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Eve between Revelation and Tradition: The Question of Origins in Muslim Classical Interpretations and Feminist Counter-Narratives

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ABSTRACT

This article critically investigates the Islamic narrative of Eve's creation through an interdisciplinary lens combining Qur'anic hermeneutics, Ḥadīth analysis, and feminist theological critique. Central to this study is the contested interpretation of the Qur'anic expression "min nafsin wāḥidah" ("from a single soul") and its exegetical association with the creation of Eve from Ādam, which many commentators equate with the biblical rib narrative. Drawing on classical interpretations by scholars such as al-Ṭabarī, Mujāhid, and Ibn ʿAbbās, alongside a textual study of six Ḥadīths reported by Abū Hurayrah in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, the study highlights how pre-Islamic, Judeo-Christian, and Hellenistic paradigms may have influenced Islamic exegetical traditions. Feminist scholars, particularly Riffat Hassan, are engaged to explore how patriarchal readings have shaped the ontology of womanhood in Islamic thought, often privileging Ḥadīth-based assertions over Qur'anic egalitarianism. The study questions the reliability of these narrations on both isnād and matn grounds, and argues that the theological construction of woman as "crooked" or secondary contradicts the Qur'anic vision of gendered equality. Ultimately, the article advocates a return to the Qur'an's primary message, free from later interpretive accretions, to reconstruct a more just and faithful theology of gender in Islam.

Keywords: *Ādam; Eve; Feminist theology; Gender in Islam; Ḥadīth critique; Islamic exegesis; min nafsin wāḥidah; Qur'anic hermeneutics*

Introduction

The figure of Eve occupies a central place in the scriptural and exegetical discourses of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, where her creation and role in the primordial narrative of human origins have long been subjects of theological and cultural debate. In the Islamic tradition, the Qurʾān refers to the creation of humanity from a ***single soul*** (*An-Nisā*, 4:1; *al-Aʿrāf*, 7:189), a phrase that has generated extensive commentary in the classical works of ***tafsīr***. While the Qurʾān itself remains relatively concise in its treatment of Eve, exegetes across centuries expanded upon her origins, drawing upon ḥadīth, *Israʾīliyyāt* traditions, and broader cultural assumptions about gender and creation. These interpretations often framed Eve in relation to Adam, establishing

symbolic hierarchies that would later shape Muslim understandings of women, gender relations, and theological anthropology.

In recent decades, feminist scholarship has revisited these narratives with a critical lens, questioning the androcentric assumptions embedded in classical exegetical traditions. Feminist counter-narratives not only expose the patriarchal readings that have historically marginalized Eve but also propose alternative interpretations that re-center Qurʾānic language, emphasize gender equity, and challenge the inherited binaries of origin stories. This dialogue between classical tafsīr and feminist critique situates Eve as a contested figure — simultaneously bound by tradition and reimagined in modern hermeneutical frameworks.

This article explores the question of origins as it relates to Eve, examining Qurʾānic verses *An-Nisā*, 4:1; *al-Aʿrāf*, 7:189, in classical Muslim interpretations and juxtaposing them with contemporary feminist re-readings. By analyzing exegetical strategies and counter-discourses, the study aims to illuminate not only the interpretive diversity within the Islamic tradition but also the ways in which gendered narratives of creation continue to inform broader theological and cultural debates.

Section One: Eve's Origin in Classical Muslim *Tafsīr*: Tradition and External Narratives

1.1- Qur'anic Accounts and Interpretive Approaches

Muslim exegetes have long engaged with the Qur'anic accounts of human creation, notably the verse 4:1, which states: ***"Fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul (nafs wāḥidah), and from it created its mate (zawjahā)."*** Classical interpretations of this verse have yielded three primary readings of the expression ***"from it"*** (***minhā***): one suggesting that Eve was created from the same type or essence as *Ādam*; another linking her origin to *Ādam's* rib, drawing on Israelite narratives; and a third interpreting both *Ādam* and Eve as originating from the same earthly substance, such as clay.[1]

1.2- Gender Debates in Classical Tafsīr

The emergence of gender-related concerns in theological and exegetical discourse has further intensified the debate around these interpretations, particularly during the medieval period. In what follows, I will examine selected interpretations of classical Qur'anic scholars regarding the creation verses, with a focus on how the notion of equality—or lack thereof—has shaped their understandings. Verse *An-Nisā*, 4:1, serves as a foundational text in this discussion, as it encapsulates the metaphysical relationship between soul and body, and the shared origin of humankind.

Although Qur'anic verse *al-Aʿrāf*, 7:189 clarifies that the ***nafs wāḥidah*** refers to *Ādam*, medieval exegetes continued to debate the significance of the preposition ***min*** in Qur'anic verse *An-Nisā*, 4:1, with many asserting that Eve was created from *Ādam's* rib. Feminist scholars have critiqued this view, arguing that classical *mufassirūn* relied on Biblical and post-Biblical narratives rather than maintaining a purely Qur'anic hermeneutic. These critiques underscore the importance of re-examining inherited interpretations in light of both textual fidelity and contemporary concerns with gender justice.

***1.3- Ibn Kathīr's* Rib Interpretation**

Exegetes of the Qur'an have traditionally based their interpretations of the creation narrative on three primary sources: transmitted reports (***naql***), personal reasoning or opinion (***ra'y***), and ***ḥadīth*** literature. A prominent example is the 14th-century exegete Ibn Kathīr (1300–1373 CE), who presents a detailed account of Eve's creation by drawing on ***ḥadīth***-based traditions. In his

commentary on Qur'anic verse *An-Nisā* 4:1, Ibn Kathīr interprets the phrase ***"nafsin wāḥidah"*** as a reference to *Ādam*, and ***"zawjahā"*** (his mate) as Eve, asserting that she was created from the left rib of *Ādam* while he was asleep. Upon awakening and seeing her, *Ādam* was astonished; however, a natural affection grew between them, leading to mutual attachment and compassion.[2]

Ibn Kathīr attributes this interpretation to the early Companion and exegete Ibn *ʿAbbās* (619–687 CE), who reportedly stated that the woman was created from the man, and thus her longing or desire is directed toward him. In contrast, since man was created from the earth, his desire tends toward it. This interpretation not only underscores the ontological subordination of woman to man but also embeds gendered assumptions about emotional and material attachments within the framework of creation. Such views, while influential in classical *tafsīr* traditions, have become subjects of critical scrutiny in contemporary feminist readings of the Qur'an.[3]

1.4- Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's Rib Interpretation

1.4.1- Competing Views and Theological Position

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 606/1210), a prominent theologian and exegete of the classical Islamic tradition, engages in a nuanced examination of the two principal narrations concerning Eve's creation. The first maintains that Eve was created from *Ādam's* rib, while the second suggests that she was created of the same type or essence as *Ādam*. *Al-Rāzī* ultimately endorses the first view, favoring the *ḥadīth* attributed to the Prophet Muhammad in which it is stated that Eve was created from a crooked rib. He aligns himself with the interpretation of *al-Bāqillānī* (d. 403/1013), who also upheld the rib-origin narrative.[4]

While *al-Rāzī* acknowledges the metaphorical and theological complexity of the account, he frames his argument within the broader context of divine omnipotence and wisdom. He interprets the phrase ***"min nafsin wāḥidah"*** (from a single soul) as an expression of God's creative power, knowledge, and wisdom, emphasizing that the creation of Eve from *Ādam* does not diminish her status but rather exemplifies a purposeful divine act.

Furthermore, *al-Rāzī* asserts that there exists a near-consensus among Muslim exegetes that the term ***"nafs wāḥidah"*** refers specifically to *Ādam*, while ***"zawjahā"*** (his mate) refers to Eve. He notes that two aspects of this interpretation have particularly attracted the attention of Qur'anic scholars: first, the ontological question of Eve's material origin—whether it was from *Ādam's* rib or of the same substance; and second, the theological implications of the gendered creation order and the symbolism embedded in it.[5]

1.4.2- The Rib *Ḥadīth* and Its Interpretation

A majority of classical Muslim exegetes hold the view that when God created *Ādam*, He caused him to fall into a deep sleep, during which He created Eve (***Ḥawwāʾ***) from his left rib. Upon awakening, *Ādam* saw Eve and felt an innate closeness to her, as she had been created from a part of his own self. This interpretation is grounded in a well-known ***ḥadīth*** transmitted in multiple canonical collections. The ***ḥadīth*** states:

> "استوصوا بالنساء خيرًا، فإن المرأة خُلِقَتْ من ضِلَع، وإن أعوجَ ما في الضِّلَع أعلاه، فإن ذهبتَ تقيمُهُ كسرتَهُ، وإن تركتَهُ لم يزلْ أعوجَ، فاستوصوا بالنساء"[6]
>
> *"Treat women kindly, for woman was created from a rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is its uppermost. If you try to straighten it, you will break it; but if you leave it as it is, it will remain crooked. So treat women kindly."*

This *ḥadīth* has been interpreted by many scholars not only as a reference to the material origin of woman from man but also as a metaphorical statement on the essential difference between the sexes, often used to justify gender roles within the Islamic tradition. The narrative of Eve's creation from *Ādam's* rib has thus become a central component of classical *tafsīr* and legal discourse concerning the nature of woman, her origin, and her relationship to man.[7]

1.4.3- Implications for Gender and *Tafsīr*

Most Qur'anic exegetes interpret verse *An-Nisā*, 4:1, (***"O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate..."***) in light of the well-known ***ḥadīth*** concerning Eve's creation from *Ādam's* rib. In doing so, they commonly associate the phrase ***"its mate"*** (***zawjahā***) with a literal anatomical origin—that Eve was fashioned from *Ādam's* rib—rather than upholding the view that both were created from a singular metaphysical or spiritual essence (***nafs wāḥidah***).[8]

Notably, many scholars rely on ***ḥadīth*** tradition not merely to determine the narrative order of creation but also to speculate on the substance and nature of Eve's creation.[9] These traditions serve to preface theological and philosophical assumptions regarding the primacy of *Ādam's* creation. Some exegetes' further use these narrations to justify why *Ādam* was created first, suggesting that Eve's subsequent creation indicates her secondary status or derivative nature.

