



## An Analytical study of Fatima Mernissi views regarding the Status of Woman and Seerat-e-Tayyaba

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### ABSTRACT

Women employment is a common issue around the world in the contemporary age. Women engagement in jobs is a practical issue of the modern age and is espoused by almost all Fatima Mernissi (1940-2015) born in Fez, Morocco to a middle-class family. She grew up in the boundaries of the harem structure. Mernissi is known as one of the best Arab Muslim Feminist. She is being acknowledged as a famous public figure in Morocco and abroad. Her outstanding books have been translated into English, Dutch and Japanese.

Her central themes of writing were gender identity, the status of women in Islam and their relation with the socio-political organisation in Moroccan society. She has specific issues in mind while writing like the image of female inferiority which is connected with Middle Eastern Culture, the meaning of women's secondary states and segregation within the Arab Muslim context. She has tried to estimate the effect of modernisation upon Arab Muslim systems which promotes a different and often contrary model for male-female relations. Mernissi says that Moroccan government encourage such law code that limits social, economic, political and worldly life space as if in the 7th century.

The purpose of this article is to bring up how the religion Islam itself safeguards women morals and decency, protects her honour and status and secure her dignity against evil thoughts and tongues and also tries to counterblow provoking hands that intends to harm her.

**Keywords:** Islam, Veil, Equality, Polygamy and Repudiation

**Hijab**, The Veil: One of the topics on which Mernissi has discussed is the Veil. The veil according to her is not to put a wall between man and woman but between the two men of Hejira. <sup>1</sup>

*O ye who believe! Enter not the dwellings of the Prophets for a meal without waiting for the proper time, unless permission be granted you. But if ye are invited, enter, and, when your meal is ended, then disperse. Linger not for conversation. Lo that would cause*



*annoyance to the Prophet, and he would shy of (asking) you (to go); but Allah is not shy of the truth. And when you ask of them (the wives of the Prophet) anything, ask it from behind a curtain. That is purer for your hearts and for their hearts. (verse 53 Surah 38)*

Two simultaneous events took place according to Fuqaha. On the one hand God's revelation to Prophet and on the other hand the fall of a cloth curtain or *Hijab* between Prophet's chamber and the man who were at the entrance.<sup>2</sup>Mernissi says that *hijab* was descended to cover the intimacy of the wedded couple and exclude a third person in those situations. And Anas bin Malik one of the companions of Prophet was there at the wedding of Prophet. Mohammad (PBUH) with Zaynab bin Jaysh. Anas was excluded by *hijab* when the revelation took place.<sup>3</sup>This Verse 53 of Surah 33 is regarded as the basis of the institution of the *hijab*. Along with the rules of etiquettes, the Surah speaks on the other subject as well, i.e. Allah's decision that forbids Muslim to marry Prophet's wives after his death.<sup>4</sup>

The verse of the *hijab* ends up with these words, "And it is not for you to cause annoyance to the messenger of Allah, nor that ye should ever marry his wives after him. Lo! that in Allah's sight would be an enormity."

Mernissi points out that Al-Tabari comments on the last part of the verse. The Prophet was threatened by men to marry his wives after his death. Mernissi says that if this happened then that means, the situation was quite confusing and complexed and the crisis in the society must have been deep that such attacks were taking place. So, therefore, *Hijab* was to be the solution to control the conflict and tensions.<sup>5</sup>

Mernissi enumerates that in order to safeguard women of higher social class, women slaves were sacrificed. Women were harassed in the streets and were urged to commit the act of *Zina*. And as Prophet could not do much about it, Prophet assured the safety of his own wives and the other Muslims in a city. When Prophet asked for the investigation of the situation from those who were behaving in this manner. They said, "We only practice *ta'arrud* with women we believe to be slaves" and they excused themselves by saying that they were confused about the identity of the women towards whom they moved. In this situation, Allah revealed **Verse 59 of Surah 33**. In this wives of the Prophet were advised to wear *Jilbab* over themselves so as to make themselves recognized. Mernissi claims that Quran itself is allowing women slaves to be reduced to prostitution, reflecting pre-Islamic social life and practices. In Verse 33 of Surah 24("Light"), proves that there was actually found organized prostitution in Medina. The Verse says, "Force not your slave-girls to whoredom that you may seek enjoyment of the life of the world if they would preserve their chastity." And Allah had recommendation for those who were indulging in this kind of affair: "And such of your slaves as seek a writing (of emancipation), write it for them".<sup>6</sup>

