

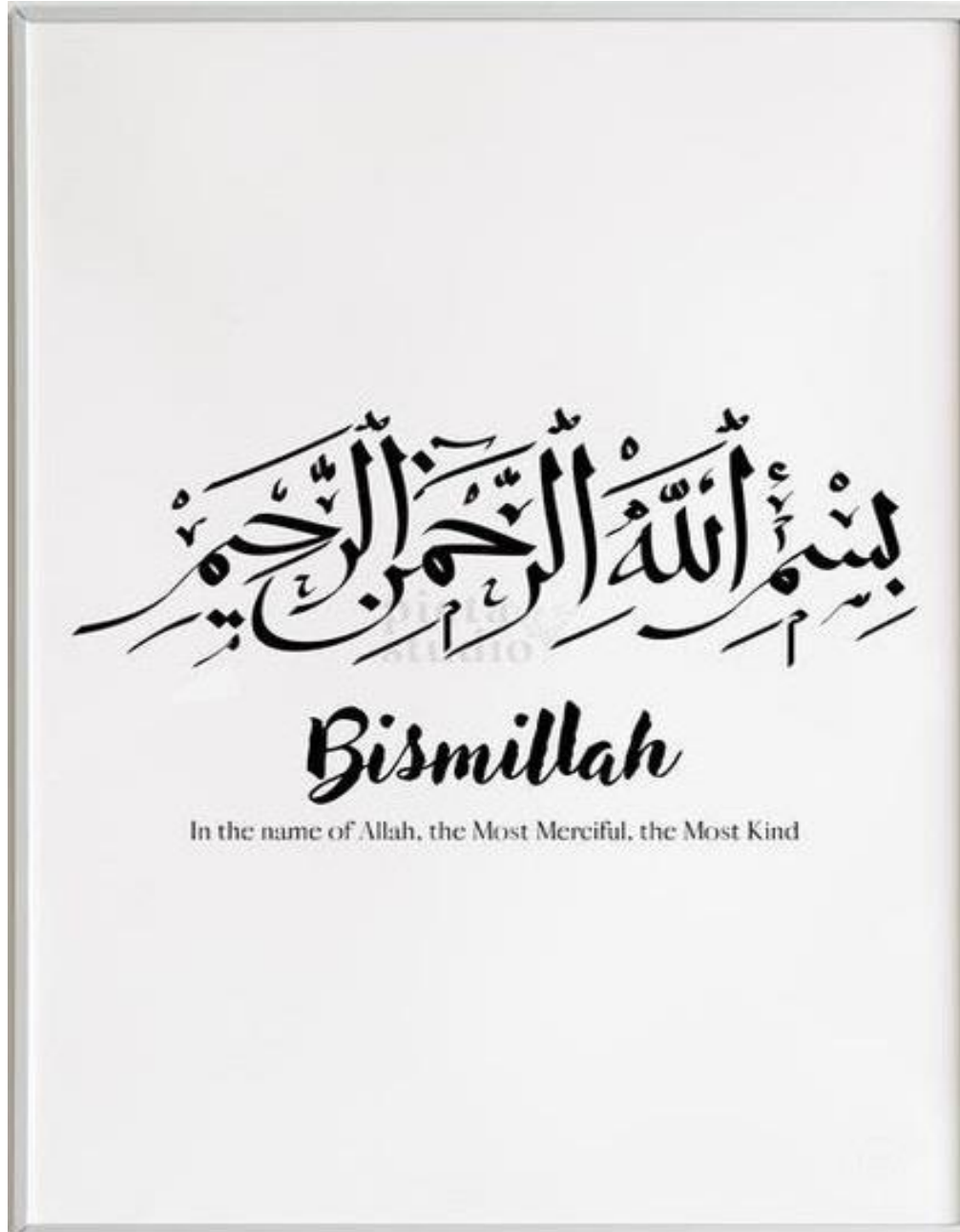
**Seyed Reza Hosseini Nassab**

# **Women's Leadership**

**WALAYAT AL-NISA'**



**Edited by: S.Hosseini Hosseini Nassab**



*To My Wife, Robabeh Zare*

## Preface

**In the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful**

**On one side:**

- Woman is a manifestation of the beauty of God.

