

Muslim scholars point out that many influential feminists perceive these institutions as obstacles to women's economic and political development. Therefore, they advocate for prioritizing work outside over services in the family to what they term unpaid domestic labour and care work. They also disagree with feminism on their promotion of LGBTQI and their stance on 'free love' with no necessary obligation of marriage, their acceptance and promotion of non-marital reproduction of children, and their promotion of different sorts of families like single-parent families, cohabitation family with multiple-fertility and such other issues. Muslim scholars reject women's empowerment of such sort and call it polluted and desecrated.⁷⁵

2.6.5 Muslim Scholars' Approach to Women's Education in Islam

To develop 'thought' through intellectual orientation, in context with women's issues, Muslim scholars preach that women should be liberated from misconceptions about their position and role in family and society. Liberation is generally used in terms of liberating women from discrimination against them. It is an important point to note that women cannot attain liberation unless they stand against female discrimination,

⁷⁴ Ibid, 55-78.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

for that they need to be conscious. in addition, they need to be enlightened as well for their rights in the family and society given by Islam. In short, women can be liberated from misconceptions by educating themselves. Kausar writes:

She (woman) must be schooled and trained in the Islamic theory of life in such a way that she will be able to fight successfully and intelligently against un-Islamic ideas prevailing about women in our societies at present. She should also be exposed to the feminist philosophy and the position of women in the West and Eastern traditions so that she can critically appreciate Islam's position on women.⁷⁶

Nevertheless, how it would be possible to educate Muslim women especially when either equal education is denied to women, or they are not much encouraged to obtain education? Muslim scholars have discussed the issue. For example, Kausar writes:

The strongest argument for this tendency is concerned with men's economic responsibility. Islam has of course assigned the economic responsibility to men, not to women. But does Islam reduce education to nothing but economic reasons? Was the first revelation to our last Prophet, "Read in the name of Allah who created," revealed for an economic mission, or was it to make man read and understand the purpose of his creation, thereby to make mankind understand it and fulfill it?⁷⁷

Indeed, Allah SWT did not send the 'revelation' to the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) so that he should read and understand the message of the oneness of Allah SWT and convey this message to people to increase their knowledge about the world around them and the creation of human beings, arrangement of their foods and everything only for their financial needs and their satisfaction. Allah SWT put great emphasis on the Qur'ān that human beings should acquire education so that they can recognize the true purpose of life. They understand the oneness of Allah SWT and increase their understanding of things to completely follow the injunctions of Allah SWT in all aspects of life. Eventually, they can establish justice, peace, and success for all here and hereafter. The Islamic philosophy of education is linked with its philosophy of man's creation to perform the vicegerency of Allah. Hence, both men and women are exhorted to pursue more knowledge to fulfil the purpose of their creation. If education also serves an economic purpose, it cannot be isolated from the ultimate purpose of creation. Even the fulfilment of the economic purpose in Islam is directed to the ultimate purpose of creation. Hence, education cannot be confined merely to the economic purpose. Although the economic responsibility is assigned to men, women should also be given better educational

⁷⁶ Ibid,109.

⁷⁷ Ibid,110.

opportunities. Sound education can liberate her from the misconceptions about herself.⁷⁸

Then the question arises of the two types of education: The secular type of education and the Muslim Madrasa type of education.⁷⁹

The secular system of education is West-addicted, totally inclined to secularism which is promoted through Western methodology and Western system of education. The Western system of education, God, and His Biblical Revelation are separated from it. In other words, Biblical Revelation is not perceived as the main source of knowledge and in its place, the reasoning power of human beings and their sense-perceptions are perceived as the means of acquiring knowledge for any subject and any discipline.

It implies that human beings would acquire knowledge through their theories – rationalism, empiricism, and whatever their intellectual capability can create. As far as the Muslim Madrasah system of education is concerned, they are no doubt good. They focus on the Qur’ān and the Sunnah which can not be compared with the Western system of education. However, here in many Madrasah institutions, (in case these subjects are taught) subjects and disciplines from Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Medicine, Technology, and all other subjects are taught, but, according to Kausar, they are not taught based on the philosophy of Islamization of knowledge.⁸⁰

Unlike the Western perspective which places more emphasis on material development for education. The Islamic perspective emphasizes the recognition of the oneness of Allah SWT and understanding the uniqueness of His creation of the whole universe and human beings thereby following and promoting His injunctions in the Qur’ān and the teachings of His last Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) to establish justice, peace, and success in the world and in hereafter.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 110-111.

See also: Syed Muḥammad Naquib al Attas, *“The Concept of Education in Islam, International Institute of Islamic Thought, and Civilization,”* (IIIT, 1991), 8-9.

⁷⁹ M. Mumtaz Ali, *“Islamization of Modern Science and its Philosophy, A Contemporary Civilizational Discourse,”* (International Islamic University, Malaysia, IIUM Press, Gombak, 2016), 29.

⁸⁰ Zeenath Kausar, *“Proto-Feminism to Liberal Feminism: A Critical Survey and Islamic Position of Woman,”* 129. (Unpublished).

See also: Zeenath Kausar, *“Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization,”* (Leeds Publication, Second Edition, 2001), 110-113.

Along with a detailed discussion on the development of education for women, Muslim scholars including Kausar assert the need for the establishment of a Centre of Women Studies. She writes:

There is an urgent need for a center of women's studies where the study of women should be undertaken (1) from a multidisciplinary approach, and (2) from the perspectives of different worldviews. The methodologies should be critical and creative from an Islamic perspective so that the stance of the West and other traditions on women may not only be explored but also critically examined. All these should come under the theoretical and conceptual study of Woman.⁸¹

This shows that the need for the establishment of the International Islamic Institute for Women's Empowerment was felt after the Fourth World Conference of Women, (FWCW), Beijing in September 1995.

Besides this, a few formal and informal institutions are proposed by scholars for women. Such as the intellectual orientation of family, Islamization of domestic work, Islamization of technology, bed-to-kitchen Islamization, heart-to-heart communication, children's Islamization, round table talks with children and home seminars and such others. For the intellectual orientation of the family, Kausar proposes that the family should be seen as an informal educational center. The family should be regarded as an informal educational center wherein all the members can learn from each other the basic knowledge that forms the core of their formal education at schools and universities. However, it does not necessarily mean that the informal atmosphere of the home should be suddenly changed into a more serious intellectual environment.⁸²

No doubt, quite a few Muslim and Western scholars suggest the cooperation and coordination between spouses in house chores and child-care responsibilities. Muslim scholars exhort that the example of the Prophet (PBUH) should be followed to keep the family in mutual harmony. Husbands and wives should maintain a pleasant and gentle attitude towards each other right from the bed to the kitchen. Kausar calls it, a bed to kitchen Islamization. She writes:

For this, the husbands should emulate the example of the Prophet (PBUH) who was gentle, pleasant, and cooperative with his wives from bed to kitchen as much as possible for him. The husbands therefore

⁸¹ Zeenath Kausar, *"Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization,"* 113.

⁸² Ibid, 117.

should try to help their wives as much as possible in the kitchen and other housework. This attitude is described as "bed-to-kitchen Islamization."⁸³

All these suggestions for women's emancipation and empowerment look simply to follow, but they are adsorbing and stimulating at the same time. If these suggestions are mirrored and reflected, one would find that the concern of Muslim scholars for women's empowerment is not for its own sake by any means. They motivate women to attain women's empowerment to serve the purpose of education which is the purpose of life to serve Allah SWT through performing and promoting all His injunctions and the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) to establish justice, peace, and success here and hereafter.⁸⁴

2.7 SCHOOLS OF FEMINISM AND THEIR CONNECTION TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Schools of feminism are explored to see its general connection with women's empowerment. As for Psychoanalytic feminism is concerned it is a reinterpretation of Freudian psychoanalysis based on a feminist perspective. For example, Karen Horney, (1885-1952), a German psychoanalyst, who lived in the USA in her last years of life, was one of the known classical psychoanalyst feminists. She challenged many ideas of Freud. In her article, *The Flight from Womanhood*, she contends that the inferiority complex that women suffer is caused by social subordination of women, not due to their anatomy or sexual experience.⁸⁵

She argues that patriarchal culture makes women passive, masochistic, and narcissistic. Hence, they should depart from such kind of womanhood which was imposed by patriarchal culture. Further, Clara M Thompson, (1893 –1958) was a prominent psychiatrist and psychoanalyst known for her works and institutional activism in the USA. Clara Thompson, in *Problems of Womanhood*, following

⁸³ Ibid, 130.

⁸⁴ Muḥammad Iqbal (Author), Javed Majeed (Introduction), "*The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam (Encountering Traditions*," (1st Edition, Stanford University Press; California, 2013),129.

See also: Saiydain, Hameed. "*Iqbal's Educational Philosophy*," (National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi, 1988), 55.

See also: Sayyed Abul A'la, Maudūdī, "*Islamic Civilization: its foundational beliefs and Principles*," (The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 2013), 111.

⁸⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women's Empowerment and Islam*," 88.

interpersonal psychology, holds the view that women are placed under male authority because they are believed to be inferior to men based on cultural interpretation., not on biology itself. Hence, the transformation of women's psychology is inevitable along with their legal, political, and economic transformation for the emancipation of women.⁸⁶

Since the last thirty years of the 20th century, some of the psychoanalytical feminists include Julia Kristeva (b.1941), a Jacobian French philosopher; Luce Irigaray (b. 1930) a Belgian-born French feminist; Jacqueline Rose (b. 1949), from London, and few others.

Existentialist feminism is developed on some of the ideas of prominent French philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre., (1905 –1980). According to Sartre, the freedom of an individual is restricted by the existence of other individuals, and everyone assumes himself to be the 'subject' and the other to be an 'object.'⁸⁷ Simon de Beauvoir (1908 –1986) was the foremost leading feminist and a known French existentialist philosopher. Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Satre were 'partners' and Beauvoir partnered with him for fifty-one years till his death, but never married him, but Beauvoir collaborated with him on the concept of existentialism.

Beauvoir was a prolific writer whose publications of novels, collections, and books go as far as more than twenty. A few of her known books include *The Second Sex*, 1949, *the Prime of Life*, 1960, *Letters to Sartre*, 1991, and many others. Her most famous book, *The Second Sex* (1949) is regarded as the trailblazing work in feminist philosophy.⁸⁸ This book was published in 1949 in two volumes: *Facts and Myths and Lived Experience*. Ever since its publication, this book has been observed as the starting inspiration point of feminism.

In this book, Beauvoir argued that a male person, a 'man' defines himself as the 'self,' or 'subject' and woman as the 'object' or the 'other.' Thus, a woman is consigned to the 'otherness', and seen in terms of 'immanence' (a state of being within and not going beyond a given domain), and man is seen in terms of

⁸⁶ Ibid, 87.

⁸⁷Jean-Paul Sartre, "*Being and Nothingness*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes," (New York, Philosophical Library, 1956), 33.

⁸⁸ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women's Empowerment and Islam*," 87.

‘transcendence’, (the act of rising above something to a superior state’) and thus woman is always portrayed as inessential’ and ‘incidental.’⁸⁹

Beauvoir contends that certain social roles that are assigned to women as ‘wife’ and ‘mother’ are always indoctrinated to women to believe that these institutions are the most important identities of women, but these institutions practically keep women under the control of men. In a way, Beauvoir conveys to women that marriage gives nothing to women except the aimless life and drains the soul of women. As for motherhood, Beauvoir asserts that it stops women’s development, further, marriage and pregnancy alienate women from themselves and reduce women to an object, preoccupied with cooking, cleaning child-care, and all such works that throw them living a life of sacrifices.⁹⁰

De Beauvoir also points out that women suffer from ‘narcissism,’ i.e., taking excessive interest in one’s physical appearance to get appreciation from others. According to her, this is a result of her ‘otherness,’ which men made her think in a patriarchal society. Women are not allowed to follow their own self-defining identity. Women therefore tried to give themselves such images paying much attention to face, body, clothes, etc, which are liked and expected from men.⁹¹

According to Beauvoir, if women turn to prostitution for economic and other reasons, it shows that they are oppressed and suppressed by society due to male domination. However, if the government provides the necessary laws to prosecute like legal protection for them, then they may be saved from abuse and oppression. As for those who like to go for prostitution willingly, Beauvoir is in favour of them and holds the view that these women should be given some laws as women performing other works are given.⁹²

Beauvoir anyways proposes certain suggestions through which women can come out from the suppressed position of an ‘object’ to the position of a ‘subject.’ She asserts that originally a woman is a ‘being-for-itself,’ not a ‘being in itself.’ In other words, a woman is not created as the ‘second sex;’ but it is society in general and men in particular forced her to think about herself as ‘second’ to men. One cannot overlook

⁸⁹ Ibid, 89 -91.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

referring to the most famous statement of Beauvoir in this book, *The Second Sex*: “One is not born but rather becomes a woman.”⁹³ Therefore Beauvoir professes that women should take measures to come out from such a low image of them. In this connection, she presents three stages. Kausar presented these stages of Beauvoir in her book. She writes:

Firstly, a woman should work outside the home, no matter whatever job she gets, because work gives her transcendence and status as a subject. Secondly, she should engage in intellectual activities which would enable her to think and define things instead of getting things defined. Thirdly, she should work for a Socialist revolution since the economic factor is key for women’s liberation and the capitalist world is exploitative and oppressive.⁹⁴

Muslim scholars on the subject refer to Beauvoir’s philosophy of existentialism and explain how Beauvoir shows the connection between existentialism and her suggestions for women’s liberation through which women can reach the position of being, transcendence, and become a ‘being for themselves.’⁹⁵

Another known contemporary feminist who is also included under existentialist feminism is Judith Pamela Butler, (1956), an American philosopher, from the field of third-wave feminism. Butler has two extremely popular books to her credit: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of the Identity*, (1990) and *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*, (1993).

Radical feminist theory is not so united and coherent; it is an aggregation of diverse theories, but very much related to each other in diverse ways. However, a crucial point distinguishes Radical feminism from other feminist theories to a certain extent. Radical feminists focus on ‘sexuality’ as the root cause of women’s oppression and suppression. Most Radical feminists argue that women face discrimination in their sexual rights and some Radical feminists disagree with all those men and women who believe that a marital heterosexual relationship is the only legitimate and morally acceptable relationship. There are several known Radical feminists whose theories have been very influential from the sixties to the present times, like Kate Millet (1934

⁹³ Simone De Beauvoir, “*The Second Sex*, trans. ed. H.M. Parshley,” (New York, Vintage Books, 1974), 301.

⁹⁴ Zeenath Kausar, “*Women’s Empowerment and Islam*,” 9.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

-2017), Shulamith Firestone (1945-2012), and others. Here, we shall discuss Kate Millet and Shulamith Firestone as explored and presented by Kausar.

Kate Milletan American Feminist, known as one of the first Radical feminists whose book, *Sexual Politics*, 1970, is regarded as a seminal influence on Second-Wave feminism and is still referred to as one of the most integral parts of feminism.⁹⁶ The two important points raised and promoted by Millet are: (1) Sex is political (2) the sexual relationship between men and women is a power relationship. According to her, patriarchy is one of the main causes of all kinds of discrimination that women pass through both in their families and social institutions because patriarchy is a socio-political system that causes male domination and female subordination.⁹⁷ Millet asserts that patriarchy is such a pervasive ideology that the power of men over women is accepted as natural and an inevitable part of the life of women. It is like an 'interior colonization' because it is internalized through childhood. Kausar then presents the main arguments of Millet in these words: Millet, therefore, argues that unless patriarchy is eliminated women cannot be liberated, and patriarchy cannot be removed unless gender is eliminated. Elimination of gender implies the elimination of specific 'gender roles and status.'⁹⁸

According to Millet, the family occupies a central position in patriarchy, and it 'acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state,' and marriage is like a financial alliance of patriarchy. Hence, Millet suggests a sexual revolution to overcome all the problems created by patriarchy marriage, family, and reproduction. For the sexual revolution, Millet suggests the promotion of contraceptive devices and the growth of new reproduction technologies.⁹⁹

Shulamith Firestone (1945- 2012), a widely known Canadian American radical feminist whose intellectual and political activism and her landmark work, *Dialectic of Sex* put her among the prominent leaders of the Second wave of feminism.¹⁰⁰ She was given titles like, "the firebrand" and the "fireball" for her enthusiastic efforts for the

⁹⁶ Ibid, 79-83.

See also: Kate Millet, "*Sexual Politics*," (London, Virago, 1985), 33.

⁹⁷ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women's Empowerment and Islam*," 79-83.

See also: Kate Millet, "*Sexual Politics*," (London, Virago, 1985), 20-25.

⁹⁸ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women's Empowerment and Islam*," 75.

See also: Kate Millet, "*Sexual Politics*," 22-25.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Shulamith Firestone, "*The Dialectic of Sex*," (London, Women's Press, 1979), 11.

radical feminist movement. Firestone like Millet finds patriarchy as the biggest cause of discrimination against women and their inequality. Firestone stresses that biological inequality of sexes and particularly the reproduction role of women are rooted in patriarchy. In fact, according to Firestone, childbearing and child-rearing responsibilities of women stand at the heart of women's oppression.¹⁰¹

Hence, instead of emphasizes on the biological structure of women, Firestone, focused on the economic structure in her analysis of the problems of women. For this reason, we see that Firestone makes a feminist revision of the historical materialism of Marx and Engels. It is important to note here that according to Karl Marx (1848-1829) and Fredrick Engels (1820- 1895), the capitalist stage of production comprises two main classes – the capitalist class, the bourgeoisie, and the working class, the proletariat. The capitalists own the means of production, and the working class sells their labour. Thus, the proletariat is made subservient to the bourgeois. However, when the proletariat becomes conscious of their exploitation by the bourgeois, they would fight against the bourgeois who would give rise to a revolution, and then the capitalist class would be defeated, and the working class would win over the capitalists. Eventually, this will lead to the rise of a communist society.¹⁰²

Firestone redefines historical materialism based on the 'dialectic of sex' dividing society into two biological classes for procreative reproduction. She asserted that the first division of labour in society is based on sex and, therefore, men and women belong to two different classes.¹⁰³ Thus, Firestone provided a biological explanation, not an economic explanation of patriarchy. According to her, the division of society into two classes, women, and men, owes its origin to the biological characteristics of women and men and their different reproductive roles. Firestone stresses that women have been subordinate d to men throughout history based on their different reproductive roles. Kausar in simple words points out the difference between Marx and Firestone: "Hence, as Marx suggested an economic revolution to solve the economic oppression of the workers, Firestone suggested a biological revolution to overcome the biological oppression of women. *The Dialectic of Sex* is therefore

¹⁰¹ Zeenath Kausar, "Women's Empowerment and Islam," 80-83.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Shulamith Firestone, "The Dialectic of Sex," 119.

described as a feminist revision of the materialist theory of history presented by Marx and Engels.¹⁰⁴

In the same way, as the proletariat should seize control over the means of production to eliminate the economic class system, women should also seize control over the means of reproduction to eliminate the sexual class system. The goal of the Marxist revolution is the obliteration of economic class distinctions, while the goal of the radical feminist revolution will be the obliteration of sexual class distinctions. She claims that the biological distinction between men and women will “no longer matter culturally.”¹⁰⁵

The only method that would facilitate the biological revolution is a technological revolution. The reproduction-controlling technologies of contraception, sterilization, and abortion would help a woman to control her fertility. Firestone exhorts that if technological devices create artificial ways of reproducing humans, the biological family will disappear, and the demise of the biological family is tantamount to the demise of the family as an economic unit.

The aim of Firestone is the elimination of the distinct reproductive role of women. She professes a revolution through abolishing patriarchal reproduction and capitalist production. She exhorts that biological reproduction should not remain the norm but an exception, because it is a patriarchal myth. Hence, she emphasizes the need for a revolution of reproductive technology for women so that they may be liberated from all kinds of problems created by the reproductive role of women.¹⁰⁶

It seems important to mention here that since 1970, a debate has come up among radical feminists on the issue of transgender identities. Some support it and others not based on their arguments. The proponents include Catherine Mackinnon, John Stoltenberg, Andrea Dworkin, and a few others. On the other hand, Daly, Janice Raymond, and Robin Morgan stand with opponents of this idea.

Nevertheless, having presented the views and demands of a few known feminists from two main schools of feminism, Existentialist Feminism, and Radical Feminism, also presented a few crucial points from the discussion to highlight the

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 182.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Shulamith Firestone, “*The Dialectic of Sex*,” 198-199.

overall stance taken by these feminists. Below we present those crucial points in their theories.¹⁰⁷

2.7.1 Existentialist Feminism

1. Women are always relegated to the secondary position of the "other" by men; thus, women are presented as objects and men as subjects.
2. Reproduction of technological devices would play a significant role in preventing women's subordination and would help them work outside and this would lead them to an autonomous life.
3. Marriage takes away women's freedom and makes their lives purposeless.
4. Wifery and mothering block the development of women's self-development.¹⁰⁸

2.7.2 Radical Feminism

1. Different reproductive roles of men and women lie behind the inequality between men and women.
2. Fast development of reproduction technological devices would reduce women's burden of childbearing and child-rearing.
3. A biological revolution is essential for the abolition of the biological family and biological reproduction.
4. Pregnancy is barbaric, and mothering is the root of all evil.
5. Sex is political.
6. Patriarchy is male domination and female subordination, and it should be abolished to liberate women in the family and society.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Malik Badri, *"The AIDS Crisis: A Natural Product of Modernity's Sexual Revolution,"* (Madena Books, Kuala Lumpur, 2000), 133.

2.7.3 Islam Against Discrimination

One of the basic and all-pervasive problems that all the feminists pointed out is patriarchy which implies male domination and female subordination in family and all socio-political and economic institutions. Patriarchy is seen as the main cause of all evils in the life of women. Nevertheless, the Qur'ān clearly show that Islam rejects patriarchy in absolute terms both in family and in all social institutions including politics. Islam also rejects other immoral, illegal, and invalid options that are presented by feminists. Islam follows its unique mechanisms which provide tools for consultation among the family members and all social institutions and promote love, peace, justice, mutual understanding, trust and confidence, and cooperation in the family.

﴿فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَمَلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ فَلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُوذُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقُتِلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَأَكْفِرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَا أَدْخِلَنَّهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ﴾

And their Lord has accepted of them and answered them: “Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any of you, be he male or female; Ye are members, one of another Those who have left their homes. And were driven out there and suffered harm in My Cause. And fought and were slain, Verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities. And admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing beneath; a reward from Allah. And from Allah Is the best of rewards.”¹¹⁰

Ibn Kathīr explained that Allah ensures no righteous deed goes unrewarded, whether performed by a man or a woman. All believers receive equal rewards when they obey Allah and follow the path of righteousness.

He further explains:

Allah promises that He will not let any righteous deed go to waste, whether done by a man or a woman. Everyone is equal in reward if they obey Allah and follow the path of righteousness.¹¹¹

﴿مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيَاةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

And the one who does charitable deeds, whether man or woman provided that the one is a believer, will enter paradise and will not be wronged in the least of their rightful reward.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Qur'ān, 3:195.

¹¹¹ Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-‘Azīm), Volume 2, 113.

Furthermore, all sorts of pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations are rejected in Islam including all forms of deviant sexual relationships – LGBTQI. Abortion is forbidden in Islam unless the life of the mother is in danger or there is any such inevitable reason related to both the fetus and the mother. Further, artificial insemination with the sperm of a stranger is considered adultery in Islam. Islam gives full economic security to women in all stages of their lives as a daughter, a wife, and a mother giving financial responsibility to men. However, women also enjoy their right to participate in different fields in society. It is not obligatory for them to share their monetary income with the members of their family but completely depends on their will.

2.7.4 Islam Against Immorality, Adultery, and Deviant Sexuality

Motherhood in Islam is the pivotal institution within a family where Islam assigns a reciprocal relationship between parents and children which makes family an abode of love, compassion, concern, care, tolerance, cooperation, and a pleasant environment to remember the bounties of Allah SWT. It leads families to follow His injunctions in the Qur'ān and the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) to attain the pleasure of Allah SWT.

2.8 PROMINENT ISLAMIC FEMINISM

The contemporary term, Islamic feminism is traced back to the 1980s and early 1990s and which spread quite fast in the East and the West. However, though this term attracted the attention of many scholars, it has also faced and still facing rejection of its term, 'Islamic feminism,' its content and arguments, and its whole theory in general. However, the scholars who disagree with this theory, of Islamic feminism are mostly those who believe feminism and Islam are incompatible with each other. They assert that Islam by itself is more than sufficient to stand for the rights of women and their empowerment. They find several ideological differences between Islam and feminism. Thus, they disagree with the very idea of adjoining feminism with Islam and creating a new mixed term, Islamic feminism. One of the known protagonists of Islamic feminism who promotes this theory is Margot Badran (b.1936), an American

¹¹² Qur'ān, 6:97.

by nationality, and a professor of Middle Eastern history, with a specialization in gender studies and Islamic feminism. Badran defines Islamic feminism in these words: “Islamic Feminism derives its mandate and understanding from the Qur’ān for the justice and rights of men and women for the totality of their existence.”¹¹³

In other words, according to Badran, Islamic feminism draws its authorization from the Qur’ān for the rights of men and women. Earlier to this, Badran presents a few historical and ideological points to explain how Islamic feminism developed through two decades, Muslims are increasingly moving away from the old patriarchal interpretations of Islam and toward a more egalitarian one, especially among women. Scholars who identify as female have been highlighting the gender equality included in the Qur’ān for more than 20 years. These interpretations are being used by activists to push for new family and social customs as well as changes to Muslim family laws. It is common to refer to this combination of global action and academic endeavors as Islamic feminism.¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, the very usage of these two terms ‘patriarchal Islam’ and ‘egalitarian Islam’ shows that this theory is developed on the Western political mechanism of ‘divide and rule.’ Kausar referring to these terms’ writes: It is obvious from these definitions of Badran, that the whole project of Islamic feminism is established on well-planned and far-reaching motives of the same Western political engineering mechanism of divide and rule. Islam is divided into the so-called Egalitarian Islam and Patriarchal or Political Islam.¹¹⁵ In a way, Badran wants to convey that those who follow egalitarian Islam follow Islamic feminism whereas those who follow patriarchy, follow patriarchal Islam, and do not agree with Islamic feminism. Kausar then points out the similar division that is drawn between Liberal Islam and Political Islam. According to Kausar, this is the same as the criterion of

¹¹³ Margot Badran, “*Islamic Feminism: What’s in a Name?*” in her book, *Feminism in Islam*,” (Secular and Religious Convergences, Oxford, One World, 2009), 242.

¹¹⁴ Margot Badran, “*Islam’s Other Half: What does Islamic Feminism Have to Offer? Where Does it Come from? Where is it Going?*”” *The Guardian* 9 (2008), 22.

¹¹⁵ Zeenath Kausar, “*Islamic feminism: A Move towards Feminist Imperialism, in,*” *Radiance Views Weekly*, (New Delhi, Vol. LIII No. 17, 26 July-1st August 2015), 8.

following secular liberal democracy. Those who adhere to it come under Liberal Islam whereas those who do not follow it come under Political Islam.¹¹⁶

Kausar asserts that if Muslim or Western scholars associate Islam with patriarchy, it is important to clarify the misconception instead of repeating the term and continuing the misconception. However, Islamic feminism uses this term repeatedly asserting that they do not comply with this concept, of patriarchal Islam. A question arises here: Who is creating this debate 'for' or 'against' Islamic feminism? Islam is Islam; the one and only! It has become a fashionable phenomenon among some scholars to conjugate Islam with some or other Western theory ideology or concept to create a new term to show the relationship of Islam with modernization. These scholars tend to ignore the ideological differences between Islam and development, Islam, and modernization. Islam has no problem with development or modernization provided they are rooted in the Islamic worldview, Islamic Revealed Knowledge. Islam cannot accept any adulteration in its concepts entering from other sources if they do not comply with Islamic basic values.¹¹⁷

The creation and usage of these kinds of terms to the intellectual and cultural implications of colonialism are still influencing the mindset of the people even long after the demise of colonialism and imperialism. As Kausar asserts.

The fact is although the period of colonialism history; economic and political strategies of colonization have become a part of history; they have not disappeared even in our living times. When colonized countries attained their independence and emerged as nation-states, they were already tied to the nation-state system which was also created to serve the imperialist interest. Then, to promote the same cause, these nation-states including the Muslim nation-states were engulfed in the project of development and modernization and the project of global democratization and globalization. If some Muslim scholars resisted these concepts and ideologies, they were labelled as traditionalists and fundamentalists. Unfortunately, there have always been few Muslim intellectuals who readily incorporate these concepts and ideologies with some Islamic decorations and promote them. Feminism is not an exception. It is also decorated as Islamic Feminism and attracted an extensive list of promoters as Islamic Feminists.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic feminism: A Move towards Feminist Imperialism, in," Radiance Views Weekly, (New Delhi, Vol. LIII No. 17, 26 July-1st August 2015),9.

She then quoted the following thought-provoking words of *Mawdūdī* which further strengthened her analysis:

What the West could not achieve by the force of arms, its philosophies accomplished by means subtler. Their political rule touched the upper layer of our physical existence only. But their cultural and intellectual domination enslaved our minds.¹¹⁹

Another protagonist of Islamic feminism is Amina Wadud, (b. 1952). Wadud was born and brought up in Bethesda, Maryland, United States as a Methodist. She reverted to Islam in 1972 while studying at the University of Pennsylvania and received her PhD in Arabic and Islamic Studies from Michigan University in 1988. Wadud is an American Muslim and taught as a visiting scholar at Star King School for the Ministry and presently serving as a visiting Professor at the Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies. Her well-known works are: (1) *Qur'ān and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, 1999; (2) *Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam*, 2006; and (3) *Once in a Lifetime*, 2022. Besides these, several of her talks and interviews are published on social media. Furthermore, a major book was published in honor of Wadud, entitled, *A Jihad for Justice: Honouring the Life and the Work of Amina Wadud*, edited by Kecia Ali, Juliane Hammer, and Laury Silvers, 2012.

Wadud in her book, *Qur'ān, and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from A Woman's Perspective*, seems to fully appreciate the complementary roles that are assigned to women and men in the Qur'ān based on their gender differences. Wadud writes, the Qur'ān does not seek to eliminate the differences between men and women or to disregard the importance of gender roles that contribute to the smooth functioning of society. Instead, it emphasizes harmonious, mutually supportive roles for both men and women, which can be understood as part of the Qur'ānic vision for a balanced society.¹²⁰

However, later, Wadud refers to the same compatible gender roles of men and women as 'patriarchal' in nature. Kausar writes The Qur'ān appears to be truthful on some behaviors. Social patriarchy, marital patriarchy, economic structure, and the

¹¹⁹ S.A.A, Maudūdī, "*Unity of the Muslim World*," (Lahore, Islamic Publications, 1967), 16.

¹²⁰ Amina Wadud, "*Qur'ān and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from A Woman's Perspective*," (Oxford University Press, 1999), 8.

division of duties between males and females within a certain family.¹²¹ This clearly shows the contradiction in Wadud's writings because just a few words earlier, she welcomes compatible gender roles of men and women in the Qur'ān, and soon, she perceives complementarities in terms of 'patriarchy.' Nevertheless, Kausar invites the attention of the readers to the question presented by Wadud on behalf of some women activists:

Some women activists today openly question this neutrality. Why didn't the Qur'ān just explicitly prohibit these practices? If the evolution of the text and its overall objective is consumed under one albeit important-aspect of social interaction, say consciousness rising about women, then the Qur'ān is made subservient to that aspect, rather than the other way around.¹²²

Kausar gives her remarks on these words of Wadud, her approach is seen as controversial, even if she raised the issue on behalf of others, as it casts doubt on the Qur'ān's position regarding the patriarchal structure of Arab society.¹²³

Kausar elaborated fully on the term, Patriarchy referring to the Divine Right Theory of Robert Filmer, and mentioned a few classical Western political thinkers who also presented exceptionally low images of women. She explained how Islam is way above these contentions on women which Filmer and earlier political thinkers like Aristotle, Rousseau, and others have portrayed about women. She asserted that the very meaning of the term Islam, 'complete willing submission to Allah' goes against the term, patriarchy. Kausar also explicated that Allah SWT specifically intimidated in the Qur'ān that Allah SWT created human beings as His vicegerents. She expounded the difference between subject and vicegerent. Men and women serve as vicegerents of Allah SWT in Islam. As such, they act as representatives of Allah SWT when they submit to a leader in any organization, be it a family or a state. If the rules and laws do not conflict with the Qur'āni and Sunnah teachings, they submit to their leader. This implies that as Allah SWT alone possesses all power and

¹²¹ Ibid, 9.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or It Conveys that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy," in Islamic Perspective Journal, (Centre for Sociological Studies in Cooperation with London Academy of Iranian Studies, LAIS, Volume 18, Winter, 2017), 67.

sovereignty, their fundamental submission is to Him and not to any human authority.¹²⁴

Unlike what Wadud says the Qur'ān remained neutral to patriarchy, the historical examples show how the Qur'ān stood against patriarchy at all levels and brought a revolutionary change in the Arab patriarchal society. For example, female infanticide was rampant among the Arabs; females were perceived as sex objects, as rattles in the hands of men; women were inherited by men as their property with no consent from them; women enjoyed no safe and secure place and no rights in family and outside in society. Islam came forward with its basic texts the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and rejected and removed all these atrocities that women faced in their lives. Kausar presented various examples and raised the question: Then on what basis, Wadud claim that the Qur'ān remained neutral to the Arab patriarchal society? The Qur'ān accomplished de-patriarchization of Arab family and society both in conceptual and practical terms.¹²⁵

Here, it seems important to recall Badran who claimed that Islamic feminists have taken the challenge of promoting the Islamic stance on patriarchy explaining that there is no patriarchy in Islam. Badran specifically referred to Wadud as she could accomplish this task and attracted many Muslims towards this Islamic stance on patriarchy. According to Kausar, Islamic feminists picked up the task in the late 20th century to develop a thorough debate on gender equality in Islam, addressing equality inside the home, and separating patriarchy from Islamic teachings. Wadud put out a Qur'ānic philosophy of gender equality through her interpretative work that encompasses the public and private domains, encompassing family, society, and the larger umma. Kausar highlighted that patriarchy is against Islamic teachings in doing so.¹²⁶ If what Badran says is correct, how could we see in the above-cited book of Wadud that she finds the Qur'ān neutral to patriarchy? Hence Kausar raised a basic question, when Wadud says that the Qur'ān is neutral to patriarchy, what does it convey? Does it convey that she is calling for a non-patriarchal interpretation of the

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 70.

¹²⁶ https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr/ceri/files/ci_feminism_iran_mb.pdf (accessed March 4, 2023).

Qur'ān or the Qur'ān is patriarchal?¹²⁷ As a result, Islamic feminism is calling Muslims towards feminism by creating confusion among them on patriarchy and the Islamic position on patriarchy.

Confusion surrounds Wadud also on the concepts of equality, equity, and complementarities. In her popular book, *Gender Jihad*, she writes, I do not adhere to a definition of equal that requires some feigned sameness to be applied. Sameness is extremely illusive and difficult to achieve.¹²⁸ This shows that Wadud accepts the distinction between men and women. This is clear in her own words, I support the notion of distinctions between women and men unequivocally' and says, I am likewise unequivocal about the notion of egalitarian family.¹²⁹ Hence, Kausar says that it looks as though Wadud perceives gender equality, as equality with a difference, which keeps into consideration basic equality of men and women while appreciating their gender differences and some of their resultant gender roles which naturally complement each other.¹³⁰ However, later in an interview, Wadud makes fun of complementarities. She declares: We must look for equality. We cannot get confused. Equity means to the complementary. It is like a man who wears an unfinished dress.¹³¹ These words of Wadud contradict her views which she presented in her book concerning equality and equity. Hence, Kausar raised a few pertinent questions on the issues, if she agrees with certain gender differences, why she disagrees with certain gender roles that complement men and women each other? If she defines equity in terms of complementary, and equality in terms of equal humanity, do not need both 'equality' and 'equity'? Are not men and women 'equal' in terms of humanity but different identically in terms of biology to complement each other?¹³² After raising these crucial questions, Kausar makes a subtle on Wadud applying the same word 'unfinished' used by Wadud, But Kausar believes that the attempt of equality leaves

¹²⁷ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or It Conveys that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy," 79.

¹²⁸ Amina, Wadud. "Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam," (One World Publications, 2006), 155.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or It Conveys that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy?" 78.

¹³¹ Amina, Wadud. An interview by Azzurra Meringolo, Portrait of a Muslim feminist, (Dialogues on Civilizations, Monday, 21 January 2013), 24.

<https://www.resetdoc.org/story/amina-wadud-portrait-of-a-muslim-feminist/> (accessed March 4, 2023)

¹³² Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or It Conveys that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy," 78.

the idea of femininity itself incomplete as it ignores the unique personalities that men and women have that enable them to complement one another.¹³³

Wadud stresses the need for reform to meet the demands of LGBTQ people while expressing her tremendous care for them. Her own words, I am currently in Cape Town, South Africa, attending a Queer Muslim International Retreat, demonstrate her dedication. I am heading to Jakarta, Indonesia, next month for a workshop with the same goal in mind: reforming Muslim communities to guarantee the dignity of life for Muslims who identify as homosexual, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex. There is still a long way to go in this conflict, despite the lengthy trip. Nonetheless, there have been significant developments that merit recognition.¹³⁴

As it was mentioned before the Qur'ān rejected all kinds of deviant sexual relations and denounced them as indecent, transgression, and forbidden acts. The Qur'ān presented the story of the community of the Prophet Luṭ (PBUH) who indulged in such sexual transgression and continued their lust even though the Prophet Luṭ (PBUH) warned them against it. Consequently, Allah SWT sent a storm of stones over them and destroyed them. The Qur'ān says:

﴿وَلَوْ طَآءَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ إِنَّكُمْ لَأَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أُخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُونَ فَأَتَجَبَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا أُمَّرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ﴾

Do you realize you practice an indecency of which no other people in the world were guilty before you? You approach men lustfully in place of women. You are a people who exceed all bounds. Their only answer was: 'Banish them from your town. They are a people who pretend to be pure.' Then We delivered Lot and his household save his wife who stayed behind, and We let loose a shower [of stones] upon them, observe, then, the end of the evildoers.¹³⁵

This so-called Islamic feminism spread over many countries the world over with similar aims and objectives as presented by Badran and Wadud. A few known names may be mentioned here: Riffat Hasan, Pakistani American; Ziba Mir Hosseini,

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Qur'ān, 7:80-84.

born in Iran and based in London; Kecia Ali American; Zaine Anwar Malaysian; Irshad Manji, Ugandan-born Canadian and many more.

Kausar makes an authoritative argument that Islamic feminism often presents the Qur'ān negatively or in a way that is modified by modernist interpretations. She argues that this approach ignores the basic conceptual gaps between feminism and Islam and ignores the intrinsic imperialist tendencies of contemporary Western ideologies.¹³⁶

Further, it happened in the history of the Muslim world the truth of Islam remained aside in quiet whenever some false voices were raised to overcome its truth through manipulating it in any possible way. The same thing happened with feminism and the so-called Islamic feminism and feminism moulded women's empowerment. Feminism by itself has been showing its negative implications from the West to the East, and now on the other side, this so-called Islamic feminism is accelerating the problems and confusions over and above. Thus, it looks as though women in general and Muslim women, in particular, are caught in a deep-rooted precarious circle from where it is too hard to bring them out showing them the truth, authenticity, and validity of Islam. But Qur'ān says:

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمَرْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

The truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So, whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unfailing handhold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.¹³⁷

2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter critically analyses contemporary trends within Muslim scholarship on women's empowerment, juxtaposing Western feminist thought with Islamic perspectives. It analyses contributions from Western scholars and Islamic feminists, highlighting the dialogues and tensions between them. The conclusion encapsulates the potential for harmonizing Islamic values with the global discourse on women's rights, advocating for a nuanced approach that respects cultural and religious contexts

¹³⁶Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or It Conveys that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy," in *Islamic Perspective*, 79-80.

¹³⁷Qur'ān, 2:256.

while striving for gender equality and women's empowerment within the Islamic framework. This combination calls for continued dialogue, research, and scholarship that bridge Western and Islamic views on empowerment, fostering an inclusive understanding that benefits from both perspectives.



CHAPTER THREE

INTELLECTUAL BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF ZEENATH KAUSAR

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Kausar, a dedicated Muslim scholar of women's rights and Islamic studies, was born in Hyderabad, the capital city of Telangana, South India, in 1957. This chapter explores Kausar's intellectual background and how she was influenced by a polymath and erudite Islamic scholar and freedom fighter Maulana Maqbool Ahmed Jamie. She came from a family of scholars. Kausar's intellectual path was shaped by her parents' active participation in socio-political arenas and their steadfast dedication to the Qur'ān.¹

Since her early years, Kausar has demonstrated a strong will to carry on her father's legacy through dedication to scholarship with a special focus on Islamic erudition. In addition to her intellectual contributions, she advocates for women's rights and empowerment.² She has been involved with academic activities, Qur'ānic studies, and with collaborative efforts in the form of organizations aimed at educating young Muslim girls about Islamic views on women. She pursued a Ph.D. at Aligarh Muslim University, and eventually enrolled in the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM) as a result of her academic accomplishments. During her time as a scholar at IIUM from 1991 to 2006, Kausar showed a relentless dedication to political science and was awarded "the Excellent Researcher" in 2005. She traveled to study Arabic intensively at the university of Doha in Qatar in 2006, which helped her to understand the Qur'ān in depth. Kausar decided at some point to go back to academia in order to complete her unfinished writing assignments. This decision demonstrates a commitment to academia over engagement with institutional activities.³

¹ <https://ilm.iou.edu.gm/members/zeenath20/> (accessed May 8, 2023).

² Shabnam Ahmad, *"Contemporary Islamic Response to Woman's Issues: A study of the views of Sayyid Abul Ala Maūdūdī, M. Mazheruddin Siddique, Anis Ahmad and Zeenath Kausar."* (M.Phil. thesis, University of Kashmir 2003), 110.

³ Ibid.

Kausar proposes a thorough Islamic criticism of women's empowerment in her lengthy publications, challenging mainstream views on issues related to women. She negotiates the relationship between Islamic and feminist thought, providing readers with a comprehensive understanding of the Qur'ānic perspective. Kausar has made a significant contribution, yet she is still not well-known.⁴

This chapter investigates Kausar's profound insights into modern-day issues such as identity, patriarchy, equality, and reproductive technology and the steadfast dedication she has demonstrated in the field of Islamization of knowledge. Her criticisms reach global forums such as the United Nations Platform for Action, where she examines the "gender perspective" and suggests an Islamic Action Plan for the empowerment of women.⁵

The chapter ends by exploring the innovative contribution of Kausar to develop an Islamic philosophy to counter all difficulties and sufferings faced by women. She urges researchers to critically examine her work. Kausar could be said to be a pioneer in the field of Islamic empowerment of women, yet her influence is still not entirely felt, highlighting the need for academics to pay more attention to her remarkable achievements in integrating Islamic ethics into modern issues.

3.2 EARLY LIFE

The educational and intellectual development of Kausar can be better understood in the light of her family and educational background. Her father, Maulana Maqbool Ahmed Jamie, born in Sialkot, Punjab during the British colonial period in India, was a double graduate in Islamic Studies. He was a versatile figure who combined Islamic scholarship with expertise in the *Arabic, Persian, and Urdu* languages, with deep insights into the Qur'ān and expertise in the socio-political thought of the poet-philosopher of Islam, Allama Iqbal (1877-1938) who was not only his neighbor during his stay in Sialkot, Punjab but a near relative of Iqbal's family.⁶

He was involved in political activism and social welfare activities throughout his life for which he is still remembered in India as one of the renown Muslim

⁴ Ibid. <https://ilm.iou.edu.gm/members/zeenath20/> (accessed 05 May 2023).

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Zeenath Kausar, Interview by Author, Wangsa Maju Kuala Lumpur, 27 August 2023.

freedom fighters who suffered severe imprisonments. He served several orphanage centers, with particular attention given to orphan girls and women to protect their rights. Her mother, Aiesha Begum was one of the brilliant students of her school who was also trained and guided in the study of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth by her father who was a practicing wealthy Muslim merchant in Calicut, Kerala.⁷

Though Kausar's mother could not complete her college degree when she got married to an activist husband who devoted his life to freedom struggle. She actively supported him in all his activities during his life and took care singlehandedly of the upbringing of seven children by providing them with the best education possible when she became a widow at a very young age.⁸

Kausar was almost five years old when her father passed away. However, she inherited from her parents the same interest love, and devotion to the Qur'ān and Islamic scholarship. Likewise, she inherited from her father a deep interest in socio-political thoughts as well as a determination to write and advocate for women's rights. In fact, Kausar realised at her teenager, after she read some autobiographical notes written by her father and some observations by some leaders on him that he led such a busy and a well-planned life. He was so devoted to delivering eloquent speeches and to publishing articles in various newspapers and magazines amounted to 7000 pages. As a result, Kausar made a strong determination during her school days that she would try to follow the footprints and lessons left by her father. This devotion by Kausar yielded consent and the unwavering support of her mother.⁹

Aesha Begum, Kausar's mother, played the role of a mother and a father after the death of her husband. Her father, Maqbool Ahmed Jamaie left an enduring legacy that she always urged her kids to follow. After the death of Aesha Begam, Zeenath Kausar wrote an extensive article titled "*Follow-up of Madīnah: Families Lead to Islamic Civilization*," which was published in four stages in the prestigious Indian journal *Radiance Views Weekly*.¹⁰

At the outset of the paper, Kausar outlined her views on family structure suggesting that the Islamic family is a miniature version of civilization. She then went

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Zeenath Kausar, interview by Author, Wangsa Maju Kuala Lumpur, 27 August 2023.

¹⁰ <https://ilm.iou.edu.gm/members/zeenath20/> (accessed 08 May 2023).

on to provide a heartfelt account of her mother's labours. Furthermore, Aesha Begum was widowed at a young age, lived in an area where the language was different from her home state, and had no support from her in-laws (who lived in Sialkot, Lahore, and Kashmir in Pakistan). Against all odds, Aesha Begam was able to raise her stepchildren, children, and grandchildren with Islamic values. Kausar's paper gained public attention and was praised for its insightful examination of family relationships and how they can affect the spread of Islamic culture.¹¹ Aesha Begum constantly encouraged her kids by saying:

Children, do your best to follow in your father's footsteps! You should work so hard as to make people notice you are the children of Marhoom, Maqbool Ahmad Jamaies.¹²

3.3 EDUCATION

Kausar maintained the same approach to her leadership growth and academic progress all the way through her time in school, right up until the last days of the tenth standard. When she reached the tenth standard, she was the class representative and was chosen as the school's president following a speech contest and formal election. She previously was assigned the class representative and elected as the school's secretary precisely when she was in the ninth grade. Her whole academic career has been centered on her studies, but she has also given special attention to her classmates' moral and Islamic growth as well as her own moral development. In addition to editing her school magazine, Kausar also wrote poetry and brief pieces for moral guidance. In addition to all of this, her interest extended, when she entered college, to moral, socio-political, and cultural issues with a special focus on women's rights and welfare.¹³

She began reading Islamic literature, and the Islamic history at a very young age. By the time she was in college, she had developed a critical approach to understanding both Western political thought and some Muslim literature. She felt that not everything written by Muslims had to be Islamic because it could just be their personal opinions on matters that paint a biased picture of women's rights. In addition

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Zeenath Kausar, Interview by Author, Wangsa Maju Kuala Lumpur, 27 August 2023.

¹³ Ibid.

to reading Islamic literature on women's rights, she affiliated with Islamic women's associations and Islamic organizations in Hyderabad that advocated for women's rights in Islam.¹⁴

She wanted to find out, from these groups, how far they went in advocating for women's rights in Islam. She made the decision to start her own association for women's rights in order to educate young women in her generation about women's rights in Islam as well as in the Western ethos. Her initial organization was called *Wadi e Huda*, which translates to a valley of guidance.¹⁵

She inspired many young ladies in school and college to read and comprehend the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, and early Muslim history. After achieving success at the organizational level, she made a decision to start the Iqbal Association for Women in order to educate young girls to become aware of their status in Islam. She introduced Allama Muḥammad Iqbal to them, a well-known Islamic poet, statesman, and philosopher (1877 - 1938). His poetry in urdu is regarded as one of the best masterpieces of the 20th century. The Iqbal association sought to comprehend the message conveyed by Iqbal, which holds that Muslims triumphed in all spheres of life in the past because they adhered to the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), to *Tawḥīd* and to the unity of the ummah.¹⁶

She also reiterates that if Muslim women fail to understand the rights bestowed upon them by the Qur'ān and Sunnah, they will be subject to negative and biased portrayals and exploitation. She would encourage her friends to continue to show their support for Islam by recalling Iqbal. From her early school days to the present, Iqbal has unquestionably been the primary source of her professional and educational growth.¹⁷

¹⁴ Shabnam Ahmad, "*Contemporary Islamic Response to Woman's Issues: A study of the views of Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdūdī, M. Mazheruddin Siddique, Anis Ahmad and Zeenath Kausar*," (M.Phil. thesis, University of Kashmir 2003) ,89.

¹⁵ <https://ilm.iou.edu.gm/members/zeenath20/> (accessed 08 May 2023).

¹⁶ Zeenath Kausar, Interview by Author, Wangsa Maju Kuala Lumpur, 27 August 2023.

¹⁷ Ibid.

3.4 MARITAL LIFE

Kausar was married in her early twenties when she finished her final Exams of MA, to a Ph. D Research Scholar, Muḥammad Mumtaz Ali who was pursuing his studies at Aligarh Muslim University(AMU), Aligarh. Nevertheless, they both completed their Ph.D. successfully from AMU, Aligarh, and were blessed with three children.

1. Mohammad Abdul Allam Roase (Eldest son)
2. Muznah Madeeha (daughter)
3. Humnah Madeeha (daughter).¹⁸

3.5 CAREER

Kausar's areas of interest and specialisation include Islamic and Western political thought, feminism and its Islamic critique, modernisation and development studies, globalisation, and few others. She has authored several books and published several articles in refereed journals on Western and Islamic political thought and women's studies and most of her books and articles are cited by scholars and researchers in the concerned fields.¹⁹

Kausar submitted her Ph.D thesis entitled "Nationalism and Internationalism: A Comparative Study of Abul Kalam Azad and Syed Abul Ala Maudūdī," to Aligarh and migrated to Malaysia. Due to some technical problems, the procedures leading to the viva were delayed for three years and she finally attained her Ph.D. in 1991. During this waiting period, she was appointed as a Part-Time Lecturer at the Matriculation Center of IIUM where she taught Introduction to the Qur'ān, Sunnah and Human Sciences for nearly two years. during this time, she also delivered a few lectures on issues related to women at IIUM.²⁰ This gave the female instructors the notion that they might ask her to speak at some of the university's student meetings on women's rights.²¹

¹⁸ <https://ilm.iou.edu.gm/members/zeenath20/> (accessed 08 May 2023).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Zeenath Kausar, Interview by Author, Wangsa Maju Kuala Lumpur on 15th September 2023.

²¹ Ibid.

She believes that being a mother should not stop one from making a valuable and innovative contribution to society. She was appointed to a teaching post at the IIUM Matriculation Center from late 1989 to late 1991 when her children started going to primary school and she was able to arrange for part-time aides at home.²²

Later, in early 1992, she received an invitation to become an assistant professor in the political science department. Thus, from 1992 to 2006, she continued to teach at IIUM and presented a paper at an international conference on “Leadership of Women: Feminism and Islam” in 1993 in Khartoum Sudan.²³

During her stay in Khartoum, she visited Omdurman University and attended gatherings with Sudanese women’s groups.²⁴ Her interest in women’s empowerment was prompted by two international conferences. This four-day event took place in Amman, Jordan between May 30 and June 3, 1995. Thorough preparation and attention were necessary, as Muslim participants were expected to discuss the final viewpoints on the Platform for Action paper.²⁵

At this conference, hundreds of female academics from Islamic Academies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) gathered in Amman for the meeting. Discussions on the 200-page paper that was to be sent to the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing were the main item on their program.²⁶

She participated in a women’s rights convention that crosses all of India in Chennai and made contributions to conversations about how the Platform for Action affects Muslims. These interactions impact Kausar’s decision to create an Islamic perspective on women’s empowerment. She said a Platform for Action, investigating various Qur’ānic interpretations by Muslim scholars, and being composed and organized in the face of different points of view are all part of the process. She acknowledges confusion caused by different interpretations of Islamic Thought.²⁷

²² Ibid.

²³ Shabnam Ahmad, “*Contemporary Islamic Response to Woman’s Issues: A study of the views of Sayyid Abul Ala Maudūdī, M. Mazheruddin Siddique, Anis Ahmad and Zeenath Kausar,*” 88.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Zeenath Kausar, Interview by Author, Wangsa Maju Kuala Lumpur, 27 November 2023.

²⁷ Zeenath Kausar, “*Sayyid Abul Ala Maudūdī on the Empowerment of Women in the Family, Society, State, and Islamic Movement: A Few Reflections,*” (Thinker's Library, 2008), 67.

Kausar asserts how her works have affected women's empowerment, especially in light of the 1995 Fourth World Conference of Women Platform for Action. Through a gender perspective, they highlight the feminist effect on the idea of women's empowerment while making a distinction between genetics and cultural gender. She talks about the difficulties Muslim and Christian participants encountered since they do not think that this viewpoint is connected with their values. She explained her interest and her early involvement with feminist ideology. She was able to forward her position paper to NGOs taking part in the Fourth World Conference of Women.²⁸

The Platform for Action's effects on Muslim women were discussed locally in Malaysia and other Muslim nations. After giving a critical speech at a conference in Malaysia in 1995, she went on to write books and articles on women's empowerment that attracted interest and were eventually translated into Bahasa Malay.²⁹ The influence of the author's work was further enhanced by the UN's ongoing advocacy of the Platform for Action as a worldwide manifesto for women's empowerment. The book is regularly published and cited, and there are suggestions to translate it into Arabic in 2024. Kausar outlines her work and projects in the area of women's empowerment from 1995 to the present. She talks about the books and essays that have been published offering an Islamic critique of the Beijing Platform for Action and its aspirational goal of creating an International Islamic Institute for the Empowerment of Women.³⁰

In place of the Beijing Platform for Action, she draws attention to the release of her book, "Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment." She conveys her happiness at the book's favorable response and its Bahasa Malay translation. She also talked about her constant contributions to the conversation of women's empowerment, citing a 2022 article as an example. Kausar's deep enthusiasm, that goes back to 1995, for founding an International Islamic Institute for Women's emancipation. She spoke about publishing books and starting an association called Women Affairs Division

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Zeenath Kausar, "*Islamic Plan for Action [IPA] for Women's Empowerment—An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action [PBA]*," (Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka 2016), 70.

³⁰ Ibid.

(WAFA) at IIUM in the early 1990s. Despite obstacles and hold-ups, she is still steadfast and dedicated to fulfil her goals.³¹

Kausar looks back on her attempt to work on the views of former Malaysia's Deputy Prime Minister, Dato Wan Azizah, on behalf of the institute. She presented her book on Wan Azizah's political leadership as a monument to women's empowerment from an Islamic perspective and underline the necessity for Malaysia to build such an institute. She talks about the difficulties in promoting women's empowerment, focusing on theoretical problems related to the definition of the concept. She illustrates the ideological disparities between Western and Islamic ideas by drawing a connection with the phrase "development." While the Western definition of growth sometimes concentrates only on material advancement, Islam views development as comprehensive, comprising spiritual, moral, and material dimensions.³²

3.6 AN OVERVIEW OF KAUSAR'S CONTRIBUTIONS

From a conceptual standpoint, Kausar highlights a basic distinction between Islamic teachings on women's empowerment and the feminist gender paradigm. Islam stresses a holistic approach that takes into account familial, social, and economic factors, in contrast to the former, which favours material advancement and social status at the expense of possible disregard for family obligations. Men and women have complementary responsibilities in the household, which encourages mutual collaboration as highlighted by the Qur'ān and Sunnah.³³

She makes the case that Islam permits women to assist with household finances but does not make it compulsory for them, challenging the feminist gender paradigm that makes it obligatory for women. In contrast to situations where some Muslim males may shirk their duties, she emphasizes the significance of men and women working together financially for the sustainability of the families. She noted that her time at IIUM for years has been incredibly illuminating. She appreciated the Department of Political Science and all of the faculty members. She did not also hide

³¹ Ibid.,91.

³² Zeenath Kausar, Interview by Author, Wangsa Maju Kuala Lumpur, 27 November 2023.

³³ Zeenath Kausar, "*Sayyid Abul Ala Maudūdī on the Empowerment of Women in the Family, Society, State and Islamic Movement: A Few Reflections*," (Thinker's Library, 2008) ,23.

the unforgettable moments she spent with her students from the Department of Political Science as well as with the students from other departments who attended her classes. She was an instructor in Political Theory and Philosophy, which was her specialty.³⁴

Joining the University, IIUM, for Ali and Kausar was the fulfilment of their academic dream because IIUM was established on the holistic Islamic philosophy—Islamization of Knowledge which draws its inspiration from the Islamic philosophy of knowledge. Hence, driven by her interest and passion, she served the University, IIUM from early 1990 to 2006 and also continued her research and publication of books and articles in academic journals in the areas of political thought and women's rights with the spirit of Islamization of knowledge along with her teaching assignments.

For this reason, Kausar was very well acknowledged and was blessed with two Awards for her research and publications in the year, 2005 as the excellent researcher as well as quality research winner at the faculty level, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, (KIRKHS). She was also conferred upon a Certificate as an “Outstanding Author” in 2005. During this time, her name was also included in ‘Marquis Who is Who in the World.’³⁵

Throughout her educational development and later her teaching and research and publication, Kausar tried to improve her Arabic and also tried to reflect and ponder over the verses of the Qur’ān to apply the message of the Qur’ān in her Islamic critique of Western political ideologies including feminism. She could complete a year course in the language and obtained a Certificate on Basics in the Arabic language and thereby she extended her stay in Qatar teaching in the Department of International Affairs, at Qatar University for around two years to remain in the same Arabic-speaking environment.³⁶

Since 2009 until present, she has not joined any university for teaching, because she wanted to complete some of her unfinished writings for at least two years and then would plan for joining the University. However, it so happened that some

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ <https://ilm.iou.edu.gm/members/zeenath20/> (accessed 10th Dec 2023).