Mernissi says that Umar repeatedly asked Prophet that he receives all kinds of people at his home, moral as well as evil then why not he order the *hijab* for the Mothers of the Believers. Mernissi remarks that despite the criticism of Umar, the Prophet did not order *hijab*. She further explains that as Prophet Mohammad was shy by nature and polite, he could not tactfully deal with some men (Sahaba) who forced him to adopt the *hijab*.<sup>7</sup>

Mernissi further explains that Prophet wanted to bring opposite to *hijab*. Muhammad wanted women to move freely around the city whereas hypocrites took women always as an object of jealousy and violence and this is continued until today. Veiling represents the victory of the hypocrites and due to this women slaves will continue to be stressed. And the female Muslim folks be divided into two categories the free women and the slave women. Mernissi refers to the Fuqaha, Al Suyuti who wrote a book ‘Asbab al Nuzul’ (The Cause of Revelations), tells us that to understand the Quran we need to know the causes that led to its revelation. And sometimes MUFASSIRUN (commentators of the Quran) explains many reasons of the verse. Both Suyuti and Al Tabari prefer to define the events as they just took place. Like the book of Al Suyuti named Asbab al-Nuzul (The Cause of the Revelations) tells has a hundred pages which are a summary of Tafsir Al Tabari. There is also found the linguistic analysis of each word. But there is not found any synthesis. For Mernissi, it is essential to synthesise all the information we have at our disposal, especially the linguistic dimension.<sup>8</sup>

Like for *hijab*, she says has three dimensions and they often blend with each other. The first dimension is visual means to hide something from sight. The second dimension is a thing existing in space, i.e. from marking a limit. And the third dimension is moral means that belong to the area of forbidden. Therefore it not only has tangible categories but also abstract reality.<sup>9</sup>

Mernissi also talks about the meaning in Lisan al-Arab dictionary which did not help her much. It tells us that ‘Hajaba’ means to hide with a ‘*sitr*’ literally means ‘curtain’. The dictionary explains Banu Qusayy had the hajaba of the Kaaba means this tribe was incharge of protecting it and had the keys to it. The Encyclopedia of Islam tells us that Hijab is among the other things as well like the caliphs and kings sat behind the curtain to avoid the gaze of their court members.<sup>10</sup>

The Muslim Sufis call it Mahjub (veiled) means a person’s consciousness is dominated by physical and mental passion and therefore not able to perceive the divine light in his soul. It is through the training and discipline and the constant seeking of God that allows one to reach out of the sphere of physical and leads towards heaven and towards the Divine. For Sufis, the opposite of the *hijab* is the Kashf, the discovery.<sup>11</sup>

Mernissi concludes that *hijab* is the crucial concept in Muslim civilisation whereas It is a sin in Christian context or American capitalist society. And it should not be reduced to a piece of cloth imposed on a woman to wear when she goes into the street.

And when it is clear that *hijab* is “descended” from heaven (according to Al Tabari explanation) to separate the space between two men.<sup>12</sup>

In case of spatial dimensions of *hijab*, we see that it can hide something from view as in the case of the *hijab* of Prince or Caliph. On the other hand, according to Sufi Hijab, it blocks the knowledge of Divine. The prince is being veiled to be respected and veiling that separate you from God might be destruction.<sup>13</sup>

Another example Mernissi gives is the anatomical use of the *word hijab*. In Lisan al-Arab, an eyebrow is called Al-Hajibun. It is named so as it protects the eye from the sunrays. That means anything that separates and protects is Hijab. The hymen is Hijab al Bukariya (hijab of virginity), and the diaphragm is Hijab al-Jawf (veil of the stomach).<sup>14</sup>

Mernissi enumerates that if we leave the linguistic point of view and come back to Quranic verses. They are different from the field of linguistic similar to the Sufi concept that prevents a person from seeing God. Mernissi notes that *hijab* is found in Quran seven times. In general, the meaning of *hijab* in the Quran means a separation-it is a curtain in which Hazrat Maryam isolated herself from the people (XIX,17) Later the same was imposed at first on the wives of the Prophet (XXXIII,53; XXXIII,32). Mernissi says it was imposed apparently on the advice of Umar. In Surah VII,46, on the day of judgement, the saved be separated from the damned, by *hijab*.<sup>15</sup>

