



Understanding the Prophet's Hadith About Women with a Hermeneutic Approach: A Critical Study of Misogynistic Narrations

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Abstract: Misogynistic readings of hadith have significantly shaped gendered norms in segments of Muslim societies, contributing to restrictions on women's leadership, religious authority, mobility, and marital agency. Such interpretations often rely on textual literalism detached from historical and socio-cultural contexts. This study critically re-examines selected hadiths frequently invoked to legitimize gender hierarchy through a hermeneutical framework. Adopting a qualitative design with a textual-analytical approach, the research analyzes narrations contained in the canonical collections of Muhammad al-Bukhari, Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, Abu Dawud, Al-Tirmidhi, and Ibn Majah. The study integrates classical hadith scholarship with contemporary hermeneutical theory, emphasizing contextualization (*asbāb al-wurūd*), socio-historical analysis, and the ethical objectives (*maqāṣid*) underlying prophetic traditions. The findings demonstrate that many narrations commonly categorized as "misogynistic" are context-dependent and descriptive rather than universally prescriptive. Reports concerning women's political leadership are shown to be situational (casuistic) responses to specific historical circumstances; narrations about a wife's prostration signify moral respect rather than ontological subordination; traditions related to women leading congregational prayer admit interpretive plurality within juristic discourse; and reports restricting women's travel without a *mahram* reflect concerns of security and social order in particular historical settings. Similarly, narrations regarding marital refusal are better understood as ethical exhortations promoting conjugal harmony rather than instruments of coercion. This study argues that a hermeneutically informed methodology offers a critical corrective to reductionist literalism in hadith interpretation. By situating prophetic traditions within their discursive and historical horizons while engaging contemporary ethical concerns, the approach contributes to a more equitable and context-responsive framework for gender discourse in Islamic studies.

Keywords: Understanding hadith, hermeneutics, misogynic hadith, patriarchal culture

Abstrak: Pemahaman terhadap hadis yang misogonis menyebabkan posisi perempuan diskriminatif dan tidak adil. Perempuan dibatasi pada pekerjaan publik seperti tidak boleh jadi pemimpin, tidak boleh jadi imam dalam shalat jama'ah, tidak boleh keluar rumah tanpa ditemani muhrim dan mereka harus tunduk dan wajib melayani suami sesuai keinginannya. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk membahas pemahaman hadis dengan pendekatan hermeneutika. Kajian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dan dianalisis dengan teori hermeneutika. Hadis-hadis yang dianalisis sebagaimana terdapat dalam kitab al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, Turmizi, Ibnu Majah. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendekatan hermeneutika sebagaimana pendekatan baru dalam memahami hadis, tidak hanya melihat teks, tapi juga kondisi yang terjadi pada saat teks tersebut dikemukakan, sehingga penjelasan isi sebuah matan hadis, khususnya hadis-hadis misoginis, dapat dipahami secara adil. Hermeneutika dianggap sebagai sebuah pendekatan baru dalam memahami sebuah matan hadis. Dengan melalui pendekatan ini, hadis-hadis Nabi khususnya hadis-hadis misoginis yang hidup dalam tempat dan kurun waktu yang jauh berbeda dari pihak pengucapnya (Nabi Muhammad Saw), dapat dipahami dan direkonstruksi dalam rangka menafsirkan realitas sosial kekinian atau shalih likulli zaman wa makan, seperti hadis tentang larangan perempuan menjadi pemimpin hanyalah kasuistis; hadis tentang keharusan seorang istri sujud terhadap suaminya dalam arti menghormatinya bukan penghambaan; hadis tentang bolehnya wanita jadi imam dalam shalat jama'ah, seperti laki-laki jika dimungkinkan; bolehnya wanita keluar rumah tanpa muhrim seperti halnya laki-laki jika keamanan terjamin (hadis temporal); dan laknat terhadap istri yang menolak ajakan suaminya hanyalah penolakan yang tidak etis yang dapat membuat sang suami marah.

Kata Kunci: Pemahaman hadis, Hermeneutika, hadis-hadis misogonis, budaya patriarki

Introduction

Ḥadīth constitutes the second principal source of the Islamic law and serves as a central guide for Muslims in both personal and communal life. It represents the practical embodiment of the Prophet's understanding and application of the Qur'ān. As the recipient and interpreter of revelation, the Prophet possessed a comprehensive understanding of the purposes underlying the revealed verses. For Muslims, however, attaining an adequate understanding of ḥadīth is a demanding intellectual endeavor. It requires not only scholarly rigor but also a sound interpretive methodology capable of ensuring that the

teachings of ḥadīth remain meaningful, adaptable, and relevant across diverse times and places.¹

The interpretation of ḥadīth as a religious text has at times been shaped by bias, particularly with respect to the role of women in the public sphere. In many Muslim societies, discrimination against women has been exacerbated by the interplay between particular doctrinal readings of sacred texts and local cultural traditions that shape social attitudes toward gender. These dynamics have influenced prevailing assumptions regarding women's roles and status in both public and domestic domains. Consequently, significant debate has emerged over how to address the discriminatory or misogynistic implications that appear in certain textual interpretations and representations of women's social position.²

Classical Muslim scholars developed interpretive methodologies that sought to situate ḥadīth within their historical and social contexts. However, when these methodologies are transferred uncritically into markedly different contemporary contexts, they may prove insufficient to address new intellectual and social challenges. In order for the Prophet's ḥadīth to engage constructively with modern developments, a renewed methodological framework is required, one that enables flexible, context-sensitive, and resilient interpretation. In this regard, hermeneutics, understood as the systematic theory of textual interpretation that developed in Western intellectual traditions, has attracted the attention of modern Islamic thinkers, some of whom have adopted and adapted its insights for the study of religious texts, including ḥadīth.³

Historically, the term *hermeneutics* is derived from Hermes, the ancient Greek deity entrusted with conveying divine messages to humanity. In certain Islamic intellectual traditions, Hermes has been identified with Prophet Idris, who is mentioned in the Qur'ān. As a divine messenger, Hermes' role was to articulate and render God's words in a form intelligible and accessible to human beings. Etymologically and conceptually linked to this mediating function, hermeneutics may therefore be defined as the discipline concerned with the theory and practice of interpretation, an art and science of constructing meaning from texts through both rational analysis and imaginative engagement. Within this framework, hermeneutics emphasizes the active involvement of the

¹ Wasman Wasman, et.al., "A Critical Approach to Prophetic Traditions: Contextual Criticism in Understanding Hadith," *al-Jamiah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, No. 1 (2023). Saifuddin Herlambang, et.al., "Paradigm Shifts in the Interpretation of Heaven Illustration Among Indonesian Mufassir: A Comparative Analysis of As-Singkili, Hamka, and M. Quraish," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Quran dan Hadis* 24, No. 1 (2023).