***1.5- Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī's* Rib Interpretation**

1.5.1- Textual Sources and Exegetical Method

In the context of the Qur'anic creation narrative, *Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī* (d. 310/923) stands out as a central and authoritative figure. His monumental exegetical work, ***Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān***, is among the earliest and most comprehensive *tafsīr* compilations in Islamic intellectual history. Widely regarded for its authenticity and methodological rigor, *al-Ṭabarī's* commentary draws extensively on ***āthār***—reports from the Prophet Muḥammad, his Companions (***ṣaḥābah***), and the early generations (***tābiʿūn***) of the Muslim community—making his interpretations a critical source for understanding early exegetical traditions.[10]

Regarding verse 4:1, *al-Ṭabarī* affirms the view held by many early scholars that the phrase ***"min nafsin wāḥidah"*** ("from a single soul") refers explicitly to *Ādam*. He thus supports the interpretation that Eve (***Ḥawwāʾ***) was created from *Ādam* rather than being formed independently from the same original substance. *Al-Ṭabarī* presents this position through a careful collation of multiple narrations, many of which align with the ***ḥadīth*** traditions about Eve's creation from *Ādam's* rib. His preference for transmitted reports (***riwāyah***) over speculative reasoning (***raʾy***) reinforces the historical influence of Israelite traditions and early theological assumptions about gender hierarchy within the *tafsīr* tradition.[11]

Al-Ṭabarī's treatment of this verse, therefore, not only illustrates the dominant exegetical trend of linking Eve's creation directly to *Ādam* but also reflects the broader hermeneutical strategies of early Muslim scholars who sought to reconcile Qur'anic expressions with Prophetic narrations and pre-Islamic scriptural motifs.[12]

1.5.2- The Rib Ḥadīth and Theological Implications

Central to al-Ṭabarī's argument is the ***ḥadīth al-ḍilʿ*** (*ḥadīth* of the rib)—has been transmitted through a well-established chain from *Abū Hurayrah*, and is widely regarded as ***marfūʿ*** (elevated), meaning it is directly attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). It

appears in both ***Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*** and ***Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim***, thereby meeting the highest standards of authenticity in ***ḥadīth*** science.

***1.6- Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī* and the *Hadīth*-Based Rib Interpretation**

1.6.1- Affirmation of the Rib Narrative

The renowned ***ḥadīth*** scholar *Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī* (1372–1449 CE), in his commentary ***Fatḥ al-Bārī***, affirms that the reference to ***al-marʾah*** (the woman) in the ḥadīth—***"The woman was created from a rib"***—specifically refers to *Ḥawwāʾ* (Eve)**.** He explains that, repor to the prevalent interpretation among early scholars, she was created from *Ādam's* left rib, reinforcing the literal understanding of the creation narrative that had become dominant in classical Islamic thought. Ibn Ḥajar cites this as the opinion supported by the majority of earlier authorities, including the Companions and the generation of ***tābiʿūn***, thereby giving it considerable exegetical weight.[13]

This interpretation reflects the strong influence of ***ḥadīth*** literature on the Qur'anic exegesis of verse 4:1, where the metaphysical phrase ***"from a single soul"*** is interpreted through the lens of prophetic narrations and early theological assumptions. It also illustrates how gendered ontological hierarchies became embedded in Islamic discourse through interpretive traditions that privileged transmitted texts (***naql***) over independent reasoning (***ijtihād***).

1.6.2- Anatomical Localization and Symbolic Implications

The early historian and biographer *Ibn e Isḥāq* (d. 150/767), in his narrations concerning the creation of Eve, goes a step further by specifying the anatomical location from which she was created. According to him, the place of creation was the left side of *Ādam's* rib, near the neck**,** identifying a previously "empty" or unformed space that was completed prior to *Ādam's* entrance into Paradise. This precise localization of Eve's creation reinforces a physical and symbolic narrative of derivation and dependency upon *Ādam*, which became influential in exegetical and theological traditions.[14]

1.7- Theological Essentialism in *Abū Ḥayyān's* Rib Interpretation

1.7.1- Woman's Deficiency as Created Nature

Expanding upon this interpretation, the Andalusian exegete *Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī* (d. 745/1344), in his ***al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ***, offers a theological and philosophical reflection on the implications of this creation account. He argues that woman is, by nature, created with a deficiency, and that this deficiency serves a didactic purpose—to illustrate both the limitations and the roles ascribed to women within the divine order. According to Abū Ḥayyān, a woman is inherently unstable, emotionally unsettled, and incapable of maintaining steadiness or internal balance. This interpretation echoes a broader tendency in medieval Islamic thought to essentialize gender differences and to frame the perceived emotional or intellectual instability of women as part of their created nature.[15]

Such perspectives, while deeply embedded in classical exegesis, have become subjects of critical scrutiny in modern feminist theology**,** which questions the epistemological validity of tying metaphysical inferiority to physical derivation. These interpretations not only reflect theological assumptions but also perpetuate gender hierarchies under the guise of divine intentionality.

1.7.2- Alternative Readings of *minhā* and Shared Essence

An alternative exegetical view maintains that the phrase *"wa khalaqa minhā zawjahā"* ("and from it He created its mate") in Qur'an - *An-Nisā*, 4:1, should not be understood as indicating physical

derivation, but rather as denoting similarity in kind, gender, or nature. In this interpretation, the preposition *min* (from) is taken to imply **"of the same type"** rather than **"from a part of"**. This reading aligns with other Qur'anic usages of *min anfusikum* (from yourselves), which clearly denote shared nature rather than material origin.

For instance, in *Sūrah al-Nahl* 16:72: *"And Allah has made for you mates from yourselves (min anfusikum azwājan)"*, the phrase signifies that spouses are created of the same species and nature as one another—humans from humans—not necessarily from each other's physical substance. Similarly, in *Sūrah al-Tawbah,* 9:128, the verse states: *"There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves (min anfusikum)"*, indicating not physical emergence from the community, but rather belonging to the same human category, sharing in their nature, concerns, and empathy.

This semantic range of *min* supports the interpretation that *"minhā"* in *Sūrah An-Nisā*, 4:1, may be better understood as "of the same essence or type," rather than implying that Eve was literally created from *Ādam's* rib. This reading is often favored by contemporary exegetes and reformist scholars who seek to emphasize the ontological equality of man and woman as equally created human beings, sharing in the same *nafs* (soul or self), without a hierarchical or anatomical derivation.

In his exegetical reasoning on *Sūrah An-Nisā*, 4:1**,** *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* critically examines the prevalent opinion that Eve (***Ḥawwā***ʾ) was created from *Ādam's* rib. He appears to challenge this traditional view and instead inclines toward the interpretation proposed by the *Muʿtazilī* exegete *Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī* (d. 934), who argued that both men and women were created from the same kind or nature, rather than through a process of anatomical derivation. *Al-Rāzī* thus departs from the literal reading of ***"minhā"*** (from it) as "from a rib" and favors the understanding of creation from a shared essence.[16]

1.8- Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī and *Ibn ʿĀshūr*: A Comparative View

1.8.1- Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī Affirming Ādam as the "Single Soul"

In support of this position, *Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī* observes that if Eve had been created prior to *Ādam* from a "single soul," then humanity would have been created from two souls**,** not one. He thus reaffirms the theological coherence of interpreting the "single soul" (***nafs wāḥidah***) as *Ādam***,** with the ***zawj*** (mate) being subsequently created from him. In a similar vein, *Ibn ʿĀshūr* assigns the referent ***nafs wāḥidah*** explicitly to *Ādam*, while ***zawjuhā*** (his mate) refers to Eve, who, according to his commentary, was created from *Ādam's* rib. Ibn ʿĀshūr emphasizes the physical and symbolic connection between them by stating that she was formed from his body, thus reinforcing the classical narrative of ontological derivation.[17]

Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī (d. 1854), in his ***Rūḥ al-Maʿānī***, offers a detailed discussion of the exegetical debate surrounding Eve's creation, particularly in the context of *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:35: ***"O Ādam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise."*** *Al-Ālūsī* highlights varying scholarly opinions regarding the timing of Eve's creation. Some scholars maintain that Eve was created after *Ādam's* entry into Paradise**,** during a period when he was alone. According to this narrative, God caused Ādam to fall asleep, then took a rib from his left side, placed flesh over the gap, and created Eve from that rib. When *Ādam* awoke, he found her sitting beside his head and inquired about her identity. She responded: **"I am a woman."** When he asked the reason for her creation, she replied: **"So that you may find comfort in me."**[18]

Despite recounting this narrative, *al-Ālūsī* notes that the majority of scholars hold the opinion that Eve was created before *Ādam's* entry into Paradise, and that both were placed in Eden simultaneously after her creation was completed.