In verse V of surah 41, according to al-Tabari, the polytheist was not able to understand the monotheistic message of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Our hearts are protected from that unto which thou (O Mohammad)callest us, and in our ears, there is a deafness, and between us and thee, there is a veil(Quran)

Here veil diminishes human intelligence. And the *hijab* polytheist claimed was their different choice in religious matters. Al-Tabari says that in this verse ‘hijab’ points out that Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was inviting them to one sole God whereas the polytheists were worshippers of idols. These polytheists were, therefore, most blinded by hijab. Some theologians claim that the Hijab is a punishment. Mernissi talks about al-Nisaburi who says that al-Siriy al-Suyuti prayed to God that if God tortures him with something, then not to torture him with the humiliation of *hijab*.

According to Mernissi, when *hijab* has a strongly negative approach in Quran when it is denoted with the meaning that keeps the person away from the Grace of God, how can it claim today as a symbol of Muslim identity, especially for the Muslim woman? Mernissi found new editions of the book on women, Islam and the veil published by the religious authorities who claim to be concerned for the future of Islam. They wish to save the Muslim society from the menace represented by a change. Simultaneously publishing is getting lesser day by day due to war in Lebanon which is the prime centre of book publishing.<sup>16</sup> The books are losing prices although they are binded inexpensive quality. But the books of the conservative writers like Al-Jawzi, 1981 new edition of

his book ‘Kitab ahkan-al-nisa (Statutory Provisions concerning Women) is available in six dollars. The text of Al-Jauzi comprises the chapters like “Advise women Against going out”; “The benefits for the Women Who Opts for the Household”; “Evidence proving that it is better for a Woman not to see man”; “Circumcision of Women” and one of the Chapters gives the husband “ the right to hit his wife.”<sup>17</sup>

Mernissi states about another writer Shaikh ibn Taimiyya (a fourteenth-century writer). “Fatawas Concerning Women” published from Cairo. These are extracted from Majmu al-Fatawas al-kubra (Collection of the famous fatwas given by religious authorities). The fatwas are related to all the issues related to women. Mernissi states that their objective is to fight against those who speak about women’s liberation. The book talks about that woman should cover her face and hands during prayers; the question is being asked if the prayer of a woman is worthless when hair is not covered. There is also a chapter on circumcision of a woman which has nothing to do with Islam nor with Arab culture.<sup>18</sup>

There is one more writer of the same kind and considered best, Muhammad Siddiq Hassan Khan al Qannuji, Husn al–uswa. He is an Indian writer whose book is for eight dollars. He writes in detail about anything we want to know related to women great sexual appetite. There is reported about woman’s inability to reason and their lack of inability to in matters of religion. Moreover, he also writes about the population of women in hell.

Mernissi says that there is a dire need of investigating the meaning of *hijab*. From its very beginning and through its interpretations that followed. We need to protect the women where she is being veiled and shut out of the world. Moreover this is important to protect it from the west. We must keep in mind that women’s body is a symbolic representation of the community. Mernissi concludes that the verse pronounced by Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) at the troubled period has introduced a space between public and private, but that turned to segregation of the sexes.<sup>19</sup>

### **Critical Analysis**

I am going to analyse the topic veil as described by Mernissi. The tales invented by Jews, Pagans and hypocrites became topic of conversation among the Muslims. It was clear that the element of physical pleasure had crossed its limits. People paid attention to such fake stories about such righteous person Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), because of this disease of sensuality that existed in society. It was the high time that Allah revealed commandment related to *hijab*. The reforms were introduced in the society with the help of Sura Ahzaab and later in Surah Nur when Sayyidah A’isha was targeted.<sup>20</sup>