² Rianto Hasan, "Partisipasi Perempuan Dalam Olahraga Perspektif Hermeneutika Hadis Fazlur Rahman," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Quran dan Hadis* 20, No. 1 (2019).

³ Wahidul Anam, et.al., "Ulama Nusantara's Legacy: Study of Hadith in the Book of Nuṣūṣ al-Akhyār fī al-Ṣawm wa al-Iftār in Hasan Hanafi's Hermeneutic Perspective," *Ulumuna: Journal of Islamic Studies* 28, No. 1 (2024).

interpreter in relation to the object of study. Understanding and participatory engagement are thus prioritized over strict detachment, challenging the notion that complete objectivity is achieved solely through distance.⁴

More broadly, this conception of hermeneutics bears close resemblance to the sciences of exegesis within Islamic intellectual history, particularly the disciplines of Qur'ānic interpretation (*tafsīr*) and ḥadīth studies. Indeed, hermeneutics extends beyond mere explanation toward *ta'wīl*, a deeper interpretive engagement that seeks to uncover underlying meanings. In this sense, interpretive practices analogous to hermeneutics have long existed within the Islamic tradition, dating back to the earliest engagement with the Qur'ānic revelation, even if they were not formally systematized under the label of "hermeneutics." The term itself originates within Western intellectual history, especially within traditions of linguistic and philosophical inquiry. As developed in modern philosophy, hermeneutics has expanded methodologically, often moving beyond the parameters of classical Islamic exegetical and ḥadīth methodologies.⁵

In the Western tradition, hermeneutics initially emerged as a branch of philology concerned with the linguistic analysis and historical origins of the texts. From the sixteenth century onward, it gained increasing scholarly prominence, particularly in the context of theological debates among European church scholars regarding the authenticity and interpretation of the Bible. By the eighteenth century, hermeneutics had begun to exert a significant influence on the emerging social sciences, especially history and sociology, where it both complemented and critically challenged prevailing methodological assumptions. In contemporary intellectual discourse, hermeneutics occupies an important position within postmodern philosophy, where it continues to shape debates concerning meaning, interpretation, and the relationship between text, author, and reader.

When hermeneutical approaches were introduced into the Islamic intellectual sphere for the study of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, their legitimacy became the subject of considerable debate. Objections were raised on several grounds. First, from a historical perspective, hermeneutics emerged within Christian theology and Western philosophical traditions. As such, critics argue that it may implicitly carry theological presuppositions, cultural values, and philosophical commitments that are not necessarily compatible with Islamic

⁴M. Amin Abdullah, *Falsafat Kalam: Di Era Posmodernisme*, Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 1997.

⁵ Joni Putra and Rima Yuni Saputri, "Implementasi Landasan Hermeneutika Dalam Studi Islam," *Tadzkirah: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar* 3, No. 1 (2022). Lis Siregar, "Konstruksi Hermeneutika Dalam Studi Islam Tentang Hadis-Hadis Misoginis (Studi Pemikiran Khaled Abou El Fadl)," *Tazkir: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-ilmu Sosial dan Keislaman* 2, No. 2 (2016), p. 123.

epistemology. Second, the Islamic tradition already possesses a well-established methodology for the study of the Prophet's traditions, namely *'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*, which provides rigorous criteria for authentication and interpretation. Nevertheless, proponents contend that when hermeneutical methods are appropriated and reformulated within an Islamic intellectual framework, they can evolve into a distinctly Islamic mode of inquiry. In this reformulated form, hermeneutics may facilitate a dynamic engagement between the Prophet's ḥadīth and the changing historical contexts of their readers. Such an approach aspires to produce interpretations that are comprehensive rather than fragmentary, and critically self-aware rather than ideologically driven. It is precisely this capacity for contextual dialogue and constructive reinterpretation that has attracted the interest of a number of contemporary Muslim thinkers, even among those who acknowledge the sufficiency and sophistication of *'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth*.

In addressing problematic or misogynistic interpretations of certain ḥadīth, careful methodological steps are required to prevent conclusions that perpetuate discrimination against women. The first step involves a critical examination of the *sanad* (chain of transmission) to determine whether the report satisfies established standards of authenticity. If the *sanad* is deemed sound, attention must then turn to the *matn* (content) of the ḥadīth, analyzing its language, coherence, and thematic implications. Finally, it is essential to consider the historical and social circumstances in which the ḥadīth was transmitted and understood. No text emerges in a historical vacuum; rather, it is shaped by particular socio-cultural conditions that must be taken into account in the interpretive process.

From this perspective, a hermeneutical, indeed, psycho-historical and sociological approach to texts that appear misogynistic becomes especially significant. Such an approach emphasizes the dynamic relationship between text, author, and reader, recognizing that meaning is formed through their interaction. Accordingly, understanding a ḥadīth requires the commentator to move beyond a purely literal reading and to examine the broader historical, psychological, and social dimensions that inform it.⁶ By employing this framework, ḥadīth that originated in contexts vastly different from contemporary societies can be critically reconstructed and interpreted in ways that speak responsibly and constructively to present-day social realities.

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in hermeneutic theory.⁷ The application of hermeneutics to the study of ḥadīth is

⁶Josep Bleicher, *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method Philosophy and Critique*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), p. 1.

⁷ Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Hermeneutika Al-Qur'an Dan Hadis*, Yogyakarta: Elsaq Press, 2010. Muh. Tasrif, *Metodologi Fiqh Hadis: Telaah Ilmu Hadis, Ushul Fiqih dan Hermeneutika*, Ponorogo: STAIN Ponorogi Press, 2012.

particularly significant in examining traditions that are perceived as misogynistic or as diminishing the status of women. Through this interpretive framework, the analysis seeks to uncover the historical, textual, and contextual dimensions of such reports, thereby enabling a more nuanced and critical understanding of their meanings. The primary data consist of ḥadīths that address the position and roles of women and that have been regarded as reflecting misogynistic tendencies. These traditions are drawn from major canonical collections, including the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muhammad al-Bukhari, the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, the *Sunan* of Abu Dawud, the *Jāmi'* of Al-Tirmidhi, and the *Sunan* of Ibn Majah. These sources constitute authoritative references within Sunni ḥadīth scholarship and provide the textual basis for the present hermeneutical analysis.