³⁶ Zeenath Kausar, Interview by Author, Wangsa Maju Kuala Lumpur, 27 November 2023.

intellectual challenges on one side and her passion for writing on the other side continued to postpone her re-joining any university for a teaching position. Thus, one can see how Kausar remained true and faithful to her goal, devotion, and resolve she inherited from her parents. Kausar in this way, has been consistently contributing to the intellectual world for more than three decades.³⁷

Her academic training in Western and political thought on one side and her deep interest in Qur'ānic insights as well as her sound grounding in Western and Islamic epistemologies, all reflected in her writings. Academically speaking, no contemporary scholar can discuss women's empowerment without referring to the pioneering works by Kausar. She is credited with being the first Muslim woman to level a systematic and in-depth Islamic critique of the term 'women's empowerment.' Kausar has published two books and several articles which are also translated into Bahasa Malay as we shall see in the list of her published books and articles. Kausar's contribution to the field of women's studies from the Qur'ānic perspective is immense, profound and globally far-reaching and significant.³⁸

Generally, scholars in studies related to women view women through their own lenses or perspectives, hence, they view them from either feminist or religious perspectives – either from Christian, Hindu, or any other religious perspectives. Kausar, unlike others, draws his views on women from an Islamic holistic approach.

Kausar in many of her books, first presents a critical survey of feminist ideology covering all major schools of thought Liberal, Radical, Socialist, Marxist, Psychoanalytical, Gender and Postmodern, and only then presents the Islamic position on the issues under discussion. This provides her readers with two perspectives - feminist and Islamic on the given issues, and further helps her readers to compare the two perspectives and appreciates the Islamic perspective as viable for humanity as compared to the Western perspective.³⁹

Her contribution is also profound because she goes into epistemic depth in showing the differences between Islamic and feminist perspectives on the given

³⁷ Shabnam Ahmad, *"Contemporary Islamic Response to Woman's Issues: A study of the views of Sayyid Abul Āla Maudūdī, M. Mazheruddin Siddique, Anis Ahmad and Zeenath Kausar,"* (M.Phil. thesis, University of Kashmir 2003).

³⁸ Zeenath Kausar, *"Islamic Plan for Action [IPA] for Women's Empowerment—An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action [PBA]."* Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (2016), 45.

³⁹ Muhammad Rashad Bakashmar, *"Islamic Studies"* 36, no 1(1997),107.

issues. For this, Kausar presents the Qur'ān as 'True, Authentic and Universal Revealed Knowledge', as the criterion on the basis of which alone any idea, concept or theory can be built and which can guarantee justice, peace, and success for all. Thus, Kausar gives her reader an insight into women in Islam with a focus on the Qur'ān as the sole point of reference and women from the viewpoint of Feminism with reference to feminist contemporary schools of thought. Kausar's role is also far-reaching crossing the national and civilizational boundaries. This is so, because, unlike many others, she while discussing the given issue from both feminist and Islamic perspectives, also presents the stance of the international document, Platform for Action so that the readers become enlightened about the international stance developed on the issue under the auspicious of the United Nations, UN.⁴⁰

She shows with a rigorous academic exercise how the international stance is built by influential feminists whose perspective does not comply with the Qur'ānic perspective and how such an international perspective is still promoted as a global model for all the Western and non-Western civilizations including the Muslim community despite the obvious differences. Thus, Kausar points out categorically how feminist perspective on various issues of women is being promoted to serve the Western imperialist agenda. This agenda aims to undermine the cultures and beliefs of the non-Western populations in general and Muslims in particular.⁴¹

There have always been a few Islamic revivalists and reformers whom Allah SWT had sent to His believers to correct their misgivings and misdeeds. For Muslims issues that pertain to women such as their rights and duties are clearly stated. The status and role of women in the family as well in society are all well-defined. Hence, according to Kausar, Islam does not object to the idea of empowering women if it is founded on the principles of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. It is important to bear in mind, that the Qur'ān and the Sunnah are the main primary sources of law in Islam, as a result, they are the only legal references competent at defining the rights, duties, and status of women. Since the Qur'ān is sent by the Creator of all human beings and the

⁴⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic feminism: is it calling for a non-patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'ān or it conveys that the Qur'ān remained neutral to patriarchy." (Islamic Perspective Journal of the Islamic Studies and Humanities 18 2017), 65-84.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) is sent by Allah SWT as ‘mercy’ to all humanity, we only can obtain true guidance from the Qur’ān and the Sunnah.⁴²

Islam stands against ‘compulsion.’ It neither allows its believers to impose their views on others forcefully nor does it allow its advocates to accept any concept from others blindly. Islam believes in peace and encourages its followers to keep and maintain peaceful relationships with all human beings.⁴³

Kausar holds the view that though the origin of feminism is generally traced back to the 18th century, history shows that ever since the 17th century, a number of women writers and activists in the West raised their voices against male maltreatment and abuse against women in the family as well as in the society.⁴⁴ These writer-activists demanded security and fair treatment of women in the family and all social structures. Hence, Kausar referred to those women’s rights activists and writers who played an active role in raising consciousness among women for their rights and stood for their emancipation ever since the 17th century as ‘feminists’. In fact, according to her, even though the origin of feminism may be traced back to the eighteenth century in the West, there were few women even in the 15th century who may be described as ones who associated themselves with ‘feminism’ before this term ‘feminism’ originated as a fully-fledged theory. The active role those women played against female discrimination and the initial efforts they made to attain equal rights for women as men.⁴⁵

It is worthy of mention that though Kausar advocates for the uprooting of injustice against women, she is so critical of feminism and its ideals. In other words, she does not call for the full and permissive liberation of women as claimed by feminism. She believes a lax liberation of women has had a pernicious effect on societies. She totally disagrees with the feminist idea that women should be granted sexual laxity as part of human rights arguing every woman has the right to do whatever she wants with her body by promoting the slogan that reads ‘biology is not destiny.’ In fact, this feminist idea makes a distinction between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ and

⁴² Zeenath Kausar, “*Role of Women in the Development of Islamic Civilization.*” (Makkah al-Mukaromah, The Muslim World League Journal, vol. 26, 1999), 29-32.

⁴³ Anis Ahmed, “*Woman and Social Justice*, (Islamabad, Institute of Policy Studies,” 1991),90.

⁴⁴ Zeenath Kausar, “*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions toward Islamization,*” (Leeds Publications, Kuala Lumpur, Second Edition, 2001), 29-31.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 24.

claims that roles and statuses associated with women are socially constructed. Hence, the feminist ardent supporters who believe in such ideals reject the idea that men and women complement one another. They promote LGBTQI as a model of life calling for full sexual laxity in societies. Kausar points out that such ideals and models put forth by feminists do not comply with the teachings of the Qur'ān and Sunnah and, therefore, should be rejected.⁴⁶ This shows how important it is to investigate Kausar's critique of feminism at least in detail. Here are some of her writings:

1. *Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1995; Second Edition, 2001.
2. *Women's Empowerment and Islam: UN Beijing Document, Platform for Action*, Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers, 2000; Second Edition by Thinker's Library in 2007. This book was again published in 2015 as *Women's Empowerment and Islam* by Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, (DBP).
3. *Politicization of Sex and Family Devaluation in Feminism: An Islamic Alternative*, Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers, 2003.

Besides these three books, there are six of her articles on feminism published in various academic journals wherein she points out the influence of feminism on several issues in Platform for Action about women's empowerment. Other than these, she is currently working on a manuscript to be published soon, entitled, *Proto-Feminism to Liberal Feminism: A Critical Survey*. She has also two books to be out by 2024. One is entitled *Western and Islamic Feminism: Critical Reflections* and the other *Feminism to the so-called Islamic Feminism: Whither Family? Whither Civilization?* All these works make the essence of this thesis, especially in this chapter.

Before moving straight to understanding her critiques, it seems important to be familiar with her writing style. Having read her writings in this area, it seems preferable to call her writing- style, 'tri-centric.' It is a unique combination of three styles of writing ;(1) explorative and descriptive; (2) analytical and decisive; and (3) alternatively suggestive. Firstly, it is explorative and descriptive because she explores the subject under discussion and describes it as it stands. However, her descriptive

⁴⁶ Ibid.

step is not simply a conventional one. Along with the concerned subject under discussion, she also explores the related subjects of the main subject under discussion and then presents those related subjects or subjects before the readers. In other words, her explorative and descriptive step is comprehensive, not narrow and limited. Secondly, it is analytical and decisive because she reflects over the subject then analyses critically and takes a decisive stance on the subject. Her stance looks firm on the subject, most probably due to her comparative study of the subject from both the Western and Islamic frameworks. Thirdly, she reflects and ponders on the subject and tries to create alternative reading of Islamic texts the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Then, she suggests Islamic alternative in a creative way to bring a constructive change in the society, which implies forbidding vices, promoting virtues, and rejuvenating Islamic civilization. Thus, in her tri-centric writing style, all her ideas and thoughts are quite visible.

In her book, *Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*, (Second Edition, 2001), Kausar identifies and discusses the difference between feminist and Islamic perspectives on equality, identity, complementarity, and patriarchy. Due to the over-emphasis on the concept of equality as promoted from the feminist perspective, the terms 'equality' and 'identity' are often blurred and the biological differences between male and female have been overlooked. Kausar takes the task of challenging the feminist concept of 'equality' and asserts that this concept clashes with the Islamic concept of 'equality' which is explained while highlighting the importance of different identities of male and female, emphasizing the complementary nature of the relationship between men and women. Along with this, Kausar tries to clarify the confusion that surrounds the term, 'patriarchy', asserting that the main source of Islam, the Qur'ān is not patriarchal; rather some interpretations of certain verses of the Qur'ān are presented by some scholars in patriarchal terms. Hence, in several of her works, Kausar explains the concepts of equality, identity, complementarity, and patriarchy.⁴⁷

To develop 'thought' through intellectual orientation in issues related to women, Kausar insists that women should be liberated from misconceptions about their status and role in family and society. She uses the term 'liberation.' 'Liberation'

⁴⁷ Muhammad Rashaad Bakashmar, "Islamic Studies," (v, 36, no. 1, 1997), 107-10.

is used in terms of liberating women from discrimination. Kausar uses the same term 'liberation' to remove misconceptions about women. It is a crucial point to note, because women cannot reach liberation unless they stand against discrimination directed against women by men, and they will not be able to stand against such discrimination unless they are made conscious that they are discriminated against by men. Nevertheless, they will become conscious of their discrimination only when they are enlightened about their family and social rights. In short, unless women are not given proper education, they cannot be liberated from these misconceptions. This shows not only the connection between thought and action but the influence of consciousness on social reality. Kausar writes:

She (woman) must be schooled and trained in the Islamic theory of life in such a way that she will be able to fight successfully and intelligently against un-Islamic ideas prevailing about women in our societies at present. She should also be exposed to the feminist philosophy and the position of women in the West and in Eastern traditions, in order that she can critically appreciate Islam's position on women.⁴⁸

Kausar raises a question as to how education will be provided to women whereby, they are either denied equal access to education or are not much encouraged to obtain it compared to their fellow men. Kausar points out the reason behind this problem in Muslim societies. She writes:

The strongest argument for this tendency is concerned with men's economic responsibility. Islam has of course assigned the economic responsibility to men, not to women. But does Islam reduce education to nothing but economic reasons? Was the first revelation to our last Prophet, "Read in the name of Allah who created," revealed for an economic mission, or was it to make man read and understand the purpose of his creation, thereby to make mankind understand it and fulfill it?⁴⁹

It should be made clear here that Kausar explains several times that though economic responsibility is assigned to men in Islam, women are not denied any financial function, provided she follows Islamic rules in their dressing and in their social interaction. These rules are not made obligations only to women, but men also based on Islamic norms. Kausar equally accentuates generally on the purpose of education and life. She believes that men and women were both created to be subservient to Allah on earth and this can only be fulfilled if they are aware of their

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

roles. She explains that human beings are created to perform several duties among which is declaring the oneness of Allah, worshipping, and glorifying Him and playing a vital role in the sustainable growth and development of civilization on this earth. Though material and financial growth is necessary for man to live happily while being subservient to Allah, we are on this earth to fulfill that for which we have been created. The only way to fully grasp the oneness of Allah is through knowing, hence, the *raison d'être* for knowing or education is to be fully conscious of the oneness of Allah and that we are subservient to Him. By understanding that we are here to glorify Allah, means that we should also conduct His commands. One of his commands and injunctions revealed in the Qur'ān is to set up justice. Hence, Kausar claims that by following the commands of Allah, humankind will strive for peace and happiness. She writes the Islamic philosophy of education is linked with its philosophy of man's creation: to perform the vicegerency of Allah. Hence, both men and women are exhorted to pursue enhanced knowledge to fulfill the purpose of their creation. If education also serves an economic purpose, it cannot be isolated from the ultimate purpose of creation. Even the fulfillment of the economic purpose in Islam is direct to the ultimate purpose of creation. Hence, education can in no way be confined to the economic purpose alone. Although the economic responsibility is assigned to men, women should be given the same educational opportunities as men.⁵⁰ She points out that the secular system of appropriate education can liberate her from the misconceptions about herself.⁵¹

Kausar explains that there are two types of education; first, secular education which has been promoted through the Western system of education. In the Western system of education, God and revelation have been removed as the main source of knowledge and rather replaced by reason and observation. That is, the western system of education relies heavily on rationalism and empiricism as sources of knowledge. Second, Islamic system of education contrary to its Western counterpart relies on revelation (the Qur'ān and the Sunnah) as main sources of knowledge. Kausar explains that though the Islamic system of education relies on revelation as primary sources also recognizes the power of reason and observation in creating knowledge. She believes that the failure of many traditional Islamic schools known as madrassas

⁵⁰ Muhammad Mumtaz Ali, *"Islamization of modern science and its philosophy: A contemporary civilizational discourse,"* (2016), 25.

⁵¹ Zeenath Kausar, *"Women in feminism and politics: New directions towards Islamization,"* 110-113.

is partly because they ignore some of the sciences and knowledges made by man. Hence, Kausar believes that the best system of education which she claims is Islamic should embrace an integrated approach to knowledge -Islamization of knowledge.

She defines both systems of education through their source, purpose, and function. For her the Islamic approach to knowledge is based on revelation as a primary source with the recognition of reason and observation as powerful tools for creating knowledge. The purpose and function of knowledge from an Islamic perspective is to please Almighty Allah and serve humanity.⁵² From the Western perspective on education, Kausar claims that Western education is materialistic in nature, that is, knowledge is sought after to maximize profit and make as much capital as possible. It is simply an expression of materialism and capitalism par excellence removing God from the equation.

It is worth mentioning here that Kausar has come up with a unique approach to addressing the importance of providing equal access to education for men and women. Many scholars from the West as well as from the Muslim world no doubt emphasize the right of equal access to education for women and men. However, they do not know what type of education women should obtain. She believes that Muslim women like men should be introduced to the Islamic philosophy of knowledge and made aware of the differences that set it unique from the Western philosophy of knowledge.⁵³ Unlike the Western perspective which puts more emphasis on the material aspect of education, Islamic perspective puts emphasis on the recognition of the oneness of Allah SWT and in understanding the uniqueness of His creation of the whole universe and human beings. Thereby following and promoting His injunctions in the Qur'ān and the teachings of His last Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) to establish justice, peace, and success in this world and in the hereafter. Hence, her ability to articulate and implement the difference between the Western based approach to knowledge and the Islamic approach to it as mentioned above is what distinguishes her from others.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ M. Mumtaz Ali, *"The History and Philosophy of Islamization of Knowledge, a Preliminary Study of Pioneers' Thought,"* (International Islamic University, Malaysia, IIUM Press, Gombak, 2010, 2011, 2013), 11.

Kausar even goes far onto not only accounting for the need for developing a model for women education but also asserts the need to set up a Centre of Women Studies. There is an urgent need for a center of women's studies where the study of woman should be undertaken (1) from a multidisciplinary approach, and (2) from the perspectives of different worldviews. The methodologies should be critical and creative from Islamic perspective so that the stance of the West and other traditions on woman may not only be explored but also critically examined. All these should come under the theoretical and conceptual study of Woman.⁵⁴

This shows that though the need for the establishment of International Islamic Institute for women's empowerment was felt after the Fourth World Conference of Women, (FWCW), Beijing in September 1995, she found the need for a Centre of women's studies months prior to this conference in 1995. Besides this, she proposes few formal and informal institutions for women in families like, intellectual orientation of family, Islamization of domestic work, Islamization of technology, bed-to-kitchen Islamization, heart to heart communication, Islamization of children, round table-talks with children and home seminars and such others. For the intellectual orientation of family, Kausar professes that family should be seen as an informal educational center. She writes:

The family should be regarded as an informal educational center wherein all the members can learn from each other the basic knowledge that forms the core of their formal education at schools and universities. However, it does not necessarily mean that the informal atmosphere of home should be suddenly changed into a more serious intellectual environment.⁵⁵

She contends that a balanced approach should be taken toward family, neither too rigorous nor too lax. She says that it is possible to assign an intellectual function to family along with other functions. Another provocative suggestion proposed by Kausar is the 'Islamization of domestic work. No doubt, a few Muslim and Western scholars suggest the cooperation and coordination between spouses in house-chores and child-care responsibilities. She writes we understand that one of the pernicious effects of secularization is the division of work into worldly and other mundane and religious activities. This has influenced Muslim societies as well, particularly the

⁵⁴ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in feminism and politics: New directions towards Islamization," 113.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

attitude towards domestic work; it is trivialized, and outside work is greatly exaggerated.⁵⁶

She further elaborates on the problem; The trivialization of domestic work is a methodological problem as well as a disastrous result of secularization. Domestic work is categorized as a mundane activity with only material and ephemeral value. All the divine purpose behind it is completely overlooked or even rejected, due to the duality of the secular approach.⁵⁷

Kausar argues that secularization has left destructive effects not only on the educational system, but also on the basic unit of society, family, and domestic work. She says that it is surprising to note that very scant attention is paid to this problem. It can be argued that, as the Islamization of society is not possible without “Islamization of knowledge,” neither it is possible without Islamization of the family and domestic work. In other words, if “Islamization of knowledge” is the first step, for the Islamization of society, then the Islamization of the home ministry (the family) is the second step. Hence, the reconstruction of the society through Islamization of family and domestic work should stand as a challenging task for the Twenty-first Century.⁵⁸

The second important suggestion Kausar proposes is concerned with Islamization of technology and its usage in the house-chores to lessen time and energy spent on house-chores. To capture this, she writes:

According to a Ḥadīth, Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) himself used to help his wives with the housework. He used to cut the meat, lace his shoes, milk the goat, and sew his clothes. Who can be a better model to be followed and obeyed than the Prophet? The same example should be followed by husbands to help their wives as much as possible. The question arises here: when the Prophet is presented as the best exemplar in all areas of life, why not in the capacity of a husband?⁵⁹

Kausar explains that the example of the Prophet (PBUH) should be followed to keep family in mutual harmony. Husbands and wives should always keep a pleasant and gentle attitude towards each other. from the bed to the kitchen. For this, the husbands should emulate the example of the Prophet (PBUH) who was gentle, pleasant, and cooperative with his wives. Husbands, therefore, should try to help their

⁵⁶ Ibid, 117.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid,118.

wives in the kitchen and as well as in another housework. This attitude is described as ‘bed-to-kitchen Islamization.’⁶⁰

All these suggestions presented by Kausar for the emancipation and empowerment of women are crucial and practical. Thus, if they are implemented and followed, can relieve many concerns and issues related to women. Kausar adopts a prophetic model for the emancipation of women from the daunting task of house caring and domestic duties. She motivates women to work harder to earn their own empowerment to serve the purpose of education, that is, the purpose of life – to declare their total subservience to Allah SWT through performing and promoting all His injunctions and the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad to establish justice, peace, and success here and hereafter. Kausar emphasizes throughout her writings that this emancipation and empowerment should be in line with the Qur’ān and Sunnah and that such well-thought-out liberation should bring them closer to the Creator.⁶¹

In fact, she enables the reader, emphasizing Qur’ān and Sunnah as a point of reference, to understand her views on Psychoanalytic Feminism, Existentialist feminism, Radical Feminism, and other feminist schools of thought, which she critically deals with in her major work entitled, *Women’s Empowerment and Islam: UN Beijing Document, Platform for Action, 2000*.⁶²

It is important to note here that there are few others who wrote on women’s empowerment in the South Asian context or in the context of Millennium Development.⁶³ However, there are differences in approaches between many of these writers and Kausar on women’s empowerment. First, unlike others, she presents her critique on women’s empowerment referring to the specific gender perspective which is emphasized in the Platform for Action passed at the Fourth World Conference on Women, (FWCW) in Beijing, in China. Second, she points out the ideological connection between feminism and the gender perspective. Third, she presents her critique on women’s empowerment, which is promoted as a universal document for

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Sayyed Abul A’la, Maudūdī. “Islamic Civilization: Its Foundational Beliefs and Principles,” (Leicester, The Islamic Foundation, 2013),120.

⁶² Zeenath Kausar. “Islamic Plan for Action [IPA] for Women’s Empowerment–An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action [PBA].” (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka 2016), 126.

⁶³ Srilatha Batliwala, “The Meaning of Women’s Empowerment: New Concepts from Action.” (Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment, and Rights 17, 1994), 127-138.

women's rights from Islamic perspective. Finally, she suggests the Islamic Action Plan for the Muslim Ummah as an alternative to the Platform for Action.⁶⁴

Kausar makes it clear that women in Islam understand that men bear the financial responsibilities, therefore, they do not make it incumbent upon their husbands to engage in husbandry and domestic duties. Here, Kausar encourages men to be aware of the welfare and sustainability of family as it depends chiefly on cooperation between its members especially in carrying out domestic chores. Men should be fully aware that it is not the duty of women only even if she is the key figure as far as the sanitation and hygiene of the house is concerned. Yes, she is the chieftain as far as domestic stewardship is concerned but should be given help from time to time by men and by the rest of family members. This echoes, Kausar emphasises, the practices of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) where he used to offer his cooperation for domestic duties and engage personally in carry them out. She claims that mutual cooperation in domestic chores strengthens love and ties between spouses and brings about peace of mind, serenity, and a healthy environment. A family whose members behave based on mutual cooperation, love and respect is likely to be sustainable and flourishing. Such family is described by Kausar as a 'micro or mini-civilization' while a family that lacks such character and based on 'patriarchy or the control of the man' as a micro or mini-monarchy.⁶⁵

Kausar discusses another related issue in the same book, the problem of the 'double work-load' on women and suggests that this can be resolved if we perceive 'work' – inside or outside the house as a 'united action' undertaken for the sake of Allah SWT.

In her book on *Reproduction Technology or Adultery?* Kausar highlights the contemporary issues like In vitro fertilization, surrogate mothering, partial abortion and such other issues. She argued that Islam is not against technology but of course, Islam is against the use of these technological devices in a way that does not comply with the Islamic stance related to reproduction. She contends that all those pro-reproduction and anti-reproduction devices which lead to adultery are not acceptable

⁶⁴ Zeenath Kausar, "*Islamic Plan for Action [IPA] for Women's Empowerment–An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action [PBA]*." (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka 2016), 23.

⁶⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "*Islamic feminism: is it calling for a non-patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'Ēn or it conveys that the Qur'Ēn remained neutral to patriarchy.*" (Islamic Perspective Journal of the Islamic Studies and Humanities 2017), 65-84.

to Islam. In her book, *Woman as Head of State in Islam*, Kausar discusses leadership issues related to women and presents the positive and negative arguments of some Muslim scholars on the issue. In this book, one can find how some Muslim scholars interpret certain verses of the Qur'ān against the political participation and the headship of women, while some other scholars have interpreted the same verses for the participation of women in all social structures including leadership position.⁶⁶

Kausar in her books, *Women's Empowerment and Islam* and *Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment*, discusses all the critical issues that are identified in the UN document Platform for Action which include inequalities, inadequacies, and unequal access to education and training for women; unequal access to health services for women; violence against women, inequality in economic structures, inequality in power-sharing, trafficking in women, and such others.⁶⁷

Kausar argues that although the document Platform for Action identifies certain genuine issues related to women, but it has analysed and suggested the strategic actions to overcome the problems from what it calls the gender perspective. Kausar thoroughly analyses the term, "gender perspective", being well-versed in the theory of feminism and being aware of how the term, "gender" was used in the Pre-Beijing meetings before the international document was passed in 1995. Hence, Kausar critically looks into the issues of women identified in the document and presents an Islamic Action Plan for women's empowerment. These two books are the most significant contribution of Kausar in this regard. This document Platform for Action is not just historical; rather it is renewed every five years since 1995. Furthermore, the signatory countries of the world that ratified these documents CEDAW, (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women) and the UN Platform for Action, are asked by the relevant UN bodies as to how far the suggestions included in these documents are being implemented in their respective countries for the development and empowerment of women.⁶⁸

Kausar also discusses the Islamic stance on another controversial issue of contemporary times, promotion of LGBT rights in the name of human rights. This

⁶⁶ Zeenath Kausar, "Tawhidic framework for family life: Reflections on Islamic texts," (Muslim Education Quarterly, 1999), 62-75.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

problem has become more crucial in the present circumstances as so-called Islamic feminists declare themselves as allies with the LGBT for supporting human rights. Kausar refers to the Qur'ānic stance on the given issues.⁶⁹ She highlighted few important points to give a clear overview:

One of the basic and all-pervasive problems that all the feminists point out is patriarchy which implies male domination and female subordination in the family and in all socio-political and economic institutions. Patriarchy is seen as the main cause of all evils in the life of female human beings. There have presented many verses of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah which clearly show that Islam rejects patriarchy in absolute terms both in family and in all social institutions, political ones. Islamic rejection of patriarchy, however, does not mean, Islam accepts other immoral, illegal, invalid options that are presented by the feminists. Islam follows its own unique mechanisms which provide tools for consultation among people in the family and all social institutions and promote love, peace, justice, mutual understanding, trust, confidence, and cooperation in family and society.

All sorts of pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations are totally rejected in Islam. All kinds of deviant sexual relationships –LGBT are forbidden in Islam. Abortion is forbidden in Islam unless the life of the mother is in danger or there is any such inevitable reason related to both fetus and the mother. Artificial insemination with the sperm of a stranger is tantamount to adultery which is prohibited in Islam. Islam gives full economic security to women in all stages of their lives as a daughters, wives, and mothers in their families giving economic responsibility to men. But women also enjoy rights for their participation in society in different fields and it is not obligatory for them to share their monetary income with the members of their family; it depends on their will and choice to contribute to the family.⁷⁰

According to her motherhood in Islam is the pivotal institution within family where Islam assigns a reciprocal relationship between parents and children which makes family an abode of love, compassion, concern, care, tolerance, cooperation, and pleasant environment to remember the bounties of Allah SWT, and to follow His

⁶⁹ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Feminism Fully Exposed: Amina Wadud and Margot Badran vis-à-vis 'Allama Yūsuf Al-Qaradāwī and Jamāl Badawī on Women's Issues." *TAFHIM: IKIM* (Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World 9 2016),3-5.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

commands. Kausar has elaborated on all these points in her articles and books which present a remarkable picture of women's empowerment, different from the one promoted in the West. Kausar's critical reflections of feminism on one side and her critique of the misinterpretation of some verses the Qur'ān by some Muslim scholars on the other side, reveal her deep and consistent reflections on the Islamic thought. She tries to set a model for Muslims to lead a civilized life that is based on submission and subservience to Allah as opposed to Western ideals that are based on humanism.

3.7 PUBLICATIONS

Books on Women's Issues and Western and Islamic Political Thought.

3.7.1 Section I (A): Books on Women's Issues: Recent Publications

1. *Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 2019.
2. *Islamic Guidance on Justice in the Context of Gender*, New Delhi, Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers, New Delhi, 2017.
3. *Women's Empowerment and Islam*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka Edition, 2015.

Note: Translated Versions of the Above Books

1. Book titled, *Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment* is translated into Bahasa Malay and published with the following title:
Pelan Tindakan Islamik Perneriksaan Wanita, (trans.) Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahman, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 2020.
2. Book titled, *Women's Empowerment and Islam* is translated into Bahasa Malay and published with the following title:
Perneriksaan Wanita Menurut Islam (trans.) by Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahim), Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 2019.

3. Book titled, *Islamic Guidance on Justice in the Context of Gender* is in process of translation in Urdu language and due for publication in 2024.

3.7.2 Books on Women's Issues from 1994 to 2008: Presenting from the Latest to the Earliest: 2008 to 1994

1. *Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdūdī on the Empowerment of Women in Family, Society, State and Islamic Movement*, Kuala Lumpur: Thinker's Library, 2008.
2. *Women in Politics: The Case of Peninsular Malaysia*, Kuala Lumpur: Research Centre, International Islamic University Malaysia, IIUM Press, 2006.
3. *Social Ills in Malaysia: Causes and Remedies*, Kuala Lumpur: Research Center, International Islamic University Malaysia, IIUM Press, 2005.
4. *Politicization of Sex and Family Devaluation in Feminism: An Islamic Alternative*, Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers, 2003.

5. *Political Participation of Women: Perspectives of Gender Feminists and Islamic Revivalists*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1997.

Note: Its Second Edition came in 2008 by Thinker's Library.

6. *Woman as Head of State in Islam?* Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen. 1997.

Note: Its Second Edition came in 2007 from Thinker's Library.

7. *Reproduction Technology or Adultery: An Islamic Alternative*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1997.

Note: Its second Edition came in 2008 from Thinker's Library.

8. *Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*, (First Edition), Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1995.

Note: Its Second Edition came in 2001 by Leeds Publications.

3.7.3 Co-edited Books on Women's Issues

1. *Social Issues in Malaysia: Women's Perspectives*, Zeenath Kausar and Zaleha Kamaruddīn, (co. ed.), Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers, 2003.

2. *Women's Issues: Women's Perspectives*, Zaleha Kamaruddin and Zeenath Kausar, co.ed. Kuala Lumpur: Women Affairs Division (WAFA) 1995.

3.7.4 Books on Western and Islamic Political Thought

1. *Modern Political Ideologies: An Islamic Critique*, Second Edition, Kuala Lumpur, Pearson Malaysia Sdn Bhd., 2014.

Note: The above book was first published in 2005. *Modern Western Political Ideologies: An Islamic Critique*, Kuala Lumpur: Prentice Hall, Pearson, 2005. Its second Edition came in 2014.

2. *Islam and Nationalism: An Analysis of the Ideas of Azad, Iqbal and Mawdūdī*, 2nd revised edition, Kuala Lumpur: Thinker's Library, 2008.

Note: The above book was first published in 1994. *Islam and Nationalism: An Analysis of the Ideas of Azad, Iqbal and Maudūdī*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1994. Its second edition came in 2008.

3. *Democratization and the Contemporary Islamic Resurgence: Democracy versus Shūracracy*, Kuala Lumpur: Thinker's Library, 2008.
4. *New World Order (NWO) or New Western Order? Need for the Re-organization of Islamic Ummah with its Socio-Political Base*, Kuala Lumpur: Thinker's Library, 2008.
5. *Colonization to Globalization: Might is Right Continues (Earthly City versus Civilized City, Madīnah)*, Kuala Lumpur: Thinker's Library, 2007.

3.7.5 Edited Books on Western and Islamic Political Thought

1. *Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Eleven Muslim Thinkers*, (ed.), Kuala Lumpur: Research Centre, International Islamic University, Malaysia, IIUM Press, 2005.

Note: The second Print of this book came in 2009 from IIUM Press.

2. *Political Development: An Islamic Perspective*, (ed.) Kuala Lumpur: Research Centre, International Islamic University Malaysia Press & The Other Press, 2000.

Note: The Second Print of this book came in 2003 from IIUM Press and The Other Press.

3.7.6 Selected Articles in Academic Journals on Women's Issues

1. Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or It Conveys that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy, in *Islamic Perspective Journal*, Centre for Sociological Studies In Cooperation with London Academy of Iranian Studies, (LAIS), Volume 18, Winter, 2017, p. 65-84.
2. Islamic Feminism Fully Exposed: Amina Wadud And Margot Badran 'Allama Yousuf Al-Qaradawi And Jamal Badawi On Women's Issues, *Tafhim: IKIM Journal of Islam and the Contemporary World*, Kuala Lumpur, Volume 9, 2016, p. 1.
3. Where is Family in the UN Document Platform for Action, BPA & in its 20 Years Celebration in March 2015? A Critique and Islamic Position on the Issues, *Hamdard Islamicus*, Karachi, Pakistan, No. 4 issue (Oct-Dec), 2015, p. 7-32.
4. Battle of Books! Diverse Trends in Muslim Thought on Women's Issues: Need Bias Cleansing, *Journal of International Women Studies, JIWS*, Bridgewater State University, USA, Vol.15, No.2, 2014, p. 165-181.

Articles: From 1992- 2006: (Presenting from the Latest to the Earliest)

5. "Women's Issues: Three Main Perspectives-Islamic, Cultural and Feminist" *Insight Islamicus*, Kashmir, Vol. 6 No. 6, 2006, p 78-89.
6. "Sayyid Abul A'la Maudūdī on the Empowerment of Women: Islamic Revivalism versus Muslim Traditionalism and Feminism", *Encounters, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2004, p. 31-54.

7. "Women between Family and Workplace: Islamic and Feminist Perspectives," *Insight Islamicus, An Annual Journal of Studies and Research in Islam*, Kashmir: Shah-I-Hamadan Institute of Islamic Studies, Vol. 3, 2003, p. 1-17.
8. "Debate on the Political Participation of Women and Interpretations of Islamic Texts: Few Reflections", *Islam and the Modern Age*, Delhi, Vol. 32, No. 1, 2001, p.41-53.
9. "Gender Perspective in UN Document on Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing: An Analysis of Platform for Action", *Hamdard Islamicus Quarterly Journal*, Karachi, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2000, p.85-98.
10. "Fundamental Flaws in the Platform for Action: Fourth World Conference on Women", *Islamic Quarterly, London*, Vol. XL111, No.3, 1999, p.203-218.
11. "Tawhīdic Framework for Family Life: Reflections on Islamic Texts", *Muslim Education Quarterly*, Cambridge, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1999, p.62-75.
12. "Sexuality and Reproductive Rights in Platform for Action and Islam", *Encounters, Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1997, p.149-163.
13. "Break Down of Family in the West: Islamic Solution", *Journal of Objective Studies*, Aligarh, Vol. 9, No. 1, 1997, p.16-51.
14. "Development or De-development: An Analysis of the Congruencies and Contradictions Between the Claims of the Rights of Women and Children", *Islam and the Modern Age Journal*, Delhi, Vol. 28, No. 2, May, 1997, p. 115-146.
15. "Oikos/Polis Conflict in Western Political Thought and Feminism: Necessity of Islamization", *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (AJISS)*, Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), Vol. 13, No. 4, 1996, p.475-496.

3.7.7 Selected Articles in Academic Journals on Political Issues

1. Pessimism in Modern Scientific Method and in Fukuyama's Hypothesis on Democracy, *Islamic Quarterly*, London, Vol.59, No. 3, 2015, p. 247-268.

2. "Communal Riots in India—Muslim Conflict and resolution", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, London, Vol. 26 No. 3, 2006, p.353-370.
3. "Nation-State System and Globalization: Indispensable Parts of Western Hegemonization", *Hamdard Islamicus, Karachi*, Vol. 29 No. 3, 2006, p.71-82.
4. "Islamic Stance for a Non-Hegemonic Globalization", *Studies on Islam*, New Delhi, Vol. 2, No. 2, July 2005, p.69-85.
5. "A Critique on the Ideological Components of the New World Order and the Need for the Reorganization of the Islamic Ummah", *The Islamic Quarterly*, London, Vol.48, Issue 3, 2004, p.250-278.
6. "Mawdūdī On Democracy: A Critical Appreciation", *The Islamic Quarterly*, London, Vol. 47. No. 4, 2003, p.303-331.
7. "A Philosophical Critique of Nationalism: Reflections of Iqbal", *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (AJISS)*, Herndon; IIIT, Vol.20, No. 2, 2003, p. 1-25.
8. "Political Dimensions of Islamic Resurgence and Global Democratization: Need for Civilizational Co-existence", *IKIM Journal of Islam and International Affairs*, Kuala Lumpur, Vol.1, No.1, 2002, p. 45-80.
9. "Iqbal on Democracy: Acceptance or Rejection?" *Iqbal Review*, Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, Vol.42, No.4, 2001, p.29-52.
10. "National Development Planning Policies: The Case of Malaysia (1957-1997)", *Islam and the Modern Age Journal*, Delhi, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1998, p.290-318.
11. "Political Development: Western and Islamic Perspectives", *The Islamic Quarterly Journal*, London, Vol. 40, No. 2, 1996, p.104-117.
12. "Dynamics of Islamic Polity: A Comparison of Western and Muslim Political Thought in the Context of Nationalism", *The Islamic Quarterly Journal*, London, Vol. 36, No. 2, 1992, p. 100-117.

3.7.8 Selected Articles in Magazines

1. Anwar Ibrahim and Wan Azizah from Reformasi Movement to the Saddles, in *Radiance Weekly*, Delhi, India, Vol. LVI, No. 11, 10 June, 2018.
2. Follow Up of Madīnah: Families Lead to Islamic Civilization, in *Radiance Weekly*, 2018, (published in 4 Parts).
Vol. LV No. 41, 7-13 January 2018 p. 25-28;
Vol. LV No. 42, 14-20 January 2018 p. 24-28;
Vol. LV No. 43, 21-27 January 2018 p. 25-27;
Vol. LV No. 44, 28 January-3 February 2018 p. 22-25.
3. Injustice in the name of ‘Gender Justice’: Islam and Feminism on Gender differences and Natural Institutions of a Civilization, in *Radiance Views Weekly*, Vol. LV No. 14, 2-8 July 2017, p. 10- 20.
4. International politics Behind Gender Justice for a Vision of a Free-Sex Society: Wake Up Call for Muslim Scholars and leaders, *Radiance Views weekly*, Vol. LV No. 14, 2-8 July 2017, p. 22-30.
5. Parliament of World Religions: A Short Introduction and leadership Participation of Few Muslim Scholars, in *Radiance Views Weekly*, 2016. (Published in 2 parts)
Part 1: LIV, No.4, 24th -30th April, 2016, Pp. 23-26.
Part 2: LIV, No.5, 1st -7th May, 2016, p. 23-27.
6. Parliament of World Religions: Presentations on Hate Speech and Violence & Family and Gender War, in *Radiance Views Weekly*, LIV, No.6, 8-14th May, 2016, p. 23-24.
7. Islamic Feminism is a Shaky Bridge! Be Firm in Faith and Actions and Avoid Accidents, in *Radiance Views Weekly*, 2016. (Published in 3 Parts)
Part I: Vol. LIII, No.48, 28 Feb -5 March, 2016, p.8-12.
Part 2: Vol. LIII, No.49, 6-12 March, 2016, p.22-25.
Part 3: Vol. LIII, No.50, 13-19March, 2016, p.22-25.

8. Islamic Feminism: Few Critical Reflections, *Muslim World League Journal*, Makkah al Mukarramah, Saudi Arabia, Sept., 2015, Vol.43, No. 11, p.52-54.
9. Islamic Feminism is Not a Rescuing Boat: Call for an Islamic Intellectual Revolution on Women's Issues and Reconstruction of Muslim Society, (cover story), *Radiance Views Weekly*, New Delhi, No. 20, 16 -21 August, 2015.
10. Islamic Feminism: A Move towards Feminist Imperialism, (cover story), *Radiance Views Weekly*, New Delhi, Vol. LIII No. 17, 26 July-1st August, 2015, p.8-12.
11. Men and Women Equality or Equity? (Cover Story), *Radiance Views Weekly*, New Delhi, Vol. LII, No.42, 18 Jan, 2015, p.7-10.
12. Motherhood: Demands of Feminists and Genuine Rights of Women, *Radiance Views Weekly*, New Delhi, Vol.LII, No.43, 25 Jan 2015.
13. Turkey Lifted Ban on Headscarves and Trousers: Welcome to Women's Empowerment, *Muslim World League Journal*, Makkah al Mukarramah, Saudi Arab, July-August, 2014, Vol.42, No. 9 and 10, p.50-54.
14. Islam Condemns Violence and Promotes Peace: Hyderabad NGOs for Peace-Building, *Radiance*, Delhi, Vol. LI, No.50, March, 2014, p.21-24.
15. Women's Issues in the Parliament of World Religions. Delhi: *Radiance*, 2005. Vol. XL. Nos. 6&7. p. 20-21; 20-21.
16. Women's Role in Muslim Society, *The Muslim World League Journal*, Makkah al Mukarramah, vol. 32, no.1&2, March-April, 2004, pp35-39 and p 44-48.
17. Be Best to Your Family: The Prophetic Model, *Radiance*, Delhi, Vol. 35, No. 47, 2001, p.101-102.
18. Acceptance of All Sexual Orientation? Part '1' Dunia Islam, *Nadi Aspirasi*, Ummah, Kuala Lumpur, Bil 64, Nov. 2000, pp. 55-57; Part '2' Bil, 65, December 2000, pp. 58-59; Part '3' Bil 66, January 2001, p.44-45.
19. Role of Women in the Development of Islamic Civilization, *The Muslim World League Journal*, Makkah al-Mukarramah, Vol. 26, 1999, p.29-32.

20. Indian Muslim Women: Some Reflections, *Radiance*, Delhi, Vol. 32, No. 34, August 1997, p.62-64.
21. Marriage and Family: Prerequisites For Overall Development, *Radiance*, Delhi, Vol.32, No. 1, December, 1996, p. 8-14.
22. Islam On Sexuality, Reproduction and Parents-Children Relationship, *The Muslim World League Journal*, Makkah al Mukarramah, Vol. 25, No. 7, 1997, p.39-42.
23. Development From An Islamic Perspective: The Role of Muslimah in Development, *Al-Nahdah Quarterly Journal of RISEAP*, Vol. 16, No. 3-4, July-December, 1996, p.35-39.
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27. Beijing Platform For Action: A Hidden Agenda, *Al-Nahdah, Quarterly Journal of RISEAP*, Vol. 15, No. 3, 1995, p.7-11.
28. Women's Empowerment in UN Documents neither a Safe Haven nor a Pandora's Box: Need for A Holistic Perspective in *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, Universiti Kebanngsal Malaysia, UKM, Vol. 21, June, 2022, p. 128 - 136.

3.7.9 Articles in Social Media

1. Wan Azizah Breaks Gender Myths, in AMUST, Sydney, Australia, July 19, 2018. <http://www.amust.com.au/2018/07/wan-azizah-breaks-gender-myths/>

2. Malaysia: Husband and Wife at the Top Levels of the Country, in Islamicity, California, US, June 26, 2018. <http://www.Islamicity.org/16147/malaysia-husband-and-wife-at-the-top-levels-of-the-country>.
3. Dr Wan Azizah Ismail a 'seat-warmer'? in malaysiakini, 20th June, 2018. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/430390>.
4. From Kaum Ibu to Kaum Reformasi (Part 1), in Aliran, Malaysia, 13th June, 2018. <https://aliran.com/aliran-csi/from-kaum-ibu-to-kaum-reformasi-part-1/>
From Kaum Ibu to Kaum Reformasi (Part 2), in Aliran, 15th June, 2018 / <https://aliran.com/aliran-csi/from-kaum-ibu-to-kaum-reformasi-part-2/>

Note:

The above article with 2 Parts is included as a chapter in this book --Francis Loh And Anil Netto edited, Regime Change in Malaysia: GE 14 And the End of UMNO-BN's 60 –Year Year Rule, Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, SIRD, Petaling Jaya, Malaysia and ALIRAN, Aliran KesedaranNegara, 2018, p. 110-119.

5. 14th General Election in Malaysia and the Three Exciting Scenarios, in Countercurrents.org, June, 8th, 2018. <https://countercurrents.org/author/dr-zeenath-kausar/>
6. UN Document Platform for Action and Its Recent 20 Years Celebration: A Few Critical Reflections on Its Stance on Poverty and Inequality of Women, in Countercurrents.org, 27th July, 2015. <http://www.countercurrents.org/kausar270715.htm>.

3.7.10 Reviews of Books by Other Scholars Published in Journals

1. Saleem Mansoor Khalid, (Book Authored by Zeenath Kausar), Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization, in Tarjuman al-Qur'ān , Pakistan, October 1996, p.56-62.
2. Syed Khalid Rasheed, Book Authored by Zeenath Kausar, Islam, and Nationalism—An Analysis of the Views of Azad, Iqbal, and Mawdūdī, in The

Muslim World Book Review, The Islamic Foundation, Leicester, Vol. 17, No. 1, Autumn 1996, p.16-18.

3. Muḥammad Rashaad Bakashmar, (Book Authored by Zeenath Kausar), Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization, in Islamic Studies, Pakistan, Vol. 36, No.1, 1997, p.107-110.
4. Muḥammad Shabbir, (Book Authored by Zeenath Kausar), Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions Towards Islamization, American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, AJISS, Herndon, Virginia, Vol. 15, No. 2, Summer, 1998, p. 118-122.
5. Daniel Mohd. Yousuf (Book edited by Zeenath Kausar) Political Development: An Islamic Perspective, in Intellectual Discourse, IIUM, K.L., Vol.10, No.1, 2002, pp.85-88.
6. Tunku Mohar, (Book edited by Zeenath Kausar) Political Development: An Islamic Perspective, in American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, Herndon, Virginia, IIIT, Vol. 20, No.3 & 4, 2003, p.191-193.
7. Jamil Farooqui, (Book edited by Zeenath Kausar) Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Eleven Muslim Thinkers, ed., in Studies on Islam, New Delhi, Vol.2, No.2, July 2005, p.132-135.
8. Mohd Ayyub Khan, (Book Authored by Zeenath Kausar) Politicization of Sex and Family Development in Feminism: An Islamic Perspective, in Studies on Islam, New Delhi, Hamdard University, Vol 3, No. 2, 2006.

3.7.11 M.Phil. Dissertation on Books: 2003

1. Topic: Contemporary Islamic Response to Women's Issues: A Study of the views of Sayyid Abul 'Ala Mawdūdī, M. Mazeheruddīn Siddiqui, Anis Ahmad and Zeenath Kausar

Student: Shabnam Ahmad

University: Shah-i-Hamdan Institute of Islamic Studies, University of Kashmir, 2003.

3.7.12 Number of Time Articles and Books are Cited By Others: (A Random Selected List)

https://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=Zeenath+kausar&oq=z

1. (Article)" Oikos"/Polis Conflict: Perspectives of Gender Feminists and Islamic Revivalists, in American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, (AJISS) 1996.

Cited by 3 Related articles

2. [Edited BOOK] Political Development: An Islamic Perspective, 1997.

Cited by 7 Related articles

3. (BOOK) Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions Towards Islamization, 2001.

Cited by 24 Related articles

4. [Edited BOOK] Women's Issues: Women's Perspectives, 2002, Women's Affairs Secretariat (WAFA) Students Affairs Division (STAD) IIUM.

Cited by 7 Related articles

5. Social ills in Malaysia: Causes and Remedies, 2005.

Cited by 5 Related articles

6. (Article) Communal Riots in India: Hindu-Muslim Conflict and Resolution, (2006).

Cited by 4 Related articles

7. (BOOK) Political Participation of Woman: Contemporary Perspectives of Gender Feminists & Islamic Revivalists, 2008.

Cited by 9 related articles

8. Islam and Nationalism: An Analysis of the Views of Azad, Iqbal and Mawdūdī 2008.

Cited by 5 Related articles

9. (BOOK) Colonization to Globalization: 'Might is Right' Continues:(Earthly City Versus Civilized City, Madīnah), 2007.

Cited by 3 Related articles

Note: (Continue)

3.7.13 Interviews and Talks in Radio and Television

1. Television Interview on one of my books, "Muslim Women at the Crossroads" in Sharjah Television Network, broadcasted on 25th May 2007.
2. Television Interview on "Gender Relations In Islam: A Civilizational Perspective", Cape Town, December, 1999.
3. Interview in Radio Riyadh (Through Telephone), "Few Critical Observations on International Document on Women's Rights, Beijing Document Platform For Action", August, 1996.
4. Television Interview on "International Islamic University Malaysia, IIUM: Its Philosophy and Mission", in Riyadh T.V December, 1995.

Print Media, (Newspapers either Short Articles or Interviews): (Selected List)

5. "Mother: How Outstanding You Have Made Us – From Where to Where!" in Siasat, (Daily Urdu Newspaper), Hyderabad, India, 21st January 2018.
6. Interview taken by Mohd. Riyaz Ahmad "The So- called Champions of the Rights of Women and Few Critical Reflections of Dr. Zeenath Kausar", Siasat,(Daily Urdu Newspaper), Hyderabad, India, 28th Sept., 2014.
7. Report on My Talk: "Emphasis of the Qur'ān on Education and Muslim Educational Institutions: Reflections of Allama Iqbal", Iqbal Academy, Siasat, Hyderabad, 14th, Jan., 2013.
8. Interview given to Dr. Raheemuddin Kamal, Chief Editor, Indian Horizon on the topic, "Proposal for the Islamic Think-Tank to Regain Creative Solidarity of Ummah at the National and International Spheres for the Development of

Family and Civilization”, Indian Horizon, (Daily English Newspaper), Hyderabad, India, 25th December, 2012, p.7.

9. Feature: “Islam Mei Khawateen ko Aala Muqam: Maghrib Ki Ghalat fahmiyon ke Azale ke liye Dr. Zeenath Kausar ki Tahreek.” (In Urdu), “Clarifications of Misconceptions about Women in Islam and the Proposal for Women’s Movement Proposed by Dr. Zeenath Kausar,” Siasat, Hyderabad, 9th December, 2012, p.3.
10. Report on the Talk: “Islamic Orientation in Educational Institutions in Hyderabad: A Case of Insight International School”, Munsif, (Daily Urdu Newspaper), 26th, Sept. 2012, p.7.
11. Interview taken by Asma Aijaz, “Women, Society and Culture in India” The Munsif Daily Hyderabad, Supplement- Family and Women, on 7th February 2007, p 4.
12. Interview taken by Azra Naqwi, "Teach your sons that women alone should not be made responsible for all House-chores", Urdu News, Riyadh, November 2002, p.9.
13. Interview taken by Moharyani Othman, “Reproduction Technology or Adultery”, New Straits Times, NST, Malaysia, July 20th, 1998.
14. Report on "Upholding Rights of Muslim Women: First All Indian Women Education Conference, held from 21-23 Dec. Madras", New Straits Times, NST, January 13th, 1997.
15. Report on "Muslim Women Rally to A Cause: Amman, Pre-Beijing Meeting", New Straits Times, NST, 27th July, 1995.

3.7.14 Awards and Honors

1. Excellent Researcher Award, Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM, 2002.
2. Quality Research Award, Faculty of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM, 2002.

3. Included in the 'Marquis Who's Who in the World', since twenty second editions, 2005, 2006.
4. Certificate as 'Outstanding Author of 2006', Research Centre, IIUM.

3.7.15 Research and Writings under Process

1. Women's Rights in Islam and Women's Wrongs in Feminism: Are Rights and Wrongs Compatible?
2. Female Family Members of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH): His Honourable Wives and Daughters (May Allah be Pleased with them).
3. An Introduction to Western and Islamic Civilizations and their Epistemologies: A Historical and Analytical Overview.

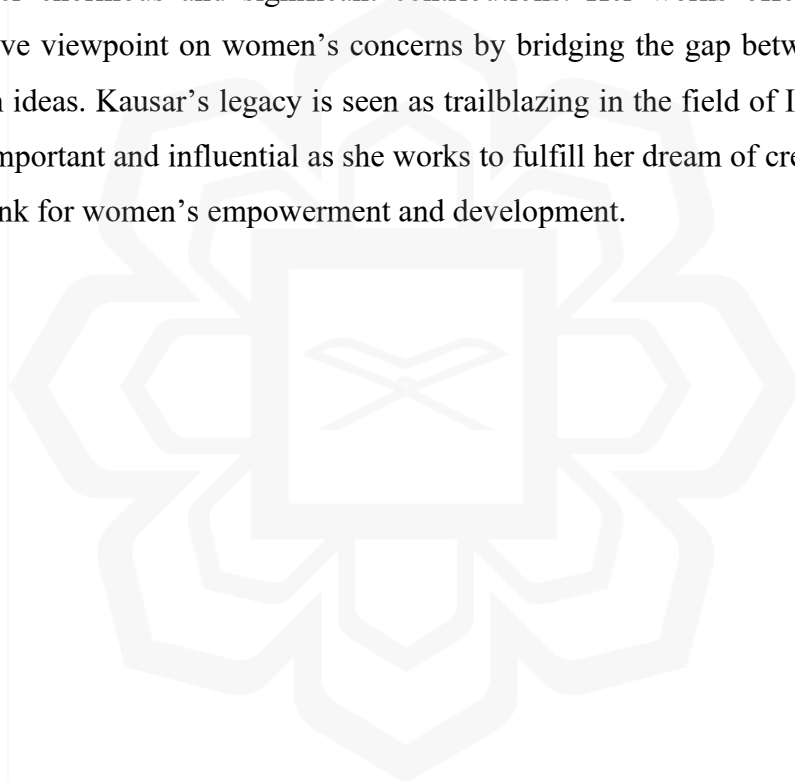
3.8 CONCLUSION

Kausar comes out as a devoted academic and an advocate for the emancipation of women based on Islamic values. Her dedication to addressing issues related to women from the Islamic viewpoint comes as a result of her upbringing and family influence. By promoting awareness about the rights of Muslim women with the Qur'ān and Sunnah as a point of reference, Kausar aims to educate and empower them. Examples of her activities include forming the Association for Women's Rights and then the Iqbal Association for Women. Kausar has made major contributions to studies pertaining to women during her academic career. She has been so active on issues related to women since she started her career as a lecturer at the International Islamic University, Malaysia (IIUM). Her research has since focused on the ideological differences between Western and Islamic views on women's empowerment by critically analyzing Western political ideas, particularly feminism. With a focus on using the Qur'ān as a model for developing concepts that guarantee justice, peace, and prosperity for all, Kausar's criticism is based on a holistic Islamic perspective.

Kausar's dedication never wanes in the face of all the obstacles she has encountered such as delays in finishing her Ph.D. and handling the demands of both academics and family life. In fact, Kausar has remained so dedicated and devoted to

her quest for the emancipation and empowerment of women based on Islamic values. Her participation in international conferences such as the 1995 Beijing Conference—demonstrated her commitment to furthering the conversation about women’s rights. The influence of her works are further demonstrated by the honors and acclaim she won in 2005.

Her determination to create an International Islamic Institute for Women’s Empowerment is evident in her choice to put writing above her desire to return to teaching at a university. In essence, the study of women from Islamic and feminist perspectives two important subfields within women’s studies is where Kausar has made her enormous and significant contributions. Her works offer a distinct and perceptive viewpoint on women’s concerns by bridging the gap between Islamic and Western ideas. Kausar’s legacy is seen as trailblazing in the field of Islamic feminism and is important and influential as she works to fulfill her dream of creating an Islamic think-tank for women’s empowerment and development.



CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF ZEENATH KAUSAR'S ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN ISLAM

4.1 INTRODUCTION

There have been numerous plans and initiatives around the globe to empower women. Yet, a notable example is the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which was endorsed at the 1995 Fourth International Conference on Women in Beijing, China. However, first and foremost, it seems necessary to make an in-depth study of the reasons behind Kausar's rejection of the Beijing Platform for Action, (BPFA), submitted at the Fourth World Conference of Women, (FWCW) held in Beijing under the approval of the United Nations. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) was created through a decade of dedicated efforts by feminists and women's rights activists from around the world. These activists worked tirelessly across different times and locations, engaging in extensive discussions to make the BPFA a practical and impactful international document for women's rights and empowerment.¹

It is important to mention here that so far, the UN has convened four international conferences for women's rights and each time, it has passed an important declaration. Kausar's views and Action Plan on Women's Empowerment begin with an introduction that sets the stage for a thorough examination of various global initiatives for women's empowerment. This chapter examines the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, evaluating it from an Islamic perspective. It aims to explore the reasons behind Kausar's rejection of the Beijing Platform, emphasizing the need for an in-depth study of its alignment, or lack thereof, with Islamic values.

4.2 AN ANALYSIS OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION (BPFA)

The First United Nations Conference on Women was held in Mexico City in 1975. It gave rise to the famous declaration of UN Decade for Women 1975-1985. The Second UN Conference on Women was held in Copenhagen in 1980. It adopted a Programme

¹<https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/intergovernmental-support/world-conferences-on-women>(accessed 4 March 2022).

of Action for the Second Half of the Decade for Women. In addition, the third UN Conference on Women was held in Nairobi in 1985 which adopted the Forward-Looking Strategies (FLS) for the advancement of women to the year 2000. The Forward-Looking Strategies (FLS) provides a general framework of action at the national, regional, and international levels to promote equality and development for women. The FLS was based on the three objectives of the UN Decade for Women: Equality, Development, and Peace.²

As far as Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) is concerned, its implementation is reviewed every five years by the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) from UN. Ever since 1995, five reviews were conducted by CSW, UN in these years - 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020. This shows the significance and practical strategic continuity of BPFA to check the implementation of this international document to critically analyze the governmental efforts for women's empowerment in different member countries of the UN.³

However, despite this universal acknowledgment of BPFA as an ultimate reference for women's rights and women's empowerment, Kausar identified a few critical points in BPFA based on which she renounced BPFA. She argues that the BPFA is conceived based on a specific perspective, called the 'gender perspective' which contradicts several principles and values of Islam. Kausar highlights that all the critical areas of concern which are identified in BPFA are analysed as well as resolved from this gender perspective. Hence, Kausar contends that this document cannot be approved from the Islamic paradigm.

A systematic analysis of the document, Platform for Action calls for an exploration and critical assessment of its 'gender perspective' based on which the problems of women are analysed and, tried to be resolved in the document. The whole document is replete with phrases such as: 'promotion of gender perspective,' 'analysis from gender perspective', 'incorporation of gender perspective' etc. An analysis is conducted on all twelve acritical areas, and solutions are proposed based on the perspectives mentioned above.⁴

² <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/women/mexico-city1975>(accessed 4 March 2022).

³ Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. <https://archive.unescwa.org/our-work/beijing-declaration-and-platform-action>. (accessed 5 April 2022).

⁴ Ibid, 118.

Nevertheless, Kausar finds gender perspective as a gender war that supports ‘sexual orientation’ as its hidden agenda, which is not acceptable to Islam and to non-Western cultures. The ‘gender perspective’ is a representation of the hidden agenda of the feminists, who support ‘sexual orientation. It is therefore contended that the ‘gender perspective’ is divisive and individualistic and leads to a gender war. Hence, it is argued that promoting such a perspective, which is emphasized in the document as the only predominantly agreed perspective for all women worldwide, is not suitable for women from diverse cultures and traditional backgrounds.⁵

Kausar highlights the significance of the Beijing Platform for Action’s (BPFA) passionate dedication to including a gender viewpoint within the text. She presents other instances to back up this assertion. Governments and other relevant parties are asked to aggressively support policies that integrate gender issues across all sectors to address the differences between men and women’s health status and access to health care.⁶ At the highest levels of the United Nations organization, it is imperative that the Platform for Action be implemented and that gender issues be integrated into all policies and activities.⁷

It is detectable from the above that the gender perspective is central to BPFA. Nevertheless, although the term gender perspective is greatly emphasized in BPFA, it has not been defined in the document. However, the term is strongly debated among some participants who disagree with it.

However, during several Beijing preparatory meetings of the United Nations and other NGOs, the terms ‘gender’ and ‘gender perspective’ were hotly debated. One such preparatory meeting took place on March 15, 1995, which was sponsored by the United Nations, in New York. In this meeting, the last chance was given to the participants of different states to express their final viewpoints so that the document could be presented, debated, and submitted to the forthcoming conference in Beijing.

⁵ Ibid, 119.

⁶ Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration, (FWCW), U.N., (Department of Public Information, New York, 1996), 32.

⁷ Ibid, 39.

The representatives of the Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs') were also asked to put their input in the draft.⁸

One of the most active NGOs that influenced the draft, Platform for Action, and its preparatory meetings was the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO). It was headed by former US Congresswoman Bella Abzug (1971-77). Bella Abzug (1920- 1998) was born in New York City in a Russian American Jewish immigrant family. She was one of the leading feminists who founded liberal political organizations for women. WEDO has strong allies in the NGO movements which stand for the equal rights of women including sexual and reproductive rights of women. The other important NGO that influenced Beijing Meetings was the Lesbian Caucus which promotes lesbian rights as human rights.⁹ However, there were also a few pro-life and pro-family NGOs who presented their views on critical areas. This specific meeting, Kausar was referring to held for three days. It was reported that more than one-third of the BPRA text was bracketed. As a result, there was fierce debate on the terms 'gender' and gender perspective. This can be understood from one of the following bulletin reports Kausar cited.

The debate over the word 'gender' revealed some of the fundamental differences and positions of delegations regarding the Beijing objectives. Indeed, the debate could become a textbook case study on the state of global feminism and feminist epistemology. The issue raised central debates on the relation between language, knowledge, and power. Those who wanted to bracket the term suspected that there was a hidden/unacceptable agenda behind its use, for example, tolerance of non-heterosexual identities and orientation.¹⁰

Pro-family participants argued that the word 'gender' is not used as a polite word for 'sex' in the document. They circulated flyers among the delegates asking why 'gender perspective' is emphasized in the draft when the term is debatable. In response to this, the conference leadership presented the following definition, which Kausar presented in her book:

Gender refers to the relationship between women and men based on socially defined roles that are assigned to one sex or the other.¹¹

⁸ The Report of the Preparatory Committee Meeting of New York, (Department of Public Information, U.N. New York March 15, 1995).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "*Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment*," 7.

¹¹ Ibid.

Kausar revealed that such a definition of 'gender' raised protests among the pro-family delegates who expressed their opinions that either the term 'gender' should be re-framed to suit all cultures and societies or should be bracketed in the draft to illustrate that some of the delegates do not comply with the meaning given to the term, gender.

Hence, Kausar states: An urgent meeting was convened on April 3rd, 1995, in which Bella Abzug was given a special opportunity to address the delegates to clarify the words gender and gender perspective.¹²

Kausar presents a few significant quotes from Bella Abzug; they will not be forced into the idea that biology is destiny, which aims to categorize, limit, and reduce women to their physical sexual attributes. Since gender roles and status are socially created and prone to change, the concept of the term gender has changed in order to clearly separate it from the word sex.¹³

Bella Abzug asserted that the UN's response to women's concerns has solidified the theory of gender and the gender viewpoint, making them immutable. She highlighted that gender is a notion that is ingrained in contemporary social, political, and legal discussions and has been built into UN planning, terminology, documents, and programs. The Fourth World Conference on Women must reinforce and reaffirm the important commitment of integrating a gender perspective into all aspects of UN movement which has been adopted in previous conferences.¹⁴

Dale O'Leary, a freelance writer and a pro-family activist, the author of the critical article on the draft, Platform for Action, presented a few definitions of gender feminists connected with sexual issues in relation to the draft. A few points are presented below which Kausar delineated from the article of Dale O'Leary:

1. Polymorphous perversity, sexuality polymorphous the belief that men and women are not naturally attracted to persons of the opposite sex, but sexual desire can be directed to any other person and people are conditioned by society to feel attraction to persons of the opposite sex.

¹² Dale O'Leary, "*Gender: The Deconstruction of Women*," (Providence, RI, USA, n.d.), 5.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid, 6.

2. Compulsory Heterosexuality: the belief that people are forced to see the world as divided into two sexes who are sexually attracted to one another.
3. Sexual preference or sexual orientation: no discrimination based on acceptance of all forms of sexuality including homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, transsexuals, and transvestites as equivalent to heterosexuality.
4. Homophobia: fear of same-sex relationships; people who are prejudiced against homosexuals (The term is based on the belief that prejudice against homosexual persons is rooted in the sublimation of homosexual tendencies).¹⁵
5. Kausar denounced the Beijing Platform for Action, (BPFA) because it is based on gender perspective, which implies that sexual division into male and female is socially constructed and preference for marital heterosexuality over all other forms of sexuality is also socially constructed and it is homophobia. Kausar, in fact made a thorough study of these concepts which are promoted in BPFA and showed its historical connection with Conferences that took place earlier to the Fourth World Conference for Women, FWCW, 1995. One such conference which she referred to and showed its connection with FWCW was the Conference organized by the Council of Europe, in Strasbourg from 9-11, February 1995. Strasbourg is in Eastern France, and it is a known seat for the European Parliament. Kausar pointed out that in this conference, Vigdis Finnbogadóttir, who during that time was the President of Iceland, presented her views on gender perspective in these words:

The enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights is a prerequisite for women to have genuine self-determination. Education is an important strategy to alter prejudice about women's and men's roles in society. The gender perspective should be integrated into the curricula.¹⁶

Kausar highlights that most of the statements of feminists and women's rights activists for sexual and reproductive rights, do not refer to marriage as a necessary institution and only talk about 'genuine self-determination' or 'responsible sexual determination. This can be further understood from another statement from the above-mentioned conference:

¹⁵ Report of the Council of Europe Meeting, *"Equality and Democracy: Utopia or Challenge?"* (Strasbourg, Feb. 9-11, 1995), 38.

¹⁶ Zeenath Kausar, *"Women's Empowerment and Islam,"* 127-128.

The right to free choice in matters of reproduction and lifestyle was considered [by the participants at the meeting] fundamental for women. The enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights is a prerequisite for women to have genuine self-determination.¹⁷

Kausar reveals that the BPFA contained several ‘code words’ that can only be understood when feminist ideologies are critically studied. Kausar writes: It is pertinent to note that ‘free choice in reproduction’ is code for ‘abortion on demand’ whereas lifestyle is code for the acceptance of all forms of non-marital sexuality including homosexuality, lesbianism, transsexuality, etc. In other words, absolute rights for non-marital sexuality and abortion are indispensable rights for their ‘self-determination’ and are part of the gender perspective.¹⁸

Kausar indicates that when the gender feminists use the term, ‘self-determination.’ ‘Free choice’, etc, is *de facto* separation of sexuality and reproduction from marriage. Referencing a speech from the same conference, Kausar brought attention to this problem by stating that it is important to recognize the perspectives of young women since sexuality is not just associated with marriage. The freedom to choose one’s lifestyle, whether it is to live with or without children, in a family, or in accordance with one’s own sexual inclinations, is highlighted by this. She emphasized once more the significance of acknowledging lesbian women’s reproductive rights.¹⁹

It is quite conspicuous from the above terms that freedom for sexual and reproductive rights implies the separation of sexuality and reproduction from marriage. Further, freedom of sexual lifestyle implies acceptance and promotion of LGBTQI. Kausar identifies: It is also important to note that in several preparatory meetings, many lesbian and gay organizations circulated their flyers among the participants.²⁰

Kausar cited one of the flyers distributed by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) during Preparatory Meetings of FWCW: Put sexuality on the agenda at the World Conference on Women:

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid, 129 -130.

¹⁹ Report of the Council of Europe Meeting. “*Equality and Democracy: Utopia or Challenge?*” (Straasbourg, Feb. 9-11, 1995), 25.

²⁰ Ibid.,129 -13.

We, the undersigned, call upon the member states to recognize the right to determine one's sexual identity; the right to control one's own body, particularly in establishing intimate relationships; and the right to choose if, when, and with whom to bear or raise children as fundamental components of all human rights of all women regardless of sexual orientation. We base these demands on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.²¹

Kausar thus spotlights three critical points in gender perspective which create a series of problems for women in family and in society (1) demand for sexual and reproductive freedom rights (2) rights for sexual orientation which includes promotion of all types of sexual relationships as human rights and (3) making a distinction between sex and gender so that women can enjoy equal rights as men in all fields of life with no discrimination whatsoever. All these rights would empower women because all these would make women free from 'sex' and thus 'gender' would become a free-floating artifice. This can be understood from the following popular statement of a known gender feminist, Judith Butler:

Hence gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice.²²

Kausar while presenting the problems of the gender perspective is shedding light on the feminist influence on gender perspective. This shows the in-depth study of Kausar of the gender perspective to illustrate the negative implications of feminism on the gender perspective based on which women's empowerment is constructed as an agenda of FWCW and, continues to be promoted. She further asserts how gender feminists argue for the elimination of the biological family. Kausar writes the goal of radical and gender feminists is to overthrow the hegemony of 'family' in society. They want to challenge the 'concept' and 'institution' of 'family' that pervades all societies in some way or the other. They contend that the sexual repression of women can be eliminated, only if the biological family is eliminated.²³

Kausar refers to Alison Jaggar, a prominent American feminist, born in England who explains the stance taken by these feminists on family in these words,

²¹ Report of the 38th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, (New York, March 15-April 4, 1995), 3.

See also: The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), 3.

²² Judith Butler, *"Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity,"* (New York, Routledge, 1990), 6.

²³ Zeenath Kausar, *"Women's Empowerment and Islam,"* 141-142.

the radical feminist does not claim that women should be free to determine their own social roles; she believes instead that the whole “role system” must be abolished even in its biological aspects.²⁴

All these reveal the main reasons behind Kausar’s rejection of gender perspective. It seems also pertinent to say few words here on the term, ‘gender feminism’ that Kausar has mentioned in her critique on gender perspective. Gender feminism is relatively a new term in the feminist discourse. It was firstly defined by Christina Hoff Sommers in her work, *Who Stole Feminism?* Sommers makes a distinction between ‘equity feminists’ and ‘gender feminists. Feminists who demand equal rights for women as men for education, employment, property, and political participation etc. and who demand fair treatment of women as men are the equity feminists. In other words, equity feminism is ‘the belief in the moral and legal equality of the sexes. Whereas gender feminism is an all-embracing ideology which asserts that patriarchal oppressive system dominates the society and women are victim in the system. The message of the gender feminists is gynocentric, and they declare a gender war against the sex/gender system.²⁵ Furthermore, a crucial point to note in gender feminists is, that according to them, gender is ‘socially constructed’ and that women should therefore fight against the concept that biology is destiny.²⁶

Hence along with gender feminists, all feminists hold the above-mentioned views, no matter whether they belong to any school of feminist thought – liberal, radical, Marxist, Psychoanalyst, or others. This term, gender feminist is assigned to them by those feminists who do not comply with the views mentioned above. They broadly categorize themselves as equity feminists. Christina Hoff Sommers, (b.1950) is a prominent American equity feminist and philosopher. She is an established critique of contemporary feminism, whose book, *Who Stole Feminism*, (1994) is well-acknowledged. A few known equity feminists are Joan Kennedy Taylor, (1936-1961) Cathy Young, Katie Roiphe, and others. Based on this categorization, Kausar includes liberal, radical, Marxist, and a few other schools of feminist thought under gender feminists because she believes their views comply with gender feminism, which goes

²⁴ Alison Jaggar, “*Political Philosophies of Women’s Liberation*,” in *Feminism and Philosophy*, Littlefield, (Adams & Co., New Jersey, Totowa, 1977), 14.

²⁵ Zeenath Kausar, “*Women’s Empowerment and Islam*,” 102-103.

²⁶ Ibid, 106-115.

well with a gender perspective. Hence, it seems important to keep this point in mind while going through Kausar's critique on gender perspective.

Kausar identifies a list of problematic issues from a gender perspective like blurring equality with identity; perceiving heterosexual marriage as socially constructed; promotion of reproduction aid and reproduction control devices in the name of reproductive health not necessarily through marriage and such others. They have failed to appreciate that although men and women are equal, equally created as human beings, they are not identical. Equality does not mean having the same identity. Men and women are created equally but differently. Differences between men and women do not create superiority or inferiority over each other but create different responsibilities and roles in certain aspects of life. Kausar then clarifies the fact that certain technological devices could facilitate women in certain reproduction role, but it could not change the basic role of women and men in reproduction. Kausar writes:

Even the highly scientific and technological devices that are invented and used to help the reproduction process have only lessened the role of mother and have not changed the motherly role into a fatherly role. Mother and father remain as mother and father with their biological differences and with their different motherly and fatherly roles in certain areas of life. The performance of their roles as mother and father does not create inequality between them. It only gives them different identities as mother and father without destroying their basic equality as human beings and parents. The gender perspective can be therefore referred to as an identity destroying perspective.²⁷

On the stance of gender perspective on heterosexual relationships, Promoters of gender perspective contend that marriage -based heterosexual relationship is socially constructed. Hence, it aims at the destruction of all the institutions which it deems socially constructed. This agenda of a gender perspective is imperialistic in its scope in the sense that it strives to galvanize universal acceptance of their views on sexuality and equality etc. Its goal is the empowerment of women through granting women unrestricted freedom for sexuality, and destructing every concept and institution that comes in the way of sexual freedom.²⁸

²⁷ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women between family and workplace: Islamic and Feminist perspectives*," (2000) ,15-20.

²⁸ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women's Empowerment and Islam*," 102-103.

Kausar points out that such a bewildered view of the promoters of gender perspective on heterosexuality relates to their blurred understanding of 'equality' which they mix with different identities of men and women.

However, all these arguments need critical scrutiny. Gender for them, as discussed earlier, is distinct from sex, since 'sex' is biological whereas 'gender' is social and cultural. If they refer to the prejudiced, biased, inferior, and negative images of women created by society as 'socially constructed', it is not objectionable. All the negative representations of women, as less rational and less spiritual human beings, are socially created. Such negative gender images are not produced by 'biology' but are constructed by society. However, for the advocates of the gender perspective, every role of a woman as a woman and every relationship in society between men and women as men and women are socially constructed.²⁹

To understand Kausar's stance on the term, 'socially constructed' norms here, Kausar argues that if certain roles and functions of women are intentionally referred to as female roles and female functions which are not necessarily only feminine, rather they may be performed by both men and women through cooperation and coordination, then a representation of those kinds of roles and functions may be referred to as socially or culturally created.

But it does not mean that Kausar accepts the stance of the gender feminists who look at every role and function of woman as 'socially or culturally constructed'. This can be clarified with these words of Kausar: For instance, according to gender feminists, different roles of men and women in the sexual relationship and the reproduction process are also socially constructed. They tend to ignore the fact that all dominant religions recognize marriage-based heterosexual relationships. It implies that heterosexual marriage is not socially constructed but it is the only legitimate form of sexuality recognized by the dominant religions. If deviant forms of sexuality are accepted as normal forms of sexuality, it will give rise to a sexual revolution that would destroy human civilization. In other words, such a sexual revolution would be a fight against normal biological characteristics of human beings, a fight against nature

²⁹ Ibid,164.

itself. Obviously, when human beings fight against nature to destroy nature, they destroy themselves.³⁰

Kausar then denotes how deviant sexual relationships have given rise to AIDS and HIV. She writes:

Scientifically, it has been already proven that sexually transmitted fatal diseases like AIDS and HIV are more common among lesbians, and gays. Unfortunately, the promoters of the gender perspective are more concerned with the development of scientific cures to prevent sexually transmitted diseases among men and women. Is it logical and scientific to develop scientific methods to prevent a disease on the one hand while on the other hand, you are making society vulnerable to that disease? Are sexually transmitted diseases socially constructed?³¹

On the views of the promoters of a gender perspective on reproduction aid and reproduction control relationship, Kausar writes, according to the promoters of the gender perspective, reproduction-control, and reproduction-aid technologies would bring a revolutionary change in the reproduction role of mothers. They argue that the role of women would be reduced to a smaller degree like that of a father. It is crucial to note that despite all the advancements in reproduction technology, like reproduction conception, in-vitro fertilization, test-tube babies, surrogate mothering, etc. The role of the mother is only reduced but not altered. A mother still performs the role of a mother, though it may have been reduced by a few scientific aids. Well, if the promoters of gender perspective argue that biology is not destiny and we should fight against biology and nature, then they are misogynist as well as male-chauvinist.³²

Kausar reveals that gender feminists who are the promoters of gender perspective argue that women should fight against 'nature' if 'nature' stands in their way of empowerment. In fact, they (gender feminists) want to wage a war against biology and nature to be exactly and absolutely the same as men in all roles including reproduction. It explicitly shows that their approach toward women is more misogynistic than Western political philosophers who are known for their misogyny.

³⁰ Ibid. ,165-166.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid. ,164.

Does not it mean that the promoters of the gender perspective are promoting hatred towards women, instead of assuaging it?³³

Kausar again raised a crucial question here on promoters of gender perspective whether they stand against misogyny, and hatred towards women, or they are misogynists themselves, showing hatred towards all feminine functions including motherhood, and demanding the same roles of men in all functions? Kausar presents her critical reflections on the feminist concept, 'marital rape.' She writes: Promoters of gender perspective also hold the view that marital heterosexuality is also a kind of rape since wives are forced to fulfil the sexual demands of their husbands for several reasons. Many questions may arise here on such arguments: Do all husbands force their unwilling wives for their sexual gratification? Can this phenomenon be generalized? Can we conclude from this, that marital heterosexuality is 'rape', and the institution of marriage is not necessary for the erotic satisfaction of men and women?³⁴

Kausar raised various questions on the rejection of marital heterosexual relationships. She writes: Furthermore, the rejection of marital heterosexuality by gender feminists gives rise to two direct evil consequences; first, acceptance of all forms of deviant sexuality which include lesbianism, homosexuality, and transsexuality, and second, the acceptance of sexuality out of wedlock. Both these kinds of sexual relations imply the destruction of 'marriage', and 'family'. Hence, it can be said that the gender perspective is a destructive perspective of marriage and family.³⁵

She points out a critical issue for the promoters of gender perspective regarding their demand for sexual and reproductive freedom. Furthermore, the promoters of gender perspective, on the one hand, demand absolute sexual freedom, and on the other hand, they want to get access to all reproduction technologies. They want complete liberalization of abortion and the development of contraceptive devices to prevent pregnancy and childbirth. At the same time, they want reproduction-aid technologies for those who want to get children. Thus, these feminists demand that

³³ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic feminism: is it calling for a non-patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'an or it conveys that the Qur'an remained neutral to patriarchy," 65-84.

³⁴ Zeenath Kausar, "Women's Empowerment and Islam," 161.

³⁵ Ibid, 161-162.

women should not suffer from unwanted pregnancy and childbirth, but they also demand that women should enjoy full sexual freedom outside of marriage.³⁶

Kausar raised a few vital questions on it. She asked, is it not obvious that the acceptance of these arguments of the promoters of the gender perspective would sexualize the whole culture? Would such a sexualized culture not turn society into a society of bastards? Well, to this, the promoters of the gender perspective would say, that words like ‘bastard’, ‘illegitimate children’, etc. are all socially constructed.³⁷

She deduced her critique on gender feminists that they would argue that children born out of illegitimate relationships should be perceived in the same way as children born within legitimate wedlock because feminists perceive that ‘legitimacy’ and illegitimacy are all socially constructed. They may argue that children who are born out of wedlock and through illegitimate means should be accepted in the same way as those born within legitimate wedlock through heterosexual marriage. Is it morally justifiable for women, men, and children to stay together temporarily or permanently without any marital and familial bounds? Can these be called families where women and men stay together out of wedlock and reproduce children via technology? Can these be called families where lesbians live together and give birth to children through technological devices and other arrangements?³⁸

Kausar finally raised a few fundamental and critical questions before the promoters of the gender perspective. She asks, if all the important institutions of society are socially constructed, then can’t it be said that all their own arguments and their own self-created institutions are feminist-based constructs as well? Furthermore, if they assert that they should fight against socially constructed relations and roles, cannot others counterargue that they should fight against gender feminism since it has also been socially constructed?³⁹

It looks totally unacceptable to Kausar, that the gender perspective which is filled with basic flaws, and which only creates innumerable problems, crises, and disasters for women, men, and children individually and collectively in

³⁶ Ibid, 161-167.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.,168.

³⁹ Zeenath Kausar, “*Women’s Empowerment in UN Documents neither a Safe Haven nor a Pandora’s Box: Need for A Holistic Perspective.*” (International Conference on Population and Development, 1994),12.

society can be passed in the Fourth World Conference of Women (FWCW) in 1995, in Beijing as a universal document for the rights of women, that too under the auspicious of the UN. Kausar argues that it cannot be expected from the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) to constitute women's empowerment based on gender perspective to be implemented by all cultures of the member states of the UN. During several Pre-Beijing meetings, it was conveyed to the leadership of the Pre-Meetings of FWCW that several women activists from non-Western member countries did not comply with a few terms and phrases and a few articles of the FWCW.

Thus, such matters were identified and asked to be bracketed. But Kausar observes that despite clear objections to a few crucial points in the document, Platform for Action, no corrective action is taken by the concerned leading members of the BPFA.

Kausar raised a few imperative questions to the leadership of BPFA: On what grounds do they assume that their own perspective would be acceptable to the wider range of society or the entire society as a universal perspective? More than anything else how can the gender perspective that creates a gender war and divides the society into two camps of men and women would resolve the problems of women and would give them peace, which is one of the goals of the document? Is this a war for the growth of women or for the destruction of women? Is it giving peace to women or fragmenting women into pieces? Can such a perspective be appropriate to all values across the world for the development and empowerment of women?⁴⁰

So, it is self-explanatory to apprehend the stand Kausar took on gender perspective and the main reasons for her refusal of the BPFA. In this whole discussion, one can observe how Kausar followed her tri-centric writing style while presenting her stance on this subject. In the first stage, Kausar explored and described gender perspectives. In the second stage she critically analysed gender perspective and showed her decisive stance on its rejection.

Her critique on the impact of gender perspective on the critical areas of interest. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, BPFA presented twelve

⁴⁰ Ibid, 13.

critical areas of concern which forms an integral part of the document. These critical areas of concern are the critical problems women are facing in various parts of the world. BPFA makes a critical analysis of each of these problems of women and provides certain strategic actions to uproot offering a corridor for women's empowerment. The twelve critical areas of concern are (1) women and poverty; (2) education and training of women; (3) women and health; (4) violence against women; (5) women and armed conflict; (6) women and the economy; (7) women in power and decision-making; (8) institutional mechanisms; (9) human rights of women; (10) women and media; (11) women and the environment; (12) the girl child.⁴¹

Kausar has covered these critical areas of concern like "Women and health" and "spread of sexually transmitted diseases" which are related to each other. Before proceeding with these critical areas of concern, it is important to bear in mind that the document, BPFA, as mentioned earlier puts gender perspective at its centre to analyse and resolve all the problems of concern. It is necessary to present these statements from the BPFA showing its focus on gender perspective on health and other related issues. Two statements shall be presented below in this connection:

We hereby adopt and commit ourselves as Governments to implement the following Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all our policies and programs.⁴² In addressing inequalities in health status and unequal access and inadequate health-care services between women and men, Governments and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies.⁴³

Kausar moves to the controversial areas of concern on Reproductive health issues. BPFA states:

Reproductive health therefore implies that people can have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so. Implicit in this last

⁴¹ Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration, (FWCW), U.N., (Department of Public Information, New York, 1996),34.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Chaban, Stephanie, Luis J. Consuegra, Hannah Elten, Karin Gardes, Olivia Greymond, Olga Martin Gonzalez, Mona Lena Krook, et al. *"Regional organizations, gender equality and the political empowerment of women."* (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance International IDEA, Stockholm, Sweden 2017), 33.

condition are the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable, and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility.⁴⁴

She asserts that women should enjoy their sexual and reproductive health rights the same as men enjoy. Nevertheless, Kausar raised a few crucial questions here in this connection. She asks, what does a satisfying and safe sex life' imply? What does the document mean by 'the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so'? What does 'access to safe, effective, affordable, and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice signify? What is meant by 'other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility'?⁴⁵

It is clear from the above statements of BPFA that its emphasis is all on the freedom of sexuality, satisfying safe sex life, and methods of choice for regulation of fertility and other phrases. But the BPFA remains vague and hidden in its meaning. It is obvious from these words that though these phrases highlight the sexual rights of women, in all statements, not a single word is mentioned on 'marriage' as the obligation for a safe and legitimate marriage. Hence, Kausar asked this basic question:

How can the document discuss sexual and reproductive health rights without mentioning the institution of marriage?⁴⁶

Having raised this basic question, Kausar certainly uncovered the hidden meaning of these terms in these words: A satisfying, and safe sex life implies sexual indulgence without recourse to marriage. Men and women should enjoy all rights to engage in sexual relations without necessarily going for marriage. Sexuality is thus liberated from marriage. Satisfaction of a safe sex life can be therefore defined as sexual satisfaction saved from the institution of marriage. In other words, the document is demanding the protection of sexual life from the encroachment of the institution of marriage!⁴⁷

The document takes all pains to keep and maintain the safe and satisfying sexuality of women through all immoral and illegitimate ways possible but avoids the institution of marriage necessary for safe and secured sexual relations and for the

⁴⁴ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*," 36.

⁴⁵ Ibid,193.

⁴⁶ Ibid,193-194.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

reproduction of children. Kausar then boldly exposes the document saying that the document has reverted its responsibility of safeguarding sexual issues of women from marital safety to the liberation of marriage itself.

Kausar writes:

How paradoxical? Instead of protecting the institution of marriage to safeguard the chastity and honour of women, the document has reverted its responsibility. It is more interested in liberating sex from marriage instead of protecting sex through marriage. Such a stance of the document on marriage and sexual life explicitly reveals the influence of the radical and gender feminists on the document.⁴⁸

Kausar also exposes the inner meaning of the phrase ‘capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so’ that is emphasized in the document as mentioned above. She reveals that it is the demand for reproduction rights without necessarily recourse to marriage. In other words, Kausar discerns that the document demands the liberation of sexual rights from marriage and marriage-based reproduction. Along with all these, she deduces that the document demands the promotion of contraceptive devices and abortion rights free from all sorts of conditions.⁴⁹

Kausar spotlights the deep establishment the BPFA has shown on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transferred diseases. But she pinpoints that BPFA exhorts that sexually transmitted diseases are the outcomes of sexual violence and lack of safe and responsible sex practices. HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, the transmission of which is sometimes a significance of sexual violence, are having a destructive effect on women’s health, particularly the health of adolescent girls and young women. They often do not have the power to contend on safe and liable sex methods and have little access to information and facilities for obstacle and treatment.⁵⁰

She asserts that no doubt sexual violence should be addressed, and all-important measures should be taken to stop it. However, sexual violence alone cannot be seen as responsible for sexually transmitted diseases. She argues that the demands

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Zeenath Kausar, “*Women’s Empowerment and Islam*,” 194 -195.

⁵⁰ Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration. (FWCW), U.N., (Department of Public Information, New York, 1996), 60.

of BPRA for sexual freedom from marriage which gives rise to sexualization of culture and the promotion of deviant sexual relations are all responsible for sexually transmitted diseases. Kausar then asked these pivotal questions:

Is not the sexualized culture responsible for the occurrence of sexually transmitted diseases? Has not the acceptance of deviant forms of sexuality contributed much to the occurrence and spread of these diseases?⁵¹

Kausar alludes to the way how BPFA ignores all the important reasons that are responsible for sexually transmitted diseases and calls the attention of people to the lack of information among people on safe-sex practices. She emphasizes that when human beings go against the laws of nature and ignores God, they suffer from these kinds of problems. It sounds as though they want to go against the laws of nature created by God, but they also want to avoid punishment from God. Hence, they claim that they would discover new safe techniques for safe-life while indulging in unsafe practices without realizing that their new safe-techniques are immeasurably unsafe for them.⁵²

4.3 ISLAMIC ACTION PLAN FOR WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: AN ISLAMIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION PRESENTED BY ZEENATH KAUSAR

Kausar has presented Islam as a complete system of life so that the Islamic Plan for Action, may be comprehended from the Islamic framework for life. Islamic Action Plan (IPA). Its need, vision, and mission, its goals, aims, and objectives. Islam already empowered women in all aspects of Life: Some Problems and Challenges. Kausar has referred to the Qur'ān, the Prophetic traditions, and early Muslim history and showed that these Islamic sources have already empowered women in all aspects of life, in family, and in society. However, she has also highlighted that Muslim women in many cases are deprived of enjoying Islam-based empowerment for various manufactured reasons. She emphasized the need for Islamic think tanks for women's empowerment: Few Strategic Actions. Here, Kausar has suggested a few strategic actions to

⁵¹ Zeenath Kausar, *"Women's Empowerment and Islam,"*199.

⁵² Ibid, 200.

overthrow the problems Muslim women have been experiencing for their empowerment.⁵³

4.4 A QUR'ANIC OVERVIEW OF KEY ASPECTS OF ZEENATH KAUSAR'S INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN (IAP)

Kausar presents a comprehensive picture of Islam as a complete system of life and civilization. Here, it is crucial to note the deep impact of Islamic revivalists on Kausar's thought as mentioned earlier. She follows the Islamic methodology of the Islamic revivalists in presenting her views on any subject. Her writing style on any subject or issue, the deep impact of the Islamic methodology of the Islamic revivalists is clearly manifested. Having said this, it should be remembered here that most of the Islamic revivalists like *Allama Iqbal* (1877-1938), *Syed Abul Aala Mawdūdī* (1903-1979) and others, discuss every in the light of Islam as the complete system of life and civilization. So that the reader understands at the very beginning that whether the subject under discussion is concerned with complex political issues or with the most innocuous daily activities, such as eating and dressing, it must be directly or indirectly related to the Islamic worldview., Kausar follows the same method applied by Islamic revivalists for IPA.

Kausar highlights that Islam implies a complete submission to Allah SWT. It addresses the whole humanity and offers a comprehensive system of life in all domains, and at all time and place. Kausar then emphasizes that there is no division in Islam as male Islam or female Islam, and no such demarcations as traditional Islam or modern Islam conservative Islam liberal Islam, and private Islam or political Islam. Kausar makes it clear that Islam transcends male-female discrimination, traditional and modern times, and private and public dichotomy.⁵⁴

Islam cannot be comprehended without understanding the over-arching message of *Tawhīd*, Unity of Allah (SWT) which includes unity of life, unity of knowledge, and unity of the purpose of creation of human beings. It includes all other units of unities presented in the Qur'ān and elaborated in the authentic traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH). The over-arching message of *Tawhīd* is: There is no God but Allah SWT and Prophet Muḥammad, (PBUH) is the last Prophet of Allah

⁵³ Zeenath Kausar, "*Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action*," 63.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 63-64.

SWT, and all human beings are obliged to follow the final authentic revelation of Allah SWT, the Qur'ān, and the Prophetic traditions of the last Prophet, Muḥammad, (PBUH), the Sunnah. The message of all the Prophets had been the same. The purpose of the creation of both men and women is the same to serve Allah SWT as vicegerents (*khulafā'*) of Allah SWT.⁵⁵

Kausar emphasizes that family in Islam is the basic and primary institution. An important thing to note here is Kausar's definition of family, as a mini civilization.

She writes:

Family in Islam may be defined as a mini civilization where all the members of family get basic education including moral education from family, get training in Islamic values of life, and develop a disciplined and civilized life while learning and practicing etiquettes of life. Islam presents the whole framework of educational, recreational, economic, sexual and all other aspects of family life.⁵⁶

Kausar wants to emphasize that in Islam civilization is not just art, architecture, literature, and culture that are developed historically in some known place and the ideas of the past that are stored, promoted, and further developed by scholars and leaders in the given place. Kausar owes her inspiration to Mawdūdī (1903-1979) and Syed Naquib al Attas (b,1931) in their explanation of the term, civilization. According to Mawdūdī, civilization from an Islamic perspective is not a mere representation of the tall buildings, art, architecture, languages, and how people eat, live, and develop knowledge including sciences. Civilization is the way of life that shows how far they understand and submit to their Creator and follow Him in their life in all aspects.⁵⁷

As for Al Attas, he highlights the connection between the terms *dīn* and *tamaddun*. Al Attas contends that when the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) migrated (*Hijrah*) from Makkah to Yathrib and started promoting *Tawḥīd*, the oneness of Allah then, gradually the revealed injunctions were implemented in Yathrib under his leadership, and Yathrib was called as Madina, meaning the civilized city. In other

⁵⁵Asma, "The Concept of Tawhid in Islam: In the Light of Perspectives of Prominent Muslim Scholars." (Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization 6, no. 2 2016), 94-110.

⁵⁶ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action," 63.

⁵⁷ Syed Abul, Aala Maūdūdī. "Islamic Civilization: Its Foundational Beliefs and Principles," (Trans. Syed Akif, The Islamic Foundation. Leicester, 2016), 41.

words, according to Al Attas, civilization is the ‘given place’ where *Tawhīd* and the *dīn* are established, maintained, and promoted.⁵⁸

Based on these explanations of the term, civilization presented by Maudūdī and Al Attas, Kausar emphasizes that the term civilization in Islam differs from the Western definition. In addition to this, Kausar insists that family in Islam should not be perceived as a mere union of family members, who interact and care for each other at the maximum. Kausar asserts that civilization in Islam is a ‘given place’ where the adherents of Islam give willing obedience to the Oneness of Allah SWT, His injunctions of the Qur’ān and the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) in all aspects of life. As like, family in Islam should be also perceived at the family level.⁵⁹

Kausar further denotes that Allah SWT clearly states in the Qur’ān that human beings are created to be vicegerents of Allah SWT on the earth. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the adherents of Islam promote justice and peace for all. She writes:

Islam invites its adherents to perform and promote Vicegerency through peaceful and educational means. Islam neither believes in terrorism nor in terrorist methods. Islam believes in non-intervention and civilizational-based policies at inter-state and international levels so that justice, peace, and security may prevail at global level.⁶⁰

In the second part, Kausar asserts at the very outset that if Platform for Action for women’s empowerment is prepared with such a perception that men and women belong to two different classes and, they need to fight against each other for their respective empowerment, then she totally disagrees with it. Nevertheless, it is a different issue if Platform for Action for women’s empowerment is prepared due to female discrimination and injustices women are passing through and they are disempowered from their rightful position in family and society. Even in this case, when women want to prepare an Action Plan for themselves, it should not be based on the antagonistic framework. Kausar argues that an action plan that is exclusively prepared for women with the omission of men and children can lead to the fragmentation of human societies.

⁵⁸ Syed Muhammad al Naquib al Attas. “*Islam and Secularization*,” ABIM, (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1978), 48-49.

⁵⁹ Zeenath Kausar, “*Family in Islam, A Mini-Civilization: Neither Patriarchal nor Matriarchal, Rather Consultation*,” (Unpublished), 12.

⁶⁰ Zeenath Kausar, “*Islamic Action Plan for Women’s Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action*,” 66.

Reconstruction and development of Islamic civilization need the participation of both, men, and women. It is expected from men and women, as co-vicegerents of Allah SWT, to complement one another for the sake of a common mission for discharging the responsibility of vicegerency by erecting a civilization that echoes Islamic principles, that is, to build an Islamic civilization.⁶¹

She highlights this term, Islamic civilization while discussing women's empowerment, that 'family in Islam' is the basic component of Islamic civilization. Thus, when there is talk about women's empowerment, keeping its integral relation with family and civilization in Islam. Kausar does this, according to her, because she is aware of the problems spread over in the Beijing Platform for Action., in its central perspective, the gender perspective.

This can be further understood from her own words. Women need not have to fight with men while keeping a conflicting relationship with them of hatred and distrust. Nor men should fight with women keeping bias and prejudice against them and drafting their own Platform for Action based on the so-called men's lens. The fact is, if the clash between both genders continues, children will say that they are not blind, and they would draft their own Platform for Action based on children's lens. All this would give rise to a clash of Platforms for Actions. Such a clash implies a series of clashes like clash of rights, clash of duties, clash of interests, clash of goals, etc. In such a situation, we would have to settle the Clash of Platforms first before settling the Clash of Civilizations.⁶² Kausar stresses that it seems wiser to approach any problem from an integrated and holistic perspective instead of a dualistic or fragmented perspective.⁶³

Kausar invites the attention of men and women never to ignore the fact that they are living in one and the same world, not in two different spaces. Thus, they should be always concerned with their togetherness instead of isolation. Apparently, this togetherness is of men and women as human beings worldwide, which basically calls for togetherness in families. She writes:

An important point to remember here is that men and women are not staying separately far apart from each other in the Himalayas and Alps.

⁶¹ Ibid, 66.

⁶² Zeenath Kausar, "*Women's Empowerment and Islam*," 200.

⁶³ Ibid.

The Himalayas and Alps are on this one earth and in this one world. Women and men are also staying on this one earth and in this one world. Hence, they are expected to stay in their respective families and societies together as human beings created by God for one another. For the same reasons, when a need arises to make some plans of action for the protection of the rights of women or of men, the plans should be family-cantered so that all efforts can be made to keep husband and wife together and parents and children together. Women and men should be encouraged to give full cooperation to each other so that a holistic framework for the development of all men, women, and children can be drafted, adopted, and followed.⁶⁴

Kausar points out another frequent problem in BPFA which is found in many other articles, books, and organizations. It is related to the term “religion” and how Islam is also referred to as religion. She clarifies that the term, religion is not suitable for Islam because Islam is not a mere bound of a few rituals, beliefs, and traditions rather it is a complete system of life bestowed by Allah SWT upon all human beings through Prophets from Adam to the last Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH). She writes: Furthermore, Islam stands firm for the rights of women, their development, and their empowerment. Hence, in international documents like Platform for Action, it cannot be expected that religion should be generalized and identified as a stumbling block in the way of the empowerment of women, because religions differ not only in their worldviews but also in many other issues. This does not however mean that any discrimination should be made based on religions, but it certainly means that religions should not be generalized and the differences between religions should be respected and not suspected.⁶⁵

Having clarified few basic points of women’s empowerment as presented in BPFA, Kausar presents her own definition of women’s empowerment from an Islamic perspective. In the first place, Kausar upholds that in Islam, neither men nor women can claim that they are empowered on their own without keeping recourse to the Creator, Sovereign, and the Master of human beings, Allah SWT. This point clarifies at the very outset that the term women’s empowerment in Islam cannot stand on its own without its basic connection with Allah SWT, His injunctions in the Qur’ān, and the teachings of the last Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH). In this way, the very definition of women’s empowerment in the Islamic Action Plan, (IAP) as presented by Kausar

⁶⁴ Zeenath Kausar, “*Islamic Action Plan for Women’s Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action*,” 67.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 68.

differs from BPFA. Kausar then presents her definition of women's empowerment in these words:

Instead, women's empowerment from an Islamic perspective may be defined as the process through which women shall be practically able to attain and enjoy all the power and all the rights and responsibilities delegated to them from Allah SWT through the Qur'ān and the Sunnah on the basis of which they shall successfully enjoy their life in family and society while fulfilling Divine-Vicegerency along with men to develop and maintain a healthy Islamic civilization vis-a-vis humanity.⁶⁶

Based on this definition of women's empowerment, women would enjoy all the three aims that BPFA claims to offer to women; but the Islamic Action Plan (IAP) would offer the same values from an Islamic perspective, not through the gender perspective. Kausar makes it clear with these words:

Through this Islamized agenda of women's empowerment, women would attain equality with men but with different identities, not as same identity. Women would attain peace, but through a willing submission to the teachings of Islam, not through rejection of religion. Women would attain development through advancing themselves in their performance of Divine-Vicegerency, not through moving away from their obligations to God and His guidance and their purpose of creation.⁶⁷

An in-depth understanding of Kausar's definition of women's empowerment shows diametrical differences between women's empowerment in BPFA and women's empowerment in Kausar's Islamic Action Plan (IAP). She writes:

Women's empowerment from an Islamic standpoint is God-cantered and religion-based empowerment, unlike women's empowerment from feminist gender perception which is God-free and religion-free empowerment.⁶⁸

4.4.1 Vision and Mission of Women's Empowerment as Denominated by Zeenath Kausar

Kausar points out a list of problems women are facing in the present unsafe horizon series of injustices, anxieties, difficulties, abuse and exploitation, violence, psychological and emotional stress, humiliation, condemnation, and discrimination.

⁶⁶ Ibid,70.

⁶⁷ Ibid,72.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Kausar stresses that women are not meant to endure such inhuman conditions. Hence, they should make efforts to migrate from an unsafe horizon to a safe heaven. Kausar writes:

Women should rise and change this unjust and unsafe horizon and make all efforts to build a haven for all, women, men, and children where women, as well as men and children, can also enjoy justice, security, prosperity, development, peace, and happiness and attain success here and hereafter.⁶⁹

Then, Kausar presents the mission of the Islamic Action Plan, IPA in these words:

Performance of divine vicegerency with men as co-vicegerents of Allah (SWT).⁷⁰

Kausar elaborates it in these words:

All efforts would be made to empower women with all the rights and responsibilities as ordained in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions, the Sunnah so that women may enjoy justice, security, prosperity, development, peace, and happiness while not impeaching the same rights of men so as to seek the pleasure of Allah SWT to achieve success here in this world and in the hereafter for all.⁷¹

Kausar designates the vision of the Islamic Action Plan in these words:

Migration from Unsafe Horizon to Safe Heaven!⁷²

4.4.2 Goals of Islamic Action Plan

The discussion around women's rights and empowerment continues to evolve, and a profound and thought-provoking perspective emerges from the Islamic viewpoint. This perspective, meticulously presented by Kausar in her Islamic Action Plan (IAP), offers a comprehensive roadmap for the empowerment of women within the framework of Islamic teachings. Grounded in the principles of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Kausar's plan delineates a multi-faceted approach to ensuring justice, security, prosperity, development, peace, happiness, and success for women in both

⁶⁹ Zeenath Kausar, "*Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action*," 80.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 79.

their personal and societal roles. Her plan not only addresses the spiritual and material aspects of women's lives but also confronts the challenges and obstacles they face in family, education, economic, and political spheres. Through her proposal of an International Islamic Think-Tank, Kausar seeks to implement strategic actions at governmental and NGO levels across Muslim countries, aiming to empower women in the family setting as a foundational step. Her work is a critical examination of women's roles in Islam, challenging both internal and external barriers to their empowerment. This introduction seeks to unpack the intricate layers of Kausar's plan, delving into its core principles and the transformative potential it holds for women in Islamic societies.

4.4.3 Justice

Women should be able to own all their rights and household tasks and should be able to attain their right position in family and society as determined in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions, the Sunnah.⁷³

4.4.4 Security

Women should feel safe and secure from all kinds of violence, exploitation, ferocity, ill-treatment, gender distinction, oppression, suppression, and all such problems in family and society. Women would be given all opportunities to collaborate with men as co-vicegerents to fight against all these problems related to women. At the same time, women would be given all prospects to work with men as co-vicegerents to fight against all the common problems of humanity such as hunger, poverty, unhygienic conditions and ill health, ecological problems pollution, arms race and arms proliferation, social, economic, and political problems, insecure and un-peaceful condition of people from local to worldwide level, etc.⁷⁴

⁷³ Syed Mohammed Ali, *"The position of women in Islam"*, (A progressive view. SUNY Press, 2004), 4.

⁷⁴ Reardon Betty, *"Women and peace: Feminist visions of global security."* (SUNY Press, 1993), 21.

4.4.5 Prosperity

Women would be given all opportunities for their material development while following Islamic injunctions. However, they would be given proper knowledge and understanding to realize that Islam does not oppose material development if it is done following Islamic injunctions and while keeping the goal of material development to be the efficient performance of divine vicegerency. It means Islam does not accept material development if it involves any kind of injustice with no higher goal of serving Allah SWT while serving humanity.⁷⁵

4.4.6 Development

Women should be provided with opportunities and an environment with the collaboration of men that they should be able to perform their roles in the family. They should be also able to participate in various social structures in the society as vicegerents of Allah SWT. Thus, they should be developed and empowered enough to identify their potential and hidden abilities while contributing their services to society to build, develop, and maintain a stable Islamic civilization.⁷⁶

4.4.7 Peace

Women should be provided a appropriate and ample understanding of Islam, and they should be given opportunities and proper access to the achievement and advancement in education and modern technology. With the knowledge of Islam and proper education, they should be able to follow Islam as the complete system of life including the Islamic position on women's issues without being influenced by cultural biases and social norms, so they may be able to enjoy peace and tranquillity in Islamic teachings alone.

⁷⁵ Chant Sylvia and Cathy McIlwaine, "Gendered urban prosperity and women's empowerment in 21st-century cities. *"La camera blu. Rivista di studi di genere"* (7,2011), 87-115.

⁷⁶ Azid, Toseef, and Jennifer Ward-Batts, "Empowerment of women in Islam: an introduction." In *Economic Empowerment of Women in the Islamic World: (Theory and Practice, 2020)*, 1-17.

4.4.8 Happiness

Women would be given all chances to lead a happy life while playing their responsibilities and enjoying their rights as daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers in family and society. At the same time, women would be given their right to participation in society while observing Islamic teachings. As a result, men and women would realize that happiness lies in following Islam which guides men and women to keep a balanced and holistic approach to life.⁷⁷

4.4.9 Success Here and Here-After

Women would be empowered in such a way that they would be able to follow all the above-mentioned goals sincerely having no negative feelings towards men.⁷⁸

Another issue which Kausar highlighted in her Islamic Action Plan, IAP in four areas family, education, economic and political fields. This area comprises three sections; (1) Women's empowerment in family in Islam; (2) Problems and challenges for women's empowerment in family: internal and external problems; (3) Suggestions of few strategic actions from Kausar which she presented in her proposed project International Islamic Think - Tank for their implementation in the Muslim countries at the governmental level and in Muslim NGOs.

In the first section, Kausar presented the Islamic stance on women's empowerment in family. In the second section, she outlines the problems women face due to both internal and external reasons. In the third section, she offered her recommendations through her proposed project, the Islamic Think-Tank.

4.4.10 Islamic Stance on the Empowerment of Women in Family

In Kausar's portrayal of a family in Islam, one finds such a concrete and comprehensive understanding of this subject that the misconceptions on the rights and

⁷⁷Abde, Abdel Nasir Yousuf, and Kahree Salih, "The literature of happiness "with reference to the philosophy of happiness in Islam."." (Journal of Islamic Studies and Culture 3, no. 2, 2015), 179-194.

⁷⁸ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action," 80-82.

position of women in Islam that are hedged in the Western literature, particularly, in the feminist critique have been refuted. Kausar writes:

It is an indisputable fact that the true and the real Islamic stance on the relationship between husband and wife is not based on conflict, tension, and terror, but on love, affection, mercy, and mutual concern. The Qur'ān has categorically stated that the tranquillity and mercy which a husband and wife find in each other is a 'sign' of Allah SWT.⁷⁹ Then, she cites the following verse of the Qur'ān:

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

And among His Signs Is this, That He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquillity with them, And He has put love and mercy between your (hearts). Verily in that are signs for those who reflect.⁸⁰

Kausar elaborated this point further referring to the following Prophetic tradition:

<>قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: أكمل المؤمنين إيماناً أحسنهم خلقاً وخياركم خياركم لنسائهم<>

Messenger of Allah pbuh said, the most perfect man in his faith among the believers is the one whose behavior is most excellent; and the best of you are those who are the best to their wives.⁸¹

She emphasizes that In Islam, men and women complement each other and fulfil their responsibilities towards each other with trust and confidence on each other. She cites the following verse of the Qur'ān in this connection:

﴿الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَنَاطٌ حُفِظَتْ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ﴾

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because God Has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in what Allah would have them guard.⁸²

Kausar refers to the term, *Qawwāmūn* used in the above verse and denotes that this term is interpreted by the commentators of the Qur'ān in different ways like -

⁷⁹ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action," 85.

⁸⁰ Qur'ān, 30:21.

⁸¹ Yahyā Bin Sharaf Al-Nawawī, *Riyād as-Ṣāliḥīn* (Durban, Muslim at work Publications, 2015) kitāb al-Muqaddimāt, vol. 1, 627.

⁸² Qur'ān, 4:34.

‘men in-charge of women’; ‘men protectors of women’; ‘men maintainers of women’; ‘men supporters of women’; ‘men superior to women’ and several others. She asserts that: since men are generally physically stronger than women and therefore, they are assigned the financial responsibility for women and children in the family and they can also physically protect women and children, they are given this position of caretakers of women and children.⁸³

Kausar further emphasizes that the Qur’ān assigns women the role of taking care of the belongings of their house and to guard their chastity. Further, in other places the Qur’ān obliges the children to be mindful and grateful to their mother, recognizing mothers are the ones who conceive, bear, give birth, breastfeed, and wean them over an extended period. They do this at utmost care, love and attentions enduring pain and trusting in Allah SWT. Hence, due to the significant motherhood responsibilities, Islam does not mandate women to be economically responsible for the family, instead placing this legal obligation on men. It, however, does not mean that Islam forbids women from participation outside the family.

There are number of ample examples from the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), the Rightly Guided Caliphs, and later generation that women scholars and activists participated in different fields based on their interest and capabilities. They rendered many services and contributed immensely towards the development of Muslim *Ummah*. Kausar sheds light on this issue in her works. by bringing the examples from Islamic history, Kausar emphasizes that the term *qawwāmūn* does not make women subordinate to men or men superior to women, instead men and women complement each other based on their biological differences. Kausar seems to have agreed with this specific part of the translation of the Qur’ān, 4:34, by Muḥammad Asad, (1900-1992) in his exegesis, *The Message of the Qur’ān*.⁸⁴ The translation goes:

⁸³ Zeenath Kausar, *“Islamic Action Plan for Women’s Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action,”* (2019), 86.

⁸⁴ Muhammad, Asad. (2, July 1900 – 20 February 1992) was an Austro-Hungarian, born in Lembeg, Galicia, which was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, currently, Lviv, Ukraine. His Jewish name was Leopold Weiss, and he reverted to Islam in 1926 in Berlin. He was author of several famous books and a known exegete of the Qur’an, a journalist, political theorist, and a diplomat.

See also: Muḥammad Asad, *“The Message of the Qur’ān,”* (Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 2013, 132.

Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, (42) and with what they may spend out of their possessions. And the righteous women are the truly devout ones, who guard the intimacy which God has [ordained to be] guarded.⁸⁵

Asad elaborates on the term, *Qawwāmūn*, in his ‘note, 42’ in these words:

The expression *qawwām* is an intensive form of *qā'im* (i.e. one who is responsible for or takes care of a thing or a person). Thus, *qāmah* ‘ala al-mar'ah signifies ‘he undertook the maintenance of the woman’ or he maintained her.⁸⁶

Kausar asserts that, unlike many other exegetes, Asad does not explain the term *qawwāmūn* in terms of the superiority of men over women, or men's dominance of women, etc. He uses the phrase, “take care of women.” In other words, men are the ‘take carers,’ and ‘maintainers of women.’ This shows that Allah SWT has assigned men some duties because they are physically stronger than women. Thus, they are assigned the economic responsibility. In other words, men are given the responsibility to take care of women.

It should be mentioned here that Kausar agrees with a few Muslim scholars such as Jamal Badawi (1939-2000), Fathi Osman (1928-2010), and a few others in their description of the term, *qawwāmūn*. Jamal Badawi presents his opinion on the term, *qawwāmūn* in these words:

Nowhere does the Qur’ān state that one gender is superior to the other. Some interpreters of the Qur’ān mistakenly translate the Arabic word *qiwāmāh* (responsibility for the family) with the English word ‘superiority.’ The Qur’ān makes it clear that the sole basis for the superiority of any person over another is piety and righteousness, not gender, colour, or nationality.⁸⁷

This is exactly what Fathi Osman explains in his book, *Women in Family and Society* in these words:

The Qur’ānic verse men shall take care of women with what God has bestowed on the former does not state the superiority of man over woman, rather it explains the responsibility of man for sustaining the family, a view that makes a man superior to a woman because he is physically stronger lacks evidence from the Qur’ān. The divine sources

⁸⁵ Muḥammad Asad, “*The Message of the Qur’an*, Islamic Book Trust,” (Kuala Lumpur, 2013), 132.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Jamal Badawi, “*Gender Equity in Islam*,” (American Trust Publications, 1995), 8.

mention care and responsibility as far as men's role is concerned in the family but not his superiority over anyone.⁸⁸

However, Kausar states that, in general, men made their own self-created position as superior to women in family and in society which makes family and all social institutions 'patriarchal;' but this goes against Islam. It is a different issue that other religions and Western classical and modern philosophers perceive women in negative terms. They strongly hold the view that all social institutions including the family are patriarchal male-dominated and female subordinated, but the stand of Islam is contrary to this.⁸⁹

She writes:

Husband and wife complement each other sharing love and mercy for each other which is given to them by Allah SWT as the sign of Allah SWT. In no way the term *Qawwāmūn* entail the subjection of wife to husband or competition between husband and wife for anything. Both are expected to fulfil their individual as well as collective responsibilities for the family and thus provide comfort to each other. In fact, the Qur'ān teaches men and women to pray for such life partners and children who would be their sources of comfort.⁹⁰

She refers to the verse of the Qur'ān:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا﴾

And those who say, Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us a leader [i.e., example] for the righteous.⁹¹

It is important to recall here what has been discussed earlier in this chapter and earlier chapters that there was/is hardly any feminist who has not condemned patriarchy arguing that patriarchal family keep women not only subservient to men in family, but it also puts all the responsibilities of family chores on women leaving men as bread-winners alone, who are not expected to render any house-chore or child-care work. this is a frequent practice openly visible both in the East and the West.

⁸⁸ Osman Fathi, "Muslim Women in Family and in Society," (minaret, California, 1991), 47 - 48.

⁸⁹ Zeenath Kausar, "Family in Islam is Neither Patriarchal nor Matriarchal: It is Consultation," (Unpublished book, 2024), 33.

⁹⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action," 86.

⁹¹ Qur'ān, 25:74.

Recently, women's rights activists and feminists have raised their voices against it and denounced such male attitudes toward women. As a result, some have started displaying this behaviour to a certain extent. Kausar presented examples from the authentic traditions of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) that He (PBUH) rendered full cooperation to his wives *Ummahātul Mu'minīn* in his family and, how he interacted with his wives with all love and care. One or two examples from the married life of the Prophet (PBUH) highlighted by Kausar would reveal the Islamic teaching against patriarchy and stand firmly for the cooperation and loving interaction between men and women in a family.⁹²

Following traditions shows the cooperation of the Prophet (PBUH) with his wives at home and his graceful and cheerful interaction with his wife 'Ā'isha (may Allah be pleased with her):

«عَنِ الْأَسْوَدِ، قَالَ سَأَلْتُ عَائِشَةَ مَا كَانَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَصْنَعُ فِي أَهْلِهِ قَالَتْ كَانَ فِي مِهْنَةٍ أَهْلِهِ، فَإِذَا حَضَرَتِ الصَّلَاةُ قَامَ إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ.»

Aswad bin Yazid narrates that: I asked 'Ā'isha (Allah be pleased with her): what was the norm of the Prophet (PBUH) at home? She ('Ā'isha) replied: He used to work for his family at home. Then, when he heard the *adhān* (call to prayer) he would go for it.⁹³

«عَنْ عَائِشَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهَا أَنَّهَا كَانَتْ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فِي سَفَرٍ قَالَتْ: فَسَابَقْتُهُ فَسَبَقْتُهُ عَلَى رَجُلِي فَلَمَّا حَمَلْتُ اللَّحْمَ سَابَقْتُهُ فَسَبَقَنِي قَالَ: «هَذِهِ بِتِلْكَ السَّبَقَةِ»

'Ā'isha said: Once I joined the Prophet in a race when I was on a journey with the Prophet (PBUH) and I won the race. Later on, when I grew fat, I raced with the Prophet (PBUH), but the Prophet (PBUH) won. Upon this, the Prophet said: This victory is in return of the earlier (loss).⁹⁴

Kausar perceives the Islamic family system as instrumental in maintaining a good and healthy life for all members of the family. She writes: Marriage is a central and locomotive function because it unites man and woman physically and spiritually to form a legitimate family. Thus, in Islam, the marriage of a man with a woman is the

⁹² Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action," 86-88.

⁹³ Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ lil Bukhārī*, (Riyadh, Dār al Iftā'), Book,14, Vol,9, 507.