- Women have been the most faithful supporters of the great divine prophets:

- **Eve**, the first companion of Adam,

- **Jochebed**, the first supporter of  
Moses,

- **Mary**, the first supporter of Jesus,

- **Khadijah**, the first believer in the Prophet Muhammad and his loyal companion.
  
- Woman is the highest embodiment of compassion, support, and nurture. Thus, the status of "mother" is considered the highest rank to God.
  
- Woman is a manifestation of tranquility. She brings peace to man through the bond of marriage.

- Woman embodies emotion and love.

She serves as the best caregiver for others' sufferings in society.

- Woman is the strongest pillar for upbringing and mental health in family and society.

**On the other side:**

- No group in human history has suffered as much oppression and injustice as women, an injustice that

cannot be fully conveyed through books, films, or other media.

- Although women have intellectual and spiritual advantages over men, their physical structure is more delicate, leading to historical oppression and abuse by men.

- Governments have often considered women as second-class citizens, barring them from major national management roles and denying them basic rights

such as property ownership, voting, and equal status in political, cultural, economic, and social arenas.

- Extremist religious jurists have deemed women as *'awrah* (something to be concealed), imposed isolation on them, and deprived them of certain rights.

- Patriarchal cultures have restricted women from their basic rights,

deeming them as obedient and silent followers.

- Many advocates for their own interpretation of Islamic law have prohibited women from leadership roles (*walayah*) in government, from becoming religious authorities, becoming *marja's* (supreme authority in Islamic jurisprudence), and attaining societal leadership or even ministerial positions.



- In addition to political arenas, women have always faced unfair restrictions in the social arenas as well.

A proclaimer of Islamic law cries out that women should not enter sports stadiums because some men insult each other. He does not say that the rude men who insult each other should not go so that there is no obstacle for others, including women, to go. Meanwhile, there is no valid

religious cause to prohibit women from attending stadiums. Another preacher at Friday prayers declares that women should not ride bicycles, even while observing the hijab, whereas this activity is a form of exercise for health and a means of transportation that does not cause air pollution. There is no valid religious cause to prohibit this activity.

A jurist announces that to prevent women from not covering all their hair, forceful action should be taken against them. However, such forceful behavior was not even applied to women during the early period of Islam. Another person even considers wearing sunglasses for women impermissible and describes it as an example of ignorant flaunting. However, using this tool in the present age is for protecting

the eyes from harmful rays from the sun.

In the supposedly civilized Western countries, injustice against women also prevails in different forms. For example, governments of European countries like Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and others have legalized prostitution for women, arguing that through this action, they become aware of the income of female prostitutes and can

take a portion of their income as tax. Prostitution for women is the greatest mental torture, and only when a woman has reached an economic dead-end (with no other means to survive) does she resort to it. Many of those forced into this practice suffer severe mental illnesses or commit suicide. We observe that instead of providing financial support to needy women, governments that portray themselves

as progressive, modern, advocates of human rights, and defenders of women are eager to exploit a portion of the income (from the mental torture) of those women as tax.

Women, as manifestations of divine beauty and loci of compassion and kindness, seek access to the blessings of life and their natural rights to educate future generations and to be pure sources of peace, love, and vitality

for their families and societies. The fulfillment of women's rights can only be achieved through their liberation from the artificial constraints imposed by misogynists.

In this brief writing, I will address the following topics:

- The position and status of women.
- Supreme guardianship (*walayah 'aliyah*) of women.

- Equality of women and men in human rights.