Misogynistic Hadiths Against Women and the Hermeneutical Approach

The term *misogynist* is a scientific and linguistic concept derived from English, analogous to terms such as feminist or liberal. Etymologically, it originates from the word *misogyny*, which John M. Echols and Hassan Shadzily define as “hatred of women”.⁸ Popular academic dictionaries provide three related usages: first, *misogyny*, meaning “hatred of women”; second, *misogyny*, meaning “feelings of hatred or aversion toward women”; and third, *misogynist*, meaning “a man who harbors hatred toward women.” Beyond individual attitudes, the term is also applied to describe doctrines or ideological frameworks that systematically marginalize or denigrate women.

Misogyny can thus be understood as an expression of hatred or aversion toward women, or as a philosophical or social doctrine that diminishes their status. Within this framework, a misogynistic ḥadīth refers to a narration, statement, action, endorsement, or tacit critique transmitted by the Prophet that reflects such animosity or aversion toward women. Importantly, this definition suggests that the issue does not lie in the existence of inherently misogynistic ḥadīths, but rather in interpretations or understandings of these texts that convey misogynistic meanings.⁹

The appearance of ḥadīth texts perceived as misogynistic must be situated within the historical context of a patriarchal society that systematically oppressed women.¹⁰ During the pre-Islamic *Jāhiliyya* period, women were

⁸Jhon Echols and Hassan Shadzily, *Kamus Inggris-Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Gramedia, 1986), h. 382.

⁹Masruhan, “The Unprecedented Contextual Interpretation of The Misogynic Hadith at The Reformist Persis Pesantren in Bangil,” *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13, No. 2 (2019).

¹⁰Ikhwanuddin Harahap, “Women's Position in Patriarchal Kinship System,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 8, No. 1 (2020). Faith Nkechi Eboraka and Jane Ikwunze, “Breaking Barriers: A Historical Study of Women in Leadership and Education at The University of Calabar, Nigeria,” *Malikussaleh Social Politic Review* 6, No. 2 (2025).

frequently devalued; in some cases, the birth of a girl was considered a source of shame, and female infanticide was practiced to avoid social dishonor. With the advent of Islam and the mission of Prophet Muhammad, however, many of these oppressive practices were gradually challenged and abolished, signaling a significant transformation in the social and moral status of women.

To navigate the contested nature of the term, this study employs the label “misogynist” in quotation marks. Broadly, an analysis of “misogynist” ḥadīths is essential for articulating Islam’s perspective on the status and roles of women. Understanding these texts requires attention to the historical and geographical context of the Arabian Peninsula, which is characterized by contrasting landscapes and social structures. The desert regions, expansive and sparsely populated, contrasted with the smaller, more fertile areas at the periphery, including the Northern Crescent, the Hijaz, and Yemen. These differing environments shaped patterns of subsistence and social organization: desert populations relied primarily on pastoralism, while those in fertile regions engaged in agriculture, both of which necessitated close dependence on environmental conditions. These ecological and economic factors influenced the division of labor between men and women within households. Men were generally responsible for public roles, such as providing for the family and safeguarding tribal honor, whereas women were tasked with domestic responsibilities, including child-rearing and household management.¹¹ Such a division of roles contributed to the formation and reinforcement of patriarchal norms, which significantly shaped men’s perceptions of and interactions with women.

In pre-Islamic Arab society, these patriarchal structures were deeply entrenched. Arab families were organized hierarchically, with authority concentrated in the hands of elder males. Fathers, as heads of households, exercised substantial power, and social norms prescribed rigidly differentiated gender roles. Men were expected to embody strength and dominance, while women were relegated to subordinate and dependent positions,¹² thereby institutionalizing the low social status of women.

Practices such as unlimited polygamy exemplify the patriarchal ethos of the period, which justified male authority and decision-making while simultaneously subordinating women. This systemic subordination curtailed women’s autonomy, leaving them vulnerable to marginalization, exploitation, and violence in both domestic and public spheres. The resulting relationships

¹¹ Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender: Perspektif Al-Qur’an*, (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2001, 2001), p. 106.

¹² May Yamani, *Feminism and Islam: Legal and Literary Perspectives*, Translation (Bandung: Nuansa Yayasan Nuansa Cendikia, 2000), p. 125.

between men and women were thus asymmetrical and unequal, a dynamic contemporary feminist scholarship identifies as gender injustice.

Many people assume that perceived differences between men and women, such as men being strong while women are weak, men being rational while women are emotional, or men being violent while women are gentle are inherent and immutable. From this perspective, any attempt to challenge these distinctions would be considered contrary to God's will. Feminist scholars, however, view this assumption as an exaggeration. They argue that such differences are largely socially and culturally constructed rather than divinely ordained, meaning they are created and maintained by the societies and are therefore subject to change depending on historical and social contexts. It is important, however, to distinguish this issue from that of biological sex, which pertains to physiological differences between men and women, such as conception, childbirth, and breastfeeding.

For centuries, women were often relegated to a subordinate role, perceived as beings created primarily to serve men. The mission of Prophet Muhammad, however, sought to reform this entrenched social order in pre-Islamic Arab society. Islam introduced normative principles that elevated the social status of women, affirming that women should no longer be regarded solely as instruments for fulfilling men's desires. The Qur'an describes married women as *muhsanat*, protected, virtuous, and active participants in their communities, underscoring one of the religion's fundamental objectives: the liberation of women from various forms of oppression.

The teachings brought by the Prophet, grounded in both the Qur'an and the Sunnah, represented a revolutionary transformation of the Arab society. These teachings challenged and deconstructed long-standing pillars of culture, tradition, and civilization that had perpetuated discrimination and the degradation of women during the period of ignorance (*Jāhiliyya*). Through Islam, such oppressive practices were gradually replaced with norms grounded in justice and humanity, restoring women's autonomy and affirming their dignity as free human beings. This transformation is illustrated in the following examples:

كنا في الجاهلية لا نعد النساء شيئاً فلما جاء الإسلام وذكرهن الله رأينا لهن بذلك علينا حقاً.¹³ (رواه البخاري عن عائشة و حفصة)

Meaning: " In the days of ignorance, women were disrespected, considered unimportant, and denied their rights. When Islam arrived and Allah

¹³ Abi 'Abdillah Muhammad bin Ismail Al-Bukhârî, *Sahîh al-Bukhârî*, Juz. IV, kitâb *al-Libaas*, bab *maa kaana al-Nabiy shallaa Allahu 'Alaih wa Sallam yatajawwazu min al-Libaas wa al busthi* (Indonesia: Maktabah Dahlaan, tth), p. 2387.