Returning to *al-Rāzī's* commentary, he points out that the word ***zawj*** (spouse) clearly refers to Eve in this context, even though she is not explicitly mentioned by name in the verse, nor elsewhere in the Qur'an. This observation, for *al-Rāzī*, reinforces the broader interpretive strategy that relies on inference and tradition to supplement the Qur'anic narrative.[19]

In connection with the verse of *al-Aʿrāf*, 7:189: *"He created from it its mate so that he might find comfort in her (wa jaʿala minhā zawjahā li-yaskuna ilayhā),"* many exegetes have deliberated on the timing and nature of Eve's (*Ḥawwāʾ*) creation.[20] *Al-Ālūsī,* in his *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī*, transmits the divergent views among classical scholars regarding whether Eve was created before or after *Ādam's* entrance into Eden. Among these positions, the view that Eve was created prior to *Ādam's* admittance into Paradise and was later joined by him therein appears to have prevailed among the majority of scholars.[21]

This position is further affirmed by *Ibn Kathīr,* who explicitly states that Eve was created before *Ādam* was placed in Paradise, and that both entered it together after the completion of her creation. His commentary situates the narrative of Eve's creation in a broader exegetical consensus among *Sunnī mufassirūn*.[22]

It thus becomes increasingly evident that most Muslim exegetes agree that the referent of the expression *"nafs wāḥidah"* (single soul) in *Sūrah* 2:35- *An-Nisā*, 4:1; *al-Aʿrāf*, 7:189 pertains to *Ādam*, despite the grammatical feminine form (*nafs*) used in Arabic. The term *nafs* in classical Arabic is feminine in morphology, yet it does not necessarily imply that the referent must be female. Two interpretive directions emerge here:

1. **The semantic direction**, which emphasizes the meaning of the phrase, pointing to *Ādam* as the ontological origin of human creation.
2. **The grammatical direction**, which acknowledges that the word *nafs* is feminine in form, but may be used generically to refer to both male and female entities.

This interpretive nuance is supported by the pronouns and expressions employed in *Hadīth* literature concerning the creation of *Ādam* and Eve. These linguistic indicators strengthen the exegetical conclusion that Eve was created from that **"single soul"**—namely, from *Ādam* himself—in a physical and ontological sense. Hence, the dominant exegetical tradition affirms that Eve's creation originated from *Ādam,* supporting the widely transmitted *ḥadīth* of the rib, and upholding the coherence of Qur'anic language with Prophetic tradition.

Muslim exegetical scholarship generally advances two principal interpretive approaches concerning the creation of Eve. The first view maintains that Eve was created from *Ādam*'s left rib, a position supported by numerous *ḥadīth* reports and widely accepted among classical scholars. The second view interprets the Qur'anic phrase *minhā* in *Sūrah* - *An-Nisā*, 4:1; and S*ād,* 38:6 to mean "from his kind" (*min nawʿihi*), suggesting that Eve was created from the same species or category as *Ādam*, rather than literally from his rib.

This latter view is notably endorsed by *Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī* (d. 934), a prominent Muʿtazilī exegete, and is discussed appreciatively by *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.* Nevertheless, *al-Rāzī*—along with *Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī*—tends to favor the first opinion as stronger and more consistent with the *ḥadīth* corpus and early exegetical tradition.[23]

***1.8.2- Ibn ʿĀshūr's* Mediating Interpretation**

Ibn ʿĀshūr, in his *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, mediates between these positions. He acknowledges that interpreting *minhā* as "from his kind" does not necessarily contradict the idea of *Ādam* origin, since the female of each species is of the same type as its male counterpart. *Ibn ʿĀshūr* further emphasizes the linguistic flexibility of the Qur'anic expression *minhā zawjahā*, clarifying that it may be contextually understood in reference to species, gender type, or ontological origin.[24]

He also notes that the term *zawj*—commonly translated as "mate" or "spouse"—is mutual in usage, applying equally to male and female within a complementary partnership. In the Qur'anic framework, *zawj* does not exclusively signify sexual pairing but also the broader relational dynamic of shared life and responsibilities. Eve (*Ḥawwāʾ*), thus, occupies a reproductive and domestic role, becoming Ādam's *zawj* in both the biological and existential sense. Accordingly, *zawj* may denote a symmetrical relationship, in which both man and woman serve as *zawj* to each other, defining the interdependent structure of human life and familial continuity.[25]

It appears that Muslim exegetes have generally advanced the interpretation of the Qur'anic phrase *minhā zawjahā* (Q. 4:1) as referring to the creation of Eve from *Ādam's* rib, reflecting a dominant exegetical trend shaped by both *ḥadīth* literature and in-tertextual influences. Many commentators present this interpretation as consistent with divine power, arguing that the creation of Eve from a rib is no more astonishing than the creation of *Ādam* from clay or the creation of humans from a drop of semen, all of which are equally within the scope of divine omnipotence. However, linguistically, the term *minhā* does not explicitly signify the idea of a rib, nor is there any Qur'anic expression that directly substantiates this anatomical interpretation.

Section Two: Perspectives of Muslim Feminist Scholarship

Modern Western and feminist scholarship has largely reached a consensus that the narrative of Eve's creation from *Ādam's* rib—prevalent in classical Islamic exegesis—is not rooted in the Qur'anic text itself, but rather introduced through external, primarily Judeo-Christian influences.[26] Much of the exegetical debate on Qur'an centers around the interpretation of two key Arabic terms: ***minhā*** ("from it") and ***lahā*** or ***lahu*** ("for it"/"for him"). The term ***minhā*** has often been interpreted to imply Eve's origin from *Ādam*—sometimes explicitly as from his rib—while ***lahu*** has been taken to suggest that she was created for the benefit of man. These readings have led many interpreters to equate the Qur'anic account of human creation with that found in the Bible.[27]

In both the Qur'an and the Bible, *Ādam* is portrayed as the first human being, which confers upon him the privileged status of being the progenitor of humanity. Several Qur'anic verses affirm *Ādam's* creation from earthly substances—clay or dust—as stated, for example, in *Sūrah al-Isrā*, 17:61 and elsewhere. Meanwhile, Qur'anic verses such as *An-Nisā*, 4:1; *al-Aʿrāf*, 7:189, elaborate on the creation of humankind from a single ***nafs*** (soul), and the subsequent creation of its mate (***zawjahā***). The term ***nafs*** has been variously interpreted to mean "self," "soul," or "individual." Notably, the Qur'an emphasizes that both male and female were created from this single ***nafs***, suggesting a shared origin.[28]

2.1- Feminist Counter-Narratives

2.1.1- Amina Wadud's Reinterpretation of Human Origins

In Muslim feminist scholarship, many hold that most exegetical treatments of the Qur'ān reflect, or are influenced by, *ḥadīth* literature. Amina Wadud[29] offers an interpretation of the Qur'ānic account of human origins that emphasizes creation from a single pair.[30] She translates the preposition *min* ("from") in two possible ways. The first is as "extraction," which in a literal

reading implies that the first created being was superior, while the one "extracted" from it (the woman) was inferior. The second reading takes *min* to mean "of the same kind," which, when read alongside Q. 31:32, suggests that one's mate is of the same type or nature.[31] Wadud notes that the term *nafs* is used in both a common and a technical sense: in common usage, it refers to humanity, while in technical usage, it denotes all human beings as originating from a single essence, regardless of race or color. She further observes that *nafs* is neither masculine nor feminine in its conceptual meaning, representing the essential constitution of both male and female. Therefore, the Qur'ān does not indicate that creation, humanity, or gender began with the male.[32]

2.1.2- Zawj **and the Logic of Pairing**

In discussing the term *zawj*, Wadud differentiates between its grammatical gender (masculine) and its conceptual sense (not inherently gendered). Because the Qur'ān offers little detail on *zawj*, she proposes three possible reasons: (1) sufficient information has already been provided; (2) further detail is unimportant; or (3) the Qur'ān refers to an unseen reality that human language cannot adequately describe. She also stresses that the Qur'ānic concept of creation in pairs encompasses a universal duality—day and night, warmth and cold, male and female—where "the male is irrevocably linked with the female, as man is compatibly linked with woman."[33]

2.1.3- Rejecting the Rib Narrative

Wadud rejects the notion that the woman alone bears responsibility for the primordial fall, affirming instead that both Ādam and Eve share equal responsibility. In this context, she cites Riffat Hassan's critique of the *ḥadīth* narrations concerning Eve's creation, agreeing with Hassan that these narrations are weak and fall below acceptable standards of authenticity.[34]

Moreover, no sound *ḥadīth* in the canonical collections decisively states that *minhā* refers to a rib. In this regard, *Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī* (d. 923) notes, through the narration of *Ibn Isḥāq*, that the notion of Eve's creation from *Ādam's* rib may have been borrowed from the People of the Book, particularly Judeo-Christian traditions preserved in the Torah. *Al-Ṭabarī* cites reports from Ibn *ʿAbbās* and other early authorities to indicate that *Ādam* was put into a deep slumber, during which a portion of his left rib was removed, from which God then created his wife, Eve. This explanation, though widespread in traditional *tafsīr*, may reflect a process of *Isrāʾīliyyāt*—i.e., Jewish and Christian scriptural motifs—being re-contextualized within the Islamic exegetical tradition.[35]