The Marriage of the Holy Prophet with Hadrat Zainab (the divorced of his adopted son) took place in order to end the custom of ignorance. The custom was that father had a right to marry his son’s (his loins) wife. The Holy Prophet gave this status to his

adopted son. However, hypocrites, Jews and Hypocrites got the chance to spread false stories about the Holy Prophet. They said that one day the Holy Prophet happened to see the wife of his adopted son and he fell in love with her, and asked his son to divorce her in order to marry her. This fiction was spread so skillfully that even today some traditionalists and commentators used it in their writings. Also, the Orientalist have used it sufficiently to defame the Holy Prophet. Hazrat Zainab was not a stranger to the Holy Prophet that he fell in love with her at first sight. She was his first cousin, daughter of real paternal Aunt, Umaimah, daughter of Abdul Muttalib. Holy Prophet himself convinced her to marry Hadrat Zaid in order to show that the Quraish and the liberated slaves were equal as a human being.<sup>21</sup> Surah Nur(Light) was closely connected with the clash between Islam and disbelievers. The disbelievers lacked character and discipline. They knew that the Holy Prophet and his followers were victorious because of their moral superiority. In order to defame and defeat the Holy Prophet and Muslims, they adopted evil ways.<sup>22</sup>

In this Surah, the threat was given to those who access a chaste woman who can never think of touching their chastity, and they are good believers. The verse is referring to Hazrat A'ishah as Siddiq. Anybody was accusing her as a disbeliever. So same thing applies to Muslim women of today.<sup>23</sup>

1. Mernissi claims that Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) could not do much about harassing of women in the streets, therefore, advised his wives and the believing women to veil themselves.<sup>24</sup>

In the early stages of Greek civilisation, the cultural development brought higher status to women. Her chastity was considered a precious thing. Greek noble women observed Purdah. The women did not mix up with men in social gatherings, nor were they noticeably brought out in public. Women living the life of a prostitute were held in disgrace. <sup>25</sup>When Roman civilisation was at its zenith, Purdah was not practised, but chastity was observed and considered the criteria of the nobility. Prostitution was practiced, but it was restricted to have illegal relations with prostitutes. The Man who did it was looked down. In Christian Europe, in the beginning, efforts were made to eradicate immorality and immodesty, but the Christian changed the concept of women chastity. The doctrine said that woman is the mother of sin. Moreover, whether sexual relation within marital way or without that, it's all sin. This gave rise to celibacy and spinsterhood. <sup>26</sup>This led to the degradation of a woman socially as well as morally. In the Modern Age, the philosophers and writers raised their voice for liberty and equality. The free intermingling of sexes was one of the doctrines. Women worked outside the home and had to earn money to look after themselves. She neither depend on men for bread nor security. She needs man only for accomplishing sexual desires. Therefore no family required. The question of morality does not come then. Showing off, nudeness, sexual perversion was used to attract the opposite sex, when she could

not attract a man by this, she started using seductive cosmetics, lustful looks and acts and dazzling dresses. Man sexual appetite grew more and more. This was a disease which was growing, destroying the mental and physical capabilities of man. The wrong social system aroused in every heart. He cannot be prosperous and think about his well-being in this condition. The peace of mind and tranquility of heart is absent.<sup>27</sup> The complete development of the personality and capability of women is when she can play her role in the enhancement of human civilisation. She needs to be prevented from becoming a prey of moral decay and disintegration. Man and woman partnership should be such that cooperation of both with each other should help in building up of community life.<sup>28</sup>

The problem of extremism can be solved only by Islam. Surah **24** verse **30** and **31**. The Surah was intimately connected with the clash between Islam and disbelievers. The disbelievers lacked character and discipline. They knew Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), and his followers were successful because of their moral superiority. In order to defame and defeat Prophet, they used the method of defaming Hazrat Ayesha and teasing women in the streets and showing the intention of Zina. The revelation was to stop the hypocrites who were creating a problem in the Muslim community. Some laws were given to educate and train the community. Provocative mischiefs were dealt generously. It also proves that God himself was observing the human conditions and guiding humankind and the words were not of Prophet Mohammad but were from God.<sup>29</sup>

In verse 33 Surah 59, 60 the aim was to protect women from harassment rather than restricting the liberty of women. We can find that whether it is east or west, there is always found a public dress which is a badge of honour for man as well as a woman. If we go back to Assyrian law, in its prosperous time (probably 7<sup>th</sup> Century B.C) instructed the veiling of married women and prohibited the veiling of slaves and women of ill fame. The holy Quran is not stopping the slave girls to wear **Jilbab**. The order is only for the believing woman. It was not imposed on the slave women. The Holy Quran is primarily for those who want to take any lesson. It is an open invitation for the slave male and females to liberate themselves. Almighty has given a warning to those hypocrites who show themselves as Muslims but are not in their morals and manners. Allah called them people with 'diseased heart' who molested chaste women. They would be punished as they caused disorder and be destroyed.<sup>30</sup>