(SWT) addressed their status, it became clear that women also possess rights over men". (Narrated by Bukhari).

This ḥadīth illustrates the perception and treatment of women during the pre-Islamic period of ignorance (*Jāhiliyya*), when women were regarded as having no autonomy or authority over their own lives. This perspective starkly contrasts with Islamic teachings, which affirm justice, respect, and the elevation of women's status. Over time, Islamic principles contributed to significant social transformations, particularly in men's attitudes toward women. These shifts included changes from a nomadic to a settled lifestyle, from traditional to more rational cultural practices, from superficial or textual understandings to substantive ethical comprehension, and from polygamous to more regulated marital systems. Such changes must be understood in relation to broader social dynamics rather than as isolated religious prescriptions. Hadith addressing women have frequently been the subject of critique by secular scholars and Orientalists, who often portray them as derogatory or consider their legal implications irrelevant in the modern era.

Yet, fundamentally, the Qur'ān and Sunnah uphold the equal status of men and women before God, assigning each both rights and responsibilities. The teachings of Prophet Muhammad introduced a revolutionary transformation in human relations, promoting justice and equality between men and women.¹⁴ This transformation is particularly evident when compared to pre-Islamic Arab society, in which daughters were often regarded as a source of shame, and female infanticide was practiced. In contrast, the Prophet encouraged the care and education of daughters, promising divine reward for those who raised them well, as reflected in the following ḥadīth:

عن أبي سعيد الخدري أن رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم قال ثم من كان له ثلاث بنات أو ثلاث أخوات أو ابنتان أو أختان فأحسن صحبتتهن واتقى الله فيهن دخل الجنة. (رواه الترمذي).¹⁵

Meaning: "The Prophet Muhammad PBUH promised Paradise to those who have daughters and raise them with care and piety. As he stated: "Whoever has three or two daughters, or three or two sisters, and

¹⁴ Yusida Fitriyati, et.al., "Reconsidering Inheritance Equality: Gender Justice in Religious Court Decisions through the Lens of Maqashid Al-Shariah," *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian syari'ah Dan Masyarakat* 25, No. 1 (2025). Roslina Roslina, et.al., "Reinterpreting Islamic Inheritance: Supreme Court Jurisprudence and Gender Justice in Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, No. 3 (2025).

¹⁵ Abu 'Isa Muhammad bin 'Isa bin Surah al-Turmudzy, *Sunan al-Turmudzy*, Juz. 3, *Kitab al-Bir wa al-Shilah*, bab *Ma Jaa'a fi al-Nafaqah 'ala al-Bint wa al-Akhawaat*, No. 1977, (Indonesia: Maktabah Dahlan, tth), h. 213.

raises them in the best way possible, instilling in them the fear of Allah, will enter Paradise.” (Narrated by Turmizi).

A similar principle applies to marriage and divorce. Pre-Islamic practices often allowed men unrestricted rights to marry and divorce without responsibility or concern for their wives' well-being, reducing women's status and rendering marriage possessive rather than reciprocal.¹⁶ Such practices are inconsistent with the ethical guidance of the Qur'ān. In Al-Qur'an 4:21 (Al-Nisā'), the marital relationship is described as a partnership in which spouses complement one another: “*ba'dukum min ba'dih*” (some of you are garments for others). This metaphor emphasizes mutual support, protection, and closeness.”. The husband-wife relationship is fundamentally reciprocal: “They are clothing for you, and you are clothing for them.” Moreover, when domestic life becomes overly male-dominated, Islam emphasizes that children should honor or prioritize their mothers three times more than their fathers. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) explains this principle in the following hadith:

عن أبي هريرة قال جاء رجل إلى رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم فقال ثم من أحق الناس بحسن صحابتي قال أمك قال ثم من قال ثم أمك قال ثم من قال ثم أمك قال ثم من قال ثم أبوك.¹⁷ (رواه مسلم).

Meaning: “A man came to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) and asked, ‘To whom do I owe the greatest duty of kindness and respect?’ The Prophet replied, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked again, ‘Then to whom?’ The Prophet repeated, ‘Your mother.’ The man asked a third time, ‘Then to whom?’ The Prophet again said, ‘Your mother.’ Finally, the man asked, ‘Then to whom?’ The Prophet replied, ‘Your father.’” This ḥadīth underscores the elevated status of women, particularly mothers, in Islam and highlights the importance of respect, care, and moral responsibility toward them.” (Narrated by Muslim).

Understanding “Misogynistic” Ḥadīths Using a Hermeneutic Approach

A hermeneutic approach to ḥadīths that are perceived as misogynistic allows for a deeper contextual, textual, and ethical analysis of women's status.

¹⁶ Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Qur'an, Women and Modern Society*. translation, (Yogyakarta: IRCiSoD, 2003), p. 56. Aniek Rahmaniah, et.al., “The Movement of Muhammadiyah Women: Religious Values, Culture, and Gender Equality,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 13, No. 1 (2025).

¹⁷ Abi al-Husain Muslim bin al-Hajjaaj al-Qusyairiy al-Naysaabuuriy, *Shahīḥ Muslim*, Juz. II, kitab. *al-Birr wa al-Shilah*, bab. *Birr al-Wālidain wa Annaha Ahaqq bih*, (Semarang: Toha Putra, tth), p. 417.

The following sections examine several ḥadīths concerning women, drawn from major canonical collections, and interpret them in light of historical context, linguistic nuance, and Islamic ethical principles.

1. Hadith regarding the Wife's Requirement to Prostrate or Submit to Her Husband

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ غَيْلَانَ حَدَّثَنَا النَّضْرُ بْنُ شُمَيْلٍ أَخْبَرَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَمْرٍو عَنْ أَبِي سَلَمَةَ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَوْ كُنْتُ أَمْرًا أَحَدًا أَنْ يَسْجُدَ لِأَحَدٍ لَأَمَرْتُ الْمَرْأَةَ أَنْ تَسْجُدَ لِزَوْجِهَا.¹⁸ (رواه الترمذي).