The narration transmitted by *Ibn e Isḥāq* convincingly illustrates that the rib narrative—the claim that Eve was created from *Ādam's* rib—derives primarily from *Isrāʾīliyyāt,* or Judeo-Christian scriptural traditions, rather than from Qur'anic revelation or sound *ḥadīth*. This view is further supported by the fact that several early exegetes among the *Tābiʿūn*, including Ibn *ʿAbbās* and *Mujāhid,* appear to have transmitted this narrative not as an article of doctrinal belief, but rather as folkloric material drawn from the scriptural lore of the *Ahl al-Kitāb*. As such, the story may be categorized as a fictional or metaphorical account, which, while permissible to mention for illustrative purposes, lacks authoritative validation in Qur'anic or Prophetic texts.[36]

2.2- Riffat Hassan's Counter Narrative

2.2.1- Reframing the Creation Narrative

In a broader theological and anthropological context, Riffat Hassan[37], a contemporary Muslim scholar, highlights the need to interpret the Qur'anic account of *Ādam's* creation beyond the inherited patriarchal frameworks. She notes that the Qur'anic depiction of *Ādam* centers on his

role as God's *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on earth, and not on gendered superiority or biological primacy. Hassan traces the etymology of the word "*Ādam*", linking it to the Hebrew root associated with "soil" or "earth" (*Ādamah*), emphasizing that Ādam is presented in the Qur'an as the prototype of self-aware humanity rather than merely the first male. The name "Ādam" occurs 25 times in the Qur'an, and in each instance, it is deployed to represent the spiritual, moral, and existential dimensions of the human being as a conscious moral agent, not as a locus of male precedence over woman.[38]

2.2.2- Qur'anic Language and Human Universality

Although the term *Ādam* appears in the Qur'an as a proper noun, Riffat Hassan emphasizes that it carries multiple connotations, including that of an individual figure, a prophet, or more broadly, the archetype of humanity. She points to verses such as Q. 3:35 and Q. 18:58, as well as Genesis 4:1–14, to show that *Ādam* is occasionally treated as a specific historical person, possibly a prophet or the father of Cain and Abel. However, Hassan stresses that the Qur'an does not explicitly identify *Ādam* as the first creation of God nor as ontologically superior to other human beings. In her analysis, the Qur'anic usage of *Ādam* often functions as a collective noun, signifying humankind at large.[39]

To support this, she cites verses such as Q. 3:26–27, 31, 35, and 172, where the term conveys the generic condition of humanity, rather than the biography of a single male progenitor. Furthermore, the Qur'an often refers to *Ādam* in terms of human essence (*bashar*) and moral agency (*insān*), underlining the existential and ethical significance of human beings rather than emphasizing their physical or biological attributes. On the matter of *Ādam's* physical creation, Hassan observes that the Qur'an makes only brief and general references, such as his creation from soil or clay, without elaborating on corporeal form. She notes this in connection to verses such as Q. 1:34, 3:11, 15:61, and 17:50, which highlight the metaphysical origin of *Ādam* rather than any biological or anatomical particularity.[40]

The Qur'anic use of the terms *al-Bashar* and *al-Insān* underscores the universality of human identity and serves primarily to distinguish humanity from other metaphysical beings such as the angels. This linguistic distinction also reinforces the Qur'anic vision of human beings as bearers of divine responsibility on earth—*khulafā'*—thus affirming their elevated ontological status as recipients and transmitters of the Word of God. In this context, Riffat Hassan draws attention to the broader anthropological framework of the Qur'an, which consistently uses these terms to represent human beings collectively, rather than privileging a singular, male figure.[41]

2.2.3- Biblical and Qur'anic Accounts of Woman's Creation

In support of her analysis, Hassan refers to the Yahwistic narrative of creation as recorded in the Book of *Genesis*, where the creation of woman is directly linked to man's existential solitude. The passage states:

"The LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.' Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them... But for Ādam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man." (Genesis 2:18–22, NIV)[42]

This passage, according to Hassan, exemplifies the hierarchical and androcentric structure of the biblical creation account, in which the woman is not an autonomous creation but a derivative being—fashioned from man and for man. This contrasts with the Qur'anic perspective, where the origin of humanity is cast in inclusive and universal terms, and where the metaphors of soil (*ṭīn*, *ṣalṣāl*) and divine spirit (*rūḥ*) are emphasized over gendered anatomy. The Qur'an avoids explicit reference to the rib motif, and such narratives—when present in Islamic exegetical traditions—are often traced back to *Isrāʾīliyyāt* sources, as seen in the accounts transmitted by early commentators like Ibn ʿ*Abbās* and *Mujāhid*.[43]

Verses 23 and 24 of the second chapter of *Genesis* conclude the Yahwistic creation narrative by stating:

"The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman," for she was taken out of man.' That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." (Genesis 2:23–24, NIV)[44]

This etiological passage reflects a theological anthropology wherein woman is ontologically derived from man and thus positioned within a framework of relational dependence. In contrast, Riffat Hassan draws attention to the Qur'anic account, which notably avoids specifying the name *Hawwāʾ* (Eve). Instead, the Qur'an consistently uses the terms *Ādam* and *zawjuhu* (his spouse or mate), a linguistic strategy that refrains from reinforcing the hierarchical implications found in the biblical narrative. Hassan refers to verses such as Q. 2:35, 7:19, and 20:117, where the pair are addressed as a unit, without individual names that would suggest precedence or derivation.[45]

2.2.4- Theological Implications of Language

The absence of nomenclature for the female counterpart underscores a thematic emphasis in the Qur'an on mutuality and shared moral responsibility, rather than gendered subordination. The Qur'anic narrative does not endorse the notion that the woman was created solely to serve or accompany man. Instead, it presents both as co-agents in the moral drama of human fallibility and divine guidance. Consequently, the Qur'anic retelling resists the literalistic and anatomical derivation that marks the Genesis account and re-centers the discussion on human unity, equality, and collective responsibility before God.[46]

The foregoing analysis supports the common assumption that the Qur'anic term *zawj* (mate or spouse) refers to a woman and, by extension, is equated with *Ḥawwāʾ* (Eve). However, the Qur'an never explicitly names Ḥawwāʾ, nor does it unequivocally assert that *Ādam* was the first human or the first male created by Allah. Riffat Hassan draws attention to this linguistic nuance, arguing that the use of terms such as *Ādam*, *zawjahu*, *zawjatun*, *zawjuka*, *zawjika*, and *azwāj* across different Qur'anic verses reflects grammatical gender but not necessarily biological sex or individual identity. Consequently, the use of masculine grammatical forms should not be uncritically interpreted as indicators of male superiority or precedence.[47]

Riffat supports her view by citing *Tāj al-ʿArūs*, a classical Arabic lexicon, which notes that while the word *zawj* was commonly understood in the *Ḥijāz* region to mean "wife," the proper form in Arabic morphology is *zawjatun*. She argues that the Qur'an's choice to use *zawj*—a gender-neutral or grammatically masculine term—rather than *zawjatun*, may reflect a deliberate textual strategy to transcend regional linguistic norms and emphasize the broader relational dynamic between partners, irrespective of gender.[48]

2.2.5- Textual Indeterminacy in the Qur'an

Hassan further maintains that this Qur'anic ambiguity regarding the precise gender and number of *Ādam* and *zawj* appears to be intentional. Rather than establishing a historical or anatomical account of the origins of the sexes, the Qur'anic narrative seems to aim at highlighting the shared spiritual and moral responsibilities of human beings. In her reading, the absence of explicit gender distinctions in the creation story promotes the notion of ontological equality between men and women. This is reinforced by the recurrence of dual-gender references in approximately thirty Qur'anic passages that emphasize the cooperative purpose of creation, without granting ontological superiority or chronological priority to one gender over the other.[49]

2.2.6- The Rib Motif and Extra-Qur'anic Influences

Nevertheless, Riffat Hassan acknowledges that certain Qur'anic verses have been historically interpreted in ways that align with the Genesis account—particularly the belief that woman was created from man. Such readings, however, represent exegetical tendencies influenced by external textual traditions rather than internal Qur'anic imperatives.

After articulating her interpretation of the creation narrative in the Qur'an, Riffat Hassan turns her attention to the *ḥadīth* corpus to investigate the origins of the widely held belief among Muslim exegetes that Eve (Ḥawwāʾ) was created from Ādam's rib. Noting the absence of any reference to a rib in the Qur'anic account, Hassan argues that this notion likely derives from the biblical Book of Genesis and entered Islamic tradition through the assimilation of elements from Judeo-Christian literature—particularly via the *hadīth* tradition. She contends that Muslim exegetes, lacking direct Qur'anic support, drew upon *isrāʾīliyyāt* and *ḥadīths* of uncertain authenticity to construct this narrative.