2. Mernissi says that in Verse 33 Surah 24, Muslim God is allowing women slaves to be reduced to prostitution in Medina. Islam has allowed slave male and female to ask for conditional manumission. In this, the amount was fixed by a written deed and slave was allowed to earn money by lawful means. The request was accepted if it was genuine and the slave had a character. Moreover, the master was instructed to help the slave with money to enable him to gain liberty. Slavery was legal and carried on by

the mischievous and hypocrite people ‘Abdullah bin Ubai, a leader at Medina. So this was criticised.<sup>31</sup>

**3.** Mernissi says, Surah Al Ahzab Verse 53 of the Quran was revealed to cover the intimacy of the wedded couple, and it was to put the wall between two men rather than man and woman. This verse was revealed to teach refined social ethics like not to enter friend’s house without permission, not to go too early when invited to dine and try to understand what is proper behaviour for you as he may be too polite to ask one to depart. This verse was for making one realise the delicate considerations for others. Secondly, it was for showing respect to ladies who may be in different circumstances in their homes. Also, especially for the “Mothers of the Believers” there should be an extraordinary degree of respect. And thirdly it was about respect for our Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) who deserved to be respected, and he should not be harmed and annoyed in anyway.

**4.** Mernissi says *hijab* is sin in Christian context as well as in American Capitalist Society and it should not be reduced to piece of cloth imposed on women wear when she goes into the street. In Quran Surah 24, Verse 30,31 Modesty is for both man and woman. Man is more aggressive than a woman (Purdah). There is a difference in the temperaments of both man and woman. A considerable amount of privacy required.

**5.** According to Mernissi, veiling is to shut woman out of the world. Mernissi enumerates Moroccan view of maleness, femaleness and sexuality. She also establishes a basis for understanding the tensions created. According to Mernissi, this ideology of sexuality confronts a westernised model for modernisation. Western model demands that women should be moved into the market place to get profit maximising essential whereas Islam says in order to make humankind better focus on God, women should be kept separate and dependent. Mernissi reach on the conclusion that Islam and this kind of modernisation comes in contrast

Analysis: Veiling in Islam is a rational law. It is to control indecency and immorality.<sup>32</sup> The Holy Prophet said that Allah permitted women to go out of the house for genuine needs. Allah has allowed the exposure of hands and face if it is unavoidable but that has to be revealed only if it is very essential. A woman who follows Commands of Allah and the Holy Prophet honestly has no intention to get involved in any disgrace, can decide about whether she should cover her face and hand and when to do it and what extent. A woman who works outside the home, such limits that she will have to uncover both her face and hand at times, even the part of Satr. However, as soon as the requirement is over, she has to come back to the *hijab*. On the other hand, the women whose situation is not such, she is not allowed to do so without an actual need.<sup>33</sup> Women have permission to visit the mosque. Their participation in Friday and Id prayers is not compulsory, but they are allowed to do so. For attending funerals, women were prohibited but not strictly. Islam allows women to take weapons in



defence. During wars, she may give first aid to the wounded, cook food for them and give water to the thirsty.<sup>34</sup>

Mernissi enumerates that veiling is to segregate both the sexes. Veiling is not the segregation of both the sexes, the woman in every way connected to a man, as a wife, as a mother, as a sister and as a daughter. Only thing is there is a limit of relationship to run the society smoothly. In the Islamic period, respectable women wore the same dress as inferior women. Both wore shirt and wrapper and came out of the house. To differentiate them from slave girls and singers veiling started. Veiling was for the respectable and virtuous women so that they will be safe from teasing.<sup>35</sup>

Quran devised the veil and established by the Holy Prophet. If this is considered shameful to wear a veil, it cannot cancel the Quranic verse. Islam doesnot accept such progress and civilization in which respectable women become society women. A woman who spends a couple of hours in makeup and attractive dresses to go out that she may get attention, this doesnot have value in Islam. One may forget that every Islamic thing to be changed and modernised.<sup>36</sup>