⁹⁴ Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān Bin al-Ash'ath, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, (Huston Texas, Dar-us-Salam Publications), Vol. 3, 65.

basis for the formation of a family, without which there is no family. The Qur'ān refers to this union of man and woman through marriage as a sign of Allah SWT.⁹⁵

Kausar asserts that in Islam, marriage is not merely a legitimate source of physical or sexual satisfaction, but it is also a spiritual gratification. Marriage and family are perceived in Islam as an indispensable part of life of all the Prophets (PBUH). Allah SWT states in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلًا مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَذُرِّيَّةً وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَن يَأْتِيَ بَأْيَةً إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ﴾

And We have already sent messengers before you and assigned to them, wives, and descendants. And it was not for a messenger to come with a sign except by permission of Allah. For every term is a decree.⁹⁶

Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) is reported to have said:

«يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ! مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ فَإِنَّهُ أَغْضُ لِلْبَصَرِ وَأَحْصَنُ لِلْفَرْجِ»

O, young men! Those among you who can support a wife should marry for it restrains eyes from casting (evil glances) and preserves one from immorality.⁹⁷

Kausar emphasizes the Islamic stance on sexuality and says in Islam sexuality is not trivialized as one's animalistic function to be dealt with by one's own whim and fancy. Sexuality is rather perceived as one of the essential parts of life, which needs proper regulation and discipline. For this reason, a man and woman are allowed to enter a sexual relationship only after marriage. Hence, Islam absolutely condemns all types of pre-marital and extra-marital relationships, fornication, illicit carnality, temporary marriages, and cohabitation as forbidden and unlawful (*haram*). Islam closes all the avenues that lead to adultery asserting that it is evil and leads to other evils.⁹⁸

She cites the following verse of the Qur'ān in this connection:

⁹⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action," 93.

⁹⁶ Qur'ān, 13:38.

⁹⁷ Muḥammad bin Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ lil Bukhārī*, (Lahore, Maktaba Rahmaniyyah, 1998), Vol.7, 5065.

⁹⁸ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action," 94.

﴿وَلَا تَقْرُبُوا الزَّيْنَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا﴾

Nor come nigh to adultery for it is a shameful (deed) And an evil, opening the road (to other evils).⁹⁹

Kausar alludes to the position Islam takes on both sexuality and reproduction. She exhorts that marriage in Islam is an essential institution, which, on one hand, regulates sexuality and, on the other, helps procreation. Hence, she specifies the point that sexuality and reproduction in Islam cannot be liberated from the marital relationship between husband and wife. Therefore, any type of sexual indulgence and reproduction of children outside of marriage is considered unlawful and unjustified.¹⁰⁰

It is obvious from all these points that the Islamic perspective on sexuality and reproduction is diametrically opposite to the stance the ‘gender perspective’ takes as discussed above. It should be remembered that the document, particularly under the critical area of health, demands that women should be given all the rights to decide freely and responsibly on sexual and reproductive health. The document reiterates that there should not be any coercion, discrimination, or violence in matters of sexual relations. According to the document, women should be made responsible for controlling their fertility by their own choice.

Hence, Kausar categorically states that all these demands of the document, BPFA for the sexual freedom of women for their empowerment are highly objectionable to Islam. Kausar further accentuates this point in these words:

Islam does not consider any sexual behaviour that is performed outside of marriage as responsible sexual behaviour. Islam also condemns any act of reproduction outside of marriage as illegal, as discussed above. It can be plainly said that what is seen, as safe-sex life by the document, BPFA is ‘unsafe-sex’ from an Islamic perspective. This demand is vicious because it opens the avenue for many vices indulgence in sexual promiscuity, illegitimate children, sexually transmitted diseases, morally unhealthy society and, finally, destruction of human civilization.¹⁰¹

Kausar underlines that there is nothing safe in this demand of BPFA except vulgarity, immodesty, and bestiality. Mentioning the stand of Islam on deviant sexual

⁹⁹ Qur’ān, 17:32.

¹⁰⁰ Zeenath Kausar, “Islamic Action Plan for Women’s Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action,” 96.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 96.

practices like lesbianism, homosexuality, transsexuality, etc, she asserts that Islam condemns these practices as indecent, immoral, and ignorant. The Qur'ān calls the people who indulge in these crimes of lewdness as people who transgressed all bounds, and for all these reasons Allah SWT punished and destroyed them throwing rain with stones of baked clay.¹⁰² The Qur'ān says:

﴿وَلُوطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَحِشَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ أَتَأْتِكُمُ الرِّجَالُ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ بِجَهْلُونَ﴾

And [mention] Lot, when he said to his people, “Do you commit immorality, while you are seeing? Do you indeed approach men with desire instead of women? Rather, you are a people behaving ignorantly.”¹⁰³

Kausar cited several verses of the Qur'ān from different chapters and discussed these issues in her writings. She has dealt with each of these deviant sexual forms of LGBTQI in a separate chapter in one of her forthcoming books, *Feminism to the so-called Islamic Feminism: Whither Family? Whither Civilization?* Kausar has not only presented the Islamic stand referring to the Qur'ān and the relevant Aḥādīth on these issues but also presented her critical reflections on these Muslim scholars Scott Kugle and Mohsin Hendric, who tried to justify these practices claiming that Islam finds no objection in them. Kausar elucidated that Islam rejects these kinds of sexual practices. She refers to the Qur'ān and mentions that the Qur'ān has made it clear that there are some people who try to justify those things which have no place in Islamic texts, Muslims should not be misled by such people. The Qur'ān says:

﴿وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ﴾

And if you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah. They follow not except assumption, and they are not but falsifying.¹⁰⁴

Kausar reminds that the gender perspective of BPFA insists on giving sexual freedom to women so that they enjoy all rights based on their choice which is LGBTQI. Hence, Kausar denotes that according to gender feminists, family should no longer be defined exclusively as the conjugal relationship between husband and wife based on marriage. It implies that a union of any two persons, males or females can

¹⁰² Ibid, 97.

¹⁰³ Qur'ān, 27:54-55.

¹⁰⁴ Qur'ān, 6:116.

also be called a family. A few new forms of families include LGBTQ+ Families; Lesbian Families; Gay family; Bi-sexual Family; Pansexual; Transgender families; non-binary family; Queer family, and few more. All these forms of families have no place in Islam.¹⁰⁵

She presented several crucial internal and external problems women are facing for their empowerment in family. Kausar identified the problems that are created unfortunately by some Muslim scholars through presenting some confused and mistaken interpretation of various verses concerning women.

Kausar pinpoints that in the oft-quoted verse of the Qur'ān, 4:34, where the term *Qawwāmūn* is interpreted by the exegetes of the Qur'ān in different ways, (this term, *Qawwāmūn* is already explicated by Kausar earlier), at the end of the same verse, 4:34, there is another word, *dharaba*, which has been interpreted in various ways.

﴿الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ وَالَّتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَأَضْرِبُوهُنَّ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا كَبِيرًا﴾

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. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them [lightly]. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand.¹⁰⁶

As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all).¹⁰⁷

Kausar draws the attention of her readers to a crucial point that this verse relates to (*nushūz*), a serious case of lewdness on the part of the wife. In such a case, the Qur'ān presents three corrective measures to be taken by the husband. Kausar

¹⁰⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "A Critical Survey of Proto- feminists to Liberal Feminism and Family: Islamic Position on Family," (Unpublished book 2024).

¹⁰⁶ Qur'ān, 4:34.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

highlights the common and popular interpretation: in the first place, the husband should admonish his wife so that she should correct herself; but if she does not change her conduct, the husband may take a second step of sleeping in a separate bed. However, if she persists with the same problem, husband can give her a light and harmless tap on the body, not on the face which would be merely a symbolic measure from her husband to express his displeasure. In case, if the wife corrects herself, then the husband should consummate the married life with his wife peacefully without creating any issues.

However, according to Kausar, the stance of Abdul Hameed Ahmed Abu Sulayman (1936-2021), one of the pioneers of the Islamization of Knowledge and the ex-Rector of International Islamic University, Malaysia the issue seems thought-provoking and commendable. He asserts that this issue can be understood well only when it is studied in the context of family as portrayed in the Qur'ān. He writes:

Firstly, to understand this verse correctly, it is necessary to place it in the general framework of family structure and relations in Islam, so as to grasp its true implications within the higher aims, objectives and purposes of the revelation. Secondly, the verse must be interpreted in the light of other related Qur'ānic verses.¹⁰⁸

Then Abdul Hamid cites few verses of the Qur'ān:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا﴾

O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created [of a similar nature] his mate, and from the two of them scattered countless men and women; reverence God through Whom you demand [your mutual rights], and reverence the wombs [that bore and delivered you]: for God ever watches over you.¹⁰⁹

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

And among His signs is that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that you may dwell in repose with them, and He has rendered affection and compassion between you: verily in that are signs for those who ponder.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Abdul Hameed, Ahmed Abu Sulayman. "Marital Discord," (International Institute of Islamic Thought, IIIT, Herndon, Virginia, Washington, 2008), 11.

¹⁰⁹ Qur'ān, 4:1.

¹¹⁰ Qur'ān, 30:21.

Abdul Hamid emphasizes that from the above and several other related words, the Qur'ān invites the attention of its readers to the very spirit of family life. He writes:

If we read the above verses in the light of the collective injunctions of the *Shari'ah* and the overall Prophetic ideals and traditions, we find that the real spirit of the marital relationship is shaped by the sentiments of “affection” and “compassion” and the obligations of “patronage,” so that the governing factors in such as relationship are affection, compassion, and benevolence.¹¹¹

Then, he emphasizes the fact that when the Qur'ān calls its adherents to think over the love, compassion, and affection that constitute a family, how then it is possible that the Qur'ān would ask the husband to go for physical or psychological punishment for his wife. Abdul Hamid writes:

If it can be shown that the verb *ḍaraba* does not denote the infliction of physical or psychological pain and that this Qur'ānic idiom might be misunderstood by some husbands to justify their cruelty towards their wives, who are, in turn, obliged to endure such abuses owing to their concern for their children, or their social or financial insecurity, how, then, should this “idiom” be construed?¹¹²

He explains further that if the word *ḍaraba* is used in terms of the infliction of some pain or disgrace to the wife, it would deprive the purpose of reconciliation of the family life which should not be ignored. He, therefore, suggests words like seclusion, separation, and such others.

He writes:

Considering the context, the purpose of this verse is reconciliation in a dignified manner and without coercion or intimidation as each spouse has the ability and the right to dissolve the relationship. Therefore, the meaning of *ḍarb* cannot imply the infliction of injury, pain, or disgrace. The most straightforward interpretation is hence that of departure, separation, or seclusion.¹¹³

Kausar thus presents the stance taken by Abdul Hamid on the word, *ḍaraba*, and underscores that Muslim women experience several problems for their empowerment in family and in society, these problems can be overpowered, if Muslim scholars and activists come forward with intellectual and practical measures. For this

¹¹¹ Abdul Hameed Ahmed Abu Sulaymen. “*Marital Discord*,” 12.

¹¹² Ibid, 17.

¹¹³ Abdul Hameed, Ahmed Abu Sulaymen, “*Marital Discord*,” 21-22.

purpose, men and women should coordinate with each other because the problems affect men, women, children as well as the society at large. She identifies the problems faced by women at the level of family and society. However, she contends that the Qur'ān and the authentic traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) are the best sources to understand the problems and resolve them. Thus, Kausar believes that the very purpose of planning and presenting of the Islamic Action Plan, is to motivate Muslim women that the Qur'ān and the Sunnah alone stand as the right sources can resolve their problems and provide practical guidance for their empowerment.

In the first place, Kausar highlights the need for the establishment of an Islamic Think Tank for women's empowerment. She has been able to eventually materialize her project on the International Islamic Think Tank for Women's Empowerment (IIITWE) despite her deep engagements with the Islamic Action Plan, IAP for women's empowerment. It is extremely necessary and imperative for Muslim women and men scholars and activists from various parts of the world to unite and conjoin together and discuss issues of women. They also need to stay connected with the governments of Muslim countries and Muslim Women NGOs to be dynamic enough to materialize the words of the IAP into action based on Islamic paradigm. She writes:

This Islamic Think-Tank can pool conscientious Muslim women and men scholars together in one united platform and can mobilize them to work together on women's issues to bring about a positive and constructive change in families and societies. This will help Muslim women to become dynamic and influential architects of healthy, peaceful, and prosperous families, societies, and civilizations. Far and above, in light of the development that occurred in the last decade of the third millennium, which is demonstrating changing perceptions and attitudes on the status and role of women, the need for the establishment of such a Think-Tank seems much more vital and imperative than before.¹¹⁴

Firstly, Kausar throws light on the nature and the scope of the Think-Tank. She asserts that it seems better if this Think-Tank is established under the Organization of Islamic Conference, OIC, or by the united efforts of a few Muslim countries. If this is not possible for any reason, then, in that case, this can be taken as a challenging major task by any Muslim country as an internal part of Islamic

¹¹⁴ Zeenath Kausar, *Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action*, 156-157.

civilization. The nature of this Think Tank would be intellectual and strategic. It shall provide intellectual in-put and necessary assistance to governments, international organizations, and NGOs by way of providing latest ideas, policies, strategies, models and plans for the protection of family in general and the development and empowerment of women in particular.¹¹⁵

Secondly, as far as the scope of the Think-Tank is concerned, it shall be an international foundation providing necessary intellectual guidance and strategic assistance to Muslim countries and Muslim NGOs on women's issues. It shall also investigate the problems of Muslim women in the Muslim minority countries and shall do the needful.¹¹⁶ For this purpose, Kausar suggests that the Think-Tank would form local, national, regional, and global network across the world. Thus, it shall provide a global platform for Muslim women and men intellectuals to discuss the multi-dimensional problems of women in different parts of the world, and to work together for their cause. She presented the aims and objectives of the Think-Tank which are given below.

4.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE THINK-TANK

1. To pool the intellectual strength of Muslim women intellectuals of the world in a united platform and make use of their potential to address the problems of women on one hand and to make short term and long-term plans for their development and progress on the other hand.
2. To introduce Muslim women intellectuals to well-known women and men Islamic scholars of the world in various fields of knowledge so that they can develop an understanding with each other and coordinate with each other on various joint ventures for the protection and development of the Islamic civilization.
3. To educate, train, and provide such skills to potential young Muslim women to prepare them for taking up leadership roles in the future.
4. To make consistent efforts in creating creative and innovative thinking in

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

women so that they can make break through attempts and break glass-ceiling and realize their true potential.

5. To conduct a series of workshops, seminars, and international conferences on various contemporary critical issues concerning health, sexual and reproductive issues of women highlighting Islamic universal values and suggesting practical guidelines.
6. To create role models among Muslim women and to project them in Muslim and non-Muslim societies as women who combine in them high education, moral excellence, spirituality, and love to serve human beings regardless of ethnic, lingual, and cultural differences.
7. To dispel misinterpretations, exaggerations, and their consequences in the forms of preconceptions and stereotypes which contradict the prominent position Islam has assigned women in family and society.
8. To provide opportunities for women to gain such expertise in their own areas of specialization and interest that would enable them to produce challenges that the modern era has heralded with its latest ideas and perspectives.
9. To conduct applied research, collecting statistics and other related data on various problems and issues facing Muslim women in Muslim countries and in Muslim minorities.
10. To make a critical review of the internal challenges women are facing in Muslim countries due to their social, economic, and political policies which are negative for the empowerment of women. To devise policies and strategies on those issues and to collaborate with concerned governments, institutions, and organizations for their implementation to overcome the problem of empowerment of women.
11. To make a critical appreciation of the international documents that are passed in the United Nations including CEDAW and BPA for the development and the empowerment of women and appreciate its positive points which do not clash with the Islamic perspective and make collaboration with the efforts of the UN to work together on those specific points.
12. To make a critical study of the UN international documents and identify the

inconsistencies in the documents with an Islamic perspective and present Islamic alternatives on those points of contradiction and request the UN and the concerned institutions to give freedom to all the diverse cultures and civilizations to follow their own perspectives on the empowerment of women.

13. To educate and train men and women as to how they should cooperate with each other in their families as husbands and wives both in the house-chores and out-side works with mutual understanding and mutual concern for each other.
14. To suggest some policies and strategies in the workplace for men and women so that women would be able to perform their responsibilities in their families and can also contribute their services to the given place of work with peace of mind and confidence without stress and anxieties.
15. To study the Islamic Plan of Action, IPA thoroughly, its aims, objectives, vision, and mission and put all efforts to follow its spirit in thought and action for a balanced development and empowerment of women.
16. To emphasize that attainment and advancement of education is obligatory for both Muslim men and women to enhance their knowledge and understanding of the signs of Allah SWT and follow His approved way of life in Islam.
17. To assert the fact that education is based on the unity of Allah SWT, unity of the purpose of creation (vicegerency) and unity of knowledge should be promoted.
18. To eliminate all kinds of discrimination between men and women in the field of education and places of work.
19. To study the problems and challenges women are facing in non-Muslim countries and suggest mechanisms and policies to overcome them.
20. To promote the culture of seeking and sharing knowledge within Muslim families and societies.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 158-160.

4.6 ULTIMATE GOAL OF THE THINK-TANK BY ZEENATH KAUSAR

The goal of this think-tank is to develop a balanced concept of development and empowerment of women while serving Allah SWT and serving people through following His injunctions and Prophetic teachings to establish a just and stable Islamic civilization.¹¹⁸

Even a brief reading of the aims and objectives Kausar presented for the Think -Tank for the empowerment of women and for its goal, reminds the deep impact of the Islamic revivalists on Kausar. She did not put all her efforts for the empowerment of women for its own sake. Her sole interest to stand firm for the empowerment of women is to empower them from the Islamic paradigmatic framework in all fields of family, education, economics, and politics to serve the purpose of creation that Allah SWT identified in the Qur'ān and are practically implemented by the last Prophet Muḥammad (PBHU). It is to serve Allah SWT following and promoting His injunctions through prohibiting vices and advancing virtues to establish justice, peace, and success in this world and in hereafter. The purpose Kausar identifies and emphasizes for the empowerment of women is related to the Islamic purpose of knowledge and creation of human beings to motivate the adherents of Islam to work for the rejuvenation of Islamic civilization.

4.6.1 Suggestions of Few Strategic Actions by the Think-Tank to the Governments and NGOs for the Over-All Empowerment of Women in Family

Kausar devotes her serious attention to presenting few strategic suggestions that she thinks the Think-Tank should embrace and convey to the governments of Muslim countries and Muslim NGOs for the empowerment of women in family and in all educational, economic, and political fields. Few suggestions in connection with the empowerment of women in family shall be presented below:

1. It is high time for the governments of all Muslim countries to establish a Ministry of Family Affairs and Women's Empowerment at National level focusing on the protection and development of families in general and a balanced empowerment of women in family and society. All those countries which have already established it should continue with it.
2. This Ministry should create a *sharī'ah* council which should comprise Muslim

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

scholars who are well-versed in the Qur'ān, Sunnah, Islamic jurisprudence, (Fiqh), and the history of Islamic civilization and should be also aware of the modern challenges which the contemporary world is facing in general and the Muslim *Ummah* is facing in particular.

3. It is important to see that the scholars of the *sharī'ah* council are moderate and very concrete in their views on women as outlined in the Qur'ān and Sunnah. They should not be ethnocultural traditionalists, the ones who are biased on women's issues due to local or globally common and dominant prejudiced cultural practices on women. In other words, they should be free from all kinds of biased ethno-cultural traditionalism. These scholars should also possess comprehensive knowledge and understanding of feminism and should be critical enough to analyse the mainstream feminism as well as all the influential trends and deviant trends in feminism and its women's liberation movement at all levels including the global level under the United Nations. In other words, these scholars should neither be influenced by the Muslim ethno-cultural rationalization trend nor by the modern feminist Westernization trend, though they should be smart enough to be aware of both these dominant and diametrically opposite trends.
4. There should be at least four bodies of this *sharī'ah* council within the Ministry of family affairs and women's empowerment:
 1. Sharī'ah Council Bench for Family Affairs and Women's Empowerment in Family, SCBFA and WEF.
 2. *Sharī'ah* Council Bench for Women's Educational Empowerment, SCB WEE.
 3. *Sharī'ah* Council Bench for Women's Economic Empowerment, SCB WEE.
 4. *Sharī'ah* Council Bench for Women's Political Empowerment, SCB WPE.
5. Scholars of the *Sharī'ah* Council Bench for Family Affairs and Women's Empowerment in Family, SCBFA, and WEF should prepare a written document on family in Islam explaining the status and rights of women in family based on *Sharī'ah*. This document may be referred to as the *Sharī'ah*

Document on Family Affairs and Women's Empowerment in Family, SDFA WEF. This SDFA WEF should cover all these: the Islamic definition of family, Rights, and responsibilities of Women, Men, and Children in a family for each other within the family in all aspects, including socio-economic, educational, and entertainment rights and responsibilities and all those rights and responsibilities that relate to sexual and reproductive aspects of life.

6. This SDFA WEF should be regarded as an expert guideline to make the policies, laws rules, and regulations for the protection of family and the empowerment of family rights of women. It seems important to clarify here, that although the term family includes men, women, and children, yet, we are mentioning women separately because women and children face more problems and challenges for their rights than men. As far as children are concerned, they also need to be addressed and discussed separately in a book by itself. Hence, here we are dealing with family which includes men, women, and children, but we are also focusing on the empowerment of women in family with more emphasis.
7. The *Sharī'ah* Council Branch for Family Affairs and Women's Empowerment in Family, SCBFA WEF should use all legal and moral means for the practical implementation of the *Sharī'ah* document on the family, SDFA WEF so that the following may be achieved:
 - a. The foundations of family should be established on love, compassion, mercy, sacrifice, care, and concern between husband and wife and between parents and children and among all the members of the family. All the members of the family should be educated, well-cultured and civilized so that the family may be described as mini civilization. Women in this mini civilization should be empowered with all genuine rights and responsibilities in the family to enjoy a peaceful and happy life.
 - b. Husband and wife should bear individual as well as collective responsibilities in the family. There should neither be any domination of men nor the domination of women in family. Family should be neither matriarchal nor patriarchal and should function based on *shūrā*, consultation. Husband and wife should complement each other and should

build the family together.

- c. No abusive language should be used by men, women, and children in the family, and all should communicate with each other with full respect and love for each other. All the members of family should avoid a disgraceful and impolite attitude towards each other.
- d. Wife battering and domestic violence should not be only condemned and forbidden but should be punishable by law.
- e. Legally men should be the caretakers of women and children in the family and should bear the responsibilities of finance and defense in the family with benevolence and compassion, not with despotism and authoritarianism.
- f. Women should guard their chastity, should take care of the belongings of the house, and should perform the responsibilities of childbearing and childbirth. It does not however mean that women should remain confined within the house. They should enjoy all rights for the attainment of and advancement in education and should be also able to participate in social structures outside the family based on their achievements and should be able to enjoy their own earnings.
- g. There should not be any stereotypes that men are only the breadwinners and women are the only caretakers of the house. There should not be any legal obligation and any compulsion on women to take care of all the house-chores in the family all alone. The woman should take care of the house chores whatever is possible for her as moral cooperation and companionship with her husband since he stays outside the house for longer hours to earn for the family for which he is legally responsible. However, wife should expect cooperation from her husband in the family in the house-chores as to whatever possible for him. Families where both husband-and-wife work outside, they should take care of the house-chores and family responsibilities with mutual understanding, cooperation, with the arrangement of helpers etc. Women should not suffer from double workload.

8. Women should enjoy all genuine rights for sexual and reproductive health according to the Islamic teachings.
9. Marriage should be made indispensable for the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health for both, men, and women. Sexuality and reproduction should not be separated from marriage.
10. All sorts of pre-marital and extra-marital sexual relations should be considered illegal and forbidden.
11. All kinds of deviant sexuality like lesbianism, homosexuality and transsexuality should be forbidden.
12. Abortion should be allowed only if the life of the mother is in danger, otherwise should not be legalized.
13. Artificial insemination with the sperm of a stranger should be seen as adultery.
14. In-vitro Fertilization (test tube babies), provided that the ova come from the mother, the sperm from the father and the embryo is transferred into the uterus of one's own wife, should be acceptable. Any other usage of IVF should be made forbidden.
15. Surrogate mothering should not be justified legally under the Islamic law.
16. The use of only those reproduction - aid and reproduction –control technological devices should be allowed which do not transgress the bounds of *Shari'ah*. All those reproduction-aid and reproduction control technological devices which open the avenues of adultery should be forbidden.
17. Tendency of giving divorce should be discouraged. men and women should be allowed to make use of their rights of legal divorce, talaq and khula, only if it is inevitable and it should be performed in accordance with the *Shari'ah*. The entire process of divorce should be made effective so that men and women should not suffer for the unnecessary delays in its process. All precautions should be made so that justice is done to both, women, and men.
18. There should be a unit within the *Shari'ah* Council Branch for Family Affairs and Women's Empowerment for children, which may be referred to as *Shari'ah* Unit for children. This Unit should manage all kinds of family

problems and health related issues of children.

If the government develops effective legal policies and mechanism to take care of the above-mentioned issues and problems of family and the empowerment of women in family and promote moral education and training to men and women on a peaceful, happy, and stable family life, the institution of family can be protected and developed, and women would be empowered with all their family rights.¹¹⁹

4.6.2 Strategic Actions to Be Taken by the Non –Governmental Organizations, NGOs for the Empowerment of Women in Family

Kausar presents few important strategic actions to be taken by the Non -Governmental Organizations, NGOs for the empowerment of women in family.

1. There is no shortage of Muslim Women NGOs in Muslim and non-Muslim countries in the world on various issues of women. There are no NGOs specifically focusing on the protection of family and the empowerment of women in family. There is a need of establishing more NGOs on family and the empowerment of women in family.
2. These NGOs should form two Cells, one for the purpose of rescuing and correcting and the other for schooling and training purposes. Rescuing and Correcting Cells may be formed on various issues including the following:
 - a. NGO Cells on Emotional and Mental Torture of Women in Family.
 - b. NGO Cells on Domestic Violence of Women.
 - c. NGO Cells on Divorce Cases.
 - d. NGO Cells on Reproductive Health Issues of Women.
3. Besides these Cells, there should be schooling and Training Cells for providing necessary teachings and training to all male and female members of the family on necessary things in life for forming and maintaining a peaceful, stable, and happy family. These Cells may include the following:

¹¹⁹Ibid, 166-171.

- a. Cells for teaching communication and interaction etiquette in the family.
 - b. Cells for teaching the importance and the practical wisdom behind family values of love, compassion, care, and concern for each other in the family.
 - c. Cells for teaching how to take family responsibilities seriously and attentively.
 - d. Cells for teaching the art of living together with unity and solidarity in family even if there are differences of opinions among the family members.
 - e. Cells for teaching old and new ways of providing entertainment to family members within the limits of *Shari'ah*.
 - f. Cells for inspiring the culture of sharing knowledge in family and increasing the interest of the family members in intellectual discourse.
4. The Teaching and Training NGO Cells should be interesting and creative so that they may intellectually and emotionally motivate family members to learn the family values and the art of living together with joy and fun. These NGO Cells should follow the spirit of *Shari'ah* but should not turn out to be the dull and boring teaching centers, rather they should be interesting and creative ones. Thus, Kausar presented a practical and interesting list of strategic suggestions for Muslim Women NGOs so that women's rights activists and Muslim men can play a dynamic role in protecting the institution of family as a basic foundation of human civilization, a mini-civilization.¹²⁰ The main characteristic feature of this holistic bi-project, WE VIP is its unified purpose of women's empowerment to rejuvenate Islamic civilization empowering mini-civilizations, and families in Islam.

4.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the introduction and context of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, a significant global initiative aimed at empowering women and promoting gender equality.

¹²⁰ Ibid, 171-173.

The Beijing Action Plan aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and recognizes the crucial role women play in societal advancement. It calls for the creation of an environment that supports women's full and equal participation in all aspects of life. The plan is noted to have influenced laws and initiatives in many nations and is considered a pivotal moment in the global women's rights movement.

It seeks to implement strategies for women's advancement and remove barriers to their participation in all areas of life. The importance of partnership between men and women for achieving gender equality is emphasized, along with an acknowledgment of diverse women's situations and challenges. Then, the chapter presented the views of Kausar concerning the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPA), as well as broader issues related to women's empowerment, gender equality, and the role of Islam in shaping these discussions.

Kausar acknowledges the BPA's identification of critical areas of concern affecting women's lives, such as poverty, education, health care, violence, armed conflict, economic inequality, lack of women in leadership roles, and more. She recognizes the efforts of feminists and women activists from various backgrounds in identifying and discussing these concerns. She praises the document's focus on critical topics and its attempt to address challenges that women face globally. Kausar, however, expresses reservations about certain aspects of the BPA. She specifically takes issue with the document's emphasis on sexual and reproductive rights, asserting that such rights could be detrimental to women and harmful to the institution of family and society. She argues that this perspective disregards cultural and religious diversity around the world and assumes that the gender perspective is universally applicable. She highlights that there are different schools of feminist thought beyond the "gender perspective," including "equity feminists" and "pro-family feminists." She suggests that these groups reject certain aspects of mainstream feminism and advocate for women's development and empowerment without overlooking the importance of family. She underscores the need to consider diverse cultural, ideological, and religious backgrounds in discussions on women's empowerment.

Kausar introduces an Islamic perspective on women's empowerment through an Islamic Action Plan (IAP). She divides this plan into several components and discusses the need to establish an Islamic Think Tank for Women's Empowerment.

She also emphasizes how Islam has historically empowered women and addresses contemporary challenges. women's empowerment in Islam is not about rejecting religion or obtaining self-created power, but rather it is about enabling women to exercise their rights as prescribed by the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions, the Sunnah. The empowerment process in Islam is God-centred, faith-based, and family-oriented, aiming to uphold a healthy Islamic civilization. It is seen as a means for women to fulfil their role as Divine Viceregency along with men and contribute to the betterment of society. Islamic empowerment promotes peace, progress, and development within the framework of Islamic teachings. Islam upholds the equality of men and women as human beings.

All genders are created from a single soul, and they are given the same fundamental value and purpose. It emphasizes that Islamic equality is not about erasing gender differences or denying distinct identities, but it is about recognizing the equal worth of both men and women before Allah. Kausar suggested an outline of the need for an Islamic Action Plan (IAP) that emphasizes a comprehensive approach to addressing women's empowerment and gender equality from an Islamic perspective.

The document emphasizes the importance of men and women working together to promote Islamic civilization while respecting the distinct roles and responsibilities inherent in their gender differences. It also counters the idea of imposing a single perspective, such as the gender perspective, as universal, and instead proposes an approach rooted in Islamic ideas. The document stresses the need for an integrated approach to addressing women's development and empowerment. Kausar argues that conflicts between men's and women's rights can lead to larger clashes and suggests that a family-centred, collaborative approach is more effective. She asserts that Islam is a way of life with its own culture and civilization.

It rejects the notion that Islam hinders women's empowerment, highlighting the religion's support for women's rights. The IAP is presented as a response that aligns with Islamic values and addresses women's empowerment without disregarding cultural diversity. The document acknowledges the existence of international documents like the Beijing Platform for Action (BPA) and argues that alternative perspectives, rooted in various cultures and civilizations, can provide a broader understanding of women's rights and empowerment. The IAP defines women's

empowerment as enabling them to exercise rights granted to them by Islam, rather than seeking self-created power. It emphasizes a comprehensive approach based on Islamic principles, contrasting it with the gender perspective that it sees as detached from religious and spiritual values. The Islamic Action Plan focuses on empowering women within the framework of Islamic teachings. It highlights the importance of collaboration between men and women, recognizing their unique roles and responsibilities, and ensuring a harmonious and just society based on Islamic principles.



CHAPTER FIVE

AN ANALYSIS OF ZEENATH KAUSAR'S VIEWS IN THE LIGHT OF THE QUR'ĀN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Kausar is a distinguished scholar whose work extensively explores the dynamic intersection of Islam, gender, and contemporary social issues. Her critical examinations address modern challenges through the lens of Islamic teachings, providing nuanced insights into current societal dilemmas. This study aims to investigate Kausar's perspectives, evaluating them against the principles and guidelines of the Qur'ān. By delving into her interpretations and arguments, the research assesses how her insights align with or diverge from classical Qur'ānic exegesis. This exploration not only underscores the relevance of Kausar's scholarship in today's context but also emphasizes the enduring significance of the Qur'ān as a source of guidance for contemporary issues, highlighting its applicability and importance in addressing modern social concerns.

5.2 ANALYSIS OF THE WESTERN AND ISLAMIC FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES: KAUSAR'S CRITICAL INSIGHTS THROUGH THE LENS OF THE QUR'ĀN

Kausar, an eminent scholar, has extensively explored the influence of Western feminism on various issues, particularly in the perspective of women's empowerment as outlined in the Platform for Action. One of her manuscripts, "Proto-Feminism to Liberal Feminism: A Critical Survey," is in its final stage of publication. Additionally, two of her books are also expected to be released in early 2025. These titles are: Western and Islamic Feminism: Critical Reflections and Feminism to the so-called Islamic Feminism: Whither Family? Whither Civilization?

Kausar's work delves into the nuances of feminism, examining its different schools of thought rather than presenting a generalized view of feminist theory. She also explores the perspectives of Western political philosophers from classical to modern times on the stance of women in family and politics. This approach aims to

provide readers with a comprehensive understanding of why feminism emerged as a theory of women's rights.

Kausar highlights the views of notable classical political philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, who often portrayed women in a negative light. Although, according to Kausar, Plato occasionally appeared egalitarian, advocating for women's education and participation in warfare, he also categorized women alongside children and slaves, considering them part of the appetitive and weaker classes of the state.¹ Aristotle, on the other hand, disagreed with Plato's rejection of the family as the guardian class but compared men to be masters and women to be slaves, asserting male superiority.²

In addition to classical philosophers, Kausar examines the views of influential religious and political thinkers. St. Augustine believed that man was created in the image of God, while woman was not, thus relegating women to a subordinate role as man's helpmate. Similarly, St. Thomas Aquinas argued that women were created for procreation and men for intellectual pursuits, justifying male dominance.³ Thomas Hobbes also perceived women as inferior, maintaining that men alone should wield civil power while women remained obedient. Other political thinkers, such as John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and Hegel, also denied women prominent positions in family and political spheres.⁴

Karl Marx offered a different perspective, viewing the oppression of women as a social construct rather than a natural and immutable condition. He advocated for women's emancipation through the establishment of a communist society, where economic dependency and wage labor would be abolished, and production would be planned for the collective good.⁵

Kausar critically analyzes these philosophical viewpoints and contrasts them with the Islamic perspective on women's roles in family and society, as outlined in the Qur'ān. Unlike many Western thinkers who depicted women as incapable of holding

¹ Zeenath Kausar, *"Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Eleven Islamic Thinkers"* (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 34.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Zeenath Kausar, *"Islamic Plan for Action [IPA] for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action [PBA]"* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2016), 66.

⁵ Ibid.

significant positions, Islam bestows upon women a dignified role characterized by love and mercy within the family and active participation in society. Through her scholarly work, Kausar underscores the Qur'ān's guidance on women's empowerment, offering a compelling counter-narrative to traditional Western feminist critiques.

Kausar referred to the Qur'ān, hadith and tafsir in this connection.

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

And among His signs is this that He created. For you mates from among yourselves, that ye may Dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love. And mercy between your (hearts). Verily in that are signs for those who reflect.⁶

Ibn Kathīr interprets this verse by highlighting that the creation of spouses is one of Allah's signs of His wisdom and mercy. He describes that this bond fosters affection (*mawadda*) and mercy (*rahma*), which are crucial in maintaining harmony in marital relationships. The Qur'ān does not suggest a battle of genders but rather a complementary partnership where both spouses fulfill their roles in mutual respect and care.⁷

«أكمل المؤمنين إيماناً أحسنهم خلقاً، وخياركم خياركم لنسائهم»

The most complete of the believers in faith are those with the best character, and the best of you are those who are best to their women.⁸

Furthermore, she also referred to the Qur'ān and hadith concerning the equal rewards Islam assigned to both men and women based on their righteous deeds, not since gender difference, which shows Islam is against female discrimination.

﴿مَنْ عَمِلْ صَالِحًا مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.⁹

⁶ Qur'ān, 30:21.

⁷ Ibn Kathīr, Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar. *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al- 'Aẓīm*. Dār Ṭayyibah, Riyadh, 1999. Vol. 3, p. 525.

⁸ Jami` at-Tirmidhi, Hadith no, 1162.

⁹ Qur'ān, 16,96.

And due to them [i.e., the wives] is like what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable.¹⁰

Ibn Jarir al -Ṭabarī explains that this verse establishes the principle of fairness and justice in the rights and responsibilities between spouses. It means that women have rights over their husbands just as husbands have rights over them, in a manner that is recognized as fair and customary (*bil-ma'ruf*).¹¹

Kausar critically explores various schools of feminism and presents Islamic responses to them. Before delving into liberal feminism, she directs our attention to 17th and 18th-century liberalism, highlighting that despite claims that liberal feminism is inspired by liberalism, many liberal thinkers did not support women's rights.¹²

For instance, Rousseau, who significantly influenced liberalism and strongly advocated for men's full participation in politics, opposed women's involvement in politics. In his work *Emile*, Rousseau outlines his theory of education through the characters Emile and Sophy. He argues that Sophy should receive a different education from Emile because her role is to be an obedient wife to Emile and a devoted mother to their children. Conversely, Emile's education should cultivate qualities like courage, justice, and temperance, enabling him to play a dynamic role in the state.¹³

Kausar contrasts Rousseau's views with those of Mary Wollstonecraft, a prominent women's rights activist of the same era. While Rousseau advocated for gender-specific education that reinforced traditional roles, Wollstonecraft vehemently opposed this notion. In her seminal work, "Vindication of the Rights of Women," she criticized Rousseau's discriminatory stance on education. Wollstonecraft argued that men and women are equally capable of receiving the same education and that women are deliberately conditioned to believe they are intellectually inferior to men. She also

¹⁰ Qur'ān, 2:228.

¹¹ Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī (Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān), Jild (Vol.) 2, Saḥḥah, 453.

¹² Zeenath Kausar, "Politicization of Sex and Family Devaluation in Feminism: An Islamic Alternative," (Ilmiah Publishers, 2003), 92.

¹³ Mackune-Karrer, Barbara, and Margaret E. Olson. *Feminism, Community, and Communication*. London: Routledge, 2014.

contended that even if Rousseau intended for Sophy to be a good wife and mother, the education he proposed for her was ill-suited for even these roles.¹⁴

Through this analysis, Kausar illustrates the contradictions within liberalism regarding women's rights and highlights the significant contributions of early feminists like Wollstonecraft in challenging these disparities. Her work provides a critical examination of feminist political theory and its Islamic response, offering a comprehensive perspective on the ongoing dialogue between these two ideologies.¹⁵

Kausar, however, referred to a few other male philosophers during the Enlightenment period who strongly held the view that women should not be deprived of equal education and political participation. Philosophers like Marquis de Condorcet from France and Von Hippol, from Germany may be included among them. Kausar also referred to Catherine Macaulay of England who like Wollstonecraft stood for equal rights for women.¹⁶

From early 1800 to 1900, Kausar referred to a few known liberal feminists who presented their writings on the educational, legal, and political rights of women. John Stuart Mill (1806-73), Harriet Taylor (1807-1858), and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902) are included among them. Kausar also referred to the first women's rights convention, the Seneca Falls Convention, held on July 19 and 20, 1849, in Seneca Falls, New York. A few prominent women's rights activists were Lucretia Mott (1793-1880), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902), Angelina Grimke (1805-1879) Sarah Grimke (1792-1873), and a few others. The Declaration presented a list of grievances, and it was passed as a Declaration of Sentiments unanimously; but the right to vote was not passed until the National Abolitionist leader, Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) gave his dedicated support for the right to vote for women.¹⁷

Kausar mentioned the National Woman Suffrage Association, (NWSA) founded in May 1869 by Susan B Anthony (1820-1906) and Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902). Later, in May 1869, Lucy Stone (1818-1893), Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910) and a few others founded the American Women Suffrage Association,

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "Woman in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization." *Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: STAD, IIU Malaysia* (1995),78.

¹⁶ Ibid,36 -38.

¹⁷ Ibid,35 -38.

(AWSA). Suffragettes made a lot of sacrifices to win the right to vote. They were put in jail and were inhumanly tortured. It was only after decades of hardships and painful sacrifices that the 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920 which officially gave women the right to vote in America.¹⁸ However, Black women were not included in the right to vote, and they were left out of the mainstream women's rights movement. However, Journey Truth (1797-1883), Mary Church Terrel (1863-1954), and many others fought for the right to vote for Black women who finally won the right to vote in 1965.¹⁹

The right to vote for women in the United Kingdom and, the UK was complicated. In 1918, only those women who were 30 years old and owned some property and qualifications were given the right to vote by the UK parliament through the Representation of the People Act.²⁰ It was in 1928 the UK Parliament passed the Equal Franchise Act which gave women the right to vote. However, New Zealand was the first country in the world where all women attained the right to vote in 1893.²¹ All these show that it was after decades of struggle and sacrifices of women that women won the right to vote.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who fought for women's rights. The first women's rights convention, the Seneca Falls Convention, was held on July 19 and 20, 1849, in Seneca Falls, New York. Stanton like Mary Wollstonecraft put strong emphasis on responsible motherhood based on equal education of women as men so that women may perform public responsibility in general. However, when Stanton presented her critique on the uncontrolled sexual lust of men which often gives rise to unwanted pregnancies and childbirth, Stanton commented that the male-dominated society is one grand rape of womanhood. Kausar found it very strange to read such a remark of Stanton. Kausar stated: It is extraordinary, however, that Stanton, who looked at

¹⁸ Jacob Livesay, "The 19th Amendment Gave Women the Right to Vote. (Here's When It Was Ratified)," *USA Today*, June 21, 2021, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2022/06/21/women-voting-rights-19th-amendment/7622022001/#:~:text=The%2019th%20Amendment%20gave%20women,Here's%20when%20it%20was%20ratified.&text=In%20the%20United%20States%2C%20women,rights%20as%20men%20until%201928> (accessed May 4, 2022).

¹⁹ "Timeline of Women's Suffrage." *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_women%27s_suffrage (accessed May 8, 2022).

²⁰ *Wikipedia*, "Timeline of Women's Suffrage." https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_women%27s_suffrage (accessed May 8, 2022).

²¹ *Ibid*.

mothering as a responsible work, regarded marriage as “an unpaid prostitution and domestic labour.” According to Stanton, a husband’s sexual access to his wife is a root cause of women's oppression.²²

5.3 ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE ON WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT BY ZEENATH KAUSAR

Kausar agrees with feminist demands for equality, equal education, political participation, and other rights but argues that Islam already guarantees these rights within its framework. Kausar proposes the intellectual orientation of the family and the Islamization of domestic work and technology to elevate the perceived value of housework and align it with Islamic principles. Kausar’s vision for women’s empowerment is deeply rooted in serving Allah and promoting Islamic teachings, aiming for justice, peace, and success in this world and the hereafter. Kausar critiques various schools of feminism, such as Psychoanalytic Feminism, Existentialist Feminism, and Radical Feminism, and contrasts them with Islamic perspectives on women’s empowerment.

5.3.1 Equality

According to Kausar, one of the important concepts that Islam has brought to the human society is its proclamation of the equality of women and men. Such equality is regarded as one of the first principles of Islam. Its philosophy of equality is rooted in its conception of the very creation of man and woman from a single soul. The Qur’ān says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ﴾

O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul.²³

Thus, the Qur’ān declares how the equality of man and woman lies in the origin of humanity itself.

²² Zeenath Kausar, “*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Direction towards Islamization*,” 35.

²³ Qur’ān,4:1.

5.3.2 Equality in Education

Kausar raises a pertinent question regarding the provision of education for women in contexts where either equal education is denied to them, or they are not as encouraged to pursue education compared to men. She identifies the underlying reasons for this issue in Muslim societies, writing:

The strongest argument for this tendency is concerned with men's economic responsibility. Islam has of course assigned the economic responsibility to men, not to women. But does Islam reduce education to nothing but economic reasons? Was the first revelation to our last Prophet (PBUH), "Read in the name of Allah who created," revealed for an economic mission, or was it to make man read and understand the purpose of his creation, thereby to make mankind understand it and fulfill it?²⁴

Kausar emphasizes the fact that Allah SWT did not send the 'revelation' to the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) so that he should read and understand the message of the oneness of Allah SWT and convey this message to people to increase their knowledge about the world around and the creation of human beings, arrangement of their foods and everything only for their financial needs and their satisfaction. Allah SWT put great emphasis in the Qur'ān that human beings should acquire education so that they should recognize the oneness of Allah SWT and increase their understanding of things as much as possible which would help them to understand Allah and His creation better and would follow the injunctions of Allah SWT in all aspects of life, and also promote them to establish justice, peace and success for all for here and hereafter. Kausar writes:

The Islamic philosophy of education is linked with its philosophy of man's creation: to perform the vicegerency of Allah SWT. Hence, both men and women are exhorted to pursue more and more knowledge to fulfill the purpose of their creation. If education also serves an economic purpose, it cannot be isolated from the ultimate purpose of creation. Even the fulfillment of the economic purpose in Islam is directed to the ultimate purpose of creation. Hence, education can in no way be confined to the economic purpose alone. Although the economic responsibility is assigned to men, women should be given as better educational opportunities as men. Better and appropriate education can liberate her from the misconceptions about herself.²⁵

²⁴ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Direction towards Islamization," 35.

²⁵ Ibid. p,110-111.

Kausar raised questions on the two types of education: Secular type of education and the Muslim Madrasa type of education.²⁶

Kausar critiques the secular education system for its Western-centric approach, which heavily leans towards secularism and employs Western methodologies. A key issue she highlights is the exclusion of God and Biblical Revelation from the Western education framework. Instead of viewing Biblical Revelation as the primary source of knowledge, this system prioritizes human reasoning and sensory perceptions as the means to acquire knowledge across various subjects and disciplines. This implies that knowledge is derived from human theories such as rationalism and empiricism, developed independently of divine guidance.²⁷

In contrast, the Muslim Madrasah system of education is fundamentally different. Madrasahs focus on the Qur'ān and Sunnah, making a direct comparison with the Western education system is difficult. However, Kausar notes that many Madrasahs, if they teach subjects from Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Medicine, Technology, and other disciplines, do not do so based on the philosophy of Islamization of knowledge.

While the Western perspective emphasizes material development in education, the Islamic perspective emphasizes recognizing the oneness of Allah SWT and understanding the uniqueness of His creation. This includes following and promoting the teachings of the Qur'ān and the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to establish justice, peace, and success in this world and the hereafter.

Kausar's unique emphasis on these points, coupled with her advocacy for the equal education of women, distinguishes her as a Muslim scholar with a distinctive perspective and approach.

Along with a detailed discussion on the development of education for women, Kausar asserts the need for the establishment of a Centre of Women Studies. She writes:

There is an urgent need for a center of women's studies where the study of woman should be undertaken (1) from a multidisciplinary approach,

²⁶ M. Mumtaz Ali, *"Islamization of Modern Science and its Philosophy, A Contemporary Civilizational Discourse,"* (International Islamic University, Malaysia, IIUM Press, Gombak, 2016),36.

²⁷ Ibid.

and (2) from the perspectives of different worldviews. The methodologies should be critical and creative from Islamic perspective so that the stance of the West and other traditions on woman may not only be explored but also critically examined. All these should come under the theoretical and conceptual study of Woman.²⁸

The need for the establishment of an International Islamic Institute for women's empowerment was recognized after the Fourth World Conference of Women (FWCW) in Beijing in September 1995. However, Kausar had already identified the need for a Center for Women's Studies months before this conference in 1995.

In addition to this, Kausar proposes several formal and informal institutions for women within families, including intellectual orientation of the family, Islamization of domestic work, Islamization of technology, bed-to-kitchen Islamization, heart-to-heart communication, children's Islamization, round table talks with children, and home seminars, among others. For the intellectual orientation of the family, Kausar advocates for viewing the family as an informal educational center where all members can learn from each other. This approach does not require transforming the home into a formal, serious intellectual environment but rather integrating basic knowledge that complements formal education in schools and universities.²⁹

5.3.3 Equality in Political Participation

History bears witness that as early as the period of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Rightly Guided Caliphate, the blessed women of Islam performed various works of legislative, advisory, executive, and judicial nature. According to Kausar, the political participation of Muslim women needs to be discussed in detail. The whole discussion into three subdivisions: (1) general political participation, (2) participation in jihad, and (3) women as leaders of the state. She prefaces historical survey with the following Qur'ānic verse:

²⁸ Zeenath Kausar, *"Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization,"* 113.

²⁹ Zeenath Kausar, *"Women Between Family and Workplace: Islamic and Feminist Perspectives,"* (2000), 45,

﴿فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَمَلِنِمْ مِّنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أَنشَىٰ بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ فَلَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَأُخْرِجُوا مِن دِيَارِهِمْ وَأُودُوا فِي سَبِيلِي وَقُتِلُوا وَقُتِلُوا لَا أَكْفِرُنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ وَلَا دَخَلْنَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ثَوَابًا مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ حُسْنُ الثَّوَابِ﴾

And their Lord responded to them, never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another. So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed - I will surely remove from them their misdeeds, and I will surely admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow as reward from Allah, and Allah has with Him the best reward.³⁰

Ibn Jarir al-Ṭabarī explains that this verse was revealed as a response to the supplications of the believers, particularly those who had suffered for the sake of their faith. Allah promises them that He will not let their good deeds go to waste, whether they are men or women, as all believers are part of one another.³¹

Thus, there is no discrimination by Allah between men and any of their work, including Hijrah and jihad. The rewards from Allah women based on their works, not on their gender.

5.3.4 Equality in Employment

Regarding women's equal right to employment, it is important to understand Islam's stand on the economic responsibility in the family. As stated in the Qur'ān:

﴿الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ﴾

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.³²

According to Kausar, Islam assigns the main economic responsibility in the family to men, freeing women from this duty. However, this freedom from economic responsibility does not mean that women are subjugated or subordinated to men. Unlike the feminist conception of economic dependence leading to male oppression and domination, in Islam, a woman's economic dependence on men strengthens the marital relationship. It fosters a sense of mutual responsibility, selfless love, and intimacy between husband and wife. Moreover, if women can positively contribute to

³⁰ Qur'ān, 3:195.

³¹ Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī (Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān), Jild (Vol.) 7, Saḥḥah, 235-236.

³² Qur'ān, 4:34.

society while adhering to Islamic principles, Islam does not discourage them from working.

5.3.5 Equality Versus Identity

According to Kausar, it is crucial to address the discussion of equality between men and women within the framework of Islamic principles. Although feminists of various perspectives have advocated for complete equality between men and women, practical challenges arise when implementing these ideas into law. For instance, if men and women are treated the same in all situations, issues such as the special needs of pregnant women emerge. This leads us to consider the question posed by Rosemarie Tong: What system can establish equality while maintaining inherent differences?

Islam provides a comprehensive solution to this problem. In Islam, women enjoy equal status with men, but the differences between the two genders are acknowledged and respected.

The Qur'ān states,

﴿وَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ﴾

And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women.³³

This verse highlights the balance between equality and the recognition of differences.

Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of treating women with kindness and respect, saying,

«أَكْمَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِيمَانًا أَحْسَنُهُمْ خُلُقًا وَخَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِنِسَائِهِمْ خُلُقًا»

The most complete of the believers in faith is the one with the best character among them. And the best of you are those who are best to your women.³⁴

³³ Qur'ān, 2:228.

³⁴ Muḥammad bin Eīsā Tirmazī, *Jami` at-Tirmidhi* (Lahore, Maktaba Rehmaniyah, 1998), Vol.1, Book, 7, 1162.

In Islam, equality does not mean identical treatment but rather equitable treatment that respects the unique roles and needs of both men and women. This approach ensures that the dignity and rights of women are upheld while acknowledging their distinct characteristics and responsibilities.

5.3.6 Equality and the Right to Own Property

According to Kausar, in Islam, women have always retained their legal right to own property, even after marriage. Islam grants women distinct legal rights to earn and possess property, engage in business, and pursue other financial activities independently of men. This legal independence ensures that women can own and earn property without any male interference. The Qur'ān and Ḥadīth clearly states,

﴿لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ وَسَأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا﴾

For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of His bounty. Indeed, Allah is ever, of all things, Knowing.³⁵

The saying of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) as narrated by Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh (RA), emphasizes the duty of providing food and clothing in a fitting manner to those under one’s care. This teaching carries profound significance in both Islamic ethics and social responsibility.

«عن جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ: ... وَهَنَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَزَقُهُنَّ وَكَسَوَهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ.....»

Jābir ibn ‘Abdullāh (RA) narrated that the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) said: "Their rights upon you are that you should provide them with food and clothing in a fitting manner."³⁶

In contrast, in the West, feminists have had to fight for these legal rights for married women. Historically, men in Western societies often exploited women and deprived them of their basic needs and legal rights. Thus, the struggle for legal equality in the West reflects the challenges women faced in achieving the same level of legal independence that Islam has long provided for women.

³⁵ Qur’ān, 4:32.

³⁶ Muslim, Kitāb al-Hajj, Bāb Hajjah al-Nabiyyi, vol. 2, 886. Hadith no. 1218.

5.3.7 Views on Marriage and Family

A Marriage in Islam is based on faith (*imān*) and is regarded as one of the signs of Allah SWT because the bound of love that marriage creates strengthen the family institution. The Qur'ān says:

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

And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought.³⁷

Authentic ḥadīth emphasize mutual respect, love, and kindness between spouses, such as:

«عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مِنْ حَقِّ الزَّوْجِ عَلَى الزَّوْجَةِ أَنْ سَالَ دَمًا وَفَيْحًا وَصَدِيدًا فَلَحَسَتْهُ بِلِسَائِهَا مَا أَذَتْ حَقَّهُ»

From Abū Hurayrah, he said: that the Messenger of Allah said: The example of a husband's right to his wife, if blood and pus flows, and his wife licks it with her tongue, then she has not fulfilled her husband's rights.³⁸

According to Kausar, marriage is not an obstacle to a woman's self-development, as feminists often perceive it; rather, it is an essential union for the balanced development of both man and woman. In Islam, becoming a wife does not mean becoming a servant to a man. The relationship between husband and wife is not one of master and slave, as some feminists wrongly assume. Instead, it is a partnership based on mutual respect, love, and cooperation, where both individuals support and enhance each other's growth and well-being.

﴿هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ هُنَّ﴾

They are a clothing for you and you are a clothing.³⁹

In Islam, a woman does not lose dignity or respect in getting married to a man and does not lose her individuality. Similarly, Kausar illustrated that mothering in

³⁷ Qur'ān, 30:21.

³⁸ Abū 'Abdillāh al-Hākim Muḥammad ibn 'Abdillāh ibn Muḥammad al-Naysābūrī, al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Ṣaḥīḥayn (Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al- 'Ilmiyyah, 1990), Kitāb al-Birr wa al-Ṣilah, Bāb wa Ammā Ḥadīth 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr, vol. 4, p. 189, Ḥadīth no. 7324.

³⁹ Qur'ān, 2:187.

Islam is not looked upon as a job, a career, or an awful burden to be overthrown. On the contrary, it carries the highest honour in human life! The Qur'ān says:

﴿وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَلَدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَى وَهْنٍ وَفَصَّلَهُ فِي عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَلَدِكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ﴾

And We have enjoined upon man [care] for his parents. His mother carried him, [increasing her] in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning is in two years. Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination.⁴⁰

Imam al-Ṭabarī explains that this verse means:

“We commanded mankind to be dutiful to their parents and to treat them with kindness. Allah informs mankind of the hardships that a mother endures during pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing.”⁴¹

Kausar says, it is obvious from this Qur'ānic verse that Islam fully recognizes the mother's highly responsible work of childbearing. This responsible work, though difficult, is honourable and not disgusting. It is based on love, affection, innate concern, and profound care, all the values which can neither be paid by the state nor shifted to professionals or communal centres, contrary to the demands of the feminists.

The problem of the double workload is quite interesting. When women were not allowed to work outside, they demanded the right to work; when they were allowed to take on outside work, they complained about the double workload. The problem lies in their thinking that unless they go out and earn something, they will not enjoy a position equal to that of men. To overcome this supposed inequality, they prefer to go to work outside and take up any profession. When they find difficulty in tackling both indoor and outdoor work, they blame the husbands, or the society, or even the state. Thus, one problem follows the other while the root problem remains unsolved. They also fail to realise that even their different solutions/advancements in reproductive technology, the abolition of families, or the like, are likely to bring other, more serious problems. However, Islam has its own approach towards the solution to such problems.⁴²

⁴⁰ Qur'ān, 31:14.

⁴¹ Tafsir al-Ṭabarī (Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān), Volume 20, 176.

⁴² Zeenath Kausar, “Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization,” 116.

Kausar's analysis suggests that Islamic society operates as a dual-sex society with a fair division of labor between men and women. Men are entrusted with the primary economic responsibility, but this does not render women devoid of responsibilities. Women are entrusted with the crucial role of guarding their chastity and managing the family's possessions in the husband's absence, when he goes to work. This division ensures that both men and women have distinct but complementary roles, contributing to the overall harmony and balance of the family and society. The Qur'an says:

﴿فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ﴾

So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard.⁴³

The ḥadīth regarding a wife who refuses when called by her husband to his bed is as follows:

«عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: إِذَا دَعَا الرَّجُلُ امْرَأَتَهُ إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ فَأَبَتْ فَبَاتَ غَضَبًا عَلَىهَا لَعَنَتَهَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ حَتَّى تُصْبِحَ»

From Abū Hurayrah, he said: The Messenger of Allah said: If a man calls his wife to his bed and she refuses, and thus he spends the night angry with her, the angels continue cursing her till the morning.⁴⁴

Another important point to note here is that both men and women in Islam have the responsibility of carrying out the Islamic mission towards humanity at large. Hence, whatever they may do inside or outside the family it should confirm to this responsibility. It is necessary for women to identify the capabilities that Allah has given them so they can contribute their services towards His cause in an efficient way. Kausar's analysis highlights the complementarity in the assignment of responsibilities to men and women in Islam. Both genders have reciprocal obligations towards each other, and their roles are honored and acknowledged. Housework is valued equally, and a Muslim woman, even if she does not contribute financially, is respected.