Hassan emphasizes that such *ḥadīths*, while often accepted without rigorous critical examination, became the subject of significant scholarly debate within the field of *ʿilm al-ḥadīth*. She focuses especially on the questionable chains of transmission (*isnād*) and the problematic doctrinal implications these narrations entail, particularly with regard to gender. Her critique thus extends beyond textual analysis to encompass the epistemological and theological authority granted to such traditions.[50]

***2.2.7- Hadīth*, Transmission, and Cultural Embedding**

In support of her argument, Hassan cites Alfred Guillaume[51] (1888–1965), a prominent scholar of Islam, who underscored the importance of *ḥadīth* literature not merely for its legal or theological content, but also as a valuable lens into the emotional, psychological, and cultural consciousness of early Muslim communities. Guillaume's insight, she argues, helps explain how certain narrations—despite their weak transmission—became deeply embedded in the Muslim intellectual tradition due to their resonance with prevailing Riffat Hassan considers the story of Eve's creation to be firmly embedded within *ḥadīth* literature rather than grounded in the Qur'anic narrative.[52] This perspective is reinforced by the works of Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Y. Haddad in their co-authored study *Eve: Islamic Image of Woman*, wherein they analyze the Islamic image of Eve as it has been shaped by extra-Qur'anic sources.[53] One of the most frequently cited ḥadīths in this context states:

"Treat women kindly, for a woman is created from a rib, and the most curved part of the rib is its upper portion. If you attempt to straighten it, you will break it; but if you leave it as it is, it will remain crooked. So treat women kindly."[54]

This narration is often followed in exegetical traditions by a more elaborated narrative of Eve's creation:

> *"When God expelled Iblīs from the Garden and placed Ādam therein, Ādam remained alone, without companionship. God cast sleep upon him, took a rib from his left side, filled its place with flesh, and created Ḥawwāʾ from it. When Ādam awoke, he found a woman seated beside his head. He asked, 'Who are you?' She replied, 'I am a woman.' He asked, 'Why were you created?' She responded, 'That you might find rest in me.' The angels asked, 'What is her name?' He answered, 'Ḥawwāʾ.' They asked, 'Why was she called Ḥawwāʾ?' He responded, 'Because she was created from a living being."*[55]

This narrative, while frequently cited in Islamic exegetical literature, finds no corroboration in the Qur'an itself. Rather, it reflects the influence of *isrāʾīliyyāt* and the internalization of biblical paradigms into Islamic thought.[56] Riffat Hassan critically engages with such ḥadīths to demonstrate how theological interpretations of gender were shaped not by divine revelation but by cultural and textual inheritances that were assimilated uncritically into the Muslim exegetical tradition.

According to Riffat Hassan, the *ḥadīth* concerning the creation of Eve from *Ādam's* rib stands in significant tension with the Qur'anic account of human creation. While the Qur'an remains silent on any explicit mention of a rib or the side of *Ādam's* body, this *ḥadīth* narrative appears to echo elements from the biblical Book of Genesis, suggesting a cross-textual borrowing. Hassan argues that certain foreign elements—particularly from Judeo-Christian sources—were assimilated into Islamic *ḥadīth* literature with minor alterations, reflecting the socio-cultural matrix of early Arab society.[57]

She observes that the motif of the rib, although absent from the Bible itself, is explicitly mentioned in the *ḥadīth*, indicating that the *ḥadīth* version may have developed independently under the influence of Semitic lore and cultural symbolism. Specifically, Riffat draws attention to the way the ḥadīth localizes the origin of Eve to *Ādam's left side*. This detail, she contends, resonates with prevailing Arab cultural perceptions wherein the right side is associated with felicity, honor, and divine favor, while the left side symbolizes materiality, subordination, or misfortune.

In Hassan's reading, the placement of Eve's creation on the left side of *Ādam's* body is not merely anatomical but symbolically charged. It reinforces patriarchal structures by embedding gendered hierarchies into the origin story through cultural associations of left-ness with inferiority. Thus, the *ḥadīth's* deviation from the Qur'anic silence on these specifics is not accidental but ideologically loaded, revealing how Arab socio-cultural codes were projected onto theological narratives.[58]

In the Biblical account, Eve (*Ḥawwāʾ*) receives her name after the Fall, with Genesis describing her as "the mother of all living," thereby affirming her identity in relation to the continuity and origin of life. By contrast, the *ḥadīth* tradition attributes the name *Ḥawwāʾ* to her immediately upon *Ādam's* first encounter with her—when he awakens to find her seated at his head. The *ḥadīth* further explains her naming by claiming that she was created "from a living being," implying that her existence is derivative of *Ādam's*, and thus subordinated ontologically and theologically.

Riffat Hassan argues that such textual and thematic divergences between the Biblical and Islamic traditions, particularly as seen in the *ḥadīth* literature, are not inconsequential. Rather, they reflect

subtle but profound shifts in theological and cultural interpretation. While the Qur'an does not include any such narrative detailing the naming or the origin of Eve from a rib or the left side, these elaborations in *ḥadīth* literature represent an interpretive layer influenced by external (especially Judaic and Arab cultural) traditions.[59]

Hassan maintains that these interpolations—marked by androcentric cultural assumptions—have not been rigorously interrogated by the classical Islamic disciplines of *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* criticism, or historiography. Instead, they have often been uncritically accepted and incorporated into mainstream Islamic thought, reinforcing patriarchal narratives about women's derivative and subordinate status. She critiques this interpretive inertia and urges contemporary scholars not to rely blindly on earlier exegetical authorities, especially when those authorities may have been complicit in perpetuating misogynistic assumptions embedded in their socio-historical contexts.

Riffat Hassan identifies six *ḥadīths* reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* that pertain to the creation of woman and underpin the Islamic theological discourse on gender. She critiques these narrations for their ontological assumptions, arguing that they contribute to a widespread cultural myth—one that reinforces the notion of Eve's creation from *Ādam's* rib without undergoing rigorous theological or historical scrutiny. These reports, she suggests, echo earlier Judaic-Christian and Hellenistic traditions and reflect the absorption of patriarchal and androcentric motifs by the early Muslim community.

Hassan draws attention to the Qur'anic use of the term ***nafs*** (soul), which appears in both masculine and feminine contexts (cf. *An-Nisā*, 4:1), in contrast to the ḥadīths that portray woman as inherently derivative and defective in both form and nature. This theological positioning, as presented in the *ḥadīth* literature, defines woman from ontological, biological, and psychological standpoints in ways that deviate from the egalitarian spirit of the Qur'an. By anchoring woman's nature in the metaphor of the "crooked rib," these traditions not only endorse a gendered hierarchy but also naturalize male authority.

2.2.8- Critical Engagement with the Rib *Ḥadīths*

In her critique, Hassan provides isnād analysis and contextual evaluation of the six reports, all transmitted through Abū Hurayra**,** highlighting their common rhetorical pattern:

***Ḥadīth* I** (via Abū Kurayth and Mūsā ibn Ḥāzam, from Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, from Zaydah, from Maysarah al-Ashʿa, from Abū Hurayra):

"Treat women nicely, for a woman is created from a rib, and the most curved portion of the rib is its upper part. If you try to straighten it, it will break; but if you leave it, it remains crooked. So treat women nicely."[60]

***Ḥadīth* II** (from ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, from ʿAbd Allāh, from Mālik, from Abū Zinād, from al-Aʿrāj, from Abū Hurayra):

"The woman is like a rib; if you try to straighten her, she will break. So if you wish to benefit from her, benefit while she remains crooked."[61]

***Ḥadīth* III** (from Isḥāq ibn Naṣr, from Ḥusayn al-Jūfī, from Zaydah, from Maysarah, from Abū Ḥāzim, from Abū Hurayra):

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt his neighbor. And I advise you to be kind to women, for they are created from a rib, and the most crooked part is the top. If you attempt to straighten it, it will break; if you leave it, it remains crooked."[62]

***Ḥadīth* IV** (from Ḥarmalah ibn Yaḥyā, from Ibn Wahb, from Yūnus, from Ibn Shihāb, who said Ibn al-Musayyib narrated from Abū Hurayra):

"A woman is like a rib. When you attempt to straighten her, you will break her. If you leave her, you will benefit from her, though crookedness remains."[63]

***Ḥadīth* V** (from Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah, from Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī, from Zaydah, from Maysarah, from Abū Ḥāzim, from Abū Hurayra):

"He who believes in Allah and the Last Day, if he speaks, should speak well or remain silent. Treat women kindly, for they are created from a rib; the most crooked part is the top. If you try to straighten it, you will break it. If you leave it, it stays crooked. So act kindly towards women."[64]

***Ḥadīth* VI** (from ʿAmr al-Nāqid and Ibn ʿUmar, from Sufyān, from al-Aʿrāj, from Abū Hurayra):

"Woman was created from a rib and will not be straightened for you. If you wish to benefit from her, do so while her crookedness remains. If you try to straighten her, you will break her—and breaking her is divorcing her."[65]

Hassan critiques the persistence and repetition of this imagery across multiple *ḥadīths*, suggesting that their uniformity and centrality in Islamic social consciousness have effectively naturalized a conception of female inferiority. Despite the lack of direct Qur'anic support for the rib motif, the widespread acceptance of these narrations, according to Hassan, has allowed Arab cultural and mythological constructs—particularly those privileging the right side and casting the left as inferior—to infiltrate Islamic theology.[66]

Furthermore, Hassan asserts that traditional exegetes and muḥaddithūn have rarely questioned the authenticity or theological coherence of these reports, thus permitting the codification of misogynist interpretations in the Islamic tradition. She encourages contemporary scholars to undertake a rigorous re-evaluation of such narrations through both historical-critical and theological lenses, especially where they deviate from Qur'anic principles of human equality and spiritual complementarity.

Riffat Hassan offers a rigorous critique of the six *aḥādīth* reported in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* regarding the creation of Eve from *Ādam's* rib. All of these narrations trace back to Abū Hurayrah, a Companion whose reliability has been a subject of contention among various scholars, including Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, who is reported to have expressed skepticism about certain reports attributed to him. Hassan argues that these *aḥādīth* are *gharīb* (solitary) and *ḍaʿīf* (weak) due to their reliance on a single transmitter in each chain of narration (*isnād*), thereby raising critical concerns about their authenticity.[67]

2.2.9- Patriarchal Bias in *Ḥadīth* Literature

From the perspective of content (*maṭn*), Hassan contends that these *aḥādīth* reflect a clear patriarchal bias, privileging men and perpetuating notions inconsistent with the Qur'anic ethos of justice and spiritual equality. She emphasizes that the Qur'an uses the word *nafs* (soul) in both masculine and feminine contexts, which affirms the spiritual and existential equality of men and women. The *ḥadīth* depiction of woman as inherently "crooked" and in need of indulgence, she argues, undermines the prophetic vision of gender equity and cannot be reconciled with the Prophet Muḥammad's (peace be upon him) own exemplary treatment of women.