Meaning: “Mahmūd ibn Ghaylān reported to us that al-Nadhr ibn Shumayl reported to us that Muḥammad ibn ‘Amr, from Abī Salamah, from Abū Hurairah, from the Prophet PBUH, said: ‘If there were a command to prostrate to anyone, I would have certainly commanded women to prostrate to their husbands.’”

This ḥadīth was narrated through multiple chains by narrators including Abū Hurairah, Qays ibn Sa‘d,¹⁹ Anas bin Malik,²⁰ Muaz bin Jabal,²¹ Abdullah bin Abi Awfa,²² dan Aisyah.²³ Most of these narrations are classified as *hasan* (good) rather than *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic), with only the narration via Abū Hurairah generally considered reliable. In terms of its *isnād* (chain of transmission), the ḥadīth exhibits continuity, with clear teacher-student relationships linking each narrator. Most hadith scholars regard the narrators as *thiqah* (trustworthy), though Muhammad ibn ‘Amr is sometimes considered *laysa bi-qawiy* (not entirely strong). Consequently, the majority opinion is that the narration is acceptable but graded as *hasan*. Al-Shawkānī, in *Naylu’l-Awtār*, notes that narrations conveying similar meanings can corroborate one another, further strengthening the chain.²⁴ Regarding the *matn* (text), some scholars, such as Fatimah Mernissi, argue that it is problematic because it appears to conflict with

¹⁸Al-Turmudzy, *Sunan al-Turmudzy*, Jil. II, Kitab *al-Radha’*, bab *Ma Jaa’a fi Haqq al-Zawj ‘ala al-Mar’ah*, No. 1169, p. 314.

¹⁹Lihat. Abu Dawud, *Sunan Abu Dawud*, juz 2, kitab *al-Nikah*, bab *Haq al-Zawj ‘ala al-Mar’ah* no.2140., (Beirut: Darul Fikr, tth), p. 224.

²⁰Al-Nasa’i, *al-Sunan al-Kubra*, juz 5, kitab *al-Nikah*, bab *Haq al-Zawj ‘ala al-Mar’ah*, (Beirut: Darul Kutub al-‘Ilmi, tth), p. 363. Ahmad bin Hanbal, *Musnad Ahmad*, juz 3, (Mesir: Muassasat Qurtubah, tth), p. 158.

²¹Al-Hakim al-Naisabury, *al-Mustadrak ‘ala al-Shahihain*, juz 2, (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-‘Ilmiyah, 1990 M/1411 H), p. 208.

²²Ibn Majah, *Sunan Ibn Majah*, juz 1, kitab *al-Nikah*, bab *Haq al-Zawj ‘ala al-Mar’ah*, No. 1853, (Beirut: Darul Fikr, tth), h 595; Ahmad bin Hanbal, *ibid*, juz 4, p. 381.

²³Ibn Majah, juz 1, No. 1852.

²⁴Muhammad bin ‘Ali al-Syawkani, *Naylu’l Awtar*, juz 3 (tpt: tp, 1973 M), p. 361-362.

Islamic monotheism, which prohibits worship or acts of prostration directed toward anyone other than Allah (SWT).²⁵

The historical context of this ḥadīth helps clarify its meaning. When Mu'adh ibn Jabal returned to Medina from Syria, he observed that Jews and Christians there prostrated before their rabbis, bishops, and priests. Believing the Prophet Muhammad PBUH deserved the highest respect, Mu'adh prostrated himself before him. In response, the Prophet clarified the limits of such acts through this ḥadīth.²⁶ When interpreted carefully, this ḥadīth does not necessarily imply that wives must be subservient to their husbands. The term *prostration* can be understood in two ways: first, as an act of worship, which is reserved exclusively for Allah (SWT); and second, as a gesture of respect, which may be directed toward others, similar to how angels show humility and respect to Adam as Allah's vicegerent (*khalifah*).²⁷ Thus, prostration in this context is better understood as a symbolic expression of respect and honor, rather than an act of servitude or subordination.

2. Hadith regarding the Prohibition of Women from Becoming Leaders

حَدَّثَنَا عُثْمَانُ بْنُ الْهَيْثَمِ حَدَّثَنَا عَوْفٌ عَنِ الْحَسَنِ عَنِ أَبِي بَكْرَةَ قَالَ لَقَدْ نَعَّيَ اللَّهُ بِكَلِمَةٍ سَمِعْتُهَا مِنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَيَّامَ الْجَمَلِ بَعْدَ مَا كِدْتُ أَنْ أَلْحَقَ بِأَصْحَابِ الْجَمَلِ فَأَقَاتِلَ مَعَهُمْ قَالَ لَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ أَهْلَ فَارِسَ قَدْ مَلَكُوا عَلَيْهِمْ بَنَتْ كِسْرَى قَالَ لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ.²⁸

Meaning: "Abū Bakrah reported: Allah (SWT) benefited me through an expression I heard from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) on the day of the Battle of Jamal after I had worked hard. When news reached the Prophet that the people of Sasan (Persia) had entrusted their affairs to the queen of Kisra, he said: 'A people will not prosper if they entrust their matters to a woman.'

The narrators of this ḥadīth are generally considered *thiqah* (trustworthy). Although some scholars have criticized individual transmitters as

²⁵Fatima Mernissi and Rif'at Hassan, *Setara di Hadapan Allah* (translation), (Yogyakarta: Media Gama Offset, 1999). p. 44.

²⁶Al-Hakim al-Naisabury, *al-Mustadrak 'ala al-Shahihain*, No. 7325, juz 4 (Beirut: Dar al-Kitab al-'Ilmiyah, 1990 M/1411 H), p. 190.

²⁷Abdurrauf al-Munawi, *Faydu'l Qadir Syarh'l Jami'al-Saghir*, juz 5, (Mesir: al-Maktabah al-Tijariyah al-Kubra, 1356 H), p. 328

²⁸Al-Bukhari, *Shahih al-Bukhari*, Jil. 4, kitab *al-Fitan*, Bab: (18) *al-Fitnah al-Lati Tamuju*, No. 6671, p. 2843.

having defects (*ma'lūl*), these assessments do not significantly weaken the overall reliability of the chain. The continuity of the *isnād* is evident, as each narrator had a direct teacher-student relationship with the preceding one. Furthermore, the chronological proximity of the narrators' deaths suggests that they could have plausibly met, and historical records indicate that the transmitters resided in Basrah, providing additional evidence that the chain of transmission is sound.