⁴³ Qur'ān, 4:34.

⁴⁴ Al-Bukhārī, Kitāb Bad' al-Khalq, Bāb Idzā Qāla ahadukum: Amin wa al-Mallikah fi al-Sama, vol. 4, 116. Hadith no. 3237. Other numbers in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: Hadith no. 5193 & 5194. See also Muslim, Kitāb al-Hajj, Bab Tahrim Imtina'ihā min Firāsh zaujihā, vol. 2, 1059. Hadith no. 120-(3-436), Other numbers in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim: Hadith no. 122-(1436). See also; Abū Dawūd, Kitāb al-Nikah, Bab P Haqq al-Zauj 'ala al-Mar'ah, vol. 2, 244. Hadith no. 2141.

However, if women can work outside the home and can manage their housework with mutual understanding from their husbands, they are free to do so. But if such work becomes burdensome, they need not continue, as the primary economic responsibility lies with men.⁴⁵

Additionally, Kausar emphasizes that both men and women in Islam share the responsibility of carrying out the Islamic mission towards humanity. Therefore, whatever they do, whether inside or outside the family, should align with this responsibility. Women must recognize the unique capabilities that Allah has given them to contribute effectively to His cause.

Allah says:

﴿وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾

The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and establish prayers and give zakāh and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those – Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.⁴⁶

It is therefore necessary for women to identify the capabilities that Allah has given them so that they can contribute their services towards His cause in an efficient way. As stated in the Qur’ān:

﴿وَلَا تَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ لِلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِمَّا كَسَبْنَ وَسَأَلُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا﴾

And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of His bounty. Indeed, Allah is ever, of all things, Knowing.⁴⁷

Kausar explains that it is crucial for men to encourage women and extend their fullest cooperation in every way. Unfortunately, such encouragement and cooperation are rarely found in many Muslim societies. Men often expect women to engage in superficial and trivial conversations rather than discussing important issues. Developing a culture of intellectual discourse within the family is necessary to prevent women and children from becoming intellectually alienated from men. This will

⁴⁵ Zeenath Kausar, “*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*,” 117.

⁴⁶ Qur’ān 9:71

⁴⁷ Qur’ān 4:32

enhance women's social consciousness about various problems and motivate them to participate intellectually. Such participation will, in turn, contribute to the balanced upbringing of children.

5.3.8 Patriarchy

A big number of Muslim scholars use the term patriarchy for Muslim family often mistakenly referring to the verse of the Qur'ān, 4:34:

﴿الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ﴾

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.⁴⁸

Ibn Kathir explains:

“Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given some of them more strength and responsibility over others, and because they are required to spend from their wealth on their wives and families.”⁴⁹

The term ‘*qāwāmūn*’ is often used in misleading terms, as ‘superior,’ which makes men are superior to women and women are inferior to men. But, the term, *qāwāmūn* is related to the word, ‘*qama*,’ meaning to stand; to take care as overseer. It is not acceptable to make a ‘caretaker,’ a superior person over any person.⁵⁰ A caretaker, in context with family is one who is given a responsibility to take care of women and children. There is a difference between the word, responsibility, and superiority. Responsibility is not superiority. It is necessary for a responsible person to perform his duties through consultation with others in the family and work with mutual understanding; not through forcing and imposing his orders on others as dictator assuming himself as superior and his wife as inferior to him. As far as the term, patriarchy is concerned, it is clarified above that it denotes absolute rights of a masculine man over women and children with no consultation and no coordination whatsoever.

Kausar disagrees with the term’s patriarchy, absolute rights of men over women, and matriarchy, absolute rights of women over men. Kausar underlines that

⁴⁸ Qur’ān, 4:34.

⁴⁹ Tafsir Ibn Kathir (Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm), Volume 2, 292.

⁵⁰ Fathi Othman, “Muslim Women in Family and the Society,” 47-48.

Islam gives no place to patriarchy or matriarchy because Islam teaches its believers, shura, meaning, consultation. She writes:

We disagree with the use of this term in the context of family and society in Islam. The term in the Western political thought and feminist political philosophy has negative connotation of absolutism and authoritarianism, whereas Islam emphasizes the method of Shura (consultation) in all socio-political institutions including family. (Qur'ān 42:38; 65:6; etc.). Hence, even though male is made in-charge of the females and children in the family, he cannot become sole authoritarian or despotic. It is necessary for him to take suggestions and seek opinions from the rest of the family members to reach to a decision on any given issue. Therefore, the institution of family in Islam is neither patriarchal nor matriarchal in nature, rather consultation, (*shura*-based).⁵¹

On certain crucial issues concerning women their rights and status Islam is against patriarchy both in family and in political institution in family.

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

And of His Signs is that He has created mates for you from your own kind that you may find peace in them, and He has set between you love and mercy. Surely there are Signs in this for those who reflect.⁵²

﴿هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ هُنَّ﴾

They are clothing for you, and you are clothing for them.⁵³

﴿أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِنْ وَجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُّوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ﴾

Lodge them where you are lodging, according to your means, and do not press them, to restrict them.⁵⁴

﴿وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلَى سَفَرٍ وَلَمْ تَجِدُوا كَاتِبًا فَرِهْنَ مَقْبُوضَةً فَإِنْ أَتَى بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا فَلْيُؤَدِّ الَّذِي أُؤْتِيَ أَمْنَتَهُ وَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ رَبَّهُ وَلَا تَكْتُمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ وَمَنْ يَكْتُمْهَا فَإِنَّهُ آثِمٌ قَلْبُهُ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ﴾

And if they both desire weaning through mutual consent from both and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them. And if you wish to have your children nursed by a substitute, there is no blame upon you if

⁵¹ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization," 75-76.

See also: Qur'ān, 42:38; 65:6.

⁵² Qur'ān, 30:21.

⁵³ Qur'ān, 2: 187.

⁵⁴ Qur'ān, 65: 5-6.

you give payment according to what is acceptable. And fear Allah and know that Allah is Seeing of what you do.⁵⁵

Kausar then stresses that if family does not follow system of *shura* and ignores mutual interaction and cooperation, then that kind of a family may turn into patriarchal family and even a mini monarchy. She writes:

However, this institution of family can become patriarchal or can even be reduced to a mini monarchy if there is no consultation, no interaction and no communication between male and the rest of the family. Here, one should comprehend the difference between family in Islam and family in Muslim societies in general which may not be necessarily Islamic.⁵⁶

5.3.9 Political and Social Institutions

Kausar critically analysed the views of these political philosophers and then she presented Islamic stance referring to the Qur'ān on the position of woman in family and society and asserted that unlike these known Western thinkers, who portrayed women incapable of any good position in family and society, Islam blessed woman a dignified position of love and mercy in family and an active position in society. Kausar referred to the Qur'ān in this connection.

﴿وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ يُرِيكُمُ الْبَرْقَ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَيُنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَيُخْرِجُ بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ﴾

And among His signs is this that He created. For you mates from among yourselves, that ye may. Dwell in tranquillity with them and He has put love. And mercy between your (hearts). Verily in that are signs for those who reflect.⁵⁷

Furthermore, she also referred to the Qur'ān concerning the equal rewards Islam assigned to both men and women based on their righteous deeds, not since gender difference, which shows Islam is against female discrimination.

﴿مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهٗ حَيٰوةً طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ﴾

Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will

⁵⁵ Qur'ān, 2:233.

⁵⁶ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization," p.76.

⁵⁷ Qur'ān, 30:21.

surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.⁵⁸

﴿وَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ﴾

And due to them [i.e., the wives] is like what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable.⁵⁹

This thoughtful Hadith highlights the essence of true righteousness in Islam, emphasizing that Allah does not judge people based on their outward appearance or material possessions but rather on the sincerity of their hearts and the righteousness of their actions.

As far as the socio-economic and political participation of women is concerned, Islam unlike these Western political thinkers, Islam does not find women incapable of any participation in society. During the period of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) and the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, (RA), women companions (RA) participated in several social, economic, and political fields and they were never stopped; rather they were fully appreciated. Kausar also clarified the general misconception among people that Islam stands against any outside participation of women. Thus, a careful study of her one-chapter, Western Political Thinkers, and Islam, in her book, Women in Feminism and Politics shows that Kausar strongly stands for women's empowerment; but it is obvious that her acceptance is based on Islamic perspective, not otherwise.⁶⁰

In her chapter on Feminist Political Theory and Islamic Response, Kausar explored various schools of Feminism critically and presented Islamic responses on them. Before exploring liberal feminism, Kausar invited our attention on the 17th and the 18th century Liberalism. She points out that though it is said that liberal feminism is inspired by liberalism, but there were some liberal thinkers who never supported the rights of women.⁶¹ Just to give an example, Rousseau who greatly influenced liberalism in his own way and strongly stood for the full participation of men in politics, he disagreed with the participation of women in politics. Rousseau presented his theory of education in his work, Emile wherein he presented Emile and Sophy, children for their rights on education. According to him Sophy should be given

⁵⁸ Qur'ān, 16:96.

⁵⁹ Qur'ān, 2:228.

⁶⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions toward Islamization," 1-28.

⁶¹ Ibid. p,33-34.

different education from Emile because Sophy must perform her duties as an obedient wife of Emile and devoted mother of their children.

However, Emile should get such an education that he should emerge with the qualities of courage, justice, temperance so that he could perform a dynamic role in the state. An interesting point to see here is that it was the same time when a Known women's rights activist, Mary Wollstonecraft was writing on the rights of women and raising her voice against female discrimination. Wollstonecraft produced her renowned book, *Vindication of the Rights of Women*. In this book, she bitterly criticized Rousseau's female discrimination for education. She argued that both men and women are equally capable of attaining same education. Women are intentionally trained and forced to think that they are less intellectual than men. She also argued that even if Rousseau desires that Sophy should be educated only to be a good wife and a good mother, the kind of education that Rousseau suggested for Sophy would not be least fitted for her even in that position as a wife and daughter.⁶²

5.4 KAUSAR'S CRITIQUE OF CERTAIN ISLAMIC FEMINISTS FROM QUR'ĀNIC PERSPECTIVE

Kausar's critique of few Islamic feminists to a known protagonist of Islamic feminism, Amina Wadud. Wadud is an American Muslim presently serving as a visiting Professor at Indonesian Consortium for Religious studies.

Wadud in her book, *Qur'ān, and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from A Woman's Perspective*, seems fully appreciating the complementary roles that are assigned to women and men in the Qur'ān based on their gender differences. Wadud writes:

The Qur'ān does not attempt to annihilate the differences between men and women or to erase the significance of functional gender distinctions which help every society to run smoothly and fulfil its needs. In fact, compatible mutually supportive functional relationships between men and women can be seen as part of the goal of the Qur'ān about society.⁶³

However, Kausar how just after this, Wadud refers to the same compatible gender roles of men and women as 'patriarchal' in nature. Wadud writes: With regard to some practices, the Qur'ān seems to have remained neutral: social patriarchy,

⁶² Ibid. p, 32-34.

⁶³ Amina Wadud, "*Qur'ān and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from A Woman's Perspective*," (Oxford University Press, 1999),8.

marital patriarchy, economic hierarchy, the division of labour between males and females within a particular family.⁶⁴ This clearly shows the contradiction in Wadud because just few words earlier, she welcomes compatible gender roles of men and women in the Qur'ān, and soon later she perceives complementarities in terms of 'patriarchy.' Then, Kausar invites the attention of the readers to the question presented by Wadud on behalf of some women activists:

Some women activists today openly question this neutrality. Why didn't the Qur'ān just explicitly prohibit these practices? If the evolution of the text and its overall objective is consumed under one albeit important-aspect of social interaction, say consciousness rising about women, then the Qur'ān is made subservient to that aspect, rather than the other way around.⁶⁵

Kausar firstly gives her remarks on these words of Wadud, this style of Wadud is objectionable; no matter she raised this question on behalf of others, because it raised doubt on the Qur'ānic stance on the patriarchal Arab society.⁶⁶

Kausar then elaborated fully the term, patriarchy referring to the Divine Right Theory of Robert Filmer and mentioned few classical Western political thinkers who also presented exceptionally low images of woman. Then, Kausar explained how Islam is way above these contentions on woman which Filmer and earlier political thinkers like Aristotle, Rousseau and others have portrayed about woman. She asserted that the very meaning of the term Islam, 'complete willing submission to Allah' goes against the term, patriarchy. Kausar also explicated that Allah SWT specifically intimidated in the Qur'ān that Allah SWT created human beings as His 'vicegerents.' She expounded the difference between 'subject' and vicegerent.' She writes in the case of Islam, men and women are regarded as vicegerents of Allah SWT. Hence, when men and women follow a head of any institution as vicegerents of Allah SWT, be a family or a state, they follow the head if the laws and the rules and regulations do not contradict the injunctions of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. In this

⁶⁴ Ibid,9.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Zeenath Kausar, Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or It Conveys that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy, in Islamic Perspective Journal, (Centre for Sociological Studies in Cooperation with London Academy of Iranian Studies, (LAIS), Volume 18, Winter, 2017), 67.

way, even here the submission is to Allah SWT, not to man, because the ultimate authority and sovereignty rests with Allah SWT alone.⁶⁷

Unlike what Wadud says that the Qur'ān remained neutral to patriarchy, Kausar explicitly illustrated historical examples showing how the Qur'ān stood against patriarchy at all levels and brought a revolutionary change in the Arab patriarchal society. For example, female infanticide was rampant in the Arabs; females were perceived as sex-objects, as rattles in the hands of men; women were inherited by men as their own property with no consent from them; women enjoyed no safe and secured place and no rights in family and outside in society. Islam came forward with its basic texts the Qur'ān and the Sunnah and rejected and removed all these atrocities that women faced all their lives. Kausar presented much more examples than these and then raised the question: "Then on what basis, Wadud claims that the Qur'ān remained neutral to the Arab patriarchal society? The Qur'ān accomplished de-patriarchization of Arab family and society both in conceptual and practical terms."⁶⁸

Here, it seems important to recall Badran who claimed that Islamic feminists have taken the challenge of promoting the Islamic stance on patriarchy explaining that there is no patriarchy in Islam. Badran specifically referred to Wadud that she could accomplish this task and attracted many Muslims towards this Islamic stance on patriarchy. She writes, it was left to the Islamic feminists of the late 20th century to develop a systematic discourse on gender equality in Islam that embraced equality inside the home and disentangled patriarchy from Islam. Wadud's hermeneutic work revealed patriarchy as un-Islamic and established a Qur'ān philosophy of gender equality throughout the public/private spectrum, that is, in family and society as well as within the holistic ummah.⁶⁹

If what Badran says is correct, how could patriarchy. Above cited book of Wadud that she finds the Qur'ān neutral to patriarchy. Hence Kausar raised a basic question, when Wadud says that the Qur'ān is neutral to patriarchy, what does it convey? Does it convey that she is calling for a non-patriarchal interpretation of the

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p, 70.

⁶⁹ Margot Badran, "Re/placing Islamic Feminism." Available at https://www.sciencespo.fr/ceri/sites/sciencespo.fr.ceri/files/ci_feminism_iran_mb.pdf (accessed March 4, 2023).

Qur'ān or it conveys that the Qur'ān is patriarchal?⁷⁰ Kausar contends that Islamic feminism is in fact calling Muslims towards feminism through creating confusion among them on patriarchy and Islamic position on patriarchy.

Confusion surrounds Wadud also on the concepts of equality, equity, and complementarities. In her popular book, *Gender Jihad*, she writes I do not adhere to a definition of equal that requires some feigned sameness to be applied. Sameness is extremely illusive and difficult to achieve.⁷¹ This shows that Wadud accepts the distinction between men and women. This is clear in her own words: 'I support the notion of distinctions between women and men unequivocally' and says "I am likewise unequivocal about the notion of egalitarian family."⁷² Hence, Kausar says that it looks as though "Wadud perceives gender equality, as 'equality with difference', which keeps into considerations basic equality of men and women while appreciating their gender differences and some of their resultant gender roles which naturally complement each other."⁷³ But later in an interview, Wadud makes fun of complementarities. She declares, we must look for equality. We cannot get confused. Equity means to the complementary. It is like a man who wears an unfinished dress.⁷⁴

These words of Wadud contradict her views which she described in her book concerning equality and equity. Hence, Kausar raised few significant questions on the issues, if she agrees with certain gender arguments, why she disagrees with certain gender roles which complement men and women each other? If she defines equity in terms of complementary, and equality in terms of equal humanity, don't we need both 'equality' and 'equity'? Are not men and women 'equal' in terms of humanity but different identically in terms of biology to complement each other?⁷⁵ After raising these critical questions, Kausar makes a subtle and smart remark on Wadud applying

⁷⁰ Zeenath Kausar, *Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or It Conveys that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy*, 79.

⁷¹ Amina Wadud, *"Inside the Gender Jihad: Women's Reform in Islam,"* (One World Publications, 2006), 155.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or Does It Convey that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy," 78.

⁷⁴ Amina Wadud. Interview by Azzurra Meringolo. "Portrait of a Muslim Feminist," *Dialogues on Civilizations*, January 21, 2013. <https://www.resetdoc.org/story/amina-wadud-portrait-of-a-muslim-feminist/> (accessed August 4, 2024).

⁷⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or Does It Convey that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy," 78.

the same word ‘unfinished’ used by Wadud, but the reality is that demanding equality for women while ignoring different identities of men and women that enable them to complement each other seems to be an unfinished identity of woman.⁷⁶

Wadud also says that she is an ally to the LGBTQI. She said this in an interview, by some means this latter bit of information was deeply moving for me, because it also expected me to give up my privilege to ignore sexual range. Thus, it should come as no surprise when matters moved forward to where I could function as an ally to the LGBTQI Muslims who have only in the past few ages begun to form establishments focused on the right to self-proclaim both their sexual and Muslim identities.⁷⁷

Wadud shows her deep concern for the LGBTQT people and visits them regularly which is clear from her words: “I am currently in Cape Town South Africa at a Queer Muslim International Retreat. Next month I will go to Jakarta Indonesia for a workshop focused on the same agenda: reform in Muslim communities towards the lives of dignity for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, Queer and Intersex Muslims. It has been a long road, and the end of the struggle is nowhere in sight. Still, there are important developments worth noting.”⁷⁸

The Qur’ān presented the story of the community of the Prophet Luṭ (AS) who indulged in such sexual transgression and continued their lust even though the Prophet Luṭ (AS) warned them against it and finally Allah SWT sent a storm of stones over them and destroyed them totally. The Qur’ān says:

﴿وَلَوْطًا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِّنَ الْعَالَمِينَ إِنَّكُمْ لَأَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ وَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَتِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّتَطَهَّرُونَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا امْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَأَنْظَرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَذَابَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ﴾

Do you realize you practise an indecency of which no other people in the world were guilty of before you? You approach men lustfully in place of women. You are a people who exceed all bounds. Their only answer was: 'Banish them from your town. They are a people who

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Amina Wadud, “LGBTQI Muslims and International Movements for Empowerment,” *Feminism and Religion*, September 20, 2014, p. 6. <http://feminismandreligion.com/2014/09/20/lgbtqi-muslims-and-international-movements-for-empowerment-by-amina-wadud/> (accessed March 4, 2023).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

pretend to be pure.' Then We delivered Lot and his household save his wife who stayed behind, and We let loose a shower [of stones] upon them, observe, then, the end of the evildoers.⁷⁹

This so-called Islamic feminism spread over many countries' world over with similar aims and objectives as presented by Badran and professed by Wadud. Few known names may be mentioned here: Riffat Hasan, Pakistani American; Ziba Mir Hosseini, born in Iran and based in London; Kecia Ali American; Zaine Anwar Malaysian; Irshad Manji, Ugandan born Canadian and many more.

Kausar categorically states:

The over-all image of the Qur'ān depicted in it, (Islamic feminism), is either negative or hermeneutically constructed within the discourse of modernity; and it ignores the epistemological differences between Islam and feminism and overlooks that all the modern western ideologies are inherently laden with imperializing tendency.⁸⁰

According to Kausar, it happened in history of the Muslim world that the truth of Islam remained aside in quietness whenever some false voices are raised to overcome its truth through manoeuvring and manipulating it in whatever way possible. The same thing happened with feminism and the so-called Islamic feminism and feminist moulded women's empowerment. Although it looks that on one side, feminism by itself has been showing its negative implications from the West to the East, and now on the other side, this so-called Islamic feminism is accelerating the problems and confusions over and above. Thus, it looks as though women in general and Muslim women in particular are caught in a deep-rooted precarious circle from where it is too hard to bring them out showing them the truth, the authenticity and validity of Islam. But Qur'ān says:

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾

The truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So, whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unfailing handhold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Qur'ān, 7:80-84.

⁸⁰ Zeenath Kausar, "Islamic Feminism: Is It Calling for a Non-Patriarchal Interpretation of the Qur'ān or Does It Convey that the Qur'ān Remained Neutral to Patriarchy," 79-80.

⁸¹ Qur'ān, 2:256.

On one side she put all her intellectual efforts to renounce falsehood and to stand firm for the truth of Islam. On the other side, she started a comprehensive search to collect in her hands few twinkling stars spread over the sky, shining to show the path of truth to those who are searching for them. She collected some writings of some Muslim scholars who are doubtful and critical of the convergence of Islam and feminism giving rise to Islamic feminism and Kausar find them thoughtful as to whether it should be accepted as an inevitable necessity or do what.

Then, Kausar could get those scholars who reject this term Islamic feminism and assert that they get the inspiration from the Qur'ān to write for the rights of women and for their empowerment, not from feminism, and they do not like to be called as Islamic feminists. These scholars are spread everywhere with no or less connection with each other though they have truly shown their concern on the negative implications of Islamic feminism on Muslim women and firmly stood for Islamic stance on the rights of women and their empowerment. Though they have written less directly on this topic, but they are invited to speak about this topic, and they are interviewed more on this topic.

A few of these Muslim scholars are interviewed mainly to know their views on feminism in general and Islamic feminism in particular; but they intellectually refused to be called as Muslim feminists because they say that they find ideological differences between Islam and feminism, and they do not agree with the convergence of Islam with feminism making it Islamic feminism.⁸² Hence, during this period the popular terms which were used and promoted for the promotion of women's rights were like, liberation of women and emancipation of women. But some of the common arguments promoted by the feminists during this period and even earlier to it were these equal rights for education to women as men, cooperation and coordination between men and women for house-chores and child-care, no discrimination against women in socio-economic and political participation including leadership. Kausar fully supported these arguments based on Islamic perspective, straightaway referring to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.

⁸² Zeenath Kausar, *Islamic Feminism is a Shaky Bridge! Be Firm in Faith and Actions and Avoid Accidents*, in *Radiance Views Weekly*, New Delhi, India, 2016. (Published in 3 Parts) Part I: Vol. LIII, No.48, 28 Feb -5 March 2016, pp.8-12. Part 2: Vol. LIII, No.49, 6-12 March, 2016, pp.22-25. Part 3: Vol. LIII, No.50, 13-19March, 2016, 22-25.

It does not, however, mean that Kausar totally rejects feminism merely pointing it as a Western ideology. Kausar appreciates the scholarly as well as the practical activism of several proto-feminists and early feminists, who spoke, wrote, and even passed through inhuman sacrifices to attain equal rights for women as men for education, for their suffrage rights, for rights to stand for election and leadership position, for all their efforts to stop discrimination and violence in the families and such other problems of women.⁸³

Kausar totally disagrees with feminism when feminists started underestimating family and family related institutions including pregnancy and motherhood. Kausar points out that there are many influential feminists who perceive these institutions as obstacles in the way of the economic and political development of women and therefore they insist that work-outside should be preferred over services in family to what they call, un-paid domestic labour and care-work. Kausar also disagreed with feminism on their promotion of LGBTQI and their stance on 'free-love' with no necessary obligation of marriage, their acceptance and promotion of non-marital reproduction of children at their free will and promotion of different types of families like, single-parent family, cohabitation family with multiple-fertility and such other issues. Obviously, if all these feminist arguments become an inevitable part of women's empowerment, Kausar rejects this sort of women's empowerment which is polluted and desecrated.⁸⁴

Kausar is not only presenting her critical reflections on Westernization and traditionalization in the Muslim world but also trying to present her practical suggestions for Islamization. In both her critical reflections as well as in her suggestion on the problems, her views on women's liberation and empowerment are easily manifested.

Firstly, she emphasizes the close connection between 'thought' and 'action.' One would be surprised reading this because it would be hard to understand the reason as to what made Kausar to write these words on connection between 'thought' and 'action' when the main issues are related to women's issues, their problems, and suggestions for their problems. To develop 'thought' through intellectual orientation, in context with women's issues, Kausar exhorts that women should be liberated from

⁸³ Ibid, 55-78.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

misconceptions about their position and role in family and society. Here, we should see how she used the term 'liberation.' Liberation is generally used in terms of liberating women from discrimination against them. Kausar used the same term liberation to remove misconceptions about women. It is an important point to note, because women cannot attain liberation unless they stand against female discrimination, and they would not stand against female discrimination unless they are made conscious that they are discriminated by men. But they would become conscious about their discrimination only when they are enlightened that they do enjoy so and so rights in family and in social institutions but these rights these Islam-based rights are denied to them giving them misconceptions that they do not enjoy their rights. It means unless women are not given proper education, they cannot be liberated from misconceptions, and it is only then they would fight for their liberation from discriminations. This again shows the connection between thought and action. Kausar writes:

She (woman) must be schooled and trained in the Islamic theory of life in such a way that she will be able to fight successfully and intelligently against un-Islamic ideas prevailing about women in our societies at present. She should also be exposed to the feminist philosophy and the position of woman in the West and in eastern traditions, in order that she can critically appreciate Islam's position on woman.⁸⁵

Another provocative and amusing suggestion proposed by Kausar is her original term Islamization of domestic work. No doubt, quite a few Muslim and Western scholars suggest the cooperation and coordination between spouses in house-chores and in child-care responsibilities. Kausar also fully supports this suggestion. But we find a big difference between Kausar and other scholars in this connection. The first thing she did is, she pointed the crucial reason behind the general under-estimation of the housework among the people and the over-estimation of the work-outside. She asserts that the main cause behind this kind of assumption is secularization. She writes:

We understand that one of pernicious effects of secularization is the division of work into worldly and other worldly or mundane and religious activities. This has influenced Muslim societies as well, particularly the attitude towards domestic work; it is trivialized, and outside work is greatly exaggerated.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Zeenath Kausar, "*Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions toward Islamization*," 109.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 118.

She further elaborates the problem:

The trivialization of domestic work is a methodological problem as well as a disastrous result of secularization. Domestic work is categorized as a mundane activity with only material and ephemeral value. All the divine purpose behind it is completely overlooked or even rejected, due to the duality of the secular approach.⁸⁷

Kausar argues that the western methodology of knowledge and secularization left its deep implications not only in the educational system, but also in the basic unit of society, family, and domestic work. She says that it is surprising to note that very scant attention is paid on this problem. Kausar argues:

It can be argued that, as the Islamization of society is not possible without "Islamization of knowledge," neither is it possible without Islamization of the family and domestic work. In other words, if "Islamization of knowledge" is the first step, for the Islamization of society, then the Islamization for the home ministry (the family) is the second step. Hence, the reconstruction of the society through Islamization of family and domestic work should stand as a challenging task for the Twenty-first Century.⁸⁸

The second important suggestion Kausar proposes is concerned with Islamization of technology and its usage in the house-chores to lessen the time and energy in performing the house-chores. Furthermore, Kausar again highlights the example of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in this connection. She writes:

According to a ḥaḍīth, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself used to help his wives in the housework. He used to cut the meat, lace his shoes, milk the goat, and sew his clothes. Who can be a better model to be followed and obeyed than the Prophet? The same example should be followed by husbands to help their wives as much as possible. The question arises here: when the Prophet is presented as the best exemplar in all areas of life, why not in the capacity of a husband?⁸⁹

Kausar exhorts that the example of the Prophet (PBUH) should be followed to keep family in mutual harmony. Husbands and wives should maintain a pleasant and gentle attitude towards each other right from the bed to the kitchen. She calls it, bed to kitchen Islamization. She writes:

For this, the husbands should emulate the example of the Prophet (PBUH) who was gentle, pleasant, and co-operative with his wives from bed to kitchen as much as possible for him. The husbands therefore

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p, 127.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p, 129.

should try to help their wives as much as possible in the kitchen and in another housework. This attitude is described as "bed-to-kitchen Islamization."⁹⁰

She motivates women to attain women's empowerment to serve the purpose of education behind which is the purpose of life to serve Allah SWT through performing and promoting all His injunctions and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) to establish justice, peace, and success here and hereafter. All her writings speak up this itch inside her purpose of life as ordained in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah.⁹¹

It is important to note here that there are few others who wrote on women's empowerment, and they discussed in South Asian context or on Millennium Development context or from various perspectives.⁹² However, there are differences in approaches between many of these writers and Kausar on the issue of women's empowerment. Firstly, unlike others, Kausar presents her critique on women's empowerment referring to the specific gender perspective which is emphasized in the Platform for Action passed in the Fourth World Conference on Women, (FWCW) in Beijing, in China. Secondly, Kausar points out the ideological connection between feminism and the gender perspective. Thirdly, Kausar presents her critique on women's empowerment, which is promoted as a universal document for women's rights from Islamic perspective and suggests Islamic Action Plan for the Islamic Ummah as an alternative to Platform for Action. This makes a significant difference between other scholars and Kausar on this topic. For this reason, we need to explore her views on different schools of feminism to understand her critique of women's empowerment of FWCW, 1995 which is refreshed every five years in the UN and sent to those member countries of UN who have ratified this document of the UN.⁹³

⁹⁰ Ibid. p, 130.

⁹¹ Muhammad Iqbal (Author), Javed Majeed (Introduction), *"The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam (Encountering Traditions,"* (1st Edition, Stanford University Press; California, 2013),90.

⁹² Srilatha Batliwala, *"Empowerment of Women in South Asia, Concepts and Practices,"* (New Delhi, FAO, Asian-South Pacific Bureau of Adult Education, 1993),32.

⁹³ Kausar, Zeenath. *"Women's Empowerment and Islam,"* 88.

5.5 A QUR'ĀNIC OVERVIEW OF KEY ASPECTS OF KAUSAR'S INTEGRATED ACTION PLAN (IAP)

Kausar presents Islam as a holistic and complete system of life and civilization. It is crucial to recognize the significant influence of Islamic revivalists on Kausar's work. She adopts the methodology of these revivalists, such as Allama Iqbal and Syed Abul Aala Maudūdī, in both her views and writing style. This influence is evident in her approach to various subjects, where she consistently situates discussions within the broader framework of Islam as a comprehensive way of life.

Islamic revivalists typically begin by presenting Islam as an all-encompassing system before delving into specific issues. They aim to convey that every topic, whether it pertains to complex political matters or everyday activities like eating and dressing, is intrinsically linked to the Islamic worldview, way of life, and purpose as outlined in the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. Kausar follows this methodological approach, emphasizing that Islam addresses all aspects of human life across all times and places.

Kausar underscores that Islam entails complete submission to Allah (SWT) and provides a comprehensive system for all domains of life. She stresses that Islam does not recognize divisions such as Male-Islam or Female-Islam, traditional Islam or modern Islam, conservative Islam or liberal Islam, or private Islam or political Islam. According to Kausar, Islam transcends gender discrimination, temporal distinctions, and the dichotomy between private and public spheres. By adopting this inclusive perspective, Kausar highlights the universal and timeless relevance of Islamic teachings in addressing contemporary issues.⁹⁴

Islam cannot be comprehended without understanding the over-arching message of *Tawhid*, Unity of Allah SWT which includes – unity of life, unity of knowledge, unity of the purpose of creation of human beings and all other units of unities presented in the Qur'ān and elaborated in the authentic traditions of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Islam is an integrated and holistic system of life based on *Tawhid*, Unity of Allah SWT, unity of life, unity of knowledge and unity of the purpose of creation of man. The over-arching message of *Tawhid* is this: There is no God but Allah SWT and Prophet Mohammad, (PBUH) is the last Prophet of Allah SWT and that all human beings are obliged to follow the final authentic revelation of

⁹⁴ Ibid, 63-64.

Allah SWT as presented in His revealed text, the Qur'ān, and the Prophetic traditions of the last Prophet, Muhammad, (PBUH), which are referred to as Sunnah. The message of all the Prophets had been the same—There is no God, but Allah and man should follow His guidance sent to him through the Prophets, (PBUH). The purpose of the creation of both men and women is one and the same – to serve Allah (SWT) as vicegerents (*khulaf'ā*) of Allah SWT.⁹⁵

Based on this basic message of *Tawhid*, Oneness of Allah (SWT) and oneness of the purpose of creation, vicegerency, Kausar presented Islam as a comprehensive system of life embracing all aspects of life into a holistic structure. Kausar then emphasises that family in Islam is the basic and primary institution. An important thing to note here is Kausar's definition of family, as a mini civilization.

She writes:

Family in Islam may be defined as a mini-civilisation where all the members of family get basic education including moral education from family, get training in Islamic values of life, develop a disciplined and civilized life while learning and practicing etiquettes of life. Islam presents the whole frame-work of educational, recreational, economic, sexual and all other aspects of family life.⁹⁶

Kausar emphasizes that in Islam, civilization transcends mere art, architecture, literature, and culture that historically develop in a specific region. Civilization, from an Islamic perspective, is not limited to the physical manifestations of buildings, art, languages, and lifestyles, nor is it merely the preservation and development of past ideas by scholars and leaders. Inspired by Maudūdī and Syed Naquib al-Attas, Kausar adopts their broader definition of civilization.

According to Maudūdī, civilization in Islam encompasses more than just material and intellectual achievements. It is fundamentally about the way of life that people adopt, reflecting the depth of their understanding and submission to their Creator. True civilization is measured by how comprehensively people integrate Islamic principles into every aspect of their lives, demonstrating their devotion and obedience to Allah (SWT). Kausar thus stresses that Islamic civilization is a holistic

⁹⁵Ibid. p, 64-65.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

system that influences not only cultural and scientific developments but also the ethical, spiritual, and everyday practices of individuals and communities.⁹⁷

As for Al-Attas, he highlights the connection between the terms – *din* and *tamaddun*. Al Attas contends that when the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) performed *hijrah* from Makkah to Yathrib and the Prophet (PBUH) started promoting *Tawhid*, the oneness of Allah SWT and His injunctions that were revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) through the Qur’ān and when gradually those injunctions were implemented in Yathrib under the leadership of the Prophet (PBUH), then Yathrib was called, Madina, meaning, the civilised city. In other words, according to Al Attas, civilisation is the ‘given place’ where *Tawhid*, the Oneness of Allah and the *din* which Allah SWT sent to the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) for all human beings are established, maintained and promoted.⁹⁸

Based on these explanations of the term, civilisation presented by Mawdūdī and Al-Attas, Kausar emphasises that the term civilisation in Islam differs from the Western definition of civilisation. In addition to this, Kausar insists that family in Islam should not be perceived as a mere union of family members, who eat and interact with each other and at the maximum take care of each other. Kausar emphasises that civilisation in Islam, is, in a ‘given place’, a major unit of people where it is observed that the adherents of Islam give a willing obedience to the Oneness of Allah SWT, His injunctions of the Qur’ān and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in all aspects of life and establish *Khilafāh*, vicegerency and make efforts to promote the message of Islam to establish justice, peace and success here and hereafter; in the same, family in Islam should be also perceived at the family level by all means. In other words, family in Islam should be seen as a basic and primary institution of a society wherein the members of the family give all their obedience to the Oneness of Allah SWT, His injunctions of the Qur’ān and the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) as vicegerents of Allah, and follow all

⁹⁷ Syed Abul Aala Mawdūdī, “*Islamic Civilization: Its Foundational Beliefs and Principles*,” Translated by Syed Akif. (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 2016), 120.

⁹⁸ Syed Muhammad al Naquib al Attas, “*Islam and Secularization*,” (Kuala Lumpur: ABIM, Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia, 1978), 48-49.

these with love, peace, cooperation and coordination with each other to attain the pleasure of Allah SWT here and hereafter.⁹⁹

Kausar further denotes that Allah SWT clearly states in the Qur'ān that human beings are created to be vicegerents of Allah SWT on the earth and therefore it is the responsibility of the adherents of Islam to be the ones who hold the torch of civilisation and promote justice and peace for all. She writes:

Islam invites its adherents to perform and promote Vicegerency through peaceful and educational means. Islam neither believes in terrorism nor in terrorist methods. Islam believes in non-intervention and civilizational-based policies at inter-state and international levels so that justice, peace, and security may prevail at global level.¹⁰⁰

5.5.1 Vision and Mission of Women's Empowerment as Denominated by Kausar

Kausar designates the vision of Islamic Action Plan in these words:

Migration from Unsafe Horizon to Safe Heaven!¹⁰¹

Kausar points out a list of problems women are facing in the present unsafe horizon – series of injustices, anxieties, difficulties, abuse and exploitation, violence, psychological and emotional stress, humiliation, condemnation and discrimination etc. Kausar stresses that women are not born to live this kind of inhuman life. Hence, women should put all efforts to migrate from unsafe horizon to a safe haven. Kausar writes:

Women should rise and change this unjust and unsafe horizon and make all efforts to build a safe haven for all, women, men and children where women as well as men and children can also enjoy justice, security, prosperity, development, peace and happiness and attain success here and hereafter.¹⁰²

Then, Kausar presents the Mission of Islamic Action Plan, IPA in these words:

Performance of Divine Vicegerency with men as Co-Vicegerents of Allah (SWT)¹⁰³

Kausar elaborates it in these words:

⁹⁹ Zeenath Kausar, *“Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action,”* 66.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.p,79.

¹⁰² Ibid. p, 80.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

All efforts would be made to empower women with all the rights and responsibilities as ordained in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic traditions, Sunnah so that women may enjoy justice, security, prosperity, development, peace, and happiness while not impeaching the same rights of men so as to seek the pleasure of Allah swt to achieve success here in this world and in the hereafter for all.¹⁰⁴

5.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Kausar's scholarly exploration into Islam, feminism, and contemporary societal issues provides a nuanced perspective that challenges conventional Western political philosophy through Qur'ānic teachings. By critically engaging with historical figures and contrasting their views with Islamic principles, Kausar highlights the dignified position Islam accords to women within familial and societal frameworks. Her critique of thinkers like Rousseau and her advocacy for equal education and rights for women align with ongoing discussions on gender equality.

Kausar's perspective on women's empowerment is deeply rooted in Islamic principles, advocating for an understanding of women's rights through the lenses of the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. She emphasizes that Islam guarantees equality in education, political participation, employment, and property ownership, aligning with many feminists demands but within an Islamic framework. She argues for an intellectual and spiritual approach that integrates Islamic values, with a vision for women's empowerment intertwined with serving Allah SWT and promoting justice, peace, and success both in this world and the hereafter.

Kausar's approach calls for an integrated, holistic view that respects and upholds Islamic values while striving for justice and equality. Her critique of Western feminism is a call to appreciate and build upon the strengths of Islamic teachings in advocating for women's rights, providing a nuanced framework for understanding and promoting women's empowerment rooted in faith and spirituality. Kausar's work portrays Islam as a holistic life system. The influence Muslim revivalists like Allama Iqbal and Syed Abul Aa'la Maudūdī can be seen in her views. Central to her approach is *Tawhid*, the Unity of Allah, integrating all aspects of life and rejecting divisions

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

within Islamic practice. She emphasizes the family as a “mini civilization,” a primary institution for imparting Islamic values. Inspired by Maudūdī and Syed Naquib al-Attas, Kausar views civilization as a way of life centered on submission to Allah. Her Integrated Action Plan (IAP) for women's empowerment advocates for transitioning from unsafe conditions to a haven, promoting justice, security, and development for all, while respecting men's rights. This approach seeks to align life with divine guidance for success in this world and the hereafter.

As far as earlier feminists' demands are concerned, the rights to equal education, vote, political participation, and property ownership are already guaranteed by Islam. Extreme views on marriage, motherhood, family, and patriarchy are unacceptable. Neither capitalism, communism, nor other philosophies can provide a proper framework for women's liberation, which depends on submission to Allah SWT's guidance. Muslims must remain moderate and reasonable, putting ideals into practice within institutions.

This study critically analyzed Zeenath Kausar's reflection on the empowerment of women within the Qur'ān, Sunnah and *tafāsīr* frameworks and concluded that her position is well-grounded in Islamic scholarship. Her work powerfully advocates for gender justice based on the Qur'ān emphasizing women's rights and empowerment through evaluate of equity, responsibility, and moral integrity. Kausar emphasizes education, political and social involvement, and economic independence for women, which are all Qur'ānic, Sunnah principles that contribute to justice, dignity, and empowerment in a Qur'ānic and Sunnah framework. Referring to her views about Western feminist theory and contemporary Islamic feminist thinking, the current research demonstrates that her mission is clearly Qur'ānic and Sunnah centric. She presents a unique model of empowerment that challenges patriarchal belief and secular feminist expression. In this context, this research successfully achieves its objective of examining the convergence between Kausar's stance and the Qur'ānic and Sunnah visions.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This study explored the views of Kausar on the issue of empowerment of women along with other contemporary Western and Muslim feminist scholars who have written on the subject. It evaluated the Action Plan presented by Kausar for the implementation of empowerment. This study critically analysed the views of Kausar on women's empowerment from the Qur'anic perspective and critical analysis of her contribution to women's empowerment.

Nevertheless, Kausar has analysed various schools of feminist thought beyond the "gender perspective," including "equity feminists" and "pro-family feminists." she identifies a list of problematic issues in gender perspective like blurring equality with identity; perceiving heterosexual marriage as socially constructed; promotion of reproduction aid and reproduction control devices in the name of reproductive health not necessarily through marriage and such others. She suggests that these groups, "equity feminists" and "pro-family feminists" reject certain aspects of mainstream feminism and advocate for women's development and empowerment without overlooking the importance of family. She underscores the need to consider diverse cultural, ideological, and religious backgrounds in discussions on women's empowerment.

The contemporary trends within Muslim scholarship on women's empowerment, juxtapose Western feminist thought with Islamic perspectives. The research shows the potential for harmonizing Islamic values with the global discourse on women's rights, advocating for a nuanced approach that respects cultural and religious contexts while striving for gender equality and women's empowerment within the Islamic framework. This combination calls for continued dialogue, research, and scholarship that bridge Western and Islamic views on empowerment, fostering an inclusive understanding that benefits from both perspectives.

Kausar has been influenced greatly by the Muslim revivalists especially *Allāmah Iqbāl* and *Syed Abul Aāla Maudūdī* which can be seen in her The Islamic Action Plan (IAP). She presents Islam as a complete system of life and civilization.

Nevertheless, Kausar has rejected the views of Islamic feminists particularly Margot Badran and Amina Wadud. Kausar believed that the terms they used such as ‘patriarchal Islam’ and ‘egalitarian Islam’ show that this theory is developed on the Western political mechanism of ‘divide and rule.

The Islamic Action Plan (IAP) presented by Kausar is an Islamic framework to deal with the issues of women’s empowerment. She has emphasized how Islam has historically empowered women and addresses contemporary challenges. Women’s empowerment in Islam is not about rejecting religion or obtaining self-created power, but rather it is about enabling women to exercise their rights as prescribed by the Qur’ān and the Prophetic traditions, the Sunnah.

She has proposed to establish a Think-Tank under the Organization of Islamic Conference. According to her, the nature of this Think Tank would be intellectual and strategic. It shall provide intellectual input and necessary assistance to governments, international organizations, and NGOs by way of providing the latest ideas, policies, strategies, models, and plans for the protection of family in general and the development and empowerment of women in particular. Islamic empowerment promotes peace, progress, and development within the framework of Islamic teachings.

The IAP emphasizes collaboration between men and women to advance Islamic civilization while acknowledging their unique roles and responsibilities according to their gender differences ensuring a harmonious and just society based on Islamic principles. In IAP, Kausar has stressed the necessity for an integrated approach to addressing women’s development and empowerment. In short, Islamic Action Plan (IAP), provides a comprehensive roadmap for the empowerment of women within the framework of Islamic teachings, grounded in the principles of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. Nevertheless, Kausar's legacy continues to inspire dialogue and action towards women’s empowerment rooted in Islamic ethics and values.

Chapter one provided an overview of the research focus on women’s empowerment within the context of Islam, emphasizing the importance of addressing this issue at both national and international levels. It introduced Kausar as a prominent advocate for women’s rights within Islamic discourse, contrasting her views with those of Islamic feminists. The chapter outlines the problem statement, significance of

the study, literature review, research questions, objectives, methodology, and scope of the research, highlighting the qualitative approach and data collection methods employed to explore Kausar's perspectives on women's empowerment in Islam and their alignment with Qur'ānic principles.

Chapter two provided an in-depth exploration of women's empowerment within both Islamic and Western contexts, tracing the historical evolution of feminist movements and contrasting them with Islamic perspectives on gender equality. It highlights key concepts such as women's empowerment, the role of women in Islamic societies, and the intersection of feminism with various philosophical and social movements.

Key points include:

1. **Women's Empowerment in Global Context:** The chapter begins by contextualizing women's empowerment as a significant issue in contemporary global discourse, particularly within the framework of the United Nations and international platforms.
2. **Islamic Perspective on Women's Empowerment:** It outlines foundational principles within Islam that support women's empowerment, including emphasis on education, economic rights, and decision-making within families and communities. However, it also acknowledges challenges stemming from cultural norms and patriarchal interpretations.
3. **Comparison with Western Feminist Movements:** The chapter contrasts Islamic perspectives with Western feminist movements, including liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, and radical feminism. It explores key figures and ideologies within these movements while highlighting their contributions and limitations in advocating for women's rights.
4. **Critique of Western Feminism from an Islamic Perspective:** It offers a critical analysis of Western feminist ideologies and their compatibility with Islamic principles, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach that respects cultural and religious contexts.
5. **Islamic Feminism:** The chapter delved into the complexities of Islamic feminism, examining diverse viewpoints within Muslim scholarship about

women's empowerment. It explored debates surrounding gender roles, patriarchy, and LGBTQI issues within Islamic frameworks.

Overall, Chapter two provided a comprehensive analysis of women's empowerment from both Islamic and Western perspectives, highlighting the complexities and intersections of gender, culture, and religion in contemporary discourse.

Chapter three delved into the life and scholarly contributions of Kausar a dedicated advocate for women's rights within Islamic frameworks.

Chapter four provided a critical analysis of Kausar's perspectives on women's empowerment within the framework of Qur'anic principles, particularly in contrast to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) endorsed at the 1995 Fourth International Conference on Women.

Kausar challenged the central concept of 'gender perspective' within the BPFA, arguing that it conflicts with Islamic principles and societal norms, particularly concerning family structure. She distinguishes between equity feminism and gender feminism, critiquing the BPFA's emphasis on incorporating a gender perspective without providing a clear definition.

The chapter delved into the evolution of the term 'gender' and its contentious definition within the BPFA, highlighting debates among participants and pro-family NGOs during preparatory meetings. Kausar critiques phrases and concepts within the BPFA, such as sexual and reproductive rights, which she believes contradict Islamic values.

Furthermore, Kausar presents the Islamic Action Plan (IAP) for women's empowerment as an alternative to the BPFA. She outlines the goals, objectives, and strategic actions of the IAP, emphasizing the integration of Islamic principles with practical measures for women's progress. Kausar advocates for collaboration between men and women, challenges stereotypes, and proposes strategies for fostering family cohesion and women's advancement within an Islamic framework.

Chapter Five offered a comprehensive analysis of Kausar's views on women's empowerment, highlighting the complexities of reconciling Islamic values with global

initiatives for women's rights and advocating for a balanced approach rooted in Qur'ānic principles.

6.2 FINDINGS

1. Islamic feminism is a spitting image and duplication of Western feminism. There are different schools of thought about feminism.
2. The Islamic perspective on women and their empowerment is a balanced one compared to Western feminists' view on women's empowerment.
3. Kausar suggests an Islamic Action Plan (IAP) for women's empowerment as an alternative to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) endorsed at the 1995 Fourth International Conference on Women.
4. Kausar's perspectives on women's empowerment stems from the framework of Qur'ānic and sunnah-based principles.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Kausar's Islamic Action Plan (IAP) for women's empowerment should adopted by Muslim government institutions with special reference to the constitutions and legal bodies.
2. Kausar's IAP for women's empowerment should endorsed, enacted, and enforced by legal bodies in Muslim societies to keep family and all social institutions from moral degeneration.
3. Muslim NGOs should adopt and introduce Kausar's IAP for women's empowerment into their internal statutes and executive regulations.
4. Kausar's IAP for women's empowerment should include school curricula and syllabuses to educate and nurture the children and young generation about the necessity of empowering women.

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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS & RESPONSES

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Project: Zeenath Kausar's Views on Women's Empowerment: An Analytical Study
from the Qur'anic Perspective

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Background of Study:

Occupation:

Q1. Can you briefly talk about your education journey?

Q2. How did you start your professional career?

Q3. During your educational journey who were the most influential scholars that had an impact on you?

Q4. With regard to women's empowerment, who was the most influential figure who influenced you?

Q5. How much your research on women's empowerment impacted women?

Q6. Can you share your future research directions on women empowerment?

Q7. What are the challenges and hurdles that stay in your way while advocating for women's empowerment?

Q8. How can your academic work contribute to shaping the minds and hearts of the women with the regard to women empowerment?

Q9. Can you share your unique contribution than other Muslim feminist scholars on women empowerment?

Q10. What is gender equity or gender equality and visa- vis women's empowerment?

Q12. What was the urgency of having an Action Plan from Islamic perspective?

Q13. Why is Islamic Action Plan needed?

- Q14. What are the reforms you have brought about with your Islamic-based Action Plan visa-vis the already existed non-Islamic Action Plan with regards of women empowerment?
- Q15. How much impact did benefit international conferences have on you with regards to women's empowerment?
- Q16. What is the approach While presenting a Quranic verse is there any specific approach that you had in your mind?
- Q17. What are the most urgent issues that you emphasize the most in your Action Plan?
- Q18. Why did you disagree with the existing UN plan of Action?
- Q19. What are your suggestions or recommendations have been implemented in research methods, approaches, or procedures on woman empowerment? How successful were they?
- Q20. What has been your role so far in developing research ideas and theories pertaining to women empowerment?

(Completed on 27-11-2023)

RESPONSES TO PART ONE QUESTIONS

Before I say anything on my educational journey, I would like to take the name of Allah SWT and would say that our educational journey would be meaningless if we do not connect it to the ideosyncratic experience of our last Prophet, Mohammad (SAWS) in the historic Cave of Hira where the Angel Jibraeel (ALS) asked him to read and the Prophet could not read for three times and then finally he read:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

أَقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ①

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ②

أَقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ③

الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ④

عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ⑤

Meaning:

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Read in the name of your Lord Who created.

Created man from a clot of congealed blood.

Read and your Lord is Most Generous.

Who taught knowledge by the pen, taught man what he did not know?¹

Indeed, we could neither gain knowledge nor we could read or write anything unless Allah SWT blessed us with knowledge and blessed us with the capability to read and speak. So, it is Allah who created human beings and it is Allah who blessed human beings with knowledge. What was the purpose of Allah for creating human beings and blessing them with knowledge?

The Qur'an says:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

I created the jinn and humans for nothing else but that they may serve Me.²

The purpose of Allah Almighty to create human beings and to bless them with knowledge is nothing but to serve Allah Almighty through following His injunctions which are presented in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet, Mohammad (SAWS) and to promote them in this world to establish justice and peace for all and thereby to attain success here and hereafter.

So high is the purpose and significance of knowledge in Islam! It is further elaborated in the Qur'an when Allah SWT raised the following question:

﴿قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ﴾

Ask them: "Are those who know equal to those who do not know?" Only those endowed with understanding take heed.³

At some other place, the Qur'an says that those only stand in awe of Allah who are knowledgeable.

﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ غَفُورٌ﴾

From among His servants, it is only those who are knowledgeable that they stand in awe of Allah. Verily Allah is Most Mighty, Most Forgiving.⁴

¹ Al Qur'an, Surah, Al Alaq, 96:1-5.

² Al Qur'an, Surat Adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:56.

³ Al Qur'an, Surah Az Zamur, 39:9.

⁴ Al Qur'an, Surah Fatir, 35:28.

I would like to make it very clear in the very beginning that the main reason for presenting the above verses of the Qur'an here is to emphasize the fact that I try to adhere to the Qur'an on the purpose of life and the purpose of education which I see closely related to each other. You will find that I tried my best to emphasize this purpose when I presented you with my educational journey.

The next point which I would like to keep before you is the deep connection of my educational development with my parents and my family background because I see their deep impact in me. Well, even here you would see the close connection between what the Qur'an said on the purpose of life and education with what I attained from my parents and my family members. Insha Allah.

I, Zeenath Kausar was born in Hyderabad in 1957 in the capital city of Telengana state in South India. My father, Late Maulana Maqbool Ahmed Jamaie was born in Sialkot, Punjab, before the partition of India, presently part of Pakistan on 28th May, 1902. He was originally a Kashmiri Rajput because one of his ancestor was a revert to Islam in Palgadh, Kishtwar, in Jammu and Kashmir. His previous name was Khushhall Singh and after accepting Islam he was called Sheikh Ahmed. Later he migrated from Kashmir to Sialkot and then all his generations settled in the Kashmiry neighbourhood of Sialkot exactly where Allama Mohammad Iqbal, the Poet philosopher of Islam was born and settled with his parents. His father, (my grandfather), Sheikh Fazluuddin was a close friend of Iqbal and his mother, Karim Bibi, (my grandmother) was a close friend of one of Iqbal's sister. There was also a close relationship between these two families. Iqbal's niece (in Urdu, Bhatiji), the daughter of his elder brother (Sheikh Ata Mohammad) was the wife of my father's uncle, (younger brother of his father), aunt, (in Urdu, *chaachi*).⁵

My father was proficient in Arabic language and had expertise in the Qur'an and Hadeeth studies being Alim-e- Fazil from Madras University, and was a double graduate from Jame Milliyah Islamiyah, JMI, Delhi and Oriental College University,

⁵ All this information is given by my father in the Preface of his book on his poetry, Kalam-e-Maqbool. I wrote and published two articles on him in Urdu and English in Newspapers and Magazines of India where his family life and his contribution to India as a freedom fighter are presented. See: Zeenath Kausar, 75th Independence Day of India and the Most Crucial Agenda: No Communalism, Only Patriotism (A Short Profile of A Muslim Freedom Fighter — Maqbool Ahmed Jamaie), Counter Currents, Kerala, India, 11th August, 2021.

Lahore, Punjab. ⁶He was a strong freedom fighter of India, who was persecuted and jailed and he passed through a lot of sacrifices during the independence of India till 1947. And after independence, he offered several political and social services to the country till his death in 1963. He was multi-lingual who was well-versed in seven languages including Arabic, Persian, English and other languages of India. Being a prolific writer who published several articles in different magazines and newspapers comprising 700 pages excluding his manuscript on his own Urdu Poetry, entitled, *Kalaam e Maqbool*, and an eloquent speaker, he could not settle in one place for a long period of his life and was always asked to shift from state to state to promote Hindu-Muslim Unity. ⁷For the same reason, one of his mentors, Abul Kalam Azad, the prominent Muslim freedom fighter of India and the first Education Minister of India asked him to travel South of India and he did so and finally settled in Hyderabad. He was thus associated with Indian National Congress on one side and with Jamiat –e- Ulema Hind on the other side as one of its leaders. Jamiat –e- Ulema Hind is one of the leading Islamic organizations of Muslims in India. During his last years in Hyderabad, he was a versatile figure --- always elected as the Municipal Councillor with majority votes; was the President of Muslim Orphanage; (earlier to this he held the whole responsibility of the Muslim Orphanage in Kerala) and he was the (Khateeb), narrator of sermons on Fridays in a historical mosque.⁸

Another important role he played all his life wherever he stayed in India was to speak concretely against (shirk), meaning, associating anyone with Allah SWT. He spoke against it in the mosques and in all public gatherings explaining Muslims that it is one of the big sins which Allah SWT never forgives. He would explain the issue referring to various related verses in the Qur'an and few authentic traditions of the Prophet Mohammad (SAWS). The Qur'an says:

Verily, Allah forgives not the sin of setting up partners in worship with Him, but He forgives whom He wills sins other than that. And whoever

⁶ See Zeenath Kausar, A Short Profile of a Muslim Freedom Fighter — Maqbool Ahmed Jamaie), in Radiance View Weekly, Delhi, 21—28 August 2021.

⁷ See: Zeenath Kausar, 75th Independence Day of India and the Most Crucial Agenda: No Communalism, Only Patriotism (A Short Profile of A Muslim Freedom Fighter — Maqbool Ahmed Jamaie), Counter Currents, Kerala, India, 11th August, 2021.

⁸ See: A Short Profile of A Muslim Freedom Fighter — Maqbool Ahmed Jamaie), in Radiance View Weekly, Delhi, 21—28 August, 2021.

sets up partners in worship with Allah, has indeed strayed far from the path.⁹

If you join others in worship with Allah, then surely all your deeds will be in vain, and you will certainly be among the losers.¹⁰

Unfortunately, during the time he lived, (shirk) was very popular in many parts of Indo –subcontinent. Thing is there are some Muslims in India and other places even today who do (shirk). Here we need to understand one thing clearly. There were a number of well-known Islamic scholars, who were generally referred to as saints, who were not only greatly learned in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, but were strictly practicing Muslims and were best examples of their pious life. They may be referred to as saints only in this sense of their understanding and practicing the messages of the Qur'an and the Sunnah nothing more than their deep Islamic thought and their Islamic practice because in Islam there is no such thing as nominating and canonizing them as we find in the Roman Catholic Church. But, unfortunately some Muslims believe that these Muslim saints bear some extraordinary favour from Allah SWT so much that people can ask any favour from them even if they are dead and these saints can grant these people whatever they seek from them because these saints get direct help from Allah SWT. This kind of thinking and practice is (shirk) because here they are the people themselves who created such practice and it is never said to them by such pious saints by any means. This is a self-created concept and practice of some Muslims and there are some Hindus who also join with such Muslims. This is totally rejected in Islam because it is like association of some human beings with Allah as though they are getting help through human beings through Allah SWT.