Furthermore, Hassan asserts that the theological anthropology derived from these narrations imposes an ontological, biological, and psychological inferiority upon women. These concepts, she suggests, are not rooted in Islamic revelation but instead represent an amalgamation of pre-Islamic Arab culture, Judeo-Christian influence, and Hellenistic philosophy. She strongly questions the legitimacy of such *aḥādīth* being attributed to the Prophet himself, arguing that they

contradict both his ethical teachings and the Qur'anic message. Therefore, she concludes that these narrations, shaped more by cultural context than divine guidance, must be rejected as unreliable and theologically problematic.[68]

While explaining the creation of human beings, *al-Kāshānī* establishes a metaphysical relationship between the universal rational soul and the physical human form. In this framework, *Ādam* represents the *single soul*—the origin of humanity—and his mate, Eve, symbolizes the material counterpart, both emerging from a metaphysical unity.[69] Feminist scholars argue that the debate surrounding human equality begins with how exegetes interpret this process of creation. Since the Qur'an does not elaborate on the exact mode of Eve's creation, exegetical traditions often turn to external sources, particularly Judeo-Christian narratives, which feminist scholars like Riffat Hassan critique for their patriarchal assumptions.

Hassan contends that much of the interpretive literature reflects not divine revelation but rather the personal opinions (*ijtihād*) of male exegetes, many of whom uncritically incorporated elements of Biblical lore into their *tafsīr*. As a result, the widely accepted notion that Eve was created "from" and "for" *Ādam* appears less as a Qur'anic doctrine and more as a cultural imposition, grounded in extra-Islamic traditions. The phrase "created from *Ādam*" is itself ambiguous in the Qur'an and lacks the anatomical detail found in the Biblical rib narrative. Feminist scholars thus question both the authenticity and authority of such interpretations, arguing that they reflect later theological interpolations rather than the original spirit of the Qur'an.[70]

Section Three: Feminist Reassessment of Human Origins

3.1- Qur'anic Foundations and the Question of Eve's Creation

Contemporary feminist exegetes assert that the creation of Eve from *Ādam's* rib is not Qur'anically substantiated but rather fragmented and influenced by external religious and cultural factors.[71] While both the Qur'an and the Bible depict *Ādam* as the father of humankind, feminist interpretations underscore that the Qur'an refrains from detailing Eve's creation in the manner found in Genesis. Some scholars acknowledge partial similarities between the two texts but emphasize significant Qur'anic differences, particularly in its avoidance of depicting woman as a secondary or derivative creation.

3.2- The Semantics of Nafs *Wāḥidah* and *Zawjahā*

The notion of *Ādam* and his mate (*zawjuhū*) as joint progenitors of humankind finds Qur'anic support in verses such as *An-Nisā*, 4:1; *al-Aʿrāf*, 7:189. In *An-Nisā*, 4:1, the Qur'an addresses humankind, urging them to be mindful of their Lord, "who created you from a single soul (*nafs wāḥidah*) and from it created its mate (*zawjahā*)." The verse's language presents a semantic challenge: while *nafs* is grammatically feminine, it is widely interpreted to refer to *Ādam*, a male figure. The ambiguity regarding gender and agency in this verse becomes a focal point for feminist critique. Q.7:189 similarly affirms the creation of humanity from a single source but is more explicit in referring to the male: *"It is He who created you from a single soul and made from it its mate, which he might dwell in comfort with her."*[72]

3.3- Ontological Unity versus Gender Hierarchy

These verses, though frequently cited in support of gender hierarchy, may be reinterpreted to emphasize ontological unity and mutuality rather than subordination. Feminist exegesis thus challenges traditional readings that privilege male primacy, proposing instead that the Qur'anic language affirms the simultaneous and equal creation of man and woman from a single metaphysical source.

This Qur'anic verse [Q.7:189] suggests that *Ādam* and his mate (commonly identified as Eve) were physical beings endowed with the capacity for procreation. The mate is created for *Ādam* so that he might find *repose* (*litaskuna ilayhā*) with her, indicating a relational and complementary purpose in their creation. The possibility that Eve was created from *Ādam's* rib is inferred by some exegetes through the preposition ***"min"***—as in *min anfusikum* ("from yourselves")—which may be interpreted not in a literal anatomical sense, but as indicating sameness of kind or essence. This interpretation supports the idea that Eve was created *from the same nature* as *Ādam*, rather than *from his physical body*, offering a more metaphorical and philosophically convincing account.

This reading departs from the rigid grammatical construction of *nafs wāḥidah* (a single soul) by highlighting the linguistic flexibility of *min*, which can denote *category* rather than *origin*. It therefore becomes plausible to understand that God created Eve *of the same species or essence* as *Ādam*, aligning with the broader Qur'anic worldview of human unity and equality. However, the question of *primacy*—who was created first—remains contentious.[73] The Genesis account initially presents male and female as being created simultaneously (Genesis 1:27), but in the subsequent narrative (Genesis 2:21–22), Eve is depicted as being created after *Ādam*, from his rib. This chronological shift within the Biblical narrative has been the subject of significant theological and feminist critique, especially in relation to gender hierarchy and derivative status.

3.4- Classical Exegesis and the Authority of *Ḥadīth*

Ḥadīth-based interpretations offered by classical exegetes such as *al-Ṭabarī*, *al-Suddī*, *Mujāhid*, *al-Ḍaḥḥāk*, and *Ibn ʿAbbās* have played a pivotal role in shaping the understanding of the Qur'anic verse on the creation of humankind (Q.4:1). These scholars interpret the term *nafs e wāḥidah* ("a single soul") as a reference to *Ādam*, thereby aligning with the tradition that humanity originates from a single male progenitor.[74] Al-Ṭabarī, in particular, addresses the grammatical tension that arises from the feminine form of *nafs* (soul) being used to represent a masculine figure, *Ādam*. He resolves this by emphasizing that grammatical gender in Arabic does not always correspond to biological sex.

To illustrate this point, *al-Ṭabarī* cites poetic precedent wherein feminine grammatical forms are applied to masculine subjects. For instance, he references a verse of poetry in which two men are described using the feminine terms "caliph" (*khalīfah*) and "another" (*ukhra*), noting that this linguistic choice stems from the singularity and not the sex of the referents. Thus, in al-Ṭabarī's explanation, the word *wāḥidah* (feminine singular) in the Qur'anic phrase *nafs wāḥidah* retains grammatical agreement with *nafs*, a feminine noun, even though it refers contextually to *Ādam*, a male figure. This interpretation aims to preserve both linguistic consistency and theological coherence within the exegetical tradition.[75]

Conclusion

The creation narrative of Eve in Islamic tradition, particularly the oft-cited claim that she was formed from *Ādam's* rib, illustrates the dynamic interplay between Qur'ānic conciseness, *Ḥadīth* transmission, exegetical elaboration, and broader cultural influences. While the Qur'ān itself emphasizes the creation of humankind from a *nafs wāḥidah* (single soul), without detailing the physical mechanism or suggesting male precedence in ontological worth, subsequent interpretive traditions have often read hierarchical assumptions into the text. These assumptions, as demonstrated in this study, owe much to extra-Qur'ānic elements—particularly weak or contested

Ḥadīth reports and the assimilation of Judeo-Christian motifs—which have shaped dominant exegetical frameworks.

The reliance on narrations that depict woman as created from a rib, transmitted through figures such as *Abū Hurayrah*, raises significant concerns regarding both their *isnād* and their *matn*. Critical analysis reveals not only problems of authenticity but also tensions with the Qur'ānic ethos of justice and gender parity. Moreover, the symbolic categories of "right" and "left" in Arab culture, which became embedded in theological discourse, further entrenched asymmetrical readings of creation, often privileging male agency over female identity. These interpretive trajectories, when left unchallenged, function as theological reinforcements of patriarchy, even while lacking explicit Qur'ānic endorsement.

Feminist Muslim scholars, such as Riffat Hassan and others, have made important contributions by highlighting the dissonance between such inherited interpretations and the Qur'ān's vision of ethical reciprocity, moral accountability, and human dignity. Their critiques compel contemporary scholarship to revisit classical exegetical methodologies with fresh hermeneutical tools that integrate historical awareness, textual criticism, and theological sensitivity.

Accordingly, the challenge before modern interpreters is twofold: first, to deconstruct readings that rely uncritically on weak or culturally embedded reports; and second, to reconstruct a theology of creation that is both faithful to Qur'ānic revelation and responsive to contemporary concerns of justice and equality. This does not mean discarding tradition wholesale but rather engaging it with intellectual honesty, critical methodology, and fidelity to the overarching principles of the Qur'ān and the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings.

In conclusion, the creation narrative in Islam, when read in light of the Qur'ān's primary message, does not endorse ontological inferiority or subordination of women. Rather, it affirms a shared origin, equal moral responsibility, and mutual dignity between men and women. A renewed theological engagement with these texts offers the possibility of moving beyond patriarchal accretions towards an interpretation that is both faithful to revelation and transformative in practice—affirming the Qur'ān as a living guide for justice, equality, and human flourishing across time.