The face is the most attractive part of the body, and this has the most significant sex appeal compared to all decorations of the body. That is why when one wants to marry a girl, he desires to see her face.<sup>37</sup>

If women displaying themselves and command of “restraining the eyes” not followed. That means open adultery of both eyes and tongue. The Holy Prophet said, “Women remain naked even after wearing clothes, allure others and are allured by others”. A woman is wearing dresses which she can wear only before her husband. Filthy romances and obscene tales are listened to in the society. People do not feel ashamed in discussing their illicit relations before others. Such things when happening in the society, the purity of moral cannot remain standing which is the basic structure of the social system of Islam. The chastity of women could not be safeguarded if fornication will be common. Moreover, they have different duties to perform.

Polygamy: Mernissi has mentioned words of one of the writers who say that Muslim God is known for his jealousy. He does not want anybody to come in between him and his worshippers and then she gives her views that it is because of the two things that are Polygamy and Repudiation. **Verse 129 Surah 4 Marry of the women who seem good to you, two, three or four, and if you fear that ye cannot do justice (to so many), then one(only)** Mernissi says that Quran doesnot provide any justification for Polygamy. Moreover, as men and women have similar urges still men are allowed to keep four wives, while women should satisfy herself with one man. Also, as Islam considers that sexually dissatisfied man is a complicated believer and problematic citizen. Women are frustrated more than him as polygamy is allowed by religion. Polygamy is to make women feel degraded. It gives a chance for a man to feel more important than the woman.<sup>38</sup>

Analysis of Polygamy: In Surah 4 Verse 129 the recommendation is towards monogamy. In the Pre Islamic period, the man had no restrictions on the number of wives. The verse limits it to four wives with the condition that all will be treated equally with material as well as immaterial things. As this is not possible, it was advised to marry one only.<sup>39</sup>The motif of blood relationship is mutual affection and fellowship. To maintain the society, it is necessary to take care and safeguard the interest of each who constitutes the community. Monogamy is essential to avoid conflict between them. So if one does not follow, commits a crime against society.<sup>40</sup> After the battle of Uhud. There were seventy such houses where widows and orphans to be taken care of. All male members of these houses died. At that time this verse was revealed. It was a severe social problem where God is asking the people to marry widows and take guardianship of the orphaned children of those widows.<sup>41</sup> History proves that same situation always been prevalent in the whole world. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the risk of death at any age is more of male than females. For, e.g., In World wars, most of the soldiers and civilians killed were men. In the Iraq-Iran war (1977-1988) more than 82,000 Iranian women were widowed. Data collected in 1967, about 175000 people died because of accidents, and most of them were men.<sup>42</sup>

In every country, women continue to be more than men. For example in America in 1967, there were about 7100,000 more women than men which meant that 7100,000 women will be still left without marriage if every single man gets married to one woman.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, now the question is how the problem to be solved. If a woman is not able to find a husband in a monogamous society. So how can she get an honourable life? If surplus women and male members outnumbered and there is outlawing of polygamy that means it provokes for illicit relations and woman prefers to be mistress rather than accepting polygamy.<sup>44</sup>

Failure to control a natural process, women sinks into the well of 'Zina' or comes under the category of a mistress who is supported by men for an uncertain time without marrying her. The solution is only that under particular conditions men should be permitted to marry more than one woman. Polygamy is in favour of a woman. It is a natural solution for women problems. God has not allowed men to marry a woman to satisfy their sexual urges instead it was a strategy to solve a particular problem.<sup>45</sup>The Quran wish to give respect to a woman rather than allowing to use her as a commodity. Repudiation: Mernissi refers to Verse 20 Surah 4.