On this issue and many more I heard from my mother, my elder siblings and people who liked and benefitted from his talks that this was the methodology of my father to go to the Qur'an and few related authentic Prophetic traditions on any topic or any critical and sensitive problem and explain and elaborate fully and leave it to people with dua'as that they may understand and follow the message of the Qur'an. He would never force people to follow him; but he always took keen interest listening to the questions and queries of people and would give them sufficient time talking and elaborating them. My mother used to say that specially after every Friday prayer when

⁹ Al Qur'an, Surah A Nisa, 4:116.

¹⁰ Al Qur'an, Surah Az Zumar, 39:65.

he would come back home he would be surrounded by the people. He always had a number of Qur'anic exegeses with him kept ready in the house. The moment people asked anything, there he would be ready answering to them opening the relevant verses of the Qur'an. For instance, on (shirk) he would sit with people in the drawing room taking the Qur'an and would refer to the verses:

Who is there that can intercede in His presence except by His permission?¹¹

You alone do we worship, and You alone do we ask for assistance.¹²

I heard from my mother and several people that hundreds of Muslims left (shirk) in Hyderabad and several states in Indian sub-continent who heard his talks on the importance of Tawheed, Oneness of Allah SWT, and the rejection of (shirk) in Islam.

Besides all these, Abbaji being an ardent lover of Iqbal's poetry presented the poetry of Iqbal and his own poetry in Urdu in different Mushaeras (Symposium of Urdu Poetry) in India. Thus by the grace of Allah SWT, my father proved to be an eminent figure who contributed a lot in various fields educational, lingual, social, cultural and political, all as a Muslim intellectual and activist. Alhamdulillah.¹³ May Allah accept all his services to the society. Ameen.

My mother, Aiesha Begum, the third wife of my father, was a family – devoted lady from Calicut, Kerala and belonged to Islam –devoted family of Calicut, who got married when she was a brilliant student of Intermediate and a champion of badminton. But the rest of her life she offered full cooperation to her extremely active husband and took care of her seven small children; became widow in a very young age and passed away on 2nd September, 2017.¹⁴ Though she only knew her local language Malyalam and English, but she learnt Urdu during her stay in Hyderabad and left no stone unturned in bringing up all her children with Islamic understanding and

¹¹ Al Qur'an, Surah Al Baqarah, 2:255.

¹² Al Qur'an, Surah Al Fatiha, 1:5.

¹³ Zeenath Kausar, (in Urdu), Ummeed Ka Aek Paygham, Jashn e Aazadi ke Moqe Par, in Awami News, Calcutta, India, 15th August 2021.

¹⁴ I wrote and published an article on her life which came in 4 parts in Radiance, Views Weekly, Delhi. I wrote on how she trained us to lead a civilized life. See: Zeenath Kausar, Follow Up of Madinah: Families Lead to Islamic Civilization, in Radiance Weekly, 2018, (published in 4 Parts), Vol. LV No. Vol. 41, 7-13 January 2018 Pp. 25-28; Vol. LV No. 42, 14-20 January 2018 Pp. 24-28; Vol. LV No. 43, 21-27 January 2018 Pp. 25-27; Vol. LV No. 44, 28 January-3 February 2018 Pp. 22-25.

Islamic culture, high education and good morals. Since I was small when my father passed away, it was my mother who bought few children books for me and taught me English and English poems. Even today when I see a sparrow outside, I remember how my mother taught me the spelling of sparrow ---- say s-p-a-r-r-o-w= Sparrow. I remember she used to make me sit in the (*Aangan*), courtyard of our house, and would make me sing--- Sing Sing Sing! Sing Mother Sing! Can Mother Sing? Mother can sing.

We were very small, she emphasized that we should always keep strong faith and trust in Allah SWT for every minor or major problem, and she made us by-heart the following verses of the Qur'an:

﴿حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ﴾

Sufficient for us is Allah, and [He is] the best Disposer of affairs¹⁵

﴿حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ﴾

Allah is sufficient for me; there is no god but Him. In Him I have put my trust. He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne.¹⁶

When we grew little more, she took care of our 5 times Salaat. She would even watch when we are standing for salaat and reading surahs, how we are keeping our legs --- whether we are standing straight or bending our legs becoming lazy.

Reading the Qur'an with a teacher; praying Salaat properly five times a day; playing outside in the evening; eating meals three times and taking a glass of milk everyday were the routines she would supervise without fail. She was so loving and caring even with her step – children and her grandchildren that we all called her with a single term, Mamma, as the 'loved one'. Even when she grew old, she always kept a smiling face, and she followed her nature to serve others with extra hospitality. Her grandchildren would go around her talking about their school and college activities and she would enjoy listening to them and would encourage them to go for higher education. Out of too much love and intimacy, they would go to her saying --- Hello Smart, how you are today, and she would laugh and hug them.

She visited Malaysia and we took her to several picnic spots, and different places, including mosques and malls she liked the country very much because she saw

¹⁵ Al Qur'an, Surah Al Imran, 3:173.

¹⁶ Al Qur'an, Surah at Tawbah: 9:129.

in Malaysia the natural beauty of Kerala so much. She would enjoy the kind of bananas and jackfruits here in Malaysia coconut trees and different types of fish, and she would remember Kerala, enjoying all these. Besides these, she became so excited seeing the Malaysian-styled female garment for salaah Telekung and Serong. She said women in Kerala wear the same garments for salaah. Then we talked about one of the theories according to which Islam came to Malaysia through the Malabar seacoast, because in olden times people from Kerala liked to come here shipping for trade in spices and presenting Islam – doing da'wah. Another exciting thing was, that we brought her to our university and took her around and brought her to the office of Prof. Mumtaz and my office and she was very happy to see our books there and she offered prayers there for barakah. In short, her stay in Malaysia was extremely beautiful and memorable for us. We heartily pray for her *maghfirah* and a high place in Jannatul Firdose. Ameen.

I already mentioned that my father passed away when I was small. So, the credit for getting me admitted to school, I owe to my eldest brother-in-law, Syed Mazharul Hasan, husband of my eldest stepsister, Amatus Salam, a very loving lady indeed. (By the way, I used here the commonly used term, 'stepsister' only to let you know that she was the daughter of my second mother while I have my own eldest sister, the first daughter of my mother. That's all. I have never seen my mother nor observed among our brothers and sisters making any kind of differentiation with each other as we find some kind of biased attitude in some families.) Well, so my mother asked my brother-in-law to get me admitted to any nearby school. We used to call him Bhaie Miya. My mother used to say that Bhaie Miya regularly visited our family during the lifetime of our father and my father loved him as his son due to his very loving nature and his interest and respect in all the versatile pursuits of my father. So, Bhai Miya admitted me to school in late 1963 in KG 2. It seems when he took me for KG1, the class was full and there were no seats. So, I was admitted in KG 2 if a little time later I would get back place in KG 1. But due to my mother's excellent schooling, I proved to be well fitted in KG2 and remained there and came first in the Class. Bhai Miya was a noble, well-educated and the kindest person of our whole big family. We remember him as the one who would visit our family every day when my father passed away to know how he could help my mother and my (Appi), my eldest sister, Rahat Iqbal, and my (bhayya), my eldest brother, Khalid Iqbal who were

themselves in school – going age – one in the 12th standard and one in the 9th standard. So, Bhai-Miya was very dear to all of us. As we grew, we would also ask him questions on several problematic issues and when we had to write an essay on any topic. I remember I was in the 9th standard, and I had to write a small essay on Israel and Palestine historical wars. Now that we are watching the news on the worst fatal wars, a genocide which Israel is imposing on Palestinians and killing mercilessly even women and children, I remember a little bit what all Bhaie Miya explained to me about the historical Arab and Israel wars in the past.

An important point I would like to say here is, that Bhai -Miya would feel extremely happy with our serious interest in school exams and school performances, essay writing, and our participation in elocution competitions. I was always greatly impressed with him the way he would listen to us with full attention and appreciated us. Thing is, in our whole family, all our siblings in general had this sort of weakness in us that we would like to hear a lot of appreciation from our elders whoever would visit us; then only we would feel happy and satisfied. We hear from people in general that it was since we missed the fatherly love and care in our childhood since he passed away soon when we were young. Among all of us, my eldest sister Appi, my elder brother Bhaijan and I were the ones who suffered mostly from this weakness. I remember that I would keep my prizes that I attained from my school at one place as a stock for months together and then whoever would visit us, and whatever they would be talking on any issue, it made no difference to me. I would bring all my prizes and would keep before them and I would expect that they should not only look all of them, rather they should give each prize in my hand taking my name Zeenath Kausar, First Prize, first in English; Zeenath Kausar First Prize First in Maths and so on... No one ever showed any objection nor found it boredom; rather all would enjoy my drama with fun and laughter, saying good words to me. Believe me, even today when I remember those innocent days of mine, I get re-motivated to work hard and try to do many good things in life.

So, I wanted love and encouraging words always and I enjoyed a lot from Bhai Miya for my educational development. Maybe it would be hard for some people to believe that I got a dream of Bhai Miya in the night when I was here in Malaysia. He asked me in the dream: Zeenath you are supposed to come to meet me before you leave; why you did not come. Did you forget? I replied to him: Bhai Miya How could

I forget you ever? You are the one who admitted me to school. I met you before coming here few days before but during our departure it was too hectic so I could not come and see you again. When I got up in the morning, I had to rush for my classes in the University, but the dream was in my eyes. Soon when I finished my class and came back to my office, I got a phone from my maid (helper) to my office and she said she received a phone from Hyderabad, India that Bhai Miya passed away and it was 23rd September 1996. I always remember him and pray him: Oh, Allah Almighty, please bless him a high place in Jannatul Firdoze. Ameen.

Point to note here is that neither my father nor my mother was born in Hyderabad as mentioned above. But it was Abul Kalam Azad, the predominant freedom fighter of India and the first Minister of education in India who asked my father to visit South of India to settle issues of Hindu-Muslim communal rights during that period soon after independence. He toured Kerala and Madras and then came to Hyderabad in 1948 for this purpose and here he was asked to settle down for some time.¹⁷ In Hyderabad from 1948 to 1993 till his death, he was so much engaged in political and social activities that he could not pay any attention for the financial resources of his family, and he passed away suddenly due to heart failure on 14th July 1993, at the age of 61. My elder siblings were just school going young children and I and my youngest brother and sister were just kids. In such a crucial situation, it was our maternal uncle, elder brother of my mother, Mohammad Abdul Qadar who stood for us all his life. He held some good position in Military, and he took our financial responsibility for our education and overall wellbeing of our family. Our uncle, whom we called Military Mamu, not only used to send us money - order every month but would spend his yearly vacation with us to give us moral strength. This noble and kind person was so close to me that I would remain with him very close while eating and outing and everything. I called myself his Personal Assistant, (PA). I used to write his name in my school notebooks as Zeenath Kausar, PA to Military Mamu. He loved and encouraged us in our education and used to supervise our salaah whether we were praying on time and would hear the English translation of the Qur'an. He used to take

¹⁷ My MPhil dissertation was on Abul Kalam Azad. I presented the dialogues between Azad and my father on his insistence that he should make an immediate tour to south India. At that time, my father was in Seoni, Madhya Pradesh. I also discussed here Azad's political thought and his immense contribution for the freedom of India. See: *Islam and Nationalism: An Analysis of the Ideas of Azad, Iqbal and Mawdudi*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1994; Second Edition in 2008.

me to a beautiful near-by garden every evening during his vacation in Hyderabad. All his life he gave us financial, moral, and spiritual support till he passed away in 1988. However, gradually, my eldest sister Rahat Iqbal and my eldest brother Khalid Iqbal started working and helped us. As time passed, my elder brother Rashid Mahmood and elder sister Talat Iqbal completed their graduation, first degree and they also cooperated with each other taking jobs and supporting the family. I, and my youngest brother, Nasser Masood and youngest sister Nikhat Shama were given full opportunity to continue our higher education.

Another big name in our family who also paid full brotherly cooperation to us was my brother –in-law, Ahmed Khalid Khan, whom we called Khalid bhai --- husband of my own eldest sister, Rahat Iqbal. I was very small when my sister got married and I never wanted that she goes out from our house and stay in her in-law's house. I would literally cry stopping her and our brother –in-law from going back their home whenever they would come to meet us. Then it became a duty of Khalid bhai that every weekend he should come and take me to his house till late evening and then he would leave me back home. I became very close to him and used to discuss with him everything I liked to do of my own interest, and anything related to my school and later in my college. I remember that I used to keep a lot of questions in my mind on various subjects to ask him and he would not only answer me to my entire satisfaction rather would say good words to encourage me --- that you would go very high in education and would do a lot of good things in your life.

Once when I was in the 10th standard, I read in our history class book --- Moghul History in India, where I read that one of the great Kings, Aurangzeb was not only cunning but was also biased against Hindus and that he created a lot of problems for the Hindus. All these critical comments touched me badly and I opened all the questions before Khalid bhai. He explained to me how some part of Muslim history is fabricated by some biased scholars to present a negative picture of the Muslim history. I was so happy to hear from him that Aurangzeb was a great good Muslim ruler, and it was deliberately told about him whatever I read about him and heard from my history teacher. But at the same time, I became very sad and thoughtful as to how young students are given wrong pictures in schools on Muslim history and how such books are published which do not give right and true education to young students. Khalid Bhai told me that we should never accept any such negative picture that is

portrayed in some books on Muslim history, or any other subject and we should be critical and try to find out from different sources if we get such kind of information. Later I realised that it was in a way I learnt from Khalid Bhai critical thinking from Islamic perspective and the initial stage of the philosophy of Islamization of knowledge.

Yes, even quite earlier to this class, I think I was in some Middle school, I remember, I learnt from him about Allama Iqbal in simple but reflective way. We had in our house good collections of Quranic exegetes, books on Allama Iqbal and on other subjects. I could hardly understand what those books were about; but personally, I used to keep them clean and tidy from dust and keep them properly arranged time and again. One day I took out a small book of Iqbal from there which looked very nicely published with just two big poems of Iqbal in them. At that very moment Khalid bhaie entered our house as usual to know things about us – how are we doing etc. He saw this book in my hand and took from me and asked me: Do you know about this book? I said: “no”. I said I just picked it up from Abbaji’s stock of books. Khalid Bhai said it has two renowned poems of Allama Iqbal here --- Shikwah and Jawab –e- Shikwa, meaning, Complaint and Reply to the Complaint. Then almost all my elder and younger brothers and sisters sat to listen to Khalid bhaie with all interest. He told us how Iqbal was seriously thoughtful and concerned about the Muslim Ummah and its neglect of Islamic message in the Qur’an and the Sunnah which became one of the main reasons of the present decline of Islamic civilization. Earlier in the past when Muslims worked hard to follow and promote Islam, they were the best in education, in sciences, in politics and every field. But when Muslims become careless and headless towards Islam and started neglecting the message of the Qur’an and the Sunnah and started following the Western thought while losing their self-confidence in Islamic message and thought, they started falling from their previous highest position to the low position.

Then Khalid bhaie said that generally Muslims who are not thoughtful they could not understand that the main reason behind the degeneration of Muslims is their own self-created problems, their own thoughtlessness and heedlessness towards Islam. Hence Allama Iqbal wrote these two poems to make Muslims conscious of their own recklessness of Islam which led to the decline of Islamic civilization. Keeping all these into consideration, Iqbal in the poem Shikwa, Complaint, presented the

Complaint of Muslims to Allah SWT as to why Allah SWT has stopped looking at the Muslims and their problems even though they were the Muslims who believed in Allah SWT and His book of guidance. Muslims also complained against Allah SWT that He seems good to those who never believed Him and were against Him. So, in Shikwah, Iqbal presented the sorrowful complaint against Allah to Allah Almighty.

Khalid Bhaie then said that when Muslims started reading this poem, Shikwah, some of them felt that Iqbal rightly said to Allah SWT how we are so neglected from Allah these days whatever be the reasons because after all we are the Muslims, and we should always remain in better and higher position than others. Some said according to Khalid bhaie that Muslims have no right to complain against Allah. Iqbal should not have made Allah angry for our issues. We should remain content to whatever position we are. Who are we to complain against Him? There were few who could understand the message behind this poem of Iqbal, Shikwa. After that Iqbal presented the next poem on the same issue as Jawab -e- Shikwa, Reply to the Complaint. Here Iqbal what? Here Iqbal put the reply of Allah SWT to the people on their complaint against Him. Here Allah SWT says that it is quite wonderful that you present your complaint against Me so good and asked Me why I am overlooking you all, though you keep faith in Me, in my Oneness, and you respect my book of guidance and keep it in the highest place in your shelves and respect the teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (SAWS). But you people only know how to complain against Me with no least realisation as to what you are talking with no slight self-assessment. All what you talked about all what you did in the past for Me, were your elders, not you. They were fully conscious of their obligations towards Me, and they were the true lovers of the prophet Mohammad ready to follow his teachings. They just never kept the Qur'an in the highest of their shelves only as a sign of respect. They were fully preoccupied with following it and implementing it. They were always ready even to sacrifice their lives whereas you are totally absorbed only in material development and socio-political positions for their own selves without ever being thoughtful what is the purpose of your life and how you should be thoughtful of following and promoting Islam for the good of the people, for justice and peace for all. So, Allah Almighty said in Reply to the Complaint that I have not neglected you; rather you have neglected what I sent to you through the last Prophet of this world, Mohammad. Hence, Allah SWT said that the moment you turn to the message of the Qur'an and to the teachings

of the Prophet Mohammad (SAWS), He would turn towards you and restore the high position to you. Allah said that they just need to follow Him and the Prophet Mohammad (SAWS); then they would find that they would achieve a high position.

I listened to Khalid bhaie attentively and it looked to me that each word is penetrating inside my heart and jolting me from inside. I started asking him several questions, one after another. Interesting thing was that he answered some of my questions and then he asked me to think on my own what the problems Muslims are facing in contemporary times and why and how they could be resolved. I was happy with his questions and with least hesitation I started giving my answers to his questions and he was happy to hear them adding a lot more to my answers bringing early Muslim history. He then told me that I should continue thinking and asking questions with no hesitation and said that this is how I can understand things better and would do things better. I became happy listening to him but at the same time became sad thinking about why and how the Muslims are moving in such a negative direction and what should be done to bring back Islam to its original landmark.

It was the first time when Iqbal and his thoughts were so systematically explained to me in my early teenage. From that moment all my life I continued reading and understanding Iqbal in whatever and however way possible and got further motivated in my work. Though I - hearted Iqbal's Dua'a for children - Lab Pe aati hai duwa Ban Ke Tamanna meri, when I was hardly 7 or 8 years old, but after listening to Khalid bhaie on Iqbal's poetry, his poetry became an internal part of my life and thought. However, I should say that during my very young age itself, perhaps, when I was somewhere between 6 to 7, I heard from my elder siblings, Bhaijan and Choti Appi, (who were also just in early teen age) that Abbaji was proficient in Iqbal's philosophy of Khudi, his poetry and thought and that Dadaji was a close friend of Iqbal, and the house of our ancestors was close to Iqbal's house and we had some relationship with his family. But only after listening to Khalid bhaie on Iqbal, Iqbal's thought became an ever-re-freshing source of inspiration for me all my life. Hence, I can never forget the deep impact of Khalid Bhaie on my educational and intellectual development. May Allah bless him with a high place in Jannatul Firdose. Ameen.

I should say at least few words here on my elder and younger siblings without whose love, care and whole-hearted cooperation and coordination, our life would not

have been well-organized, proactive, and beautiful. At some other place, on some other occasion, perhaps I would write on them which have been some glorious moments of my life. Here I would just touch upon few points. We are altogether four sisters and three brothers, Alhamdulillah. My eldest sister, Rahat Iqbal was in the 12th standard when my father passed away. She was not only one of the brilliant students of the class, but she was also the Head of the School. Abbaji wished for her that she should go very high in the educational field and in leadership. But my sister had to stop her education abruptly and took some small teaching jobs to support the family. She was the one who took care of us in all our issues of life and she and her husband Khalid bhaie stood for all of us as pillars to support us in all aspects of life. Specially, their moral and physical support for me, my husband and our children were just incredible. When we were studying in Aligarh Muslim University, (AMU), doing our M Phil and PhD, we had to come back to Hyderabad for delivery for my three children one after another and for this purpose we stayed for several months in my mother's house and sometimes in the house of my sister Rahat Iqbal because the kind of moral and physical help we needed we could enjoy from them. While staying in these houses, we continued writing our chapters quite often, because they not only took care of us, but also could also took care of our babies with all love and full attention. Though my father-in-law, Mr. Mohammad Mahboob Ali and my mother-in-law, Mrs Mahboob Bee were very kind and loving people, but they were old in their age and could not help us. My husband, Mumtaz had no sisters, and had all four elder brothers with big families of many children. They were/are also loving and quite supportive, but they could not give us so much time we needed for us and our babies because we were students and had three small babies. But the best thing from these families was, that none from them, --- from my in-laws and from my own family, heard any objection or any negative critical comment on us that we were continuing our studies with three small kids one after another while also being engaged in doing some da'wah work. So, coming back to the point, the eldest sister, Rahat Iqbal, and her husband, Khalid bhaie played an exemplary role for us during our educational development indeed. May Allah SWT keep both in a high place in Jannatul Firdose. Ameen.

The same were the sacrifices of my bhayya, Khalid Iqbal who also had to leave his school to help us. He tried to get a job in Hyderabad but could not get

anywhere. Hence, he left for Bombay and spent his very young teenage life in Bombay and helped all of us with our day-to-day life and education. He would visit Bombay at least twice a year to give his physical and spiritual support and would supervise all the family matters and fully satisfy our mother and all of us. I should mention here that I started getting proposals for my marriage when I was in the first degree, BA. But I made it clear to my mother and my elders that I would after BA, I would enter Masters and while doing it, if I get any proposal that is suitable for me and the person and his family are ready for me to continue my higher education and to the level of PhD and then I would continue my work in Islamic movement as well then I would accept that proposal; nothing less than all these conditions. In the beginning, my mother my eldest sister, and bhayya told me that they agreed with my opinion, but soon later they were worried and kept before me several proposals coming mostly from well-educated persons who were in very good positions in Saudi Arabia, and they could keep me in a better position. It was the time when Bhayya came back from Bombay to be shifted to Saudi Arabia for a better job. I was very close to bhayya and I convinced him that I was not rejecting the proposals altogether, but I wanted to make sure that I got the right person. Bhayya, Appi, and Khalid bhaie asked me in front of my mother what kind of proposal should they accept. I said without least hesitation this: I am interested in going for higher education and want to be active in Islamic movement activities and I am interested in intellectual life and would try to do things following big Islamic thinkers. Hence, I would accept one who is doing these things that I want to do and would be interested that his wife should be doing the same so that I should not find problems later in my married life. Further, I added to give them an example that they are getting proposals where the persons would provide me comfort of big houses and sofas and carpets and maximum, they would also let me read the translations of the Qur'an and be self-content with it. I totally reject this kind of life. I do not simply want to read some books and exegetes of the Qur'an and be happy with these things. I want the full implementation of these things which require a lot of hard work mentally and practically. You would be surprised to know that all including my mother fully agreed to what I said and Bhayya told everybody, to let her continue her studies and get the right proposal suitable for her and nobody simply forced her on this issue anymore. He said he would be leaving the country for Saudi Arab and in his absence, Khalid Bhaie would take the responsibility to investigate the proposals, and based on my preference decision would

be taken after informing him. My mother Appi and all others willingly agreed to what Bhayya said and thus I got relief from non-stop proposals coming for me because now all clearly understood my preference which though looked a lot different from generally girls of my age aspired for. Here you would see that not only I was different from others in what I asked for, rather my mother and all my siblings agreed peacefully. I have witnessed that mostly the brothers wanted to get their sisters married as soon as possible to be relieved from the responsibility, particularly in the absence of the father. But in my case, Bhayya, who had been working and helping us since his very early teenage, showed no objection and fully supported me. He then left India and when I was preparing for my second year of Master, I got a proposal from the family of Mumtaz who was doing his M Phil for his PhD and was one of the pioneers of the Islamic movement even as a young student, I agreed with this proposal. Khalid bhaie took the whole responsibility under the overall guidance of my Military Mamu because both of my brothers Bhayya and Bhaiejan were outside in Saudi and the marriage took place under the prayers of my mother and fully taken care by my sister Appi because my elder sister, Talt Iqbal was also in Saudi. After some time when all my siblings visited Hyderabad, they all liked Mumtaz and congratulated me with prayers for selecting the suitable person of my choice. Bhayya always treated us like our father till the end of his life. I wrote a small article on him after when he passed away as a token of appreciation and it was published in the Daily Urdu Newspaper of Hyderabad.¹⁸ I pray to Allah SWT to bless him a high place in Jannatul Firdose. Ameen.

My elder brother, bhaijan, Rashid Mahmood and elder sister, Choti Appi, Tanat Iqbal completed their first degree, one in BSC and one in BA and could have continued their higher education because they could have easily got admission for Masters being the best students. But they decided to provide financial cooperation to their eldest sibling who sacrificed their own education and enabled them to complete their first degree. Bhaijan worked in India for some time and later he got a good job in RMCO Company in Saudi Arabia. After some time, he also got married and got

¹⁸ See: Zeenath Kausar, Zindagi Aamad Bara – e -- Bandagi: Zeenath Kausar Ka Apne Bade Bhaie Khalid Iqbal ke Liye Khiraj –e- Aqeedat, Urdu, Daily News Paper, Siyasat, Hyderabad, 27th October 2019.

children, but continued to support us. One of the most important characteristic features of bhaijan has been his keen interest in performing salaah, in understanding the Qur'an, becoming part of Islamic movement activities, and by-hearting several poetic verses of Allama Iqbal. I learnt how to offer salaah from him and started taking part in the Islamic movement through him and it is he who improved my writing and speaking skills in English. He is the one who edited the first poem that I wrote in English which was accepted and appeared in my School Magazine. There is still a lot to say about his motivation for my educational and intellectual development which is not possible to deal here due to limited space, though I will be throwing some light on him below when I will speak on my elder sister, because both complement each other. My all prayers go for him for his sound health and long proactive social life which he is continuing with the same dedication. Amen

My elder sister, Talat Iqbal also played a unique role in my educational development in her own way. In fact, I can say that my elder brother, Bhaijan, and my elder sister, Choti Appi are like 'two peas in a pod'. They are collateral and complement each other in a similar way as Appi, my eldest sister, and Bhayya, my eldest complement each other. In a way, we had two sets of 'two peas in a pod'. This is something like pre-destined from Allah SWT because it was like a well-planned arrangement in the absence of our father. Abbaji was called by Allah SWT leaving His young wife and small children on their own under His protection alone. It is Allah SWT who made these two sets of siblings so cooperative and coordinative with each other that people around and the friends of my mother would be wonder-struck seeing them. Masha Allah. So, I closely observed that when my eldest siblings would be fully occupied in settling our monetary and other issues of life, my elder siblings would sit together in our drawing room and would talk together on the salaah performance of three of their young ones, I and my younger brother and sister, and our educational progress and our moral behavior. Besides all these, they would discuss how to keep our house thoroughly clean, neat, and tidy, and also good looking adding some decorative vases, hand-stitched tablecloths, sofa cushions, and curtains of the doors all prepared by sister, Talat Iqbal. Not only these, I remember I used to join my elder siblings at a very famous Nampally Public Garden to select and get green crotons and flowering plants to grow in the flowers to grow in the small home-garden of our house. Yes, it was these two 'peas in a pod' who not only gave a beautiful name – ---

Maqbool Ashyan to the house, rather put all efforts to bring labourers to the house to build a new façade (front portion) of the house with this new name, and that made our house looked like an extremely beautiful good-looking house. No doubt, people started calling our house a unique mansion. May Allah Almighty bless my elder sister a high place in Jannat –al- Firdoze. Ameen.

Behind this Maqbool Ashyan was my mother, Aesha Begam, the mind, and soul of our family who performed the best responsibility of both a mother and a father. She would always remind us of saying children, try your best to follow the footsteps of your father who worked in all fields of life so much that people should say –look they are the children of Marhoom Maqbool Ahmed Jamaie! After my mother passed away, I wrote a comprehensive article entitled --- Follow up of Madinah: Families Lead to Islamic Civilization, in four parts in a known magazine of India, Radiance Views Weekly.¹⁹ Firstly I presented my views on family from Islamic perspective and then contended that family in Islam may be described as a Mini-Civilization. Then I talked about my mother as to how she put all efforts to keep all her children, her step-children and her grandchildren Islam-oriented, well-organized, well-educated and well-civilized though she became a widow in her young age and stayed back in a state where people speak a different language totally different from the language of her local state, and she had nobody from the members of her own family nor she had anybody from her in-laws because her family lived in Kerala, and her in-law family members were spread all over in Sialkot, Lahore and Kashmir in Pakistan because my father was against the partition of India same like Abul Kalam Azad and he stayed alone in India giving his political and social services in India. My article was liked and read by many readers.

No doubt, there were four pillars that stood with my mother giving her moral and spiritual support to maintain the family the best way possible. I already mentioned about my Military Mamu who also gave his full financial cooperation also to the family. We also had one more maternal uncle, the eldest brother of our Military uncle. His name was Abdul Fattah who was a Lecturer in some College and was also a

¹⁹ Zeenath Kausar, follow up of Madinah: Families Lead to Islamic Civilization, in Radiance Weekly, 2018, (published in 4 Parts) in Vol. LV No. Vol. 41, 7-13 January 2018 Pp. 25-28; Vol. LV No. 42, 14-20 January 2018 Pp. 24-28; Vol. LV No. 43, 21-27 January 2018 Pp. 25-27; Vol. LV No. 44, 28 January-3 February 2018 Pp. 22-25.

Homeopathic Doctor, whom we therefore called as Dr Mamu. He always visited us from Kerala and morally and spiritually supported us till the last day of his life. And I mentioned the two brothers in laws – one Mazharul Hasan, bhaiemiyan and the other one, Khalid bhaie husband of my eldest sister. They were our caretakers and fatherly figures of our family who stood as pillars for my mother.

Besides these four pillars, you would ask whether there were some female pillars that supported my mother and her young children. Yes, they were, indeed. My mother had a strong group of loving and caring friends who were all family – devoted ladies with their husbands and children --- sons and daughters. I cannot write much about them here due to lack of space. But I would say at least one point here that in my whole life, I have never seen such a strongly united group of friends anywhere else, who possessed such a kind of self-less love, care, concern, and devotion for each other. And they loved and cared my mother and all of us much more than one's family members could do to their people. I would call them germs and pearls of the life of my mother and as roses and lilies for us, her children. They would never allow us to be depressed and sad on any problem or issue and they would give any time – day or night helping us on any little or big problem and would put all efforts to see us smiling and peaceful. They were all Islam-loving and practicing Muslims and some of them even proactive in social field; rare to find people like them. They would mix with people; they were hospitable; they would make jokes and would try to be cheerful and smart and at the same time morally sound. And their sons and daughters all highly educated and well-enlightened on the current issues of the society and would discuss things with each other along with playing games and sports on their own. Almost all these friends of my mother were from Madhya Pradesh, (MP) or from Uttar Pradesh, (UP) and few from Hyderabad; but they all settled in Hyderabad for a long time and lately some of them shifted to United States, US.

Of course, I should mention here the name of at least one of them, Meherunnisa Meher, whom we called Shaera Khalajan, meaning, a poetess aunt. She was a known Urdu poetess from India, whose book on her poetry entitled; Kishwar-e-Meher was published in California in US by one of her daughters when she settled there.²⁰ She was settled in Hyderabad for several years with her family during the time when my father was alive and much active as mentioned earlier. She, her husband,

²⁰ Meherunnisa Meher, Kishwar-e- Meher, (A Won Printing and Graphics, California, US, 1998).

and children stayed very near to our house in Hyderabad. Later after the death of my father, the whole family shifted to United States, US, in California. But even while staying there, she continued correspondence with my mother and her friends of Hyderabad and even visited Hyderabad to meet them. She was so active while her stay in Hyderabad that I heard from my brother, Bhaijan that she played an important part during the last election of my father for winning votes for him and as usual he won majority votes. Her whole family and of course a huge number of people surrounded my father on his death bed and its pictures came in the Newspapers. In her book on poetry, Shaera khalajan published a poem, Bewa Ki Eed, meaning Festival of a Widow. Here she portrayed how a widow of Late Maqbool Ahmed Jamaie performed her Eed Festival with small children with a gloom of tears when her small children asked their mother as to why we did not get new and nice clothes for the festival, Eid, and wearing these old clothes, whereas Eid comes once a year only? Thus, I can say that my mother was brave enough to take care of us with her deep and strong faith in Allah SWT, always reading the Qur'an and getting herself spiritual strength and getting the great help from the pillars who were related to us and her friends who were her female pillars and precious gems. I owe each bit of my educational development to each one of them with lot of prayers to Allah SWT to bless them high places in Jannatul Ferdous. Ameen.

By the grace of Allah, I really enjoyed going to school would pay full attention to the teachers listening to them in all classes and would perform the best in every class but the class I loved most was the class for poems. I would be the first one who would learn and by-heart the poems fast and would sing them following the rhythm while also doing actions. So, in every class the teacher would ask me to stand in front and sing before the class. Besides doing the best in classes I had some personal interest on my own for two things while in school --- firstly to be morally good with the teachers and friends and secondly to offer salaah, Zohar at some proper place in the school during lunch time so that it should not be missed and to offer Salaah Asar in the school before leaving the school in case we reach home late sometimes and miss Asr. Though offering Salaah was not obligatory for me, and I was in the process of learning Salaah, but I wanted to make sure that I offer Salaah whatever and however I could. Important thing was that I made a sort of group of my very close friends that we offer

Salaat Zohar and if possible, offer Salaat Asar within the school premise whatever we know, and they agreed, and we did it.

I remember I was in class third and my primary school comprised only till fifth standard. I was the class captain of the class and one of the Prefects of the school. At that time students from the 4th and the 5th standard were selected for the position of Prefects. But I was the only one chosen from class 3rd to perform the responsibility of Prefect. I remember very well that I would take few friends of my class with me as a Prefect little outside the premise of my school where during the interval some students would make a mess there --- breaking the leaves and flowers intentionally there while plying and making the whole area untidy. Then I would stand at the morning assembly and would report to the teachers that some of my schoolmates need moral training to stop such things during the interval.

I continued with the same style of my educational development along with my leadership ethos throughout my school career till my last days of school life of the Tenth standard. I was made the Class Captain on one side and was elected as the Secretary of the school when I came to the Ninth standard and when I reached the Tenth standard, I was the captain of the class and was elected as the President of the School after a speech competition and fully-fledged election. During this whole period of my studies my attention would be at studies but would be more focussed on my own moral development and Salaat at school and moral and Islamic development of my schoolmates. I was also the Editor of my School Magazine and used to write short articles for moral orientation and poems from my side. Along withal these, I do not know I had within me a sort of visions to do something good for the students of my age and for the country. I remember very well that whenever we had any free period or we get time during lunch, I would be taking few of my classmates and sitting near the tree and talking to them how we should always try to improve ourselves as good students and good citizens and all these we should do as good Muslims. I remember very well that one day I think I was just in the Eighth standard and when I went to school, suddenly the school declared holiday due to some strike somewhere and the school wanted that the students should go back home peacefully before the strike increased and create problems for the students. A group of students were sitting waiting to get their arrangement back home. I joined them and asked them do you know what I want to do now? They asked: what? I said: I want to invite a lot of

people here because you see now there is a big space left alone because lot of students have left and there is so much silence all around. I wish a lot of people should be invited here and I should stand before them and speak to them as to what we all should do to stop problems people are facing around and should work the solutions. My friends who were also very young like me asked: Zeenath do you think people would listen to you? I got up instantly from the place where I was sitting and stood and showed with my hands the whole big empty place in the school and said: See it is such a big area and lot of people can gather here; and people can listen if we talk loudly as to what we should. I added: You know I am thinking seriously that one day I should do this. My friends agreed with me and said yes, it is a good idea.

When I reached College, my passion increased further from thinking and talking on moral and social values to political, cultural issues and women's rights. Though I started reading the Qur'an, hadeeth literature and history of Islam from very early age, but by the time I reached College I started becoming more critical on my readings on Western political thought and also critical even on some Muslim literature and felt that it is not necessary that all what some Muslims write are necessarily Islamic, because it could be their own views on some issues which present biased picture of women's rights. I not only started reading Islamic literature on women's rights but started attending Islamic women's Associations and Islamic movements who were working for women's rights in Islam in Hyderabad and tried to hear them how far they stand for the rights of women in Islam.

So, I decided to do one thing; decided to establish my own Association for Women's Rights to motivate young women of my age to understand Islam and the West on women's rights. I established first an association by name, Wadi e Huda, meaning A Valley of Guidance I attracted a few young schools going and college going girls and motivated them to read and understand the Qur'an, Hadeeth and early Muslim History which talk about what the early good Muslims did and what we should do.

As I achieved success in the organizational field, I decided to form Iqbal Association for women to inspire and motivate girls of my age to become conscious about their position in Islam. I told them Allama Mohammad Iqbal (9 November 1877 – 21 April 1938), is a world known philosopher, politician, and an Islamic poet

whose poetry in Urdu is considered as one of the greatest in the 20th century. I told them that poetry of Iqbal inspires Muslims to change the world for the good. The aim of Iqbal Association is to understand the message Iqbal gave us through his poetry that in the past Muslims were victorious in every field because they followed the message of Allah Almighty and teachings of the Prophet Mohammad (SWAS) on the oneness of Allah and unity of Muslims as a single integrated Ummah. I also talked and explained to them if Muslim women do not become conscious of their rights what the Qur'an and Sunnah blessed them with, they would submit to the biased and low images on women presented by self-created people on their own and women would be exploited by them and would lose their dynamic position which Islam blessed them. This was how I used to remember Iqbal and reminded my friends to remain active for the cause of Islam. No doubt, Iqbal is the pivotal source of my educational and professional development since my earliest school days to the present.

His popular poem for children, which is published in 1902, is still sung in many schools at the Morning Assemblies, in India, Pakistan Bangladesh and in different parts of the world, East and the West by Muslim children on various occasions. Few verses from his poetic du'aa for children may be presented here:

My heart's desire comes to my lips as a prayer
 God, make my life as one of a candle a guiding light
 My presence would take away the darkness of this world,
 And my burning light would illuminate all space
 My life should be like that of a moth, O Lord!

Such should be my love for Knowledge, O Lord!

Why I kept the name of the Association as Iqbal Association? There are two main reasons. One: There are certain poetic verses of Iqbal which presents a very enlightened picture of women. Iqbal says that if there is beauty in the world, it is due to the existence of woman. He further adds that the poetic ethos which is latent in woman provides consistency to the life of human beings. He says:

*Wujood-e-Zan Se Hai Tasveer-e-Kainat Mein Rang
 Issi Ke Saaz Se Hai Zindagi Ka Souz-e-Darun.*²¹

Meaning:

²¹ Allama Iqbal, Kulyat e Iqbal, Zarb e Kaleem, Aurat, (Eteqad Publishing House, Private Ltd., New Delhi, 2011), p, 94.

It is the existence of the woman that gives the universe its colours. She is the leading instrument in the grand orchestra of life itself.

More than this, my second most important reason to make Iqbal Association was to enlighten and motivate Muslim women towards an important message of Iqbal on reading books and getting knowledge. Iqbal says that let Allah Almighty awaken you with a tempest fierce because the water of your ocean looks mild and passive. Iqbal says if you read books without understanding, then such kind of reading fail to motivate you to bring a positive revolutionary change in the world. Such books are nothing but source of death which does not move you from within to work for some high cause. Iqbal says:

*Khuda tujhe kisi tufan se aashna kar de
ki tere bahr ki maujon mein izzat nahin
tujhe kitab se mumkin nahin faragh ki tu
kitab-Khwan hai magar sahib-e-kitab nahin²²*

May God acquaint you with a tempest fierce and wild
For the waves of your ocean are too placid and mild
And never from books can you be weaned
Which you declaim, not comprehend.

Of course, a lot can be said about Iqbal. I just want to say here that if you ask me to show singlehandedly who inspired, influenced, and motivated me for my educational and professional background, I will say Allama Iqbal, Rahmatullah Alaih.

So, coming to the point, the Inaugural Function of Iqbal Association took place in Chattabazar, Hyderabad on 22nd September 1979, which coincided with the demise of demise of the internationally known Islamic thinker, the exegete of Tafheenul Qur'an, and the author of 100s of books on Islam, Syed Abul Aa'Mawdudi. I was very much shocked and worried thinking about the expected number of the attendants whether they would attend or not hearing the shocking news of the demise of Mawdudi, (RAA). But that sad news made the lovers of Iqbal and Mawdudi to attend the Inaugural Session of Iqbal Association to join the prayers for the Maghfirah of Mawdudi during the Session. The Inagural Hall was full of more than three hundred people. Some senior female leaders of the Islamic movement, I and some young girls of my age gave thought-provoking speeches on Iqbal that how his kalaam is ever

²² Allama Iqbal, Kulyat e Iqbal, Zarb e Kaleem, Aurat, (Eteqad Publishing House, Private Ltd., New Delhi, 2011) p, 82.

motivating for Muslim men and women and how we should stand firm with the message of the Qur'an and Sunnah and should put all our efforts to bring Islamic resurgence in the world. By the grace of Allah SWT, the programme was successful, and it is covered in the Urdu Newspaper, Hyderabad.

So, coming back to the point, by this time we come to 1980s and I got married with Mohammad Mumtaz Ali in Hyderabad and just after two weeks, we had to reach Aligarh, for continuing his PhD in Aligarh Muslim University, (AMU) Aligarh. Within a month or two, I sat for Phd Entrance Test in the Department of Political Science, in AMU, and passed with the highest grade and got admitted in PhD in Political Theory. Within the area of Political Theory, I selected a comparative study of Western and Islamic political thought. During that period, MPhil was made a compulsory part of PhD. Hence my MPhil was on the political thought of Abul Kalam Azad comparing Western and Islamic political thought focusing on the theory of Nationalism. My PhD was on the comparative study between Abul Kalam Azad and Sayyed Abul A'la al Mawdudi on Nationalism and Internationalism: A comparison between Western and Islamic Political Thought. I have already mentioned about Azad earlier when I touched upon the political activism of my father, Maulana Maqbool Ahmed Jamaie (RA) who followed Azad before and after independence till his death. I cannot discuss Azad's thought here on Nationalism which needs a paper on its own. But I would like to mention here that my academic life of writing and publication began with my first book entailed: *Islam and Nationalism: An Analysis of the Ideas of Azad, Iqbal and Mawdudi*, first published in 1994 and its Second Edition came in 2008.²³ An interesting point to remember here is that Azad showed serious interest on the rights and position of woman as presented in the Qur'am and it is even practically clearly manifested when he supported the rights of women for education when he was appointed as the first Minister of Education in Independent India in 1947 and he remained in this position till his demise in 1958.

As far as Sayyed Abul A'la al Mawdudi is concerned, he occupied the greater part of my PhD thesis because his critique on the theory of Nationalism manifests his own original philosophy on Islamic revivalism -- revival of Islam as a complete system of life including political aspect to be emerged as Islamic civilization.

²³ Zeenath Kausar, *Islam, and Nationalism: An Analysis of the Ideas of Azad, Iqbal and Mawdudi*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1994; Second Edition in 2008.

Mawdudi, (25 September 1903 – 22 September 1979) is recognized as one of the renowned Islamic thinkers of the contemporary world, who is remembered as an Islamic philosopher, Jurist, Historian, scholar-activist, founder of Islamic movement of Indian subcontinent which later gave rise to Islamic Movement of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and became the source of inspiration for many other Islamic movements' world over. Besides his magnum opuses --- Tafheem al Qur'an, his Qur'anic exegesis, which is in 6 volumes, and his Seeratun Nabi in 2 Volumes, he has to his credit more than 100 books on socio-economic and political issues and on women's rights in family and society.

I must say here that if my M Phil Dissertation is on the political thought of Abul Kalam Azad, my PhD thesis is on the comparative political thought of Abul Kalam Azad and Sayyed Abul A'la Mawdudi. I am very much thankful to Allah SWT that both these thinkers on whom I did my MPhil and PhD, they were exegetes of the Qur'an. Abul Kalam Azad presented 3 volumes of the Qur'anic exegeses which covered 18 parts of the Qur'an, which means he covered from Surah Al Fatiha to Surah Al Mo'mineen. Sureh Al Fatiha itself covered one volume of his exegesis, a comprehensive and concrete explanation of Surah al Fatiha. His exegesis was written in Urdu, and its English translation was done by Prof. Dr, Syed Abdul Latif, of the Department of English Language from Osmania University, Hyderabad.

As far as Mawdudi is concerned, he accomplished the exegesis of the whole Qur'an in six volumes and its English translation was done by Dr. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, who was the President of the International Islamic University, Islamabad, (IIUI), Pakistan. This is not the relevant place for me to discuss his Islamic political thought. But I would like to mention here the names of few books and articles I published on Mawdudi. One of my books, entitled, Modern Western Political Ideologies: An Islamic Critique, published in 2005, comprised the first chapter on, Mawdudi's Critique of Nationalism and his Reflections on the Islamic World Order.²⁴ One of my edited books, entitled, Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Eleven Muslim Thinkers comprised the fourth chapter on, Mawdudi's Philosophy or an Islamic state, Government and Citizenship: An Exploration and A Critical

²⁴ Zeenath Kausar, Modern Western Political Ideologies: An Islamic Critique, Kuala Lumpur: Prentice Hall, Pearson, 2005; Second Edition, 2014.

Appreciation²⁵ One of my articles on Mawdudi's views on women's empowerment is published in *Encounters*, in Leicester, in 2004.²⁶ I would come back to Mawdudi again in my second and third part referring to his views on women's empowerment and Islamic civilization.

By this, I should say that I have already entered my professional life. We came to Malaysia in 1987. It was such a God-blessed beautiful coincidence that just few days after Mohd Mumtaz Ali sat for his Viva of PhD at (AMU) and his thesis was officially accepted, we received an official letter from IIUM that his application for teaching position at IIUM is accepted and we were asked to reach there by July 1987. Alhamdulillah. By the grace of Allah SWT, we reached Malaysia in 1987 with three small kids – exactly 5 yearsold; 2 years + and 1 + old. As for me, I just submitted my PhD thesis, so I had to wait for my Viva for quite some time to obtain my degree. But we decided to shift together to Malaysia, and I should come to do my Viva from Malaysia when I would receive letter for my Viva from AMU. So, we reached Malaysia together in 1987 and he started teaching at Centre for Fundamental Knowledge and after some time our first two kids were admitted to Kindergarten, Tadika and the third one stayed with me being too small for Tadika. But I had to wait for my Viva for too long due to some unexpected problems there at AMU. However, I needed some time joining any teaching profession because my children were very small. Thus, for more than two years from mid-1987 to early 1989 I gave full time to children but also gave some talks on women's rights in Islam during some conferences organized for students at IIUM at the first PJ campus. I am very much thankful to Dr. Qamaroniah and Dr Che Amnah who invited me to few talks at IIUM to speak on women's issues during those days and they used to take care of my kids whenever I handed over to them while giving talks. It so happened that they learnt about me through Dr Mumtaz during an introduction of newcomers at some departmental meeting in an informal way that his wife who did her MA and MPhil, waiting for her PhD degree, presently looking after three small kids at home and that

²⁵ Zeenath Kausar, Mawdudi's Philosophy or an Islamic state, Government and Citizenship: An Exploration and A Critical Appreciation, in Zeenath Kausar, (Ed), *Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Eleven Muslim Thinkers*, (ed.), Kuala Lumpur: Research Centre, International Islamic University, Malaysia, IIUM Press, 2005; pp., 113—154; Second-Reprint, 2009.

²⁶ Zeenath Kausar, Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi on the Empowerment of Women: Islamic Revivalism versus Muslim Traditionalism and Feminism", *Encounters*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2004, pp. 31-54.

she has been an active participant in Islamic movement in India specially on women's rights. This gave these female teaching staff the idea that they could invite me for giving talks on women's rights in some students' gatherings at the University. I was even invited for giving lecture at Malik Faisal Hall and I still remember that the hall was full of male and female students and there was a questions and answer session, well organized and well-conducted. Perhaps what I am writing here might look too simply a matter to be mentioned. Yes, I agree with them that apparently speaking, it was not a big deal to be mentioned that I presented talks and gave lectures in IIUM during that time when I was not teaching there, and I had with me small kids. But a little thought over it would show that it was amazing to see how few female lecturers could be so anxious and spirited enough to invite someone to give talks on women's issues even though they had to plan for her to invite and receive her and had to look after her kids while she would be giving talks. Then they would have to decide to send her and her children back home safely. Believe me, it was a great opportunity and encouragement for me never be forgotten and for others it is a lesson from them to remember that Islam teaches its believers to come forward for da'wah in the way of Allah SWT. They taught us that we should help each other in righteous deeds; particularly young women with kids so that they should never feel neglected. In fact, they should us that it is our duty to motivate young mothers to think that they could contribute something productive and creative to the society even if they are mothers with kids.

When my kids reached the Primary School and we could arrange part-time helpers at home, I could get teaching position at the Matriculation Centre of IIUM from late 1989 to late 1991. I taught few courses there, like Introduction to the Qur'an Studies, Introduction to the Hadeeth Studies and Introduction to Human Sciences. It was in late 1991 I attained my PhD degree and then after some time I had to sit for an interview first at the Kuliyah level and then at the senate Hall. Then I was offered the position of Assistant Professor at the Dept. of Political Science in early 1992. It was the time when Prof. Emeritus Dato Dr. Abdul Hameed Ahmed Abu Sulayman was our Rector from 1989 to 1999 and Prof Emeritus Tan Sri Dr Kamal Hasan was our Deputy Rector. Later, when Dr Abdul Hamid left the IIUM, Prof Dr Kamal Hasan was appointed as the Rector of the University from 1998 to 2006. So, my teaching service to IIUM continued at IIUM under the Second and the third Rector from 1992 to 2006

and then continued till early 2007 when Dato' Seri Prof DR Syed Arabi bin Syed Abdullah I did was appointed as the fourth Rector of the University.

I should say here that all these beautiful years of teaching at IIUM have been very much enlightening days of my teaching experience. I liked my department of Political Science with its entire teaching staff, and I really enjoyed my students of Political Science and students who attended my classes from other departments. Since I and Dr Mumtaz liked and fully appreciated the Philosophy -- Islamization of Knowledge since its beginning even while we were studying at Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (AMU), which had nothing to do with this philosophy, we both fully enjoyed teaching at IIUM. I taught courses under my area of specialization – Political Theory and Philosophy. While teaching my courses with all interest and enjoying my students paying full attention on them, I also devoted my time in research and publication and presentation of papers in International Conferences.

During my professional journey, I took keen interest in one important thing. What was that? It was nothing but the culture of Seminars and Talks which I enjoyed and greatly benefitted during my teaching at IIUM. On one side there used to be regular seminars and lectures from our own teaching staff from different Kulliyahs and on the other side there used to be several seminars and lectures by scholars visiting IIUM from different parts of the world who were mainly involved at International Institute of Islamic Thought, IIIT in Virginia, at Washington, US. Mostly, the seminars were conducted at Tabari Conference Room in our old original Campus, at Pealing Jaya. Seminars and lectures would be on different topics critically analysing Western thought in the light of the philosophy of Islamization of Knowledge. Those beautiful days can never be forgotten from my life which proved to be the original and far-reaching sources of thought not only for me but for all those who attended those seminars and talks. Those were the early days of my academic career, and I was in my early 30s and there was hardly a talk which I never attended and missed. In those talks our Rector, Dato Abdul Hamid Ahmed Abu Sulayman, and our Deputy Rector, Prof Dr. Kamal Hasan and our Dean Prof. Dr. Anis Ahmed would often grace the occasions which would further inspire the paper presenters, participants and all who would attend the seminars and talk. During that period, Associate Prof Dr Mumtaz used to be the Chief Organizer of those Seminars and talks. The at Tabari Conference Hall would be full and some of the Professors and

students had to stand and listened to seminars and talks and there would be always question and answer sessions after the seminar that would bring more beauty and thought to the seminar. Then the seminar would end with high tea which would give more time to those who would like to sit with the paper presenters while enjoying tea and interacting with them. Hardly it happened that I missed asking any question or giving any comment. Often it happened that Mumtaz would be stopping me not to ask questions to give chance to others, but I would be pleading him not to stop me. Anyways, he often had no choice to stop me because he knew that I would argue with him so much while going back home in the car as to why he was trying to stop me when I had important questions to be asked. If you ask me what my best days at IIUM were during my stay there, they were the days of Seminars and talks at At Tabari Conference Hall! I cannot go in detail here taking the names of those whose papers have put a deep impact in my mind and on several others. But let me take few names at least -- Prof Dr Abdul Majeed Makeen; Prof Dr Malik Badari and few others from our University and Prof. Dr Taha Jabir al Alwani, Prof Dr Abdel-Wahab El-Messiri, and many others from outside. And who can forget the talks given by Allama Yousuf al Qaradawi? I have greatly benefitted from all these thinkers and scholar-activists during my professional period.

As for your question regarding the most influential figures for me on women's empowerment, I would say that it was me who took this challenging task myself and put consistent conceptual efforts to take the initiate of presenting a new concept of women's empowerment based on the injunctions and values guided in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Hence instead of putting the above question to me, it would have been better if you would have asked me this question --- what prompted you to think about women's empowerment? To respond to your question, I would have to take you to two of my conceptual journeys that I performed in two International Conferences, first in Khartoum, Sudan in 1993 and the second in Amman, Jordan, in 1995. There was an International Conference on Women in Khartoum, Sudan, 1993.²⁷ I should mention here that I joined IIUM in 1992 and I got the opportunity to present a paper in the International Conference in 1993 on the topic, Leadership of Women: Feminism and Islam. It was Dato' Prof Dr. Kamal Hasan, our Deputy Rector of the University who

²⁷ Zeenath Kausar, Presented Paper on "Leadership Role of Women in Islam and Feminism" in International Conference on Women, Khartoum, Sudan, March 1993.

presented my name for this conference, because Prof Kamal Hasan was aware of my activism on women's rights. So, I prepared my paper for the conference and travelled to Khartoum. After reaching Khartoum I was told by the organizers that the Conference was postponed for twenty years, and it was informed to the participants. But we did not receive any such letter in our university, and this put me in a big problem as what to do. I talked to Dr Mumtaz to inform about this issue to Prof Kamal Hasan. Prof Kamal Hasan stated I should stay there till the conference is convened and I participated in it, instead of coming back without doing anything. I informed this to the organizers, and they happily arranged for me accommodation in some hotel and made a programme of visiting me regularly and would take me to some places like Omdurman University and would take me to meet some women associations in Sudan.

Well during this meeting with some very active women leaders of Sudan, I heard about eye-opening news from them! What was that? The Fourth World Conference on Women, (FWCW) would be held in Beijing, China for which a lot of Pre-Beijing Meetings were held in many countries and a big number of Muslim countries would participate in it and several Muslim Women NGOs would be also attending the conference. They also said that Muslim attendees and participants had to be very careful because earlier to these in the last three conferences Muslims always found ideological differences between these World Conferences on women held by the United Nations, UN. I listened to all the information they portrayed before me and asked several questions and they patiently answered to all my queries.

The good thing what I found in the women leaders of Sudan was that a good number of them were enlightened scholars and activists and they were not only well-read on the comprehensive position of Islam on women, rather they were quite aware of the contemporary problems in feminist ideology. I was extremely happy with them and ever since that time I tried to keep in contact with them. But I always find in me that I never want a mere discussion on problems and issues, but I insist that there should be some practical reflections over the problems to overcome them. Hence, my mind started reflecting on the fourth - coming issues of the Fourth World Conference, FWCW --- how to face it? How to overcome it? So, on and so forth. Keeping all these in mind I started talking to myself all these - -- look, these types of conferences usually in a way emphasize about the rights of women and their development which

appeal and attract all, i.e. to women from all cultures and backgrounds but often at some issues we learn that there are some hidden clashes particularly between Islam and the West. Then this realization creates a sort of ideological clash between Islam and the West. Consequently we, the Muslim societies who understand this whole picture start moving away from such a contradictory framework. But how are we pictured and portrayed by others? As losers; bugs in the hole; old fashioned myth lovers; problem creators; failed fighters, and much more.

Usually, when my mind faces such situations, I try to get inspiration from the Qur'an and the Seerah of the Prophet Mohammad (SAWS). I then get peace of mind and then I say myself that I would work on this issue and Allah would open avenues for me to find out more details and then I do the necessary. Believe me, I did a good thing. My mind came back to the present Conference for which I came from so far and I should focus here presently. Does it mean that I gave up and packed up the whole problem? Never. I just keep it in the important shelf of my mind soon to be worked on seriously. Why I kept all these before you? This is to let you know that my arrival to Sudan before time was planned by Allah SWT so that before I get occupied in the conference for which I came, I should get enough time to get important information of the FWCW of Beijing, because the champions of this conference are claiming that they are going to re-map the world of women in their own framework, in the lens of women which they claim that it shall be different from the lens of men. So, my challenge would be to find out what kind of lens is it which is so magical.

So, leaving this magical lens temporarily, I started focussing on the lens of the Sudanese women and the women who started coming to participate in this International Conference to get enlightened from here. Now at this juncture a landmark was exposed to the participants of the conference before the inauguration of the conference itself. One of the most learned, the prominent personality and the brave female lioness of Sudan was introduced to us, Prof Dr Suad Al Fateh! All those who knew that Syed al Fateh is honoured in Sudan as a 'lioness' of Sudan were extremely happy to see and meet her and talk to her. Do you want to know what she said when I went to her and said we heard a lot about you? We all are so happy to meet you. She said: I am coming from the group of women who are learning exercises and those skills which can make the body of women very strong. And she said in the same spirit that I want you all women to learn these skills to be physically fitted. Do

not know what we would face anything at any time. So, we should keep us strong and healthy. Imagine this strong woman was already an old lady at that time, but just came to meet us after learning some physical combat to keep her well fitted. We all got excited to listen such gallant words from her.