The *asbāb al-wurūd* (circumstances of transmission) for this ḥadīth relate to reports received during the 9th year AH concerning the succession of female leadership in Persia. Traditionally, Persian custom had reserved political leadership for men. However, in 9 AH, this tradition was disrupted when a woman, Būwarān bint Syairawaihi ibn Kisra ibn Barwāiz, was appointed as the ruler following the death of her brother during a succession conflict. The Prophet's statement reflected this historical context, commenting on the perceived departure from established societal norms rather than issuing a universal theological prohibition against women's leadership.²⁹

The above hadith addresses a specific situation, as noted in the *asbāb al-wurūd*: it concerns a Persian princess who was appointed head of state, since no male could assume the kingship at that time. The hadith also relates to God's response to the Prophet's prayer when Kisra tore up the letter he had sent her; the Prophet prayed for the kingdom's destruction, and God answered his prayer. Consequently, this hadith applies to this particular case and is not a general ruling.³⁰

3. Hadith regarding the Prohibition of Women from Imitating Men

حَدَّثَنَا مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ نُمَيْرٍ حَدَّثَنَا الْوَلِيدُ بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ أَبُو جَنَابٍ حَدَّثَنِي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ الْعَدَوِيُّ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ زَيْدٍ عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ الْمُسَيَّبِ عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ قَالَ خَطَبَنَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ فَقَالَ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ تَوَبُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَبَدَّلَ أَنْ تَمُوتُوا وَيَبَادِرُوا بِالْأَعْمَالِ الصَّالِحَةِ قَبْلَ أَنْ تُشْغَلُوا وَصَلُّوا الَّذِي بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَ رَبِّكُمْ بِكَثْرَةٍ ذَكَرْكُمْ لَهُ وَكَثْرَةَ الصَّدَقَةِ فِي السِّرِّ وَالْعَلَانِيَةِ تُرْزَقُوا وَتُنصَرُوا وَتُجْبَرُوا وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ افْتَرَضَ عَلَيْكُمْ الْجُمُعَةَ فِي مَقَامِي هَذَا فِي يَوْمِي هَذَا فِي شَهْرِي هَذَا مِنْ عَامِي هَذَا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا فِي حَيَاتِي أَوْ بَعْدِي وَلَهُ إِمَامٌ عَادِلٌ أَوْ جَائِرٌ اسْتَحْقَاقًا بِهَا أَوْ جُحُودًا لَهَا فَلَا جَمَعَ اللَّهُ لَهُ شِمْلُهُ وَلَا بَارَكَ لَهُ فِي أَمْرِهِ أَلَا وَلَا صَلَاةَ لَهُ وَلَا زَكَاةَ لَهُ وَلَا حَجَّ لَهُ وَلَا صَوْمَ لَهُ وَلَا بَرَّ لَهُ حَتَّى يَتُوبَ

²⁹Ibnu Hajar al-Asqalani, *Fath al-Bari*, Juz VIII, (Cet. I, Kairo: Dar al-Hadits, 1998), p. 128.

³⁰Muhammad Anis Qasim Ja'far, *Perempuan dan Kekuasaan*, terj. Irwan Kurniawan et.al., (Cet. I, Bandung: Zaman Wacana Islam, 1998), p. 49.

فَمَنْ تَابَ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ إِلَّا لَا تُؤْمَنُ امْرَأَةٌ رَجُلًا وَلَا يَوْمٌ أَعْرَابِيٍّ مُهَاجِرًا وَلَا يَوْمٌ فَاجِرٌ
مُؤْمِنًا إِلَّا أَنْ يَفْهَرَهُ بِسُلْطَانٍ يَخَافُ سَيْفَهُ وَسَوْطَهُ.³¹ (رواه ابن ماجه)

Meaning: Jabir bin Abdillah reported: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: “O people, repent to Allah before you die and hasten to perform righteous deeds before you become preoccupied. Draw close to your Lord with abundant *dhikr*, give much *sadaqah*, whether openly or in secret, and know that Allah has made Friday prayers obligatory for you in my place from this year until the Day of Judgment. Whoever abandons it after me, or follows an imam, whether just or unjust, out of disdain or disbelief, Allah will not unite him with His blessings, nor grant success in his deeds, whether prayer, zakat, hajj, fasting, or other acts of goodness, until he repents. Whoever repents, Allah accepts his repentance. Women are not permitted to lead men, and Arabs are not allowed to lead non-Arabs or sinful people. Believers should not be led except under compulsion by a ruler they fear due to his authority or sword.”(Narrated by Ibn Majah).

From a critical perspective, the reliability of this ḥadīth is questionable. One of its transmitters, ‘Abdullāh ibn Muḥammad al-‘Adawī, is considered weak or defective by multiple hadith critics. Scholars such as al-Bukhārī and Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī judged the narration as false; Ibn Ḥibbān considered it unreliable for legal proof; and al-Daraqutnī viewed it as acceptable but did not confer full authenticity. No hadith critic assigned it the status of ṣaḥīḥ (authentic). Consequently, this ḥadīth is classified as *da‘īf* (weak), and its weakness cannot be remedied because its chain (*isnād*) lacks corroborating or mutually supporting narrations (*shāhid or muttafiq*).

Some scholars use this hadith to argue that women are not permitted to lead men in congregational prayers, whether obligatory or sunnah. However, other scholars allow it under certain circumstances, such as leading tarawih prayers. This, however, appears somewhat contradictory to the hadith narrated by Umm Waraqah, who received permission from the Prophet PBUH to lead her household in congregational prayer, as follows:

³¹Abi ‘Abdillah Muhammad bin Yazid al-Qazwiiniy, Jil. 1, Kitab *Iqaamah al-Shalaah wa al-Sunnah Fiihaa*, bab *fii Fardhi al-Jum’ah*, No. 1081, (Semarang: Toha Putra), p. 343.

عَنْ أُمِّ وَرَقَةَ بِنْتِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الْحَارِثِ قَالَ وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَزُورُهَا فِي بَيْتِهَا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا مُؤَدِّنًا لَهَا وَأَمَرَهَا أَنْ تُوَمَّ أَهْلَ دَارِهَا قَالَ عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ فَأَنَا رَأَيْتُ مُؤَدِّنَهَا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا.³² (رواه أبو داود)

Meaning: “Umm Waraqah bint ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥārith reported that the Prophet PBUH visited her house and appointed a muezzin for her. The Prophet instructed him to lead her household in prayer. Abdur-Raḥmān said, ‘I saw an elderly man calling the adhan for her.’ (Narrated by Abū Dāwūd)).