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# **Chapter One**

## **The Position and Status of Women**

When examining social elements, we must theorize and judge based on scientific, cultural, and sociological evidence. The status and position of women are so high that they are neither threatened by the extremely humiliating views of radical patriarchal theorists nor are they in need of the extreme tendencies of radical feminist

movements. Based on scientific, religious, and sociological teachings, we can recognize the essential principle of the equality of men and women and the equality of genders:

### **The Principle of Equality between Men and Women in Humanity**

Comprehensive theoretical and practical studies on the equality of men and women and their gender equality yield two valuable results:

1. These studies, which prove the equality of men and women, provide the necessary foundation for recognizing women's rights and preventing the oppression and injustice by misogynists. Through these studies, this major social dysfunction can be eliminated.

2. In addition to securing the natural rights of women, these scientific and sociological studies in the field of

gender equality also bring greater health and happiness to the other part of society, namely men, and as a result, lead to the growth and flourishing of the entire society.

A 2016 scientific and statistical research by the World Health Organization showed that gender equality between women and men in some countries, such as Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries, has not

only increased the health index for women but has also simultaneously reduced stress, vascular diseases, depression, and anxiety among men. Consequently, this recognition of gender equality has led to a longer lifespan for men in those societies and an increase in their life expectancy.

While in average countries, life expectancy index in 2016 was less than seventy years old, the life expectancy

index in a country like Switzerland, which observes gender equality more, was more than eighty-one years old.

The reason for this lies in the fact that if there is no gender equality in a society, the potential for patriarchal and misogynistic oppression increases.

Consequently, the level of violence and family and social conflicts rises, leading to severe psychological and physical harm, such as anxiety, depression, and

the breakdown of family and social structures. As a result, premature mortality due to the spread of cardiovascular diseases and psychological disorders increases.

However, if gender equality laws are properly and fairly implemented, peace and security will prevail over the people, preventing turmoil, conflicts, depression, resentment, and their associated consequences. Thus, the

Quran also emphasizes the equality of men and women in human status and dignity. For example, in Surat Al-Nisa, we read:

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً..."

“O humanity, fear [the disobedience of] your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from that single soul created its mate, and from the



two of them scattered many  
men and women throughout  
the earth..." (Surat Al-Nisa 4:1)

As we observe in the mentioned  
verse, the origin of human beings—  
both men and women—is understood  
to be a reality called "a single soul"  
(*nafs wahidah*), which is a sacred spirit,  
and there is no difference between  
them as human beings. Therefore, the  
soul of a woman and a man is of equal

status before God, and their equality in the act of creation is emphasized in the Holy Quran. Accordingly, the psychological and physical differences between men and women are solely because women and men complement each other, and each possesses unique virtues of their own. Both are equal in the fundamental divine blessings and the highest human virtues. Therefore, physical difference is not a reason for

the superiority of one group over the other. Hence, gender equality between women and men should be recognized and considered in the legislation of countries.

### **Response to an Objection**

Some thinkers who object to the theory of gender equality from the Islamic perspective raise a doubt: Why does the Quran refer to men as "*qawwamun*"? Does this not imply the

superiority of men over women? To address this doubt, let us review the verse in question along with its translation and interpretation:

الرجال قوامون على النساء بما فضل الله  
 بعضهم على بعض و بما أنفقوا من  
 أموالهم فالصالحات قانتات حافظات  
 للغيب بما حفظ الله ". (سوره نساء ،  
 آيه 34)

"Men are supporters of women  
 and are responsible toward  
 them because God has given  
 some of these men advantage

over others and because of what they spend from their wealth. Thus, virtuous women are humble and keepers of hidden affairs as God has preserved."

To clarify, I shall explain the meaning of the term "*qawwamun*" in the context of this verse.

## **The Meaning of "Qawwamun"**

The term "*qawwam*" refers to a person upon whom the responsibility and trust of a matter depend. Therefore, in the science of Arabic linguistics, this word has been understood to mean "the one responsible for the matter" (*al-mutakaffil bi-l-'amr*), i.e., someone who is entrusted with a task.