Another exciting thing for me was that she was the Chairperson of the panel where I had to present my paper. The title of my paper was, Political Leadership of Woman: Feminist Perspective and Islam. In few words I would touch upon few important points presented in the paper. In this paper I did not go into the long conceptual discussion on the leadership of women. I straight away presented few examples of the political leadership of women in contemporary world. Here I showed that few of these female leaders believed in their own leadership qualities and made it clear that they came to power based on their leadership qualities and they need not had to refer to feminists to take their support. They argued that few strident trends developed in some contemporary schools of feminism which are not acceptable. However, the liberal and radical schools of feminists argue that feminism is opening avenues for the leadership of women in the political and other fields. As far as Islam is concerned there are differences of opinions among Muslim scholars on the leadership of women.

My paper went well and invited several questions and comments and Suad al Fateh presented positive comments on my paper, and she gave me sufficient time to respond to the questions. I should mention here that among the few female scholars who never agreed with the philosophy of feminism and rejected the concept of so-called Islamic Feminism, I will put her at the top of the list. After reaching back Malaysia, I not only reported my participation in the conference in Sudan but also talked about the forthcoming Fourth World Conference on women in Beijing in 1995.

I mentioned above that there were two International Conferences which invited my interest to women's empowerment and the first one was the conference in Sudan which I discussed above. The other one was the International Conference which was directly connected with the Up-coming Conference of Beijing and for that reasons it was called, Beijing Preparatory Committee Meeting, which was held in Amman,

Jordan for four days from 30 May to 3rd June, 1995.²⁸ Before leaving for the conference, I had to present my views on my preparation for the conference before our Rector Dato' Seri Dr Abdul Hamid Ahmed Abu Sulayman because in this conference it was expected that the final views on the document, Platform for Action from the Muslim participants would be discussed and so they had to be fully prepared and alert. Abdul Hameed seemed satisfied with my presentation, and he presented his own views on some of the critical issues and told me to leave for the conference and wished me the best with prayers to Allah SWT and I travelled to Amman. In this conference, hundreds of women scholars from Islamic Academies and Non - Governmental Organizations, NGOs gathered to discuss the 200 pages document which was going to be submitted in Beijing in the FWCW conference. Hence, we were asked to present Islamic perspective in the conference at Beijing under the auspicious of the United Nations, UN so that those articles of the Platform for Action which contradict Islamic injunctions should not be imposed to the Muslim member-states of the UN and they should be given their own rights to follow the Islamic stance on the concept. There were fully fledged discussions on the document, the aim of which was women's empowerment.

By the grace of Allah SWT, finally the time came when each one of the participants presented her views on the Pre-Beijing document Platform for Action. Their main concern was that some of the articles of Platform for Action do not comply with Islamic injunctions and so it is necessary that the concerned UN authorities should include certain 'reservations' from the Muslim world in the document before its final submission and approval in Beijing, in September 1995. As far as my presentation was concerned, I pin-pointed the areas in the document which manifested the influence of the feminists whose views directly clash with the Islamic injunctions. Hence, I said that we should seriously work on the Platform for Action and present Islamic position on it so that Muslims should not be forced to follow all the articles of the document. After this, we were asked to form some groups based on the different parts of Platform for Action so that when we go back, we should work on the concerned topics and send our position papers to the organizers of the conference who invited us to this conference. We formed few groups and worked accordingly. We

²⁸ Zeenath Kausar, Presented paper on "Critical Observations on Important Schools of Feminism and Islamic Position on Women's Issues", at Beijing Preparatory Committee Meeting of Muslim NGOs, Amman, Jordan, 30, May -3rd June, 1995.

were then told how we should prepare ourselves to register for the Beijing Conference and reach there to work together there in full coordination with each other. Thus, the Conference was highly creative and productive.

But unfortunately, due to some technical problem of Visa formalities, at the last moment I could not attend the conference at Beijing though I prepared my position paper, and it was sent to the concerned organizers. It was a big disappointment for me to miss the Conference, but I did not give up my active role in it. I wrote articles on this concept and got them published in several academic journals. I also contacted Moharyani Othman of the popular Newspaper of Malaysia, New Straight Times, NST and talked to her on my participation at the Pre-Beijing Conference and it was published in the paper.²⁹ Later, in 1997, the first all India Conference took place in Chennai on women's rights. I attended this conference and presented my paper in it. Besides this, a special talk was organized for me in Chennai to talk on my participation in the Pre-Beijing Conference and to present my views on Platform for Action. I presented my views on it and a big discussion took place on the implications of Platform for Action on Muslims. My whole participation in Chennai was covered by Moharyani Othman for NST and it was published in the paper.³⁰ After that, two Malay magazines interviewed me and published my views in their magazines. I hope it is quite clear from all this activism that mainly my participation in the two big conferences, one in Sudan and the other in Amman and then the reports published in the newspapers and magazines on my participation inspired me to take keen interest on the concept of women's empowerment from Islamic perspective.

Well, if you ask me what steps I took in making my mind for writing on women's empowerment, I will say that I followed three steps. One, I made a thorough study of the Platform for Action and went through the reports on the Pre-Beijing Conferences and workshops where some of the highly influential feminists have presented their views on the term gender. Then I studied how they defined gender perspective from their own feminist perspective and started promoting it as a universal

²⁹ Report on "Muslim Women Rally to A Cause: Amman, Pre-Beijing Meeting", New Straits Times, NST, Malaysia, 27th July 1995.

³⁰ Report on "Upholding Rights of Muslim Women: First All Indian Women Education Conference, held from 21-23 Dec. Madras", New Straits Times, NST, Malaysia, January 13th, 1997.

concept for all the cultures of the world without paying any concern on the cultural differences. Second, I studied Muslim scholars of different backgrounds who wrote on women's rights in Islam. I found that there are big differences of opinions among Muslim scholars on several issues while referring to the same verses of the Qur'an and hadith. This problem never made me confused and perplexed though many writers often complain about this problem. Why was I not confused even though I found it problematic? For this I would have to take you to my third step. What is that? I already kept myself ready and fully prepared that I would face problems in diverse interpretations of the Qur'an and hermeneutics, and I should be calm and stable reading and facing them and finally I should come to my opinion on the issues keeping all faith in Allah SWT. There is a lot to say about this problem, but I cannot go into detail here. I would just give one example here to show the problem. For example, on one single verse of the Surah, A Nisa, verse 4:34 there is a big list of differences of opinions among our scholars and exegetes of the Qur'an. So, I made a comparative study of few scholars and exegetes and based on deep reflections I came to my stance on various issues keeping all trust in Allah SWT.

Yes, about the impact of my writings on women's empowerment, I should say that I saw a deep impact of my books and articles on researchers and scholars in general. For this, we should remember that the concept of women's empowerment is traced back to 1995 when the document, Platform for Action was submitted in the Fourth World Conference of women, (FWCW) in Beijing, China.³¹ Platform for Action made it quite clear that women's empowerment may be achieved through gender perspective.³² The term gender perspective is not defined in the Platform for Action but it was explained by the feminists in few Pre-Beijing Conferences.³³ The term gender perspective is explained through making a differentiation between sex and gender. It is stated clearly that sex is biological, and gender is cultural. Hence gender perspective is created by the feminists who make a clear-cut differentiation between sex and gender. What do they mean by saying --- sex is biological while gender is cultural? Sex is explained as a human female based on her sex organ,

³¹ The Beijing Declaration and The Parliament for Action, United Nations, Department of Public Information, New York, 1995, p 17.

³² The Beijing Declaration and The Parliament for Action, United Nations, Department of Public Information, New York, 1995, p. 40; 62. 85.

³³ Report of the Preparatory Committee Meeting, March 15, New York, 1995

chromosomes, or say physical features. But gender is explained as a social construction or a cultural construction about men and woman by people in general who determine a social role, social position, social behaviour and social identity of men and women.³⁴ Hence when feminists put emphasis on gender perspective they separate 'sex' from 'gender' and have sex irrelevant to gender. It can be explained with a simple example. For example, those who accept heterosexual marriage and heterosexual marital reproduction as the only morally acceptable and valid forms of marriage and reproduction, then, for feminists they should be rejected, and they should not be included under feminism. In other words, according to some feminists, all those scholars who refer to such sexual relationships like LGBTQI as deviant, immoral and invalid are unenlightened victims of mystification and conundrum because they failed to distinguish between sex and gender and so they should be rejected by the feminists.³⁵ We shall be discussing this further in detail in the next chapters. Here it is important to understand here that in Platform for Action, it is clearly stated several times that we need to promote women's empowerment through gender perspective. Therefore, this created lot of problems for the Muslim and Christian participants who find this kind of women's empowerment unacceptable to them.

A very interesting point should be mentioned here. By the Grace of Allah SWT, one of my first books on women's rights entitled *Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization* was newly published in 1995 just few weeks before the conference of Amman, in 1995.³⁶ Since I already made a thorough study of feminist ideology and published my book on it, for me, a critical exploration of Platform for Action and its exposition before the paper presenters in the conference was just a piece of cake for me. Hence, I straight away pointed out the feminist influences on the Platform for Action and showed how it differs from Islamic perspective. Thus, my participation in Amman proved to be influential conceptually and practically. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, I sent my position paper to the NGOs who participated in FWCW, and it is reported to me that several participants benefited from my paper.

³⁴ See Dale O' Leary, n. d., *Gender the Deconstruction of Women*, Providence, RI, USA, p.5.

³⁵ See Earth Negotiations Bulletin, Pre-Beijing Meeting, March 15, 1995.

³⁶ Zeenath Kausar, *Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*, Kuala Lumpur: A.S. Noordeen, 1995; Second Edition, 2001.

Another important point to note here is that before and after the end of the FWCW in Beijing, many Muslim countries including Malaysia held local conferences in their countries to make the male and female scholars and activists familiar of the document and its hidden implications on Muslim women. In August 1995, a jointly organized Conference took place on the topic, UN Beijing Conference on Women, Shariah and Development under International Institute of Islamic Thought, Malaysia (IIITM) and the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia [ABIM] Kuala Lumpur, in August 1995. I presented my paper in this conference and presented my critique on the Platform for Action.³⁷ By this time I found a deep impact of my book, *Women in Feminism and Politics* and my participation in Amman on Platform for Action on researchers and scholars on women's issues. A review on my book was published in 1995, in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, (AJISS).³⁸ After this two of my articles on the problems in the Platform for Action were published, one in *Encounters*, Leicester, UK, in 1999; another in *Hamdard Islamic*, Karachi, Pakistan, in 2000. In both these articles, different problems of the gender perspective and women's empowerment are presented.³⁹

Besides all these articles, I was fully occupied in writing a book on this whole problem of women's empowerment. It took for me five years to publish this book on *Women's Empowerment*. Its impact on the researchers and scholars can be easily perceived. This book was published first in 2000 from Ilmiah Publications; then it was published in 2007 as a second edition by Thinker's Library and again it was published in 2015 by Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, (DBP).⁴⁰

³⁷ Zeenath Kausar presented paper on: "Towards Equality, Development and Peace: Political participation of Women in Islam and U N Platform for Action", Workshop on Women, Shariah and Development: Towards the 4th UN World Conference on Women, Beijing', jointly organized by International Institute of Islamic Thought, Malaysia (IIITM) and The Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia [ABIM] Kuala Lumpur, August 1995.

³⁸ Mohammad Shabbeer, *Women in Feminism and Politics: New Directions towards Islamization*, in *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, (AJISS), Summer, 15, 2; 1995, pp.118- 122.

³⁹ Zeenath Kausar, "Sexuality and Reproductive Rights in Platform for Action and Islam", *Encounters, Journal of Inter-Cultural Perspectives*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1997, pp.149-163. See also: Zeenath Kausar, "Gender Perspective in UN Document on Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing: An Analysis of Platform for Action", *Hamdard Islamicus Quarterly Journal*, Karachi, Vol. 23, No. 2, 2000, pp.85-98.

⁴⁰ Zeenath Kausar, *Women's Empowerment, and Islam: UN Beijing Document, Platform for Action*, Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers, 2000; Second Edition by Thinker's Library in 2007. This book is again published in 2015 as *Women's Empowerment and Islam* by Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, (DBP).

Furthermore, this book was translated into Bahasa Malay by Associate Professor Dr Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahim, from University Malaysia, with the title, *Pemeriksaan Wanita Menurut Islam*, was published by Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, DBP, in 2019.⁴¹ It is further published as Second Print from DBP in 2022. ⁴²A crucial point to note here is that the UN has been consistently promoting its book, *Platform for Action* emphasizing its main agenda, women's empowerment world over. Furthermore, this book is re-looked every 5 years in the UN and the member countries of the UN are asked to send their reports on their progress on women's empowerment in all areas of concern. Then the UN evaluates their reports of progress and send its comments and suggestions on the critical issues so that these countries take further actions to enhance women's empowerment in their countries. Thus, ever since 1995, the *Platform for Action* has been promoted as an inevitable, integral, and indivisible part of universal human rights, agreed upon worldwide to be implemented as the global document for women's empowerment. This made the researchers and the activists in this field to refer books written on this subject. Perhaps it is the main reason behind the impact of my books and articles on this subject that it is published consistently and published in Bahasa Malay. It is also taken to Egypt for Arabic translation and perhaps it may be published in 2024. Insha Allah.

Now, it seems pertinent to mention here that quite often, scholars working in this field felt the dire need to see in their hand, *Islamic Action Plan* as an alternative to the *Beijing Platform for Action*, (BPA) from Islamic perspective for women's empowerment. Finally, I took an initiative to accomplish this task. Hence my book, entitled, *Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action* is published in 2019 and it is received as an arrival of a book long waited. ⁴³ I am happy to say that this book is also translated into Bahasa Malay by Associate Professor Dr Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahim, from University Malaysia, with the title, *Pelan Tindakan Islamik Pemeriksaan Wanita* and it is published from Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, (DBP), in 2019 and its Second Print

⁴¹ *Pemeriksaan Wanita Menurut Islam*, translated by Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahim, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 2019.

⁴² *Pemeriksaan Wanita Menurut Islam*, translated by Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahim, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 2019.

⁴³ Zeenath Kausar, *Islamic Action Plan for Women's Empowerment: An Islamic Alternative to Beijing Platform for Action*, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 2019.

came out in 2020.⁴⁴ Then my earlier Malay translated book, *Pemeriksaan Wanita Menurut Islam* which was published in 2019 was reprinted again and came out in 2022.⁴⁵

Recently, in 2022, one more fresh article of mine, entitled, *Women's Empowerment in UN Document neither a Safe Haven nor a Pandora's Box: Need for A Holistic Perspective*, is published in *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM, in June, 2022.⁴⁶ It seems to me that a mere glance at the list of my articles and books on women's empowerment from 1995 to 2022 is more than sufficient to show the deep impact of my writings on women's empowerment.

As far as my future directions on women's empowerment is concerned, I would say without a least hesitation that I strongly believe that the future direction of women's empowerment depends much on the establishment of an International Islamic Institute for women's empowerment in any part of the Muslim world. In fact, establishment of an International Islamic Institute for women's empowerment is my dream project ever since 1995. Yes, it is as old as the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) convened in September 1995, in Beijing, China. Thing is, when I participated in the Pre-Beijing Conference in Amman, I realised that the Muslim Ummah urgently needs the establishment of an International Islamic Institute for Women's Empowerment in some part of the Muslim world without which Muslim women would continue submitting only their 'reservations' to the United Nations, UN on the Platform for Action and they could hardly achieve any positive results. This dream gradually turned into my passion when I started writing on women's empowerment criticizing gender perspective and presenting Islamic perspective as the only solution.

Now I would like to keep a short story in this connection. During that historical time when I was seriously thinking about such an Institute, a group of our

⁴⁴ *Pelan Tindakan Islamik Pemeriksaan Wanita*, translated by Dr. Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahim, Associate Professor, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 2019; second print, 2020.

⁴⁵ *Pemeriksaan Wanita Menurut Islam*, translated by Rahimin Affandi Abdul Rahim, Kuala Lumpur, Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, 2019, second print, 2022.

⁴⁶ Zeenath Kausar, *Women's Empowerment in UN Documents neither a Safe Haven nor a Pandora's Box: Need for A Holistic Perspective* in *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, UKM, Vol. 21, June 2022, pp. 128 - 136.

colleagues of IIUM, (but in the beginning), we were mainly two --- I and Dr. Zaleha Kamaruddin came up with the idea of forming an Association in our University, IIUM. Though Dr Zaleha was from the Kuliyah of Laws and I was from the Department of Political Science, Kuliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, (KIRKHS), but we both had similar views on women's rights in Islam and we used to discuss several problems Muslim women face in different parts of the world based on certain misconceptions on women's rights or some biased attitude against them from their own families or from some Muslim societies in general. So, we shared same views on many issues. During that period, IIUM was in its first original campus at Petaling Jaya. At that time, Dr Zaleha was the Head of the Students Affairs Division. Hence, she presented our project of forming an association for women's rights before the then Rector of IIUM, Data Dr. Abdul Hameed Ahmed Abu Sulayman and he agreed with our project. Finally, we established an association, called Women Affairs Division, acronym, (WAFA) in early 1995. We formed a dynamic group of some of our friends from different departments and Kuliyahs --- Dr Rusnani Hashim from Kuliyah of Education; Dr Nur Farida Abdul Manif from the department of English; Dr NurAini Mohd Noor, from the department of Psychology and few others. We held several meetings and talks on women's issues; thus, we started working for women's rights and their development in some way. Besides this, we held a brain-storming session under WAFA for publishing books on women's rights from Islamic perspective. These ideas were practically materialized, and we published two books on behalf of WAFA in 1995. One of the books that I mentioned above was mine with the topic, Women in Feminism and Politics: A New Directions towards Islamization. The other book was co-edited by Zaleha Kamaruddin, and I entitled, Women's Issues Women's Perspectives, in 1995.⁴⁷ These books were appreciated by many inside and outside the University. But after this, we were very much occupied in our own Departmental affairs and other things and very lately we came up with one co-edited book, entitled, Social Issues in Malaysia: Muslim Women's Perspectives, in 2003.⁴⁸ However after this, we hardly did anything --- neither in writing nor in giving talks etc. It does not mean that we developed some

⁴⁷ Zaleha Kamaruddin and Zeenath Kausar, Women's Issues: Women's Perspectives, (co. ed.), Kuala Lumpur: Women Affairs Division (WAFA), 1995; Second Edition, 2002.

⁴⁸ Zeenath Kausar and Zaleha Kamaruddin, Social Issues in Malaysia: Women's Perspectives, (co. ed.), Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers, 2003.

differences of opinions among us or that we changed our mind from our interest in women's rights. We remained good friend with each other all the time, but we could hardly come back to our coordinating enterprises.

However, I felt later that we should have continued WAFA, if not fully fledged, at least in some form or the other. Within a very short time I started feeling a missing dimension in my life again due to the absence of any Institute for women's empowerment. The fact is, I was presenting papers consistently on women's issues in several International Conferences and I felt every time the need of an International Islamic Institute on Women's Empowerment because in almost every conference the implications of FWCW of Beijing on Muslim women was referred to and some of us would feel the lack of such an Institute in the Muslim world.

Later when Dr Zaleha Kamaruddin was appointed as the Rector of our University, in 2011, we both refreshed our aspirations of the establishment of such an Institute in IIUM itself. During this time, I was not teaching in the University, IIUM because I wanted to finish off some of my writing works for two years before re-joining our University, IIUM, after coming back from Qatar University QU where I taught for two years. However, since, I and Dr Zaleha were close friends as I mentioned earlier, and we had mutual understanding and interest on women's rights, we had several informal meetings at her office on our project of the establishing of the Institute. Dr Zaleha understood quite earlier I already published one chapter on the need for the establishment of an Islamic Institute in one of my books.⁴⁹ We decided not only the title of the Institute but also the tentative date on which an International Conference would be convened in which the inauguration of the Institute would be officially announced. But it so happened that surprisingly I received the message from Dr Zaleha that our project is postponed for certain reasons. I remained in dilemma, and I assumed that she must have faced some problem and so she must have thought to postpone it. Whatever be the reason, I still remember her that we have been good friends. I pray that may Allah keep her in all her intellectual endeavours in the way of Allah Almighty. Ameen.

⁴⁹ Zeenath Kausar, *Muslim Women at the Crossroads: Rights of Women in Islam and General Muslim Practices*, Kuala Lumpur: Thinker's Library, 2006. See this chapter in this above book: *Need for the Establishment of an International Islamic Organization for the Development of Muslim Women*, pp. 149-163.

However, my problem is that I never like to give up any work if I am convinced on the work that it is Islam-centred, sound and needed for the good of the human beings. Hence, on one side I continued my writing works and on the other side I continued taking measures to establish my dream project of establishing International Islamic Institute for women's empowerment in some way or the other. So, I think it was during 2012, I thought I should try to contact Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missed, the second wife of Sheikh Hamad bin Khalid Al Thani, the former Emir of the State of Qatar. During my stay in Qatar, I heard a lot about Sheikha Moza that she is an educationist who co-founded the Qatar Foundation and takes interest on women's rights in Islam. Hence, I thought that perhaps Sheikha Moza would be interested in establishing such an Institute for women, as the need of the time, either in Qatar or here in collaboration with Malaysia. I wrote a letter to Sheikha Moza addressing her and inviting her attention towards the need of the Institute. I took my letter to the Qatar Embassy in Malaysia and tried to contact the concerned person in-charge of correspondence to Qatar Royal Members of family. I presented my letter to him explaining the purpose of the letter and requested the person to send my letter to Sheikha Moza. He assured me that he would send my letter to her and would send to me her response if she gives. I have no idea whether my simple and humble letter was presented to her or not. I did not receive any response to my letter from her or from any concerned person there.

Well, I still did not give up my dream project of the Institute. I should mention here that I was closely watching the political chaos in Malaysia in 1998 when Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the then Deputy Minister of Malaysia and the finance minister was severely accused of corruption and sodomy which were totally politically motivated allegations against him by the then Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato Dr Mahathir Mohammad. When Anwar Ibrahim denied all these allegations against him, all his leadership positions were sacked from him. Then Anwar had no other choice than to go to the public. He gave a big public speech and talked about the hidden corruption, cronyism, and political exploitation in Malaysia before thousands of people and he motivated them to stand for justice and reforms in the country giving the slogan, 'reformacy'. Then, Anwar Ibrahim was inhumanly arrested in his house and was put in jail for several years. I observed that Dato' Seri Dr Wan Azizah left her medical profession and joined politics when Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim was jailed

with no valid reason and thousands of Malaysian citizens totally disagreed with the politically motivated charges against him. She called the enthusiasts of Reformacy to stand for justice and work in collaboration with each other. She emphatically gave speeches before the big number of citizens and emphasized that all the patriotic citizens of diverse communities of Malaysia should stand for reformacy to stop the corruption in Malaysia. She formed the political party, Pakatan Harapan, PH and took all the necessary political strategies and gave all kinds of sacrifices. Finally, Anwar Ibrahim was released from the prison, and in the 14th General Election of 2018, the 61-year-old ruling coalition, Barisan Nasional, BN was defeated by a newly formed opposition coalition, Pakatan Harapan, PH, under the leadership of Wan Azizah. Wan Azizah was awarded the position of the first female Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia and offered the position as the Minister of Women and Family Affairs Department. I fully recognized the persistent efforts and unwavering encounters of Wan Azizah during this long period of twenty years which showed her dynamic leadership qualities. Hence although I was busy in some of my writing works, I discontinued them for some time and started writing articles on the political leadership of Wan Azizah and I pointed out that she presented a new concept of women's empowerment while sticking to the Islamic values. I published six articles on Wan Azizah in various places in the East and the West.⁵⁰ My articles were very much appreciated and so I decided to come up with a book on Wan Azizah, on her unique political leadership as an embodiment of women's empowerment from Islamic perspective. Hence, I completed my manuscript, and it is ready for its publication.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Zeenath Kausar, 14th General Election in Malaysia and the Three Exciting Scenarios, in Countercurrents.org, Kerala, India, June, 8th, 2018. <https://countercurrents.org/author/dr-zeenath-kausar/>; From Kaum Ibu to Kaum Reformasi (Part 1), in Aliran, Malaysia, 13th June, 2018. <https://aliran.com/aliran-csi/from-kaum-ibu-to-kaum-reformasi-part-1/>; From Kaum Ibu to Kaum Reformasi (Part 2), in Aliran, 15th June, 2018. <https://aliran.com/aliran-csi/from-kaum-ibu-to-kaum-reformasi-part-2/>; Dr Wan Azizah Ismail a 'seat-warmer'? in Malaysiakini, Malaysia, 20th June, 2018. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/430390>; Malaysia: Husband and Wife at the Top Levels of the Country, in Islamicity, Culver, California, US, June, 26, 2018. <http://www.islamicity.org/16147/malaysia-husband-and-wife-at-the-top-levels-of-the-country>; Wan Azizah Breaks Gender Myths, in AMUST, Sydney, Australia, July, 19, 2018. <http://www.amust.com.au/2018/07/wan-azizah-breaks-gender-myths/>; Anwar Ibrahim and Wan Azizah From Reformasi Movement to the Saddles, in Radiance Views Weekly, Vol. LVI, No. 11, 10th June, 2018; <http://radianceweekly.in/portal/issue/youth-power-hopes-and-challenges/article/anwar-ibrahim-and-wan-azizah-from-reformasi-movement-to-the-saddles/>

⁵¹ Zeenath Kausar, Wan Azizah Wan Ismail: Symbol of Women's Empowerment in Malaysia (Bunga Raya, Hibiscus Blooms with Kaum Reformasi).

But I am waiting to get an interview from Wan Azizah so that my manuscript proved to be an original work on Wan Azizah. Why did I write this whole story here on my works on Wan Azizah? Its answer relates to my 'dream project' --- establishment of an International Islamic Institute for Women's empowerment! In this book on Wan Azizah, I wrote a chapter on the need of the establishment of women's empowerment in Malaysia. I pointed out that Malaysia has presented examples in establishing International Islamic University, IIUM and Islamic Banking and what not. Now it is time for Malaysia to establish the International Islamic Institute for women's empowerment which would attract Muslim women from all over the world to study Islam on women's empowerment through critically analysing feminism and other ideologies which would remove all kinds of misconceptions from the minds of Muslim women and would restore confidence in them that the Qur'an and Sunnah alone stand as the right sources of knowledge for all human beings , of course including women for their well-balanced and holistic empowerment. I wish and pray that Dato Wan Azizah read my chapter which emphasize the need of such an Institute and come forward for its practical achievement. Insha Allah. So, you can see since decades I have been trying to turn this theoretical project into an empirical reality, but I could not achieve it till date. However, I feel that I made some mistakes in my efforts in this connection. I think I should have started something little on my own instead of waiting to get help from outside resources, and perhaps others would have joined me later to make it bigger and stronger. Fact is, I had with me a list of writing works which were not giving me sufficient time to work on this project all by myself. But my dream is alive and vigorous because I keep full trust in Allah SWT that He would help me in accomplishing this genuine task. Insha Allah.

As far as the challenges and hurdles I face on my way while advocating women's empowerment, they are many. Mostly they are conceptual, and few are practical but, in a way, both conceptual and practical problems relate to each other and create obstacles on the way for women's empowerment. However, I would be discussing them in the next two parts of the questions, (that are asked to me), and so here I would just touch upon them. To make things clear, I would like to explain it referring to the term 'development' as an example. If you remember, just few decades before, the term 'development' was very popular and was promoted from the West to

the East and was commonly used in a general sense without analysing it conceptually going into its Western ideological root. The same we are doing for the term, women's empowerment. Conceptually speaking, the first problem is the understanding of the term women's empowerment itself. Commonly the term women's empowerment is used in a general sense as women's development in the same way as the term 'development' has been used and promoted in a general sense without analysing the ideological differences between Islam and the West on the term 'development'. In a general sense, we do not find any problem in the term 'development' and so we do not find any problem in the term women's empowerment. But when some Muslim scholars pointed out the differences between Western and Islamic perspectives on the term 'development', we realized the ideological difference between the two. It was only then we realized the main reason behind our degeneration although we were following the West in imitating the term development which the West presented before the East as a universal term. What did we realize? We realized that the term 'development' for the West is mainly the material development with no whatsoever connection with the Creator, Sovereign and the Master of the universe, God. Hence in the West, it is needless to investigate the connection between the material development and spiritual and moral development whereas in Islam, the material development cannot be separated from spiritual and moral development. It implies that in Islam though material development is seen as inevitable part of life for human beings, but it is not perceived as the main goal and purpose of life. In Islam the purpose of life is to serve Allah SWT. Serving Allah Almighty implies following the injunctions of Allah in all aspects of life. It is not confined only to the performance of the five pillars of Islam --- (1) shahadah, faith in Allah SWT and the last Prophet Mohammad (SAWS); (2) salaah, performance of five times salaah; (3) giving *Zakat*, that is giving a certain portion of wealth to the needy; (4) performing *saum*, that is, keeping fasts during the month of Ramadhan; (5) performing Hajj, that is performing the pilgrimage to Masjid al Haram provided Muslims can afford to perform it. Besides these five pillars of Islam, the purpose of life is to follow all the injunctions of Allah SWT given in the Qur'an and shown in the Sunnah of the last Prophet Mohammad (SAWS) in all aspects of life – educational, cultural, social, economic, and political and each aspect of life. So, in Islam, development includes a holistic development which comprises all aspects of life. We cannot simply pursue material development leaving all other aspects of life.

Similarly, for women's empowerment Muslim women are obliged to follow the Qur'an and the Sunnah in all aspects of life individually and collectively incorporating men and children to serve Allah SWT. For instance, for women's empowerment, gender perspective teaches women to focus more on their social position and material development as the main target of life. Thus, women are expected either to overlook or underestimate all other responsibilities connected with family – husband and children because according to them family responsibilities take away their time and energy necessary for their social position and material development. Hence such a gender perspective of the feminists does not comply with Islamic teaching on family and society. The Qur'an and the Sunnah put great emphasis on the central position of family and teaches both men and women to perform complementary roles in the family. Furthermore, we need to understand that in Islam, males are assigned the financial responsibility in the family because by nature men are exempted from giving birth to children and for that reason, they are assigned the financial responsibility.

It does not however mean that women are not allowed to perform the financial responsibility in the family. Islam allows this practice which can be understood from the lives of the female companions (RAA) during the period of the Prophet Mohammad (SAWS) and during the period of Caliphate of the four Caliphs, (RAA). But unlike the gender perspective, Islam does not make it obligatory on women to take the financial responsibility. Furthermore, Islam gives the rights to women to enjoy their own financial benefits which they earn on their own. It depends on women if they want to contribute their earnings for the good of the family. Another important point to understand on family in Islam is that Islam promotes a culture of cooperation between men and women which can be understood from the family life of the Prophet Mohammad (SAWS) where we see that the Prophet (SAWS) provided cooperation to his wives as much as he could do.

All these show that there is compatibility in Islam for a well-balanced family life. Well, it is a different issue whether Muslim men are following the example of the married family life of the Prophet (SAWS) or not. Generally, we find that men do not follow this example in many cases; rather they expect more services from women mistakenly arguing that women are obliged in Islam to perform all the house-hold responsibilities and men are obliged to work for bread & butter and nothing more.

Here wives are dictated and ordered to obey their husbands in taking care of all the works within the family and are not shown any love and respect which they deserve. This is not family in Islam, and I call such families, mini monarchies. Contrary to this, family in Islam is an abode of peace where men and women work together in cooperation and coordination with mutual understanding between husband and wife and between parents and children. Here the members of family try to follow the example of the Prophet (SAWS). I call such a family in Islam as a mini civilization.

So, coming back to the point, from Islamic perspective women enjoy all the genuine rights within the family and outside at workplace based in the Qur'an and the Sunnah and thus women possess all rights for their empowerment. If some women are denied these rights which the Qur'an and Sunnah have blessed them with, it is not the problem from Islam; rather this problem is created by some self-appointed male leaders. But due to such problems, Muslim women should not follow the trap of the feminist gender perspective. So, I can say that what I mentioned here is only an example of one conceptual problem which by itself needs more elaboration. We must understand that Islam emphasizes a holistic life which first and foremost calls submission to the Qur'an and Sunnah in all aspects of life including material aspect of life and secondly Islam enjoins men and women to work with coordination as co-vicegerents of Allah SWT to serve Him, promoting virtues and forbidding voices.

Kausar: Her Quotes in Few Conferences

It so happened that while talking all these Kausar suddenly remembered another exciting story which she faced long after she joined the University, IIUM and she went to Seoul, South Korea to present a paper entitled: "Women's Rights in Family and Society: Islamic and Feminist Perspectives". It was an International Conference of NGOs from 10 – 15 October 1999. Kausar says that, that International Conference of NGOs was not a simple conference of paper presentations and question and answer sessions and the end of it. It was a conference which was organized by the NGOs from different cultures and countries of the world and some of them looked diametrically different with each other. Kausar says that an obvious difference looked particularly between the highly influential feminists who came from the West and the ones who came from the Muslim world. Kausar says that she was observing all these throughout

the conference as to how difficult situation few feminists tried to make for the Muslim speakers when they presented the position of Islam on women's rights. Hence Kausar says that she was praying to Allah SWT to help her during her presentation. When her turn finally came, Kausar as usual started her presentation reciting few verses from the Qur'an and then came straight to the topic – Islam and Feminism on Family and Society. Kausar says that by the grace of Allah there was no interference from the participants during the whole talk and there was complete silence and it looked all paying full attention to the talk. But Kausar says as soon as she stopped, a list of questions was thrown on her from every corner. Kausar says that she already told herself that -- Zeenath, be calm, conscious, and wise enough to handle their questions. Kausar says that as far as the general misconceptions on Islamic stance on women's rights were concerned, she could easily settle down. But the problem came when it was asked by many participants that the stance which Islam takes on several issues on women's rights do not comply with the UN Human Rights and then how can Islam ignore 'Human Rights' and stand for Islamic extremism which are not good for Muslim women by any means? Kausar said that she replied to them with all calmness giving them a sweet smile. Kausar then told us that she cannot remember the exact words she said there, but she remembered well the arguments and contentions she presented there. Then Kausar started saying and we started jotting down: "I am happy that you all are talking about 'Human Rights' because it is necessary and important for all humans – men or women to follow 'Human Rights'. Having said this, I would like to say that of course Islam follows 'Human Rights' and enjoins people to follow 'Human Rights' and Islam never asks people to go for 'Human Wrong'!" Kausar then told us that she saw some people started smiling and some showed only anger and confusion in their faces. Then Kausar continued: "We need to differentiate between Human Rights and Human Wrongs. When Islam says that men and women should follow Islamic laws in all aspects of life including sexual aspect, what Islam says is 'right'; not wrong. Islam says – no sexual relations between men and women unless they get married based on the given rule and regulation. These are 'Human Rights' because these rules are protecting men and women from committing hundreds of wrongs in the society. These rules would keep men and women in peace and happiness. Suppose there are rules which allow men and women to enjoy all kinds of sexual relationship with or without marriage and they also allow them to enjoy all forms of deviant sexual relationship, and if they call them, they are Human Rights,

how do you see them? Sorry to say that they are not ‘Human Rights’; they are ‘Human Wrongs’. They mistakenly call them ‘Human Rights’. And we know that people who are following these ‘Human Wrongs’, they are not only suffering from several social ills, but they are suffering from many fatal diseases. Then, how can we still call these ‘Human Wrongs’ as ‘Human Rights’? So, my dear, you have been insisting on Human Rights; I too agree with it. But the only thing is we should know what are ‘Human Rights’ and what are ‘Human Wrongs’? Rights should be ‘right’; not ‘wrong’! We cannot change the meaning of the opposite terms – wrong to right. How can we do that? Human Rights should be ‘right’ not ‘wrong’. Obviously, the One who created human beings alone possesses absolutely knowledge of what is ‘right’ and what is ‘wrong’ for human beings. The Creator and Master of the universe only has the ‘right’ to define what is ‘right’ for human beings and based on that He would enumerate what are Human Rights, then only it can be ascertained that these Human Rights are ‘right’, and they should be followed and promoted.” Kausar then said that she cannot say how much people enjoyed and appreciated the whole argument on ‘human Rights’ and ‘human Wrongs’. After that Kausar said that few journalists took her photo and published in the Bulletin of the conference which Kausar keeps it in her file.

We would say that there is nothing to say except thanking Allah SWT who blessed Kausar with such sharp intelligence and wisdom that she could then and there answered such cunning questions which were put on her to downgrade Islam and highlight the importance of UN stand on Human Rights; but Kausar turned the table upside down!

Kausar then asked us whether she could take few more minutes to say something interesting again which she remembered before proceeding to their original topic on her experiences with friends. We gladly accepted it. Kausar says that it was the same year, 1999, but it was in December when she had to go to Cape Town, South Africa to present a paper: “Gender Relations in Islam: A Civilizational Perspective”. Kausar presented this paper in the Parliament of World Religions. Kausar says that in such conferences of Interfaith Dialogues and Parliament of World Religions, the audience would be mixed up from such different religions and cultures one would be hardly imagined. But as usual, Dr. Irfan Khan who was one of the leading persons from the Muslim world had selected a good number of speakers who could face the

people of diverse faiths with peace of mind with no anger and rudeness. Dr. Irfan and few more Islamic scholars including Prof Anis Ahmed from Pakistan, Rashid Ghannouchi from Tunisia and few others briefed the Muslim speakers how they should present their talks in concrete terms based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah and they should avoid using such dualistic terms which create divisions among Muslims like Conservative Islam and Progressive Islam, and Political Islam or Liberal Islam and such others. Kausar says that as soon as she heard these words from these Islamic leaders, she remembered her own experience. Kausar says that as soon as Kausar sat in the car when the concerned female organizers were taking her to the venue of the Conference, just after taking Kausar's introduction in few words, one of them asked: Zeenath, what do you follow? Do they have Progressive Islam in Malaysia or not? Kausar answered her peacefully: "Well, if you mean by 'progressive', a person or an organization which does not stay backward and moves on consistently then Malaysia as a country is always progressing; not static and not backward. But if you are asking about these self-created definitions – Conservative Islam or Progressive Islam, these kinds of definitions are not in vogue in Malaysia because Muslims there like me believe that there is only one Islam from the day human beings are created and sent on this earth till human beings would go back to meet their Creator, Master, and the Lord of the universe. These terms are often created by the West to create confusion for their own benefit and some Muslims who are not conscientious they started using and promoting these terms." Kausar then says that she does not fully remember each word what she said to that girl; but she did say this and tried to clarify her misconception. Kausar then said she went to the Hall of the talk where she had to present her paper. Kausar said that first she clarified that when she used the term 'gender' she did not mean, 'gender' as understood and misinterpreted in the feminist discourse. When she would say gender relations, she would only mean relations between men and women. So, she would present the Islamic stance on the relationship between men and women in family and in society in context with the Islamic perspective on civilization. Kausar said that she also made it clear to them that she would also refer to the Western philosophy of civilization when needed to show the difference between Islam and the West on civilization to make things clear and concrete. Kausar said that the whole presentation went smooth and clean and there were few questions which were responded up to the satisfaction of the participants. However, a comment was raised by a broadcaster of the Cape Town Television that she liked how I created my own

term for family in Islam as 'Mini-Civilization'. The broadcaster asked for a broader explanation of the term mini civilization for family in Islam. Kausar explained it pointing the general understanding of civilization that is promoted from the Western philosophers and showed how it differs from the definition and explanations given by the Islamic scholars. We stopped Kausar for a while and requested her to explain the whole thing to them in short. Kausar explained that the West defines civilization mainly in terms of its physical structure --- like its arts, architecture, languages people use, literature, sciences, and technological development, family life, state its political system, its economy and economic system and such other matters and with these if they prefer, they talk about the religions people follow in the given state and they emphasize how is the financial status of the country whether it is progressing or it is declining for certain reasons. Kausar then said from the Islamic perspective, main point for us to find out is that how far the given country is following Islamic system of family, Islamic system of education, Islamic economic system, Islamic political system, in short how far it is following Islam as the complete system of life. If the given country is following Islam in all its dimensions that it is called an Islamic civilization. If it fails in few aspects, then it is less civilized and needs to work hard for advancing in Islamic laws, rules, and regulations to reach to the better level accordingly. Hence, Kausar points out that when we see civilization from the Western paradigm, we find that they bring and talk about each and every thing of that given country and hardly leave a single aspect, but they bring God, His (call it) Revelation or (they say) Scripture at the end as a personal life of people whatever they follow leaving all the aspects of life on their own following whatsoever ideology they prefer to follow or they like to change one theory and create a new one to try a new experiment and see how far they are successful in following it and based on it they would mathematically measure about their position in their civilization. Thus, Kausar explains so beautifully the philosophy of civilization in Islam and the West. We thanked her and prayed duwa for her and said it looked as though we are watching a 'live movie' of a Western civilization and an Islamic civilization and both the pictures are clear to us and we feel how far we have moved off from the real civilization and how the West clams for its apparent material civilization, but how bitterly it has fallen in its moral and spiritual aspects which are only dragging it towards a fatal fall. Kausar told us that we have clearly understood the full picture of both the West and the Muslim world. We once again thanked Kausar and requested her to say what

happened with the broadcaster. Kausar then told that the broadcaster liked the whole discussion and requested her to present the whole thing -- Family in Islam as a Mini-civilization in her TV programme and Kausar did it. Alhamdulillah. Again, we lack words to talk about Kausar's comprehensive conceptual understanding of both Islam and the West on several subjects and issues and how she performs each one of them distinctly remarkable.

Then naturally the interesting thing what happened was that our whole mood was shifted towards Kausar's participation in the international conferences, and we smilingly asked Kausar: "What next?" She also smiled and said: "You people seem to be more interested in story listening, not in thesis writing." We said: "We are doing both – story listening as well as thesis writing." Kausar laughed and said: "OK, since I talked about television, I remembered about one extremely successful talk I gave which Allah SWT made it successful indeed." Then Kausar started talking about and we started jotting down fast and we are presenting his words here. "There was an International Conference organized under the auspicious of OIC, Organization of Islamic Conference, on the topic, Civilizational Dialogue and Tolerance in Islam in Auckland, New Zealand, in June 2003. It was a huge conference in which few male and female teaching staff were the speakers and Prof. Kamal Hasan who was the Rector of the University during that period was also there as the Guest of Honour of the Conference. The topic that I had to present was -- "Women's Rights, their Position and Social Role in Islam". The topic allotted to me was quite simple but what I did was I made it quite comprehensive doing four things in it. Firstly, I presented the Islamic position on woman in family and in society specifying each aspect of life bringing in the necessary verses from the Qur'an and referring to certain necessary *ahadith* and historical examples there. Secondly, I clarified few common misrepresentations on the rights of women in family and society. Thirdly I pinpointed the feminist stance on some of the rights of women which do not comply with Islam. Fourthly, I referred to the Fourth World Conference that took place in Beijing in 1995 and showed some of its extremely negative implications on Muslim women in the Muslim world. The important point that I emphasized throughout this topic was that – none, but Islam alone blesses women with prominent position in family and society. In the conclusion I said that it is a great opportunity that this conference is organized by OIC, and we are talking about civilizational dialogue. I said it is the right time and

right occasion to think about establishing an international institution for the protection of women's rights in Islam under the auspicious of OIC so that Muslim women may prepare their own Islamic Action Plan which can be presented as an alternative to the Beijing Platform for Action. There was a big applause from the floor, and I was asked to write a preliminary plan for such an Institution, and I wrote it within our stay in the conference and submitted to its concerned officers. This was a good start when OIC was requested from a female speaker of the conference to establish such an institution. It is extremely disappointing to say that no follow up took place for this proposed project, except that it was written down and submitted as a written record in OIC. As quite usual OIC remained as – Oh, I see!" We felt extremely happy to hear all what she spoke and the initiative that she took for establishing an international institute for women's rights under OIC. It was a different problem that the OIC never took any step for materializing the project. But then Kausar said that though in this connection she was disappointed; but she was happy to learn something wonderful. We were so anxious to learn about it and we said: "We are eager to know it." Kausar said and we noted fast and presenting it as verbatim: "The conference was over, and we returned to Malaysia. After few days I received a letter from some TV operating person whom I saw during the conference that he and few more persons were standing all the time and recording all our presentations we did standing on the stage. He wrote to me that he is pleased to inform me that a non-Muslim local lady from Australia wrote to him that she heard and saw the whole lecture on the rights and position of Islam on woman and she liked it and accepted Islam then and there soon after listening to the talk. Masha Allah." We all were overwhelmingly happy hearing such delightful news and we all said: "Masha Allah! Subhanallah! Alhamdulillah! Heartiest congratulations to you Madam. Cannot say anything Madam, we are so excited." Kausar said: "Indeed. It was a great blessing from Allah SWT. Whenever I remember it, I thank Allah for that blessing on me. But you know what happened. I was late here in following up the whole thing through that young boy of the TV programme. I shared this happy news with all my family members here and in India and my dear mother shared the good news with others there and talked to me on phone and gave me lot of prayers. By the time I decided to send my message of thanks to that person, somehow, I do not know how his message to me was deleted and I was disappointed that I did not save anything from him, and I have absolutely lost contact with him. Later I tried different ways to contact him; but I could not get him at all." We said: "Very sorry to know

about it. But there are different techniques through which you could have traced the TV boy.” Kausar said: “I should be ashamed of myself. I did not know many things on laptop, and I still do not know many things. So, I lost a precious written message and failed to contact the TV boy and that lady who reverted to Islam so that I could have continued contact with both. And you know, usually I keep a record in my file of international conferences my pictures and some important facts, but I did not keep such good news in my file because I put those events with authentic information with dates, pictures, and full information. I lost the important letter which was a proof of the good news so nowhere I mentioned it except there is a record in my CV that I presented a paper in that conference. That’s all. Perhaps, it must be the will of Allah for any reason which He alone knows; so, I left it to Him. But somehow, I shared it with you.” We said: “We are so thankful to you Madam for sharing such a good thing with us. But we pray to Allah that He would bless you with more such beautiful experiences, Ameen.” Kausar said: “May Allah accept your *duas*. Ameen.” Kausar then aids: “What I think is that in my talk, each aspect of family life and social life I presented based on Islamic resources; not just through my own words and though what I emphasized throughout d the talk –none, but Islam blesses women their prominent position; but this little and simple phrase is authentic and decisive. Hence if Allah wants, He can bring people to His message of Oneness and integrity and who knows perhaps she was in search of truth and Allah opened her heart for Truth which she was searching.” We said: “Madam, you seem right in thinking this. Of course, nothing is possible without the help of Allah. Well, Madam your full explanation of Islamic position on women and your emphasis on those simple words can also play an important role by the grace of Allah. Madam if you allow us, we want to take this small phrase as one of your ‘quotes’ to attract the attention of Muslims and non-Muslims. Perhaps, it may be gone well as a quote as an authentic and integrated message from Islam. Madam, even your other attractive short sentences can be also promoted as quotes, please think about this important point.” Madam said: “Why not? It is a good idea. What you say is that these phrases or sentences can attract Muslims and Non-Muslims from anywhere. You may go ahead for it. May Allah help us in His way, Ameen.” We said: “Madam if we take your phrases and sentences on Human Rights and Human Wrongs, they can do a lot. What all you said on the term Human Rights in that conference is just marvellous? For example, few phrases or sentences may be easily drawn from them -- Differentiate between Human Rights and Human

Wrongs; Human Wrongs cannot be Human Rights; Rights should be 'right'; not 'wrong'; Human Rights should be 'right' not 'wrong'. Creator of human beings alone possesses absolute knowledge of human beings. Hence, Creator alone has the 'right' to ascertain what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' for human beings and alone has the right to define Human Rights. All these are all what you said, and we can make use of them as 'quotes.' Madam said: "That sounds good and interesting." We said: "Madam, let us do the same for – Family in Islam is a mini-civilization.... This by itself is a motivating quote. We can elongate it as you did in one article -- Family in Islam is a mini-civilization, a mini-Makkah ; the reconstruction and the regeneration of Islamic civilization largely depends on the making or unmaking of the Muslim families as 'mini-civilizations'; unless we teach our children that Islam is the complete system of life and that they should connect each aspect of their life with the purpose of creation, we would not be able to make our families mini-civilizations, and we would fail to regenerate Islamic civilization again; A civilization is constituted on its Creator, God and His injunctions. If any ideology that dominates a given civilization remains unconnected with God and His injunctions in its systems and institutions, the given civilization in due course of time may decline to barbarism, no matter how its social institutions apparently appear complex and cool and how tall its monuments and towers rise to the sky; each family in each street of Yathrib turned into mini-civilization after embracing Islam, because Yathrib could not have become Madinah without each family in Yathrib becoming mini-Madinah, a mini-civilized city; if we want to re-construct our society, our goal should be – follow up of Madinah which entails re-construction of families as mini-civilizations which would lead to Islamic civilization at large." Madam said: "Well, we have collected many sentences for quotes. We pray that they become useful and thought-provoking". Ameen. We asked: "Madam, do you remember any such striking and stimulating phrases or sentences that we and others can benefit from them?" Madam said: "I think we better stop now; we may get few more if we investigate some of my writings; but not now. We need to continue some more on our previous topic. Oh! Wait a minute; I suddenly remember one or two small phrases which I expressed during some question-and-answer session after the presentation of my paper in Sydney, Australia, in March 1997. This was also a very important International Conference, called, Da'wah Bil Hal Conference. DR. Qazi Ashfaq Ahmed a known Islamic scholar of Sydney, Australia, who devoted most of his time in promoting communal harmony and social cohesion, (about whom we

have already discussed earlier), was one of the main Islamic leaders who was in-charge of that conference. Prof. Mumtaz and I, both of us presented our papers in this Conference. My topic of presentation was: “Development from Islamic Perspective: Role of Muslimah in Development”. Here, I discussed the concept of development first from the Western Perspective and then presented critical analysis of Development from Islamic perspective and then presented the concept from an Islamic Perspective. After this, I presented my own reflections on the development of Muslimah referring to the related verses from the Qur’an, Prophetic traditions, and Muslim history. I emphasized here that the Muslim women companions (RA) during the period of the Prophet Mohammad (SAWS) and during the period of Kulfah –e- Rashidoon (RA) played a remarkable role for the development of Islamic Ummah. I asserted that the history of those women companions (RA) should not be studied merely as the history of the past just to remember and appreciate them. The Prophet Mohammad (SAWS), the male and the female companions (RA) performed an exemplary role for the development of the Islamic Ummah so that Muslims in every period of their historical development including the contemporary times should follow their example as much as they can so that the Islamic civilization should remain always glorious and creative in every aspect – familial, educational, cultural, economic, and political and all. In all these areas, both men and women should coordinate and cooperate with each other and work for the rejuvenation of Islamic civilization. I also presented few critical comments that --- on one side Muslim women are not given a prominent role in family itself and on the other side, they are discouraged for their participation in social institutions. Besides these problems, it is also observed that a big number of young Muslim women like young Muslim men are seen victims of Westernization in the name of modernization without critically analysing these terms and their implications. They are neither taught in their families nor in the formal schools where they go how they can go for modernization through Islamization. We are facing all these problems because Muslims who are blessed with the Qur’an to ‘read’ and ‘lead’ the humanity, they are following other cultures and ideologies and thus they are mentally ‘fed’ by others and ‘led’ by others. I then said putting great emphasis – my dear brothers and sisters, let us popularize verbally and practically a slogan today; rather take a goal with us from this conference: Stop getting Fed and stop getting Led; Read and Lead. With these words I concluded my talk and quote few poetic verses of Allama Iqbal wherever needed and with prayers ended my talk. We said: “Madam we wish we

could have met you long before; but Allah decides everything the best for us. What we mean is that every time you speak in any conference, you presented excellent critique which opens the mind of the people and present such suggestions that can only motivate them and move their heart and mind to change the society, to change this world for the positive development. Madam, we easily got an enthralling quote from here what you said -- Stop being Fed and led; Read and Lead. Fantastic! Madam, thanks a lot and lot of prayers to you. Madam, did you get any feedback or comment from the audience?" Madam said: "No feedback. But I saw that after I finished my talk and I went to some other panel discussion to listen to others, I saw some women standing and asking their friends pointing their hand towards me --- did you hear her talk? Oh, you should hear her. You know what she says: Read and lead!" I heard them, and waved for them and gave a good smile saying thanks."

Kausar: Her Friends from Primary School to Professional Level Along with her Participation in Islamic Organizations

Kausar says that by the grace of Allah SWT she is always blessed with good and God-conscious friends since her childhood who have been not only knowledge-loving but have also been joyful and social. Kausar did her early Primary School --- KG 2, First Standard, Second and Third Standard in Tarana Primary School, at Lakhdi Ka Pul, Hyderabad. It was a co-educational School, but girls had to sit in the front rows and the boys at the back. The school was known for its high educational standard and strict discipline that students had to follow. It was purely an English Medium School where the Prefects including Kausar (Kausar was the Captain of her Class and was one of the School Prefects) had to take fine if students speak any language other than English even during lunch break. Urdu and Hindi were optional languages to take, and Kausar took Hindi as her optional language. But during Annual Cultural Functions, Kausar was taken both in English and Urdu sessions because it was said that Kausar does the best in both.

Kausar loves her Primary School, and she gets tears in her eyes when she remembers its teachers and its principal and her friends. She still remembers few names – Madam Sarala Kuntumbai was the Principal of the School and Faruqui Sir and Habeebur Rahman Sir and others were her teachers. Kausar says that these and few other teachers at the school were symbols of education and moral training. They

were full of love and affection, and they showed so much love to Kausar and Kausar showed her love and respect to them. It was so good to hear from Kausar that she still remembers her teachers and remembers them in her prayers. Kausar says that she had very good friends who were good in studies, morals, sports, and extracurricular activities. Kausar remembers few names – Kausar Tasneem, Amena Kareem, Rekha Rani and few more. Kausar says that this School was the foundation stone which built her educational development, her inner passion for presenting and expressing her views and ideas and all her inner capabilities. Kausar says along with taking full interest in all her classes on each subject, she fully participated in extra-curricular activities through games and sports and through active participation in leading roles through her friends in --- speaking on moral issues; poetry singing, dramas, qawwalees etc. Kausar says there is lot to say on this School and her performance there. Kausar sang for us few Nursery rhymes, Urdu National songs, and few stanzas of qawwalees which she remembered very well, and we enjoyed listening to her. It is obvious from Kausar's performance in this Primary School that Kausar already became Kausar when she was just in her early Primary School.

Kausar was then admitted in the Nampally Primary School. Kausar was supposed to be admitted in the Fourth standard, but there was no place for new admission and so she had to sit for an examination to get a class for the fifth standard in which she passed and admitted in the fifth standard. From fifth to the tenth standard and then the whole First and the Second year Intermediate at Mahboobia Girls College, Kausar had several very close friends. The first name Kausar liked to take is Qamar Sultana who was not only her classmate from Primary School to Intermediate, but Qamar remains her the best friend throughout her academic career, marriage and married life and her professional career; in a way throughout her life. An interesting thing to note is that Qamar is one of the middle daughters of Kausar's eldest stepsister Amatus Salam whose husband Syed Mazharuddin Hasan, Kausar's eldest brother-in-law, whom she called Bhaie Miyan was the same loving and caring personality who admitted her in the school in KG, 2, as mentioned earlier. Thus, Kausar and Qamar were together in the same school and the same college. What Kausar finds exceptional in Qamar is her selfless – love for everybody but with Kausar, the most. Kausar describes her as the most loving, caring and highly affectionate person from her very childhood who would be ready to give her services to anyone with all attention and

care. At the same time Qamar has been a very brilliant student in the class and quite active in sports and the best in extracurricular activities where no one can beat her. There would be hardly any big occasion in Annual functions where Qamar would not be there where she would not win great applause from the teachers, students, and the audience.

A very interesting thing what we learnt from Kausar which she spoke on her school days was the 'group of six' that Kausar had with her throughout that period Zeenath, Qamar, Talat, Syda, Jaysree, Sarjeet Kaur. This 'group of six' would study together; eat together; play together and go back their homes together. Kausar calls them 'a union of Six' who have been very near and dear to Kausar. They were good in education, good in manners and good in sports and in extracurricular activities. Far and above, they were God-loving and at the same time highly active in different activities. Talat Fatima was with Kausar same as Qamar from Primary School to intermediate; but at the graduation Talat joined Women's College, Kothi, Hyderabad, and Kausar joined Sarojini Naidu Wani Mahavidyalaya, Exhibition Ground, Nampally, Hyderabad. Syda Abbasi was with Kausar till high school, and she is Hafiz e Qur'an, Masha Allah. Jayasree N Rao was with Kausar from High School to her Graduation. Later, during Masters, Jayasree joined Osmania University, Hyderabad, while Kausar joined Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. Kausar and her whole group call her Jayasree as Jaya. Sarjit Kaur was with Kausar from Nampally High School till Intermediate in Mahboobia College. Kausar takes the name of each one of these six friends with so much love, respect, and prayers that one would just wonder about her close relationship with them.

More interesting thing is, Kausar talks about the Election Campaign which this 'union of 6 friends' performed taking all other classmates and students from other classes when Kausar was in the ninth standard and when she stood for the position of Secretary of the School; and when she was in the tenth standard, she stood for Presidential position. Kausar says the Election Period was always extremely interesting and motivating where the students were given the chance during break time and some other time to do canvassing. Kausar's 'union group of Six' would be the leading group where all other students would join them, and they walk around the school campus with loud voices – Vote for Zeenath! Fight for Zeenath! East and West Zeenath is the best! and many other slogans. Kausar says that there used to be so

much fun and excitement during the Election Period which can never be forgotten. Kausar says that every time she won the election with majority votes. Alhamdulillah

Kausar then talks about her another close friend, Ghousia Kishwar, though she was one class higher than her group of 'six', but she has been very near and dear friend of Kausar. When Kausar was in the ninth standard, she was in the tenth; so, when Kausar was Secretary of the school, Kishwar was the President and when Kausar was elected President, she was in Inter first year already. Both being the members of the school Union, they had similar aims of keeping discipline among the students in their classes, punctuality in coming to school and watching the school uniforms of the students and looking into certain issues among the students and resolving them taking the help from the teachers. Kausar says she would never forget how they both used to stand together when the National Anthem would be sung in the School Assembly every day. Kishwar was with Kausar from High School to the graduation because she did her BSc from Wanita College and Kausar did her BA from the same college as mentioned earlier.