From the perspective of sanad (chain of transmission), the narrators of this ḥadīth are generally considered reliable (*thiqah*). The only exception noted by some hadith critics is ‘Abdur-Raḥmān ibn Khallād al-Anṣārī, who is considered *majhūl* (unknown) by one critic. However, most scholars regard him as trustworthy, particularly because his narration is supported (*muttabi*) by others, such as Lailiy bint Malik, the grandmother of al-Wālid ibn ‘Abdullāh, whose chain is continuous and accepted (*maqbul*). Consequently, the overall ḥadīth is classified as valid (*ṣaḥīḥ*).

Another narration in Abū Dāwūd clarifies that the appointed *muezzin* was an elderly man, reinforcing the permissibility and practical implementation of the Prophet’s instruction:

عَنْ أُمِّ وَرَقَةَ بِنْتِ عَبْدِ اللَّهِ بْنِ الْحَارِثِ بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ وَالْأَوَّلُ أَنْتُمْ قَالَ وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ يَزُورُهَا فِي بَيْتِهَا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا مُؤَدِّنًا لَهَا وَأَمَرَهَا أَنْ تُوَمَّ أَهْلَ دَارِهَا قَالَ عَبْدُ الرَّحْمَنِ فَأَنَا رَأَيْتُ مُؤَدِّنَهَا شَيْخًا كَبِيرًا.³³ (رواه أبو داود).

Meaning: “Umm Waraqah bint ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Ḥārith reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) once visited her house and appointed a *muezzin* to call the prayer for her. Then the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) instructed her to lead her household in prayer. Abdur-Raḥmān said, ‘Indeed, I saw that the muezzin he appointed was an elderly man.’” (Narrated by Abū Dāwūd)

³²Abu Daud Sulaiman al-Sijistaaniy, *Sunan Abi Daud*, jil. 1, kitab *al-Shalaah*, bab *Imaamah al-Nisaa*, No. 592, (Semarang: Toha Putra), p. 152.

³³Abu Daud Sulaiman al-Sijistaaniy, *Sunan Abi Daud*, jil. 1, kitab *al-Shalaah*, bab *Imaamah al-Nisaa*, No. 592, (Semarang: Toha Putra, tth),

3. Hadith about women not being allowed to travel without being accompanied by their Muhrim

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الثُّعْمَانِ حَدَّثَنَا حَمَادُ بْنُ زَيْدٍ عَنْ عَمْرٍو عَنْ أَبِي مَعْبِدٍ مَوْلَى ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا قَالَ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَا تُسَافِرُ الْمَرْأَةُ إِلَّا مَعَ ذِي مَحْرَمٍ وَلَا يَدْخُلُ عَلَيْهَا رَجُلٌ إِلَّا وَمَعَهَا مَحْرَمٌ فَقَالَ رَجُلٌ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَخْرُجَ فِي جَيْشٍ كَذَا وَكَذَا وَأَمْرَاتِي تُرِيدُ الْحَجَّ فَقَالَ أَخْرُجْ مَعَهَا.³⁴

Meaning: “Ibn ‘Abbās (RA) reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘No woman should travel except with her mahram, and no man should approach her except in the presence of her mahram.’ A man then asked the Prophet, ‘O Messenger of Allah, I intend to go out with such-and-such a military troop, while my wife wishes to perform Hajj.’ The Prophet replied, ‘Accompany her.’ (Narrated by Bukhari).

From a scholarly perspective, the authenticity of this ḥadīth is beyond doubt. All narrators in its chain are highly credible, and their personal qualities are well regarded. The chain is *muttashil* (continuous), meaning that each narrator had a direct teacher-student relationship with the preceding narrator, ensuring the integrity and reliability of the transmission.

Another narration provides additional details:

حَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الْحَنْظَلِيُّ قَالَ قُلْتُ لِأَبِي أُسَامَةَ حَدَّثَكُمْ عُبَيْدُ اللَّهِ عَنْ نَافِعٍ عَنْ ابْنِ عُمَرَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَا تُسَافِرُ الْمَرْأَةُ ثَلَاثَةَ أَيَّامٍ إِلَّا مَعَ ذِي مَحْرَمٍ.³⁵ (رواه البخاري)

Meaning: "From Ibn Umar ra. Said: indeed the Prophet SAW said: a woman cannot travel for three days except with her muhram. (Narrated by Bukhari).

In terms of its quality, the authenticity of this ḥadīth is beyond dispute. All the narrators are highly credible, and their personal integrity and reliability are well established. Moreover, the chain of transmission is *muttashil* (continuous), meaning that each narrator had a direct teacher-student relationship with the preceding narrator, ensuring a connected and unbroken transmission of the report.

³⁴Al-Bukhari, *Shahih al-Bukhari*, Jil.1, kitab *al-Hajj*, bab *Hajj al-Nisā'*, No. 1742, p. 712.

³⁵Al-Bukhari, *Shahih al-Bukhari*, Jil. 1, kitab *al-Taqshir*, bab *Fī Kam Yaqshūr al-Shalāh*, No. 1029, p. 423.

In another history it is stated as follows:

حَدَّثَنِي زُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ سَعِيدٍ عَنْ ابْنِ أَبِي ذَنْبٍ حَدَّثَنَا سَعِيدُ بْنُ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ لَا يَحِلُّ لِمَرْأَةٍ تُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ تُسَافِرُ مَسِيرَةَ يَوْمٍ إِلَّا مَعَ ذِي مَحْرَمٍ. ³⁶ (رواه البخاري)

Meaning:” Abū Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: ‘It is not lawful for a woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day to travel for a day without a *maḥram* (her guardian). (Narrated by Bukhari).

According to the majority of scholars, this ḥadīth prohibits women from traveling for voluntary or permissible purposes without a *maḥram* or husband. In the case of obligatory travel, such as performing Hajj, scholarly opinions differ. Abu Ḥanīfah, supported by most hadith scholars, maintains that women must be accompanied by a *maḥram*. In contrast, Imams Mālik and Shāfi‘ī (may Allah be pleased with them) argue that while women should ensure their safety, accompaniment by a *maḥram* is not strictly obligatory; security can instead be provided by a husband, a trusted *maḥram*, or another reliable woman.

The original prohibition was grounded in considerations of safety and security. During that period, the primary modes of transportation were camels, donkeys, and bighals, and travel often involved traversing vast, uninhabited deserts. Traveling alone posed significant risks to women.