Since according to Islam, the responsibility of providing for and

financially supporting the family lies with the men, in this noble verse of the Quran, the Almighty God has described men as the supporters of women who bear the responsibility of providing for the family's living expenses. Therefore, this verse does not imply the superiority of men over women but rather outlines a responsibility and duty for men towards their families.

## **Conclusion**

Considering what has been explained, it becomes clear that men and women are equal in their human status and position. Consequently, gender equality between women and men in the realm of legislation and societal management is an undeniable and essential principle. As a result, rulers and lawmakers in society have no excuse for unjust discrimination



regarding the rights, dignity, and  
freedom of women.

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## Chapter Two

### The Supreme Guardianship

#### *(walayah 'aliyah)* of Women

One of the controversial issues in Islamic societies is the discussion of women's guardianship (*walayah*) from an Islamic perspective. Some Muslim thinkers consider women's guardianship among the prohibitions and forbidden matters, while others believe in equality between men and

women in this regard, and some do not accept women's responsibilities at the level of supreme guardianship (*walayah 'aliyah*) but have no objections to other responsibilities.

The term "supreme guardianship" refers to the leadership and macro-management of society, such as the position of leadership of the nation, the position of "supreme religious authority" (*marja'iyah 'ulya'*), and the

presidency of the country. In Islamic countries, various viewpoints with significant ideological differences have been presented on this topic. For example, in some Arab countries, women still do not have the right to vote in elections, let alone the right to be elected and accept important posts and management positions.

In some other Islamic countries, women are allowed to ascend to mid-

levels of political, scientific, and social management, but they face obstacles regarding supreme guardianship.

Today, especially in developed or developing Islamic countries, the issue of women's guardianship is a serious topic, and it demands more attention from Muslim thinkers. In this chapter, I examine the different aspects of women's rights using accepted religious reasoning methods and present my

viewpoint on the superior guardianship of women based on Islamic principles and humane principles. The discussion on women's responsibilities is examined in the following three categories:

1. Minor social, economic, cultural, and scientific responsibilities (and the like), such as managing a school, teaching, university professorships, managing

commercial companies, and similar roles.

2. Intermediate responsibilities and high-level management, such as ministries, parliamentary representation, general management, and the like.

3. The position of supreme guardianship and the general leadership of society by accepting responsibilities such as leading the

nation, exercising religious authority over the nation, and presidency of the entire country, which necessitates the right to govern the people, command all armed forces and manage the macro administration of the country.

The first category above is generally accepted by Islamic scholars and does not need further discussion. The



second category above, which accepts relatively major responsibilities and mid-level management roles up to the level of minister and lawyer, has also been accepted for women in many Islamic countries. Although some jurists have not endorsed this type of management, another group of jurists has declared it permissible. Nonetheless, there is not a widespread opposition to this management level

for women. However, the third category above on the supreme guardianship of women has been more seriously debated and disputed among the jurists. Therefore, I will also focus on this latter controversial topic, try to articulate the arguments of both sides and ultimately deduce what aligns with reality.

## **Arguments of Those Against the Guardianship of Women**

Those who have opposed supreme guardianship for women or any form of guardianship for them have argued based on the Quran and Sunnah, some of which I will discuss below:

### **First Argument**

One of the arguments of this group is verse 33 from Surat Al-Nisa of the Quran:

"الرجال قوامون على النساء بما فضل  
الله بعضهم على بعض و بما أنفقوا من  
أموالهم فالصالحات قانتات حافظات  
للغيب بما حفظ الله ."

"Men are supporters of women  
and are responsible toward  
them because God has given  
some of these men advantage  
over others and because of  
what they spend from their  
wealth. Thus, virtuous women  
are humble and keepers of

hidden affairs as God has preserved."

Some jurists and Quranic commentators have understood the Arabic word *qawwām* in this verse to mean guardian or ruler, based on which men will have the right to govern.

Allamah Tabatabai in *Tafsir al-mizan* states:

"Men being guardians over women is a general matter, and

it is not limited to a husband towards his wife, nor is it that men are only guardians over their own partners. Rather, the ruling that