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References

[1] For classical *tafsīr* interpretations of the verse *An-Nisā*, 4:1, see *al-Ṭabarī*, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), vol. 4, 292–295; *al-Qurṭubī*, *al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad al-Bardūnī and Ibrāhīm al-Aṭrash (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1967), vol. 5, 6–9. See also: Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23–26, for a contemporary feminist reading of the verse.

[2] See Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, ed. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999), 2:207–9.

[3] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, 2:208. Ibn Kathīr cites a report attributed to Ibn ʿ*Abbās* that emphasizes woman's creation from man and her natural inclination (*shahwah*) toward him, in contrast to man's desire for the earth. For a critical analysis of such gendered interpretations in classical *tafsīr*, see Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 25–28; and Asma Barlas, *"Believing Women",* 129–35.

[4] See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 10:42–44.

[5] See Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 10:42–44.

[6] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Nikāḥ* (Book of Marriage), "Bāb al-Mudārāh maʿa al-Nisāʾ" (Chapter: Gentle Conduct with Women), *ḥadīth* no. 5186, vol. 7, p. 26. Imām al-Bukhārī authenticated and also extracted it in (2:332; 3:440), and Imām Muslim recorded it in (4:178). Al-Nasāʾī narrated it in *ʿAshrat al-Nisāʾ* from *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, and al-Bayhaqī in (7:295) from Abū Ḥāzim, from Abū Hurayra. It is also authenticated and extracted by al-Tirmidhī (1:223), al-Dārimī (2:9148), al-Bayhaqī, Aḥmad (2:428, 449, 530), al-Ḥākim (4:174), and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ*. Furthermore, it is authenticated by al-Nasāʾī (2:85), al-Dārimī, and Aḥmad (4:164) from the narration of Abū Dharr; by Aḥmad (6:279) and al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ* from the narration of ʿĀʾisha; and by al-Ḥākim from the narration of Samura b. Jundub.

[7] The rib *ḥadīth* is found in multiple canonical collections, including *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *ḥadīth* no. 3331, and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *ḥadīth* no. 1468. It has served as a foundational text in many classical *tafsīr* works to support the view that Eve (Ḥawwāʾ) was created from Adam's rib. See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 4:292–95; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, ed. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999), 2:207–9. For theological and metaphorical readings of this *ḥadīth* and its influence on gender discourse, see Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 13–18; and Asma Barlas, *"Believing Women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 130–34.

[8] See *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, *ḥadīth* no. 3331; *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, *ḥadīth* no. 1468. This interpretation is prominently featured in al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4:292–95; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, ed. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah, 2:207–9; and al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 10:42–44. For alternative readings that challenge the anatomical interpretation and emphasize a shared spiritual essence, see Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23–27.

[9] Mulana Goher Rehman, *Tafheem-ul-Masʾail*, vol. 4 (Mardan, KPK: Maktabah Tafheem-ul-Quran, 2003), 105.

[10] See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 1:72–75, for his introduction outlining reliance on *āthār* from the Prophet, Companions, and Tābiʿūn. On al-Ṭabarī's methodological rigor and influence in early *tafsīr*, see Walid A. Saleh, *The Formation of the Classical Tafsīr Tradition: The Qurʾān Commentary of al-Thaʿlabī (d. 427/1035)* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 25–32; and Andrew Rippin, "*Tafsīr*," in *The Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 5:162–67.

[11] Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, vol. 3, 2114.

[12] Ibid.

[13] See Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī bi-Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn ʿAbd Allāh ibn Bāz et al. (Riyadh: Dār al-Salām, 2000), 6:368–69.

[14] Al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*. Vol. 9,161.

[15] Muḥammad ibn Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān al-Andalusī, *al-Bahr al-Muḥīṭ*, ed. ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd et al. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993), vol. 2, 366.

[16] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, ed. Maḥmūd Ḥijāzī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 9:166–167; Abū Muslim al-Iṣfahānī, as cited in Ibn al-Jawzī, *Zād al-Masīr fī ʿIlm al-Tafsīr*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1984), 4; See also al-Ṭabarī's contrasting interpretation in *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān*, vol. 4 (Cairo: Dār Hajr, 2001), 293–295, which preserves the rib-creation tradition.

[17] Qāḍī al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Taʾwīl*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Marʿashlī, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 223; Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr wa-l-Tanwīr*, vol. 4 (Tunis: Dār Sahnūn li-l-Nashr wa-l-Tawzīʿ, 1984), 229–30.

[18] Shihāb al-Dīn Maḥmūd al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī fī Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm wa-Sabʿ al-Mathānī*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1993), p. 366.

[19] Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* –167

[20] Ibid.
[21] Shihāb al-Dīn al-Ālūsī, *Rūḥ al-Maʿānī,* 8:144–145.
[22] Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, ed. Sāmī b. Muḥammad Salāmah, 8 vols. (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah li-al-Nashr wa-al-Tawzīʿ, 1999), 1:218.
[23] Abū al-Qāsim Maḥmūd ibn ʿUmar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqāʾiq al-Tanzīl*, ed. ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Mahdī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 2009), 1:246; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1999), 3:182–183; Qāḍī Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa-Asrār al-Taʾwīl*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Marʿashlī (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1998), 1:138–139.
[24] Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr, *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, 4:225.
[25] Ibid., 4:226
[26] Catherine Bronson, *Imagining the Primal Woman: Islamic Selves of Eve* (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2012), 85.
[27] For the prevalence of the rib narrative in classical *tafsīr*, see al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, 4:292–95; and al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qurʾān*, ed. Aḥmad al-Bardūnī and Ibrāhīm al-Aṭrash (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1967), 5:6–9. On the argument that such interpretations stem from external, particularly Judeo-Christian traditions rather than the Qur'anic text itself, see Barbara Freyer Stowasser, *Women in the Qur'an, Traditions, and Interpretation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17–21; Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23–27; and Asma Barlas, *"Believing Women" in Islam: Un-reading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'an* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), 133–36.
[28] On Adam as the first human and his creation from clay, see *Sūrah al-Isrā,* 17:61, *Sūrah Ṣād,* 38:71–72, and *as-Sajdah*, 32:7. For the creation of humankind from a single *nafs*, see Qur'an: *An-Nisā*, 4:1; *al-Aʿrāf*, 7:189. Classical commentators differ on the meaning of *nafs wāḥidah*—some interpret it as Adam himself, while others suggest it refers to a shared human essence. See al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 4:292–95; and al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 10:40–42. For modern interpretations emphasizing gender equality and the shared spiritual origin of man and woman, see Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 23–27; and Asma Barlas, *"Believing Women"*, 128–34.
[29] Amina Wadud was born into a Methodist Christian family in Maryland and embraced Islam while in college in 1972. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and later received her doctorate in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Michigan in 1988. From 1989 to 2008, she taught at the International Islamic University Malaysia and subsequently at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU).
Recognized as a prominent voice in Muslim feminist thought, Wadud often frames her intellectual journey as shaped by the broader struggles of African Americans against racism. Her seminal work, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, first published in Malaysia in 1992 and later in the United States in 1999, has been widely acknowledged as a groundbreaking feminist Qurʾānic interpretation.

In addition to her academic career, Wadud has played an active role in Muslim women's activism. She was a leading figure in *Sisters in Islam*, a Malaysian-based organization, where she contributed to collective Qurʾānic readings and interpretations during the late 1980s. Her later reflections, such as in her essay *On Belonging as a Muslim Woman*, further articulate her vision of Muslim women's spirituality within both African-American and global contexts. Please see Amina Wadud, "On Belonging as a Muslim Women." My

Soul is a Witness: African-American Women's Spirituality. Ed. Gloria Wade-Gayles. Boston: Beacon Press 1995, 265

[30] Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 17–22.

[31] Ibid., 18.

[32] Ibid., 19–21.

[33] Ibid., 22–25.

[34] Riffat Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib? The Woman Question in the Qur'an," in *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America*, ed. Gisela Webb (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 67–90.

[35] See Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān,* 4:308–309, and views of Ibn Isḥāq, cited in al-Ṭabarī, and on the transmission of Judeo-Christian narratives into early t*afsīr*, see Roberto Tottoli, "Origin and Use of the Term Isrāʾīliyyāt in Muslim Literature," *Arabica* 46, no. 2 (1999): 193–210, and *Ibn ʿAbbās* traditions cited in al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān*, 4:309.

[36] Ibn Isḥāq, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1976), 1:53–54; Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān,* 4:293–294; Al-Thaʿlabī, *Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyāʾ*, ed. ʿImād ʿAbd al-Salām Rāʾūf (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2004), 48–49; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah*, ed. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī (Cairo: Dār Hajr, 1997), 1:85–86; Mujāhid, *Tafsīr Mujāhid*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Salām Abū al-Nīl (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-Islāmī al-Ḥadīth, 1989), 54.

[37] Riffat Hassan is a Pakistani-American theologian and one of the pioneering figures in Islamic feminist thought. Born in Lahore in 1943, she pursued her higher education in the United Kingdom, earning her doctorate in English and Philosophy from the University of Durham. Her intellectual work has consistently challenged patriarchal readings of Islamic texts, with a particular emphasis on Qurʾānic hermeneutics and the theological foundations of gender equality in Islam.

Hassan has served as a professor at several universities, most prominently at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, where she taught Religious Studies for decades. She is widely recognized for her critical engagement with traditional interpretations of the Qurʾān and *Hadīth*, arguing that many misogynistic understandings are rooted in patriarchal culture rather than in the sacred sources themselves.