Kausar then mentioned about her another close friend during her college time; it is Manzoor Fatima. Manzoor was with Kausar from Intermediate at Mahboobia College to her graduation, BA in Wanita College. Thus, they studied together from Intermediate to their Bachelor. Manzoor has been a very competent student as well as a very active member of our college group friends. One interesting thing with Manzoor is that she is one of the maternal granddaughters of a known Urdu Poet, Makhdoom Mohiuddin, (4 February 1908 – 25th August 1969). Maqdoom Mohyuddin was not only a renowned poet of Urdu, but he was also one of the Freedom Fighters of India. But Maqdoom Mohyuddin was a Marxist Political activist and was the Founder of the Communist Party of Hyderabad and he also founded the Progressive Writers Union in Hyderabad. He was also the Member of the Legislative Council (Upper House) of Andhra Pradesh. (However, in 2014, Andhra Pradesh is divided into two states – Telengana and Andhra Pradesh). Kausar says that Manzoor is Islam-loving and a practicing Muslimah. Kausar remembers the days with her friends during her BA in Wanita and says that she can never forget how a group of three – Kausar, Manzoor and Jaya used to sit together under a tree-shade and enjoyed their lunch together. After the classes, during the exhibition period, they would go and buy banana chips packets and would go around the shops of bangles and earrings enjoying

the chips and then their other friends would also join then, and they would have a lot of fun and joy together.

When Kausar started her Masters, she got a new friend, Rafath Durdana who was doing her Masters in English Literature from University of Hyderabad, Abids. As we mentioned earlier, Kausar was engaged in several Islamic Associations and Islamic Mission Organizations ever since her school days to college and University level. We have also mentioned earlier that she formed Muslim girls Associations herself and conducted talks and gave training to girls of her own age for speaking and essay writing to make them good speakers and writers in the way of Islamic Mission. In one of the Speaking Sessions of one Islamic Organization, Kausar and Rafath had to speak on Islamic Mission and the Role of Muslim Women. It so happened that in that Session itself, both became very close friends with each other, because they felt that their views and aspirations were close to each other. Hearing this from Kausar, we remembered the famous proverb – ‘Birds of the same feather flock together’. Then Kausar used to visit Rafath at University of Hyderabad, Abids and they used to share their views on several social and political issues referring to several verses from the Quran and the poetic verses of Allama Iqbal and thus used to motivate each other to work for Islamic cause. After Masters, Rafath did her MPhil from the same University of Hyderabad. She then did her Postgraduate Diploma in English Language Teaching from CIEFL, Hyderabad, India. Kausar says that Rafath’s English in both speaking and writing is second to none. Alhamdulillah. Kausar says that Rafath’s deep understanding of the Qur’an and her presentation of Dars – e – Qur’an has always been very comprehensive and inspiring. Rafath married to Jalaluddin from Hyderabad who did his two Masters – one in English Literature and one in Arabic language from Osmania University, Hyderabad. An important and motivating point in this couple - Rafath Durdana and her husband Jalaluddin was that they both wrote together and published their works, and they were all connected with Islam. They both did English translation of the Masterpiece of the known Islamic scholar, Shibli Nomani, his Islamic logic, The Al Kalam. Besides this, they did two collections of Living Stories and did English translation of the Story of Joseph. Along with their writing works, they taught at Sebha University in Libya. Prof. Jalaluddin taught there from 1987 to 2003 and Rafath taught in the same University from 1991 to 2001. Kausar says that it is obvious from all these that Rafath and Jalaluddin continued their married life

working in the Islamic cause through their expertise in Islamic understanding and in languages – English and Arabic. However, we all know that it is Allah SWT who knows everything about the life and death of His servants; Jalaluddin suddenly got Heart Attack while he was leading the prayer during the blessed month of Ramadhan in 2003 and he was immediately hospitalized but within few days his conditions further grew worst and he passed away to Allah SWT, to his original destination. May Allah SWT bless him a high place in Jannat –al-Firdoze. Ameen. During that period Rafath was in Hyderabad to get her four children admitted in schools. It was a big shock to Rafath, her children and her family members. But Rafath being Islamic-minded person, she gathered all her strength from Allah SWT and took care of herself and her children remarkably well. Hence, all her children, two daughters and two sons attained high education in different fields --- medicine, engineering etc and have attained high professions in different fields and they all are getting married, and they are well-settled in their own places -- three of them in Toronto, in Canada and one in Australia. Rafath visit them and spend good time with her children and grandchildren. Alhamdulillah. Both, Kausar and Rafath are in contact with each other and as usual they talk and motivate each other in the Islamic cause by the Grace of Allah SWT.

Well, coming back to 1980s when Kausar met Rafath when they were doing Masters, it was the time when Kausar was getting too many proposals for her marriage. It is already mentioned that Kausar was rejecting all the proposals and she made it clear to her mother, her sister, Appi, her Bhayya and her eldest brother-in-law, Khalid Bhaie that she would only accept any proposal only if the proposed person and his family would show no objection to her in the continuation of her higher education and in her intellectual endeavours and her activities in the Islamic Mission. Kausar finally agreed with that specific proposal when she learnt that Mohammad Mumtaz Ali is one of the pioneers of Islamic Organization, and he is a research scholar doing PhD. Furthermore, his mother agreed with all the conditions which Kausar's mother and her elder siblings presented to her which were clearly specified by Kausar as mentioned above. It is an important and a strong decision Kausar took which was totally different from the common culture where girls generally agree with whatever proposal parents suggest for them. Parents generally would see whether the boy is earning well, and his family looks fine and Islamic minded in general. In Kausar's case, Mr Mumtaz was not earning at all because he was still a student and

that Kausar's family knew that he is extremely busy in Islamic Organization works and he had no idea what profession he would be taking and what would be his future financially. When Mr Mumtaz was asked about his future planning, he replied with full confidence to the brother – in - law of Kausar that he would take care of his family well, and after that no further question was asked except saying Insha Allah.

Kausar got married when she just sat for her MA Final examination. She reached Aligarh fifteen days after her marriage which was a very historical time, when the preparation of the 15th Century Hijra Celebration was at its peak under the Islamic Organization. During that period Mumtaz Ali was the Finance Secretary at the National Level and he had to make a full tour of India, North and South giving talks and lectures on the forthcoming 15th Century Hijri and Kausar was asked to give talks at girl's section. Both performed their tasks well and returned to Aligarh. That time, she got her MA result and by the grace of Allah, it was the time when the Entrance Test for PhD was announced. Kausar prepared herself and sat for the Test and passed with highest marks and got admission for PhD in Political Science under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Shan Mohammad, a well-known Muslim Political Scientist known for his several books on Muslim Political History in India and Western Political Philosophy. As mentioned earlier during the time when both Kausar and her husband were continuing their doctorate, it was made compulsory for PhD research scholars to do MPhil as a part of their PhD. Hence, both this new couple devoted all their time in fulfilling all the requirements of MPhil and PhD.

During this time, Kausar was fortunate to meet one of the renowned Islamic scholars of the Muslim world who was also one of the known Exegetes of the Qur'an, Dr Irfan Ahmed Khan. He came to Aligarh from the States to meet his family and his friends in AMU, Aligarh. It was the first time that Kausar got an opportunity to meet him in Aligarh and she says that the simple and noble picture that she learnt from the people around about him, she found him much more than the picture portrayed before her. Kausar then continued visiting him at the campus and at his residence and greatly benefited from him. Besides his inner urge of sharing and imparting his knowledge to the people, Dr. Irfan was famous for his hospitality. His house can be called an 'open house' for twenty-four hours. Point to note is that -- for his good and loving wife and his young children it was like a part of their life – be ready to serve people whenever they come, and they would be also ready for participating in discussion with Dr. Irfan.

Kausar says that even whenever she went to Chicago for any conference, she found the house of Dr Irfan full of people, enjoying delicious food and benefiting themselves with knowledge from Dr. Irfan.

Irfan Ahmed Khan (1931 – 3, April 2018) was born in Saharanpur in India, did his BSc and master's from Aligarh Muslim University, AMU, Aligarh in early 1950s and then attained higher education in Arabic, Qur'anic and Hadeeth Studies from Sanavi, Darsghah, Rampur, for two years and then taught Islamic Thought and Western Philosophy at AMU from 1953-73. In 1974, Irfan Ahmed moved to the United States, and did PhD in Western Philosophy from the University of Illinois, Chicago in 1986. He then taught Islamic Philosophy at the University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Religion at The University of Iowa, School of Art Institute of Chicago, and American Islamic College, Chicago. Dr Irfan devoted his whole life in inviting people to the understanding of the Qur'an, its contemplation and its practical implementation and its promotion for the good of humanity. Being a Mufassir-e- Qur'an, his widely read books include -- An Introduction to Understanding the Qur'an with Examples, from Association for Qur'anic Understanding, Chicago, 2011; An Exercise in Understanding the Qur'an: An Outline Study of the Last Thirty Divine Discourses (Surah 85-Surah 114) from Kazi Publications, Chicago, 2015; and Reflections on the Quran: Understanding Surahs Al-Fatihah & Al-Baqarah from Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 2005; Re-printed by Kube Publishing Company in 2021. Dr Irfan was the initiator of several Interfaith Dialogues world over. He was also the founder of the revived Parliament of World Religions. Far and above, Kausar says that Dr Irfan was the symbol of 'ikhlas', (one who loves Allah SWT and performs all works only to please Allah SWT alone; with no desire for name and fame from human beings). He was a rare specimen who combined in himself simplicity with nobility. Kausar says that she is happy to say that Dr Irfan was a very close friend of the other two Islamic scholars of his time -- Dr. Qazi Ashfaq Ahmed, an Australian citizen of Indian origin, an eminent Islamic scholar and a founding father of several Islamic organizations and associations in Australia and Dr. Nejatullah Siddiqui, the world-acclaimed prolific writer, and the author of the world renowned book, "Banking Without Interest" which was published in 30 editions and benefited millions of people around the world. Kausar calls them --- Dr. Irfan Ahmed Khan, Dr. Qazi Ashfaq Ahmed, and Dr. Nejatullah Siddiqui as the 'trio-Islamic thinkers of contemporary times' who left a

legacy of their deep-rooted Islamic works and their consistent practical activism as pioneering examples of thought and action for the young and old.

Not only this, but Kausar thanks Allah also SWT saying that Dr Irfan invited her for two international conferences, one held in Barcelona in Spain and the other held in Cape Town in South Africa which were conducted under the Parliament of World Religions wherein Dr. Irfan was one of its leaders from the Muslim World. As far as the sponsorship was concerned, Kausar says that it was sponsored by the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, WAMY, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Besides these two conferences, when Kausar was in Chicago to settle one of her daughters' admissions (Muznah Madiha) for her Masters, Dr Irfan invited her to speak in one of the International Conferences on the Qur'anic Understanding. Kausar says that Dr Irfan expressed his happiness and satisfaction with Kausar's presentations in all these three big conferences. Kausar says that all these international conferences immensely motivated her in going ahead in intellectual development and she would always remain thankful to Allah SWT and would remember Dr Irfan in her prayers.

Kausar then went back to AMU, Aligarh, and started speaking about her busy schedule of thesis writing and her involvement in different activities of the Islamic Organization. Kausar says she never felt hesitant talking, interacting, and meeting the leaders of the Islamic Organization because Kausar had an extra advantage of meeting them since her husband, Mr Mumtaz belonged to the same Majlis-e-Shura at the National level. Kausar remembers here many members of the Islamic Organization, particularly Mr Ahmed Ullah Siddiqui, Dr Zaki Kirmani, and Dr. Amanullah Khan. Kausar calls them Ahmed Sb, Zaki Sb and Aman Sb. Ahmed Sb was the main person, like the Chairman of the Islamic Organization and Zaki Sb at that time was its President while Aman Sb was also one of the active Union members of the Organization. The interesting thing with them, Kausar says is that they were and are very much family - oriented people. Aman Sb and his very loving and cooperative wife handed over their house to Mr Mumtaz and Kausar when they first arrived as new couple to Aligarh, and they shifted to some of their friend's house. Kausar says it was such a noble and loving gesture they showed that can hardly be forgotten. Not only this, since Aman Sb and his wife were both medical doctors, they were always helpful to Kausar during her pregnancies, and they often invited them for dinners or lunch making delicious dishes.

Similarly, Zaki Sb also invited Mr Mumtaz and Kausar several times for lunch or dinners, and they always enjoyed their food. Interesting thing with Zaki Sb was his two younger sisters --- Arifa Kirmani and Asma Kirmani and they were quite active within the Women's Wing of the Islamic Organization. So, Kausar says that it was always very exciting to visit Zaki Sb's family where she would also meet his sisters, talk to them on many issues and enjoy their North Indian food. Zaki Sb was/is one of the prominent and active persons of the Islamic Organization. Zaki Sb is also known for his contribution to Islam and science debate through Journal of Islamic Science, Urdu magazine Ayat, Centre for Studies on Science and The Muslim Association for the Advancement of Science (MAAS), which he established after completing his PhD in Chemistry from IIT Delhi in 1979. He has authored number of research papers in English and Urdu, translated books from English to Urdu and has developed distance education courses on Science and Civilization in Islam, and intellectual studies. He owes Averroes Academy, a publishing house and chairs Centre for Studies on Science which promotes Islam and science debate, Science and civilization studies through Seminars and Workshops.

Well, as for Ahmed Sb is concerned, Kausar says that if he stayed in Aligarh, (because he went to US for his PhD) hardly a week would go without he is inviting them to his house keeping delicious food ready for them. Kausar says she still remembers Ahmed Sb's coming to their house in his scooter and calling from outside Mumtaz Sb, come for dinner today with bhabhi. We would become so happy listening his call and we would go to him and would enjoy eating delicious food and talking to him on several issues of the Islamic Organization. Kausar says that Ahmed Sb and Mumtaz Sb continue to remain the best friends till now and would remain the same all the time. Insha Allah. Whenever Prof Mumtaz and Kausar went to States either for any Conference or to meet their daughters – Muznah and Humnah, they visited Ahmed Sb in States and met his loving wife and very nice children and stayed in their house and had a good memorable stay with them. Not only this, but Ahmed Sb also invited Prof Mumtaz and Kausar to present their papers in one of the International Conference conducted under Parliament of World Religions in Salt Lake City, Utah, US in 2015. Both of them-- Kausar and Prof Mumtaz presented their papers and greatly benefitted from the Conference -- meeting and interacting with people who gathered there from different parts of the world and sharing their views with each

other to promote peace and social cohesion in the world. Kausar presented her paper on – Stop Gender War and Bring Gender Peace: Islam and Feminism on Women’s Rights. Kausar says her paper ignited several questions and she had enough time to respond to the questions and thus the panel discussion on women’s rights in Islam and Feminism went very successful. Ahmed Sb is one of the renowned Islamic scholars of the Muslim world and he had also established himself as one of the prominent scholars in his area of specialization -- journalism and Public Relations.

Dr. Siddiqi has served as the Dean of Academic and Student Affairs at Northwest Suburban College in Rolling Meadows, Illinois. He is Professor Emeritus of Journalism and Public Relations at Western Illinois University (WIU) where he has taught for 29 years. At WIU he served as the Journalism Program Director and Chair of the Department of English & Journalism. Dr Siddiqi has authored several books, published more than two dozen articles in refereed publications and conducted media workshops in more than 100 cities in North America and more than 35 countries in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. He serves on the editorial advisory boards of the Journal of Arab & Muslim Media Research, U.K., Journal of Media Studies, Pakistan, and the Islamic Horizon magazine.

Dr. Siddiqi was inducted, in 2014, into the Collegium of Interfaith Scholars at Martin Luther King Chapel at Morehouse College, Atlanta, Georgia. He is among the founding members of the World Council of Muslims for Interfaith Relations (WCMIR) and is currently serving as its treasurer. From 2011 to 2015 he was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Parliament of the World Religions. Dr. Siddiqi was among the founders of the Islamic Centre of Macomb and served as its President and Imam of the Masjid for more than 20 years. Born in India, Dr. Siddiqi now lives along with his family in Villa Park, Illinois.

Kausar says that she devoted good time with many friends during her PhD in AMU like Nusba Parveen, Asma Kirmani, Arifa Kirmani, Bazgha Tabassum and many others. Bazgha was very active in the Islamic Organization, and she was a regular contributor to Organization’s magazine wherein she often published inspiring Islamic articles, particularly in the form of fiction. But her fiction was never a mere storytelling for its own sake; rather it would be Islamically motivating. Bazgha was not from Aligarh; she is from Bhivandi, a city in Maharashtra. But many conferences

took place in Bhiwandi from Islamic Organization. Kausar remembered to have visited Bhiwandi with Mr Mumtaz, Dr. Zaki Kirmani, and her two sisters –Arifa and Asma. Bazgha and one of her cousins were kind enough to host them and they stayed with them for few days. It was nice meeting Bazgha and her cousin because they had sufficient time there to discuss several important issues and they motivated each other to do a lot of work for Islamic Organization. Kausar says that later Bazgha married Dr Zaki Kirmani and thus the two-like minded active persons of the Islamic Organization united and they are continuing their Islamic mission work peacefully with mutual understanding and showing example to others. Kausar says that in one of their last trips to Aligarh, Prof Dr Mumtaz and Dr Kausar met Dr Zaki Kirmani and Dr Bazgha and remembered their beautiful past and talked and discussed several issues of the present and get refreshed each other. Bazgha has been very active in the Islamic Organization since 1980s. She founded a Council for Women's Empowerment, CREW, an NGO and has conducted several programmes, seminars, and conferences. Kausar says that Bazgha did Bachelor in Unani Medicine and Surgery, BUMS and she also did MA in Urdu. Hence, Bazgha conducts health camps and health awareness programmes for maid servants and others. Along with all these activities, Kausar feels happy to say that Bazgha always keeps herself active in several other important and crucial issues – she is the member of Muslim Personal Law Board, and she is also a member of the Executive Committee of its Women's Wing. Furthermore, Bazgha writes short stories in Urdu and published them and motivates her readers towards Islamic message. Bazgha also conducts weekly online programmes, and she runs a YouTube channel in the name "kitchen lazaat". Kausar says that Bazgha has her own fully-fledged family with children and grandchildren, but she neither stopped her higher education while she was studying, nor she discontinued her involvement in the Islamic mission activities when she got children. Kausar says that Bazgha is showing a good example of mission-oriented family in Islam, which Kausar calls 'a mini-civilization' where full attention is paid to familial development and educational development, and while balancing both these institutions showing active involvement in the Islamic mission taking it as an inevitable part of life. Alhamdulillah.

Kausar then says that she can hardly forget the lovely and beautiful days she spent with Nusba Parveen, Asma Kirmani and Arifa Kirmani and few more. Kausar frequently visited Nusba's house, enjoyed the love and concern of her mother and her

delicious food and used to sit and talked to Nusba on several issues of the Islamic Organization wherein often the two sisters– Asma Kirmani and Arifa Kirman would also join. Nusba just completed her Masters in English literature from AMU, Aligarh at that time. Asma Kirmani and Arifa Kirmani, both were doing their Masters in Persian language. Kausar and this whole group of the Women’s Wing of the Islamic Organization would discuss issues of Women’s Wing of Islamic Organization and would make necessary plans and would try to follow and promote them. Women’s Wing of the Islamic Organization was not a small group; it was a big and active group spread in different parts of India from North to South and from the East to the West. The headquarter being Aligarh, all the correspondence would be dealt in Aligarh with the help of these members – Nusba, Asma, Arifa, Kausar, and few more. Kausar says that these members kept contact with other members of the Movement who would submit their reports through letters of their da’wah activities and in return these members send those members suggestions through letters for further improvement. Kausar said that once these members sat together to read the letters from different states of India to respond to those members accordingly. Kausar says that they were so excited to see that one letter they received from Kasmir and one from Kanya Kumari. They all thanked Allah SWT that the Organization has spread from extreme North to the Extreme South. Alhamdulillah.

Along with keeping correspondence with the Women’s Wing, Kausar says that those women members of Organization would plan and visit Girls Schools and Colleges in Aligarh and would give talks on contemporary social and political problems bringing Islamic perspective there to enlighten young female students on the importance and significance of Islam and Islamic stance on those issues. Kausar says that members from the Women’s Wing used to visit other cities and states with the male members of the Central Shura while following Islamic etiquettes of dress and Islamic social interaction. Once they went to Bombay and the members of the Women’s Wing had to deliver their speech on the then current socio-political issues presenting the relevant verses of the Qur’an to highlight the Islamic stance on those issues. Kausar says that their group was ready and at the time when Kausar had to present her talk to the audience suddenly an elderly lady entered the hall and asked Kausar the topic of the speech and Kausar replied to her. The lady asked Kausar not to give speech on such issues and asked her to say few basic points on Islam in few

minutes time. Kausar and her group members explained to the lady that she could not stop them because the topic was already informed to the girls earlier and why she is imposing her own topic on them. The lady was adamant and stood there unmoved. Kausar says that the time was running fast, and it was not possible to go outside and inform the Shura members so that they could settle the issue. Then Kausar says she got an idea which Allah put in her mind, and she convinced that lady that she would only speak on the basic points of Islam and so please let her speak. The lady agreed and gave the mike to Kausar. Kausar started with Bismillah Hir Rahman Nir Raheem and referred to some specific verses of the Qur'an on the socio-political issues in general and each time Kausar said that this is what Islam says on this and this social problem and it was how she completed her talk. Thus, Kausar says that she did not change the topic by any means. She spoke on the topic bringing few related verses from the Qur'an and while saying several times that these are the basic and fundamental teachings of Islam. This was how Kausar completed her talk; finally thanking Allah SWT for blessing this opportunity to talk on the basic points on Islam. Kausar says that the lady listened to the whole talk and could not stop Kausar and all the members of Kausar's group felt fully satisfied and expressed good words to Kausar saying that the problem settled quite smartly, even though they faced useless unexpected problems from elderly people. Kausar then told her group members that sometimes we may face such problems from our own Muslim brothers and sisters for several reasons, but we should never give up and should say in the way of Allah what is right; then Allah would guide us. When we asked Kausar what her age at that time of that incident was, Kausar said she was early 24 years old only. This shows the immense confidence in Kausar and the capability in her to take the prompt action on the ground to resolve the issue successfully. Kausar neither gave up the talk nor changed the topic of her talk. She started with Islam and ended talking about Islam and in between she pinpointed the then social and political problems of the society and said all these problems only Islam can resolve. In fact, Kausar says that she had passed through several other problems during her educational, professional, and Islamic mission, but she remained strong with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophetic traditions and Allah always helped her.

Kausar says that by this time Kausar was expecting baby and she and Mr Mumtaz left to Hyderabad to stay under the supervision of their parents for this

purpose. By the grace of Allah SWT, she gave birth to their first baby boy and kept his name, Mohammad Abdul Allam Roase, in short, Roase Mumtaz. Roase was just two months old, when Mr Mumtaz and Kausar had to go to United Kingdom, UK for one year because Mr Mumtaz had to do his field work in UK because his M Phil dissertation was on – Islam and the West: A Case Study of Muslims in Great Britain. Mr Mumtaz and Kausar left for UK with their kid, Roase Mumtaz. During this period, Kausar and Mumtaz spent most of their time in The Islamic Foundation, Leicester. Kausar says it was one of their golden periods of life. They visited the Islamic Foundation, Leicester putting their baby-son in a stroller and taking care of him while making full use of the bookstore there and attending big talks organized under the leadership of a very great Islamic personality, Khurramjah Murad (3, November 1932 – 19 December 1996) who was at that time the Director General of the Islamic Foundation. In fact, Khurramjah Murad was the co-founder of the Islamic Foundation, Leicester along with Prof. Dr. Khurshid Ahmed the Chairman of the Foundation. Khurramjah Murad was a known Islamic scholar and a Civil Engineer by profession. He was one of prominent leaders of the Islamic Movement Pakistan and a prolific author of several books both in English and Urdu. Kausar focussed on her own topics while taking care of her son and Mumtaz would focus on Muslims in Great Britain, while also visiting UK Islamic Mission, colleges, universities, and many other places for field investigation.

Kausar also remembered Dr Muhammad Manazir Ahsan who is the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of The Islamic Foundation, and Rector of the Markfield Institute of Higher Education, Leicester, UK. His brotherly cooperation with us during our stay in Leicester was unforgettable. His lectures on Muslims in Great Britain had been very informative and inspiring. Dr Manazir Ahsan was also the Editor of The Muslim World Book Review and chaired many Muslim and Interfaith Organizations. Kausar of course remembers Khurshid Ahmed as such a holistic personality hard to be portrayed in words. Kausar describes Khurshid Ahmed (born, 23 March, 1932) as ‘a world – famous celebrity and an ideologue of Islamic Movement in Pakistan, a politician and a Senator who served for several years, who developed Islamic Economics Jurisprudence, winner of Shah Faisal Award, co-founder of the Islamic Foundation, Leicester and a prolific writer on Islamic thought, a profound critique of the modern Western philosophy and modernity and a proponent of Islamic

resurgence.’ Kausar says that the in-depth scholarly talks and the profound motivation that they used to get from Prof. Khurshid Ahmed during their stay in Leicester shall remain with them all their life as the ever-refreshing guidance for their entire life which they have proudly passed it to their children to be followed. Kausar says that when they visited Pakistan with their young children, they visited Prof Khurshid there and whenever he visited Malaysia, they not only visited him but also invited him to their family with few other dignitaries in his honour.

Kausar was so happy when she talked about one of the books of Prof Dr Mumtaz on Khurshid Ahmed with the title, *The Clash of Civilizations or Civilizational Peaceful Co-Existence: An Analysis of the Views of Huntington and Khurshid Ahmad* which was published in 2006 and it was well acclaimed. Kausar says that Khurshid Ahmed is presently settled in Leicester, and they keep in contact with him. Alhamdulillah. Point to note here, is the kind of prominent Islamic scholars of contemporary times that Kausar and her husband Prof Mumtaz not only met them, but they talked, interacted, and listened to their talks and got enlightened with their books and were motivated with them. This is a rare phenomenon because often we see some highly learned men enjoyed the opportunity to meet such distinguished personalities not because these persons stay out of the reach of people in general, but because they sincerely and consistently remained preoccupied in their Islamic mission. But here we find that Kausar stood shoulder to shoulder with Prof Mumtaz in several of his external endeavours with such personalities and never missed a chance meeting and interacting with them and getting their advises on several issues including women’s empowerment from Islamic perspective. Kausar could accomplish this because this urge to get benefited with known Islam scholars was inside her very nature to keep herself activated all the time, being herself mission-oriented to the very core.

Another interesting point that can be hardly ignored is the close relationship Kausar always tried to keep with the honourable wives of these two important personalities, wife of Khurshid Ahmed -- Azra Khurshid, and wife of Khurramjah Murad -- Lauat and Nur. Kausar was only in her early mid of twenties when she visited UK with Mr Mumtaz and their infant - son and these ladies; but Kausar kept a close relationship with them. There used to be a regular Dars -e- Quran or Islamic talk at the residence of Khurram Murad house where a good number of women would

gather and participate in it. This talk was organized by the wife of Khurram Murad, Mrs Lauat and Nura noble lady with deep Islamic thought and an in-depth understanding of the Qur'an, hadeeth and Islamic literature and deep insight into poetry of Allama Iqbal. Kausar describes her a unique personality of her own kind. She has been the most active person who not only conducted Islamic circles at her residence but was active in all important occasions of the Islamic Foundation inviting women to attend and be a part of those Islamic sessions. She would not only speak but would also prepare delicious foods to present to the participants and would help them as much as possible. Her eldest daughter would always help her in all these affairs. Mrs Lauat And Nur was so loving and caring to Kausar and would always appreciate all the Islamic mission related works of Kausar and would say her that all what she is speaking on Islam is entering in the ears and the heart of Roase who few months was just old at that time. Kausar says that she was so busy in Islam related talks and meetings mostly in Leicester, then in Birmingham and London that sometimes it became too hard for her to go for every Islamic programme. She therefore says that it was a pro-active and interesting period of her life.

After Mr Mumtaz completed his fieldwork, they returned to India and went straight to Hyderabad to meet their parents and siblings. Kausar then had to deliver her second child which she successfully did, and Allah blessed her with a daughter, Muznah Madiha. Then, during that time, third All India Conference was announced to be held in Delhi and Mr Mumtaz was selected as its Chief Organizer. Hence, Kausar had to go with her husband and two kids to Delhi where they stayed in the guest room of the Delhi office with a helper whom they brought from Hyderabad. Mr Mumtaz kept himself preoccupied with the big task of all the preparation of the conference and Kausar with one small kid of around two years and one infant girl, two months old. Not only this, Kausar had to participate in the preparation of the conference with young ladies and had to give speeches every now and then on women's right in Islam. Finally, the Conference ended with a great success and then they returned to Aligarh. After coming back from the Conference, Kausar says that both of them, Mr Mumtaz and Kausar had a sort of mutual consultation with the concerned members of the Islamic Organization that though they would be continuing with the work of the Organization, but they would lessen down their participation in order to focus fully on their theses because the time was running fast and they had a lot to be completed.

Kausar says that they were giving day and night on these works. After a year they made arrangement for their kids for few hours at the Crèche which was rightly and properly arranged under the Vice Chancellor Lounge of AMU, Aligarh. Besides this Kausar's mother handed over to her a young male – helper from Hyderabad to supervise their kids and they also kept a female maid for few hours for cooking. This was how the whole arrangement was made through helpers so that both, Mr Mumtaz, and Kausar could concentrate on these works. Kausar had to go to Azad Library of AMU almost every day for reading and writing. From the Library Kausar had to go to crèche to look at her children and then she would go back to the library and would continue her work.

Kausar says that within one year time, lot of their work was completed, but Kausar was expecting her third baby. Hence, Mr Mumtaz and Kausar had to go to Hyderabad taking their two small kids for the third baby to deliver. Kausar says that since the mother of Mr Mumtaz was old, they were the mother and eldest sister of Kausar who helped them for all their works. By the grace of Allah SWT, Kausar delivered her baby-girl, and they named her – Humnah Madiha. Then both, Mr Mumtaz and Kausar stayed there in Hyderabad for some time to take rest and then returned to Aligarh with three small kids to continue their PhDs and give some time to the Islamic Organization. Hearing all these, we liked to offer lot of thanks to Allah SWT who gave so much stamina to Kausar and liked to salute Kausar that she continued her PhD with small children one after another and at the same time gave little time to Islamic Organization. Kausar says that all these three works are Mission-based works, not outside it and according to her, there is no real life without these three integral works. An interesting point to note here was that by this time Mr Mumtaz almost completed his thesis writing and was waiting for the responses of the referees on his thesis. But Kausar had quite a lot of work left to be completed and she was fully occupied in her work. After few months Mr Mumtaz received positive responses from his referees and the date of his Viva was settled. Around this time, Mr Mumtaz sent his applications for teaching position inside and outside India. By the grace of Allah SWT, he attained appointment for teaching position in International Islamic University, IIUM, Malaysia. Kausar then had to request her mother to visit Aligarh and she came and could take care of her three small kids and Kausar could speed up her PhD thesis and submitted to AMU by the grace of Allah and her mother

left back to Hyderabad. After some time, Mr Mumtaz, Kausar, and children left for Malaysia and settled down there. It is already mentioned earlier that when Kausar was here in Malaysia, responses from her referees took years to come and the same happened for her Viva and then Kausar went from Malaysia for her Viva to AMU and finally completed her Phd. It is already mentioned earlier that Kausar taught at Matriculation Centre of IIUM while she was waiting for her Ph D and after receiving her doctorate she joined the Department of Political Science, IIUM and the rest of her professional development here, it is already stated.

Kausar says that during their stay in Malaysia, they used to visit Hyderabad for a month to meet their families and their friends there. Kausar says that they enjoyed a very lovely and beautiful time with their family members and friends. Kausar talked about few of their very close friends in Hyderabad – Janab Azamuddin Azam, his wife Dr Zakia Sultana Azam and their children; Janab Zahid Sb and his wife Fouzia and their children; Janab Wahab Sb and his wife Kaleemuddin Shahnaz and their children and many more. Kausar says that their whole family always enjoyed a very good and interesting time with Janab Azamuddin Azam, his wife Dr Zakia Sultana Azam and their children because Prof Dr. Mumtaz and Azam Sb were school friends, and they were like-minded on many issues. Azam Sb's wife, Dr Zakia is a very graceful and a noble lady who taught Arabic Language in St. Anns College, Hyderabad. Kausar says that never it happened that when they visited Hyderabad from Malaysia, they did not meet and spent lot of time together. Kausar then said that Azam Sb suddenly fell sick and passed away which remain a big shock to Kausar's whole family and friends. But Kausar and Prof Mumtaz keep in contact with his wife, Dr Zakia, and his children.

Janab Meer Zahid Ali Sb, his wife Fauzia and their children are very close friends of Prof Mumtaz, Kausar, and their children. Zahid Sb is a long time very close school friend of Prof Mumtaz, and he is lawyer by profession and an entrepreneur. Kausar says that whenever they go to Hyderabad, it is compulsory to meet Zahid Sb, his wife Fouzia and their children. In fact, Zahid Sb, and his wife Fouzia are so close friends of Prof Mumtaz and Kausar that they inform them the date of their arrival to Hyderabad so that they get themselves well prepared to meet each other. Kausar says that they not only discuss social and political problems of the Muslim Ummah but also make several plans and follow them and motivate each other to continue working for Islamic cause. Along with talking and doing things for Islamic Organization, their

interest of eating and enjoying delicious Hyderabad dishes is part of their life. Kausar also says that Zahid Sb is a philanthropist who helps the needy and poor. Whenever Mr Mumtaz suggested him to help some deserving family in Hyderabad, Zahid Sb always stood in front for this kind purpose. Kausar says that she looks at and calls Zahid Sb as her own brother in the real sense of the term. Prof Mumtaz and Kausar keep contact with Zahid sb and Fouzia even from Malaysia quite often.

Besides this family, Janab Wahabuddin, his wife Kaleemunnisa Shahnaz and their children are also very close friends of Prof Mumtaz, Kausar, and her family. Kausar says that their visit to Hyderabad remains incomplete without visiting this family of Wahab Sb and his wife Kaleem. Kausar says that this family is not only Islamic minded, but also very social and joyful for which reason Kausar says that they always feel a beautiful and interesting change' meeting them, going outside with them, taking lunch and dinners with them, and discussing several controversial issues with them and making their minds to do a lot of works in Islamic cause. Kausar says that she likes to visit Industrial Exhibition of Hyderabad with this family which takes place in January every year. Kausar says that if they visit Hyderabad, they try to visit the Exhibition at least once or twice. Kausar was quite happy talking about this Exhibition wherein she said several stalls containing handmade garments from Hyderabad and different cities of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and many states of India are presented in the Exhibition. Besides all these, the Exhibition featured carpets from Iran and Pakistan; and sarees, shawls and sweaters from Kashmir and delicious snacks like ragda, haleem, dahi wadas and sweets and halwas and pistas from Agra, Delhi, and several places from India. Kausar said that this Industrial Exhibition started as Numaiash Masnuat –e- Mulki, Exhibition of Local Products and Crafts long before the independence of India, in 1938 by a group of graduates from Osmania University of Hyderabad during the Muslim Rule of the Last Nizam ruler of the Princely State of Hyderabad, which was the the largest Princely State in British India, His Exalted Highness, (HEH) Mir Osman Ali Khan, Asaf Jah VII(5 or 6 April 1886 – 24 February, 1967),who is regarded as one of the wealthiest people of all the times, who ruled the State of Hyderabad from 1911 to 1948, until India annexed the State of Hyderabad. Kausar said that they often visit Exhibition with the family of Wahab Sb and Kaleem and enjoy delicious dishes there while talking about the past Muslim history of Hyderabad and its current political condition.

Kausar said that Wahab Sb's family also visit Malaysia because their children studied with her children in IIU M.

Kausar also talked about Janab Riyaz sb and his wife Mrs Riyaz. Kausar says that Riyaz Sb is one of the close friends of Prof Mumtaz who is an academician, who taught at Anwar Ul Uloom College of Hyderabad. Kausar says that he is the main person who first visited Kausar outside the door of her residence to know whether Kausar is the one who formed Iqbal Association for young girls of her age. He is the one who gave the whole address of Kausar to mother of Prof Mumtaz, and she came with one of her daughter in laws to Kausar's house to meet Kausar and talk to the Kausar's mother for the proposal. Thus, Riyaz Sb did this beautiful work of getting these two people married. Riyaz is a very simple but a noble person who is an active member of the Islamic Organization and he fully engages himself in several socio-economic functions of the Organization. His wife, Mrs Riyaz is also a very nice and active lady and thus they both are good friends of Kausar and Prof Mumtaz.

Another very close friend of Prof Mumtaz and Kausar is Dr. Merajuddin and his wife Sajida Khatoon. Kausar says that Meraj Sb did his BSc from Osmania University, and MSc, MPhil and PhD from Aligarh Muslim University, AMU, Aligarh, in 1984. Dr. Meraj then joined Tohuko University Sensai, Japan as Monbudho fellow, (Academic Scholarship Fellow) from 1985 to 1987. He also worked in IICT-CSIR, Indian Institute of Chemical Research and Technology - Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, as (RA) Research Assistant for three years. He joined Osmania University Post Graduate Centre at Anwar ul Uloom College to teach Masters MSc in Organic Chemistry. In 2001, Dr Meraj joined King Saud University, (KSU) to work in a Research Project of KACST –KSU. Thus, Dr Meraj is a versatile academician who taught in three famous Universities -- India, Japan, and Saudi Arabia. Besides a known intellectual, Dr Meraj is actively committed to Islamic Organization in various educational and administrative capacities. Kausar says that very illuminating characteristics of Dr Meraj are his austere and steadfast qualities for which he is well-known not only in Islamic Organization but also in the campus of AMU, Aligarh. During his PhD in AMU, Kausar says that she has personally noticed Meraj Sb surrounded by active and Islam – loving students of his own age whom he would be helping them on various issues and motivating them to work hard in their studies and to give time in Islamic

Organization activities. Kausar says that she can never forget her whole life the way Meraj Sb helped her and Mr Mumtaz when she was hospitalized in the initial stage of her first pregnancy and her mother was expected to come to Aligarh, but Kausar heard about the fatal accident of the train in which her mother was expected to come. Hearing this, Kausar and Mr Mumtaz were fully shocked, and the condition of Kausar started further affecting her badly. It was the time, Meraj Sb came to visit them and as soon as he learnt the whole issue, he left the hospital and went to phone Kausar's siblings in Hyderabad and at that time it was torrential rain and heavy wind, and nobody could drive outside. But Meraj Sb drove in that cataclysmic storm and phoned Kausar's family and learnt that her mother did not sit in that train which collapsed in the accident because she became sick, and it was told to Meraj Sb to inform Kausar and Mr Mumtaz to come to Hyderabad taking permission from doctor so that Kausar can be looked after well in Hyderabad under the full care of her mother and eldest sister. Meraj Sb drove back in that torrent rain to inform Mr Mumtaz and Kausar so that they could get satisfaction that their mother did not sit in that train which caught tragic accident. Kausar says that the information brought by Meraj Sb gave them peace and they thanked Allah for saving their mother from the calamity and prayed for those who were killed in the train accident and thanked Meraj Sb who performed such a timely help rare to be experienced from anyone. Another interesting point in Meraj Sb is his nobility in simplicity. Although as a research scholar doing PhD in Chemistry and giving time in Islamic Organization and thus being extremely busy in his life, he would still manage his time to entertain his friends in different ways. Since staying in the AMU hostel for years, he learnt how to make Hyderabad Biryani and all Hyderabad Cuisine. Hence, Kausar says that whenever this group of students wanted some 'change' and recreation from serious writing works of PhD, one of their entertainments was – preparing delicious food dishes and enjoying eating together with friends. Kausar says that his wife, Sajidah Khatoon is also a very loving person and active in many social fields and so both these God-loving and social persons are close to Prof Mumtaz and Kausar.

Kausar then talks about a very close friend of Prof Mumtaz from Aligarh, Prof Dr. Obaidullah Fahad, who teaches at AMU, Aligarh. Kausar says Prof Dr Fahad is Gold Medalist in MA and he did his PhD on, Concept of Shura in Islamic State and its Contemporary Interpretations. Prof Fahad is the Shah Wali Allah Award Winner from

Institute of Objective Studies, New Delhi in 2019. Prof Fahad is a prolific writer who has a big number of books, articles, and monographs to his credit. Kausar takes the name of Prof Fahad with a lot of respect and prayers. Kausar says that Fahad Sb is that kind of loving and sincere friend of Prof Mumtaz Sb that his prompt and self-less love and concern can never be forgotten in life. When Kausar went alone from Malaysia to AMU, Aligarh to do her Viva, it was Fahad Sb and one more friend br. Nabeel who helped her in contacting her Supervisor, Prof Dr Shan Mohammad, took her to his office and settled each and every work needed unless the Viva was fixed and Kausar was taken to the office and Kausar came back to Fahad Sb with Prof Shan Mohammad who told Fahad Sb Kausar accomplished her Viva successfully, Alhamdulillah. Kausar says that she always remembers Fahad Sb and Nabeel with lot of prayers for them.

Kausar then talked about her friends in Malaysia while she was teaching at IIUM. She says that she has many good friends who have been occupied in different Da'wah activities. Kausar says that she can never forget the beautiful Dars – e - Qur'an group that was organized by Mrs Anisa Ahmed who was from Pakistan. It should be noted here that during that period, Prof Dr Anis Ahmed was the Dean of the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, KIRKHS. And his wife, Mrs. Anisa Ahmed was a very dynamic lady who organized the Dars- e - Qur'an group at her residence consistently at least twice a week every month and used to organize several Islamic programs for children of the international staff. Kausar says that it can hardly be expressed in words how systematically Mrs Anisa Ahmed used to organize all these programmes taking all her own the whole responsibility of calling international ladies whose husbands were attached to IIUM and what delicious dishes he would present on her big dining table and how all the ladies enjoyed the food items after the talks and the discussions on various topics. Mrs Anisa Ahmed would even use to take the responsibility of sending back some of the ladies herself driving whenever she found some ladies faced problems going back homes. In short Mrs Anisa Ahmed would do the whole show and all international ladies would benefit from the talks and would enjoy the foods and a social gathering every time they visited Mrs Anisa. In this whole beautiful and educative get together, one of the main figures was the wife of the honourable Rector of the University, Sister Faikha. She would either give the Dars- e -Qur'an or would do the feedback adding some more

information from the Islamic texts – the Qur'an and the Sunnah. She would keep herself simple and humble and always loving and caring for all those who gathered there in her house. There were a good number of internationals from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kashmir, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and from many other places who participated in the Dars. Kausar was literally enjoying remembering those beautiful days of the group meetings at the house of Mrs Anisa Ahmed and was praying to Allah for Mrs Anisa Ahmed and all those who made use of that lovely group.

Kausar then talked about Nusba Parveen, daughter of Dr Irfan Ahmed whom Kausar remembers as her long-gifted friend who were friends when they were in early twenties of their age -- young in education and young and active in Islamic Organization. After staying for few years in Aligarh, Nusba shifted to the United States with her mother and her siblings. Nusba got married in the States with Dr Abdullah Al Ahsan, a Historian and an academician by profession who is also an active person of Islamic Organizatio. Within a short span of time, Allah blessed them with three children, one daughter and two sons. Very soon, Dr Ahsan got appointment in the International Islamic University, Malaysia, IIUM, in the Department of History and so Dr Ahsan and family came to Malaysia and Dr Ahsan joined the Department of History. Kausar, Dr Mumtaz, and their children met their friend and welcomed them, and they were very happy to meet each other again. Kausar says that one very impressive point with Nusba was that she continued her higher education even after having three small children. Kausar says that Nusba who already did her Masters in English literature, she did one more Masters in Islamic Civilization from International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, ISTAC, International Islamic University Malaysia, IIUM, in 1996. She then accomplished her PhD under the topic "Educational Reforms in Nineteenth Century India: An Analysis of Shibli Nu'mani's Thought & Practice" from International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, ISTAC, International Islamic University Malaysia, IIUM, in 2004. Kausar says that one more characteristic feature of Nusba was the same which she inherited from Dr. Irfan's family -- care and concern with people and hospitality. Kausar says that despite her busy schedule for MPhil and PhD, Nusba maintained her family culture of hospitality. Kausar says that it was no doubt a challenge for Nusba to accomplish her MA, and PhD degrees on one side while taking care of small kids and on the other side inviting people for dinners every other time. Besides all these, Kausar says that

being trained under their father Dr. Irfan and well-disciplined by their mother, Nusba and all her siblings participate in Islamic da'wah activities wherever and whenever they stay. Alhamdulillah. Not only this, but Kausar also says Nusba continues her intellectual works – she is continuing her publication of articles in well-esteemed journals, and she is developing her ideas for presenting the message of her father's philosophy, particularly his theory of co-ubodiyah-- co-servants of Allah SWT so that his message and ideas on Islamic issues continue to reach the Muslim world.

Kausar says that it is very interesting to note that her stay in Malaysia opened for her many friendly gates not only from various countries who became her colleagues in the University, but also from India and Pakistan. Ruqayya Ashraf from Pakistan was a medical doctor in university clinic, IIUM Medical Centre. She was medical officer from 1997 to 2013. If Dr. Ruqayya was there in IIUM clinic, Kausar, Prof Mumtaz, Dr Nusba, her husband, Prof Ahsan and their family friend Prof Dr Jameel Faruqui and many other friends consulted her and followed her prescriptions, and they all find 'shifa' in her hands by the grace of Allah. Though she left IIUM Clinic and settled down in Toronto, Canada, Kausar keeps her in contact because the kind of self-less and true love and care Kausar enjoys from Ruqayya, it is rare and unique to find anywhere. Kausar says that Dr Ruqayya was the first lady doctor who diagnosed her health issues of diabetes, back pain, and osteoarthritis in her legs. Ruqayya not only prescribed necessary medicines for her, but she talked to her like her near and dear friend and her real sister as to how she should take care of her health. Dr Ruqayyas husband Br, Ashraf is a very good gentleman who is a very close friend of Prof. Dr, Mumtaz. Ruqayya presently is working in the public library at Toronto. Ruqayya and her husband often visit Malaysia and Kausar and Prof Mumtaz meet them and enjoy their company. Kausar says presently, she and Prof Mumtaz consult Dr. Mohammad Shafeeq Lone from Kashmir, Dr. Siti Mashita Binti Jalaluddin, Dr. Lizawati Binti Che Nik and few other Malaysian doctors.

Kausar also remembers Sister Mubeen, wife of Dr. Yahya Alwi. Mubeen and Dr. Yahya Alwi and their children came to Malaysia from Kashmir. Dr. Yahya Alwi is one who took the initiative of forming IIUM Clinic which is continuing its function. Their last youngest daughters were my students who were brilliant in all subjects. Sister Mubeen is a very loving and affectionate lady with fair and clean heart for all her friends and she has been quite active in the Dars –e- Qur'an at the house of Prof

Dr Anis Sb organized by his wife, Aneesa., as mentioned earlier. Kausar says that she and Prof Dr Mumtaz had very good time with Sister Mubeen, Dr Yahya Alwi, and their children if they stayed in Malaysia, and they left for States after few years and are settled there.

There is another very interesting and loving friend of Kausar, Sabina. She is a Pakistani, a psychologist by profession and taught at IIUM and her mother was a physician and she married to a Japanese academician and for all these reasons, Sabina follows strict rules and regulations – what to eat; what to avoid; what medicine is better; what should not be touched at all etc. Kausar says that one would be wonder struck that the same strict lady after giving all information on one's health, she brings all kinds of funny jokes to make one laugh and freshen up enough to resume their work. Saying all these, Kausar says that Allah blessed her with all kinds of good friends indeed. Alhamdulillah.

Kausar then takes the name of one of her close friends, Shahtaj bhabhi with lot of respect and prayers for her and her family. Kausar says that Shahtaj Bhabhi is not only her friend but also like her elder sister whom she describes as a unique combination of 'ikhlas', 'qulus', love, respect, and sincere concern for all human beings. Kausar says that Shahtaj bhabhi knows all her weaknesses. Kausar talks to her all about her health issue and convinces her that she would be fully taking care of her health from now onwards. But Kausar says that she never follows it. Then, Kausar says smilingly that she gets scared contacting her because she never followed what she promised her. Kausar then says that after some time, Kausar calls Shahtaj bhabhi and gets lots of scolding from her. Kausar says that she would intentionally call her to listen all her loving scolding words from her mouth. Usually, she would say--- Zeenath, I know you have again fully occupied in your writing works and never cared your health; I do not want to listen to your promises anymore. You do not know where you are taking your health and blab la. Then Kausar says that she makes a last and a final promise to her that from now onwards, she would fully focus on her health. After that Kausar says she gets a lot of prayers from Shahtaj Bhabhi and would get a lot of satisfaction. Kausar then says this lovely talk between them continues but every time 'the last and final promise' which she gives to Shahtaj Bhabhi is never fulfilled.

Tahseen Minai is also a very close friend of Kausar. Kausar says that she is a very graceful and a sober lady. She is the wife of Iqbal Minai who is closely related to the famous Urdu poet of the nineteenth century, Ameer Minai (1829 – 13, Oct 1900). Kausar likes Urdu poetry of Ameer Minai. Being closely attached to a known poet, Ameer Ali, Tahseen Minai and her husband take interest in promoting Urdu language and Urdu poetry among Urdu speaking families in Malaysia. Once they organized a poetry session on Allama Iqbal which inspired Urdu speakers a lot including Kausar's son, Roase Mumtaz when he was a school going young boy. Presently Roase Mumtaz is recognized as one of the well-established Urdu poets by the grace of Allah SWT. Kausar also presented Iqbal's thought and sang few verses from Iqbal's poetry in that Poetry session on Allama Iqbal organized by the Minai family. Minai's family and family of Mumtaz take dinners together and share their views on several contemporary issues.

Kausar has many more close friends -- some belong to her age group and others are quite young who call her Aunty. But they all are very loving and caring persons and Kausar enjoys them sharing their food items and they enjoy Kausar's Hyderabad Biryani, baghare Baigan and Double Ka Meetha – all Hyderabad cuisines. Interesting thing is, Kausar says either she visits them with her family, or they visit her family, and they not only enjoy eating foods, but they discuss on all kinds of social, economic, and political issues and enlighten each other. Kausar then presents a list of all her close friends -- Rajina, wife of Prof Dr Thameem Uthama; Tawheedah Khatoon wife of Prof. Dr. Arshad Islam; Rasika, wife of Dr. Younus Gilani; Noor Hashima, wife of Siddique Sb; Aliza wife of Mahboob Sb; Fazilat, wife of Laeeq Sb and few more. Kausar then prays for all her friends -- May Allah SWT bless all these families with good health, long life; high education of their children; love for understanding, following, and promoting Islam as the main purpose of their life. Ameen.

Then Kausar remembered one of her very near and dear friends, Shahnaz bhabhi, who recently passed away after suffering from a series of health issues. Kausar prays for her -- May Allah SWT bless her high place in Jannah, Ameen. Kausar says that she was a very affectionate and family-devoted lady, rare to get an example like her. She was the respected wife of Prof. Dr. Asrar, who is the family-friend of Prof Mumtaz ever since his studies in Aligarh Muslim University, AMU,

Aligarh. Then, Kausar says that she cannot miss mentioning a very dear and near name to their entire family, Prof. Dr. Jameel Faruqi, who recently passed away in January 2024 in Azamgarh, UP, India. Prof Jameel Faruqi belonged to the department of Sociology, in IIUM. He was loved by his students and respected by his colleagues due to his love and respect and care for everybody. Prof Jameel was a long-time family – friend of Prof Mumtaz and his family. Kausar says that he has always encouraged Kausar and Prof Mumtaz to go ahead in their interest in developing Islamic thought and writing commendable books. Kausar says that Jameel Sb loved her children and her children looked at Jameel Sb as a fatherly figure of their family. There was no family occasion either here in Malaysia or there in Hyderabad, India when Jameel Sb was not with their family. Kausar says that his demise is a deep shock to her entire family. Kausar prays -- May Allah the Merciful bless him maghfirah and put him in the high place in Jannatul Firdose. Ameen.

After talking about her friends, Kausar points out two important points on friendship. She referred to the following verse of the Qur'an:

﴿الْأَخْلَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾

On that Day even bosom friends shall become enemies to one another, all except the God-fearing. (Al Qur'an, Surah Az Zukhruf,(The Ornaments of Gold) 43:67)

Kausar says that the Qur'an is emphatic in stating the fact that except God – loving and God-fearing friends, all other friends shall be enemies of each other on the day of Hereafter. It implies that God-loving and God-fearing friends always try their best to remind each other the commandments of Allah SWT to be followed and the vices to be avoided so that they should attain success on the Day of Judgement and be blessed with peace and high place in Jannatul Firdose, a lofty place in paradise. But neither those friends follow the injunctions of Allah SWT, nor they remind their friends what virtues they should follow and what vices they should avoid. These sorts of friends would appear in the Hereafter as their enemies. Hence Kausar says that the Qur'an in other words enjoin us to be mindful in selecting our friends so that they should remain the real friends here and hereafter. The Qur'an has stated even this problem clearly in the following verse:

﴿يُؤْتِيكَ لِيَتَنِيَ لَمْ أَخَذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا﴾

Woe is me! Would that I had not taken such a one for a friend! (Al Qur'ān, Surah Al Furqan, 25:28)

Kausar then cites a hadeeth in this connection.

On the authority of Abū Hurayra, the Prophet of Allah said: “Souls are like conscripted soldiers: Those who are like qualities are inclined to each other, but those who have dissimilar qualities, differ. <https://medium.com/@travelingwritvr/souls-clicking-one-another-ba19121e5bcb>

Kausar referring to the above hadeeth asserts that friends whose qualities look similar with each other always stay together because according to this hadith as explained by some Hadeeth scholars before they are sent to this world, their souls relate to each other. Hence Kausar says that we should be thankful to Allah SWT who blessed us such good friends. Hence, friendship is regarded as an *amanah* (trust) from Allah.

Kausar elaborates the same point emphasizing the purpose which Allah SWT has assigned to believing men and women – of upholding justice and bearing witness to the Truth for Allah. The Qur'an says:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ﴾

Believers! Be upholders of justice, and bearers of witness to truth for the sake of Allah, even though it may either be against yourselves or against your parents and kinsmen. (Al Qur'ān, Surah An Nisa, 4:135)

Kausar emphatically emphasizes here that believers should take this very important message of the Qur'an seriously that as believers we are upholders of justice and bearers of witnessing the Truth of Allah. The Qur'an exhorts us that we should perform this work even if it goes against ourselves, our parents, kinsmen and others. It implies that our duties towards our parents, kinsmen and others are important, and they should be performed accordingly, but nothing should stand as obstacle against upholding justice and bearing witnessing to the Truth of Allah. Hence, Kausar asserts that our friendship with each other should be also based on upholding justice and witnessing the Truth of Allah SWT. Kausar underscores that if friendship is not based on this purpose, then it is meaningless and purposeless.

Secondly, Kausar brings home another important point in connection with friendship that it should not necessarily be based on male and female segregation. It is but obvious that women and men may work based on their own gender – male and

female; but it should not be based on segregation in a sense that men and women are not helping each other in those areas where it is necessary for them to work together while both following Islamic etiquettes of dress and Islamic social-interaction. Kausar asserts that there was not this rigid kind of segregation (as presently followed by some women) between men and women companions (RA) during the period of the earlier Prophets (AAS), Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and the period of Khulphā –e- Rashidoon, (RA). The Qur’ān stated clearly that both men and women should lower down their gaze and explained how they should be dressed. (Al Qur’ān, Surah An Noor, 24: 30 –31) Kausar pinpointed that on one side feminists do not read and understand well or they intentionally accused Islamic rules of dress and social interaction and on the other side some women wear such dress and follow such segregation which are not dictated in the Islamic texts – the Qur’ān and the Sunnah. Kausar asserts that both these extreme attitudes of the West and the East would never help women by any means. Kausar presented several examples which showed how she could get brotherly help from several friends of Prof Mumtaz while she was doing her MPhil and PhD in AMU, Aligarh and how they looked each other as brothers and sisters in Islam. The same she continued in IIUM, Malaysia. Kausar says that it is not simply a question of care and cooperation of Muslim men and women for educational or economic purpose, but for all purposes because all are ultimately related for Islamic cause. Kausar then reminds the following verse from the Qur’ān:

﴿وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ﴾

The believers, both men and women, are allies (or guardians or supporters) of one another. They enjoin good, forbid evil, establish Prayer, pay Zakah, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Surely Allah will show mercy to them. Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.⁵²

Kausar upholds that here in the above verse the Qur’ān is addressing both -- believing men and believing women as allies or guardians or supporters of one another. Here the Qur’ān does not segregate believing men from believing women so that they should enjoin good and forbid evil and pay zakah and obey Him and His Messenger staying separately with each other. The Qur’ān says that men and women are (auliyas) allies or guardians or supporters of one another who work in the way of Allah SWT. It however does not mean that men and women should mingle with each

⁵² Qur’ān, 9:71.

other in all fronts and in all walks of life; but they should be also not segregated in a way as if it is forbidden to talk and interact with each other even for genuine causes and for Islamic organizational activities. Similarly, it is important for male and female friends to interact and work together following Islamic injunctions of dress and Islamic social interaction to enjoin virtues and forbid vices to establish social justice and peace in the world for the success here and hereafter. It is quite evident that as per her methodological presentation, Kausar refers to the Islamic texts – the Qur’ān and the Sunnah and presented her perspectives on friendship from Islamic paradigm and motivated one and all to go for friendship in the way of Allah SWT. Not only this, but Kausar has also presented several examples of her friendship which manifest how Kausar and her friends from primary school to university and to her professional life and all along their Islamic organizational activities they remain loving and cooperative with each other, firm, and binding with each other and active and vibrant, joyful, and lively. Kausar asserts that the best examples of friendship we get from the life of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and his male and female companions, who never thought that following Islamic values means one should not smile and laugh and should not be jovial and happy and should remain sad and joyless. Kausar says that following such negative qualities is not following the true and real Islamic values.