*And if you wish to exchange one wife for another and ye have given into one of them a sum of money(however great) take nothing from it.*

Mernissi says that ‘wish’ and exchange are the keywords for verbal repudiation in Islam. Where man has right to break the marriage bond without giving any reason for breaking, to the judge or court. Repudiation represents instability it fulfils the sexual appetite of men within the Islamic boundaries. This way he is saved from Zina and doesnot get bored with one woman.<sup>46</sup>

Analysis of Repudiation: There is no force in anything, Men and women are given in details about what is beneficial for them and what is not. Divorce is permissible in the most extreme cases. Allah has given them equal rights. Mernissi has referred Verse 20, but before that in Verse 19, Allah Ta’ala says,.....**And consort them with kindness, for if you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good. (4:19)**<sup>47</sup>

A husband must recognise that he is dealing with a human being where natural imperfections are possible. He should balance his weaknesses with her good qualities. The Prophet (SAW) said, Let a believing man not dislike a believing woman. If something in her displeasing to him, another trait may be pleasing. On the one hand, Allah ta’ala wishes that man should be enduring and patient with her and on the other Allah commands the wife to please her husband as much as she can. Allah ta’ala warns wife not to let any night pass when a husband is angry with her. A hadith states: There are (persons) whose salat does not rise even a single span above their heads: a man leading a congregational salat while the people hate him, a woman passing the night while her husband is angry with her, and two quarrelling brothers. Another point which is emphasised in Verse 19 Surah 4 is again referring in favour of women.

In the Pre Islamic period, women folk had to bear social injustice. They inherited the wives of the deceased man considering it as a property. Moreover, women were forced to handover all their property and dower they possess. The Quran ended up this culture and asked the man not to take back anything from women if he has given him. The verse also further explains that if anything of your wife displeases, may be things in her be useful to you.<sup>48</sup>

In order to show women low, the man used to mistreat women so that she ask for khula and their dower could be claimed back. This was restricted. Another harshness forbidden was that woman was not supposed to be forced to give her dower to the people who controlled her.<sup>49</sup>

In Islam, marriage is a contract that should be honoured like a ‘solemn promise’(4:21). In Sahih Muslim it is reported, once the Holy Prophet asked his companions, ”Be good to women because they are given to you by God as a trust.” As marriage is a contract, there is equivalent possibility of divorce. Prophet Mohammad said of many things which God has made permissible for man, the most displeasing to God is divorce.<sup>50</sup> Sahih Al Bukhari states:“When a man gives his daughter in marriage and she dislikes it, the marriage shall be repudiated” (Bukhari 67:43)<sup>51</sup>The Quran states: **‘O you who have believe It is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion(4:19)**. Instead

of using wrong ways, he has to take her responsibility, and man and woman both are allowed to leave each other if don't want to live together. A woman has also rights, its not only man. Once wife of Thabit bin Qais said to Prophet Mohammad(PBUH) that her husband does not have any defect in his character or religion, but she dislikes to behave in an unIslamic manner if she remains with him. On that Allah's Messenger asked her if she would give back the garden that he gave to her as Mahr. She said 'Yes'. At this Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) said to Thabit to accept his garden and divorce her once.<sup>52</sup>(Sahih al Bukhari Vol 7 Hadeith no 197),

### Summing Up

Mernissi statements related to the Quranic text are different from what the actual meaning is. She says that Moroccan society and the Muslim world has flaws and people are harsh to a woman on the basis of few verses of the Qur'anic text. She also claims that the companions were overpowering the Holy Prophet (SAW) in taking such decisions. At one place Mernissi claims that she is God fearing but her blunt statements do not prove so. For example, she supported the statement of one of the writers that Muslim God is jealous. Mernissi seems to be confused as on one side she rejects several verses and blames Muslim God for the problems in the Moroccan society and on the other side she says that women are degraded in the Muslim countries as they violate Quran, its principles and its laws. According to Mernissi, women shut out of the world and hijab is being depicted as having a negative approach in Quran. Mernissi choice leads to a dead end by accepting that the Quran requires covering.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.,86.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.,92

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.,180-181.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 93

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 93-94.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.,95.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.,95.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.,96.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.,96.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.,97.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.,98.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibn Kathir, "Tafsir Ibn Kathir-Surah 24 An-Nur,Ayaat 32-34",Alim,  
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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.,23-25.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.,31-32.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.,33.

<sup>29</sup> Sayyid Abul Ala Maududi, "24 Surah An Noor (The Light)", Tafhim al-Quran-The Meaning of the Quran, [www.englishtafsir.com/quran/24/index.html](http://www.englishtafsir.com/quran/24/index.html)

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<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Taqiuddin Hilali,trans.,Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khan,trans., *The Holy Quran*(Medina:King Fahad Complex,1413H)1014.

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.,247.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 250.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 255.

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