Her scholarship often highlights three central concerns: the creation of woman and the question of equality, the issue of human rights in Islam, and the role of women in relation to revelation and prophecy. She critiques the secondary status historically attributed to women in Islamic thought, contending that the Qurʾān presents men and women as ontologically equal, both created from a single self (*nafs wāḥida*).

Beyond academia, Hassan has been an active participant in international dialogues on religion, human rights, and women's empowerment, working with organizations such as the United Nations on issues related to Muslim women. Through her writings, lectures, and activism, she has established herself as a leading voice in advocating for a feminist theology rooted in the Qurʾān. Please see Riffat Hassan, "Equal Before Allah? Woman-Man Equality in the Islamic Tradition," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 19, no. 2 (1989): 2–6

[38] Riffat Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib?: The Woman Creation Question," *Christian Study Center Rawalpindi – Pakistan* 27, no. 3 (Autumn 1985): 124–130; Riffat Hassan, *Women and Islam: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2011), 45–46; for the frequency and moral usage of the term *Ādam* in the Qur'an, see William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam*, Religion & Reason Papers No. 23 (Chicago: Green–Templeton College, University of Oxford, 2004), 18.

[39] Riffat Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib?," 128–35.

[40] Riffat Hassan, "Woman and Man's "Fall.", 101-5.

[41] Ibid.

[42] *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Gen. 2:18–22.

[43] Riffat Hassan, "The Development of Feminist Theology as Means of Combating Injustice Towards Women in Muslim Communities/Culture," *European Judaism* 28, no. 2, issue 55 (Autumn 1995): 80–90;

and Riffat Hassan, "Islamic Modernist and Reformist Discourses in South Asia," in *Reformist Voices of Islam: Mediating Islam and Modernity*, ed. Shaheen Hunter (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2008), 455–59.
[44] *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Gen. 2:23–24.
[45] Riffat Hassan, "Equal Before Allah? Woman-Man Equality in the Islamic Tradition," *Harvard Divinity Bulletin* 19, no. 2 (January–May 1989): 3–4.
[46] Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 18–20.
[47] Riffat Hassan, "Muslim Feminist Hermeneutics," In Our Voice: Four Centuries of American Women's Religious Writings", Ed. Rosemary S. Killer and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *San Francisco*, 1995, 455–58; Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib?", 130–33; Hassan, "The Issue of Women", 70–72; Riffat Hassan, "The Chicago Theological Seminary Register (Special issue on Muslim Women Scholars on Women", *The Chicago Theological Seminary*, 1&2, LXXXIII (Winter and Spring ،1993): 8–10; Riffat Hassan, "Eve and Adam (Jewish, Christian and Muslim Readings on Genesis and Gender)", Ed. K.E Kvam, ., L.S Schearing, and W.H. Ziegler, *Indiana University Press*, 1999, 465–68; Riffat Hassan, "Women Studies in Religion: A Multicultural Reader", Ed. Kate Bagley and Kathleen McIntosh, *N J. Pearson Prentice Hall*, 2007, 143–49.
[48] Riffat Hassan, "Equal Before Allah? 68–70.
[49] Riffat Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib?, 74–77.
[50] Riffat Hassan, "Women's Rights in Islam: Normative Teachings versus Muslim Realities," in *Windows of Faith: Muslim Women Scholar-Activists in North America*, ed. Gisela Webb (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 23–45.
[51] Alfred Guillaume (1888–1965) was a British orientalist and scholar of Arabic and Islamic studies. He taught at the University of Oxford and later at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. Guillaume is best known for his English translation of *Ibn Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (titled *The Life of Muhammad*, 1955), which remains a widely used source in Western scholarship on early Islam. He also authored works on Islamic law, theology, and comparative religion.
[52] Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥāq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), 69–70.
[53] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, "Islam, Women, and Revolution in Twentieth-Century Arab Thought," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 207–26.
[54] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Kitāb al-Nikāḥ, Bāb al-Waṣīyah bi-l-Nisāʾ, *ḥadīth* no. 3331; Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Kitāb al-Raḍāʿ, Bāb al-Waṣīyah bi-l-Nisāʾ, *ḥadīth* no. 1468. Translation adapted from Muḥammad Muḥsin Khan, *The Translation of the Meanings of Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, vol. 7 (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997), *ḥadīth* no. 3331.
[55] Please see Riffat Hassan, "Women in Islam, "Contemporary Challenges", Ed. Sybille Fritsch Opperman, Evengelischen, *Akademie Loccum, Rehburg-Loccum Germany* 2, Number, 4, (1997): 67-82. This narrative appears in the works of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr; see al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʾān*, 293–94; and Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿAẓīm*, trans. Sāmī ibn Muḥammad al-Salāmah (Riyadh: Dār Ṭayyibah, 1999), 1:113–14.
[56] Riffat Hassan, "Women in Islam and Christianity: A Comparison" (paper presented at the Third International Conference on Women and Men in a Changing Society, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, 1994), 19–20.
[57] Riffat Hassan, "Women in Islam and Christianity, 19–20.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Riffat Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib?, 124–30.
[60] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Anbiyāʾ* (Book of the Prophets), vol. 4, *hadīth* no. 3331, p. 133.
[61] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Nikāḥ* (Book of Marriage), "Bāb al-Madārah maʿ al-Nisāʾ" (Chapter on Sociability with Women), vol. 7, hadīth no. 5184, p. 26
[62] Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, *Kitāb al-Nikāḥ* (Book of Marriage), "Bāb al-Madārah maʿ al-Nisāʾ" (Chapter on Sociability with Women), vol. 7, hadīth no. 5186, p. 26.

[63] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Kitāb al-Nikāḥ*, first hadīth of the last chapter "Bāb al-Wasiyyah bi al-Nisāʾ" (Chapter on Advice regarding Women), vol. 2, hadīth no. 65, p. 1090.
[64] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Kitāb al-Nikāḥ*, hadīth no. 59, vol. 2, p. 1091.
[65] Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, *Kitāb al-Nikāḥ*, hadīth no. 60, vol. 2, p. 1091.
[66] Hassan, "Made from Adam's Rib?" 150–51.
[6767] See Riffat Hassan, *Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 45–47.
[68] Ibid See Riffat Hassan, *Women and Gender in Islam,* 47–50.
[69] Abd al-Razzāq (attrib. Ibn ʿArabī) Kāshānī, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-Karīm Lil-Shaykh al-Akbar … Muhyī al-Dīn Ibn ʿArabī*, (Beirut: Dār al-Yaqẓa al-ʿArabīya, 1968), 233.
[70] See Riffat Hassan, *Women and Gender in Islam.* 52–55; Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman,* 130–132.
[71] Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman,* 128.
[72] For detailed exegesis of these verses and discussions on their gendered semantics, see Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman,* 112–115; also see Riffat Hassan, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 58–60.
[73] It is pertinent to mention here Fatimid Ismāʿīlī views on the creation narrative, which differ markedly from those of Sunni exegetes. Al-Qāḍī al-Numān explains that Eve represents a spiritual hierarchy created from Adam's essence or shape, rather than from his physical form, serving as a *hujja* (proof) of Adam's prophetic authority. According to Fatimid Ismāʿīlī doctrine, every prophet manifests as a *nāṭiq* (lawgiver) who is succeeded by an executor (*wāṣī*). Each *nāṭiq* is accompanied by several *hujaj* (proofs), and Eve functions as Adam's *hujja* in this world, as elaborated by al-Qāḍī al-Numān. Referring to the Qur'anic verse (al-Aʿrāf, 7:12) قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ ("[Iblis] said, 'What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?' He said, 'I am better than him; You created me from fire and created him from clay'"), al-Qāḍī al-Numān interprets that Iblis was initially privileged with the position of *wāṣī*—disciple and executor to Adam—but upon his refusal to obey Adam, he was replaced by Eve. Thus, in the spiritual hierarchy, Iblis's role was succeeded by Eve, and both Adam and Eve were directed to dwell in Eden. The spiritual authority or *tayyid* (discipleship) passed through physical ancestry, but the unique knowledge granted to Eve is not due to physical origin but rather imparted spiritual knowledge. Eve's discipleship to Adam marks her as a cryptograph or representative of Adam in a mentor-disciple relationship. While Eve is a woman, her femininity in this context reflects her position as Adam's student, receiving knowledge from him. She is said to have become "pregnant" with this knowledge. Hence, in worldly matters, women can attain a spiritual hierarchy, though not equal to the ranks of *imām* or *wāṣī*. In contrast, Imāmī Shīʿī exegetes offer a slightly different interpretation, rejecting the notion that Eve was created from Adam's rib. Instead, they argue that she was created from the leftover clay after Adam's creation. In this respect, the Shīʿī scholar Ayyūshī is notable for advocating the 'leftover clay' view. Meanwhile, al-Qummī, another prominent Shīʿī exegete, supports the rib creation interpretation, which aligns more closely with Sunni hadith-based exegesis. Please see See al-Qāḍī al-Numān, *Asās al-Tawīl*, ed. Arif Tamer (Beirut: Dār al-Thaqāfa, 1960), 59. For Shiʿī perspectives on Eve's creation, including the 'leftover clay' interpretation, see works discussing Ayyūshī and al-Qummī's *tafsīr* traditions; for comparative analysis, see Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), and Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shi'ism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).
[74] al-Tabari, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān*, 2114; al-Suddī, *Tafsīr*, cited in M. M. Azami, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 108; also see F. M. Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 64.
[75] Ibid.