In modern times, however, transportation is highly advanced, travel distances are manageable, and security systems ensure safety for travelers. Consequently, the requirement for a *maḥram* in these ḥadīths can be understood more broadly as a provision for security and protection, rather than being limited strictly to a male guardian prohibited from marriage.

4. The Hadith about a Woman Cursed by Angels for Refusing Her Husband's Sexual Desires

حَدَّثَنَا مُسَدَّدٌ حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو عَوَانَةَ عَنِ الْأَعْمَشِ عَنْ أَبِي حَازِمٍ عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ غَضِبَانَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ إِذَا دَعَا الرَّجُلُ امْرَأَتَهُ إِلَى فِرَاشِهِ فَأَبَتْ فَبَاتَ عَلَيْهَا لَعْنَتُهَا الْمَلَائِكَةُ حَتَّى تُصْبِحَ. ³⁷ (رواه البخاري)

Meaning:“ Abū Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) said: ‘If a man invites his wife to bed and she refuses, causing

³⁶Al-Bukhari, *Shahih al-Bukhari*, Jil. 1, kitab *al-Taqshūr*, bab *Fī Kam Yaqshūr al-Shalāh*, No. 1029, p. 423.

³⁷Al-Bukhari, *Shahih al-Bukhārī*, kitab *Bad’u al-Nikaah*, bab *Idzaa Baatat al-Mar’ah Muhaajiratan Firaasya Zawjihaa*, No. 4865, Jil. 3, p. 2150.

him to become angry, she will be cursed by the angels until morning.”
(Narrated by Bukhari).

The hadith mentioned above states that if a wife refuses her husband's request for intimacy and he becomes upset as a result, the angels will curse her until morning. Taken at face value, this wording suggests that a woman is not permitted to refuse and is expected to comply with her husband's request. In this sense, the hadith can be interpreted as providing religious justification that may be used by some men to pressure or coerce women into sexual relations.

However, a hermeneutical and linguistic analysis offers a more nuanced understanding. The term دَعَا (*da'ā*, “invited”) conveys a respectful, considerate, and wise request rather than force; it implies awareness of the other's circumstances and consent. The refusal by the wife is expressed with the word أَبَتَّتْ (*abatat*), indicating reluctance or unwillingness, rather than a complete rejection or defiance.³⁸ Notably, this word is also used in the Qur'ān to describe Satan's hesitation to prostrate to Adam, signaling that reluctance is natural and morally significant.

Furthermore, the text of the ḥadīth specifies that the curse of the angels applies only if the wife's refusal provokes anger in her husband. This implies that the moral consequence is contingent upon the absence of a valid Shariah-compliant or rational reason for her delay. If the wife's refusal is based on legitimate grounds, such as illness, lack of desire, or if the husband's request is made harshly or in an inhumane manner, then she bears no culpability. In such cases, as Sitti Musdah Mulia explains, it is the husband who may incur moral blame, being considered guilty of *nusyūz* (inhuman or unjust treatment) toward his wife.³⁹

A deeper study of this ḥadīth within the framework of marital ethics reveals several points: first, the literal reading appears to conflict with the Quranic depiction of household relationships as founded on love, compassion, and mutual understanding; second, it contrasts with the Prophet's (peace be upon him) own example as a caring and considerate husband; third, the sole narration via Abū Hurayrah requires critical consideration, given the historical debates surrounding some of his narrations; fourth, the hadith's structure that angels are said to curse the wife if her husband's desires are unmet, must be contextualized rather than understood in isolation.⁴⁰

Understanding this ḥadīth also requires situating it within the broader gender dynamics of 7th-century Arabian society, which was deeply patriarchal.

³⁸Abi Husain Ahmad bin Faris bin Zakariya, *Mu'jam Maqayis al-Lughah*, Jilid I, (Bairut: Dar al-Jail, tth), p. 45.

³⁹Siti Musdah Mulia, *Muslimah Reformis: Perempuan Pembaru Keagamaan*, (Bandung: Mizan, 2005), p. 249-250.

⁴⁰Damanhuri, “Reconstruction of Matan Hadith Understanding About Women Position in Household,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 4, No. 2 (2016).

Despite prevailing social norms, the Prophet's guidance emphasized principles of justice, mutual respect, and equity between men and women. His ḥadīth encouraged the development of marital relationships that are compassionate, reciprocal, and rooted in understanding, rather than authoritarian or coercive. In this sense, such narrations function as practical guidance for families, promoting *maṣlahah*, the well-being of the household and community by encouraging relationships grounded in equality, respect, and shared responsibility.⁴¹

Based on the discussion above, it is clear that a hermeneutic approach is essential for understanding ḥadīth. Such an approach is particularly necessary when engaging with ḥadīth that are symbolic or context-sensitive, as their interpretation requires more than a literal reading. A hermeneutic analysis considers the textual meaning alongside contextual factors, including socio-historical and psycho-historical conditions, *asbāb al-nuzūl* (circumstances of revelation or transmission), and other interpretive tools. Moreover, a comprehensive understanding of the Arab cultural and socio-historical context is indispensable, as the meaning and application of a text are deeply shaped by the society in which it emerged. This approach ensures that interpretations are informed, nuanced, and relevant, avoiding anachronistic or overly literal readings that may misrepresent the spirit of the ḥadīth.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, several conclusions can be drawn. Adopting a hermeneutic or socio-historical approach to the study of misogynistic hadiths is essential. This approach allows such texts to be understood in a balanced manner, aligned with contemporary realities, without perpetuating discrimination against women. Analysis of several hadiths often perceived as discriminatory reveals that, when examined through a hermeneutic or socio-historical lens, they do not inherently contain misogynistic elements. Many of these hadiths are context-specific or casuistic. For example: the prohibition of women becoming leaders is contextually limited; the instruction for a wife to “bow” to her husband refers to respect rather than servitude; women may lead congregational prayers if feasible; women can leave the house without a mahram under secure conditions, similar to men; and the admonition toward a wife who refuses her husband's invitation addresses unethical refusal rather than imposing subjugation.

⁴¹ Zunly Nadia and Niswatin Faoziah, “Gender Equality within Family in Islamic Perspective: Insights from The Hadiths of Ummul Mukminin,” *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Quran dan Hadis* 25, No. 1 (2024). Irna Nur Arisa, et.al., “Women's Political Leadership: An Analysis of Gender Equality in Legislators in Sekadau,” *Jurnal Sosiologi Dialektika Sosial* 11, No. 1 (2025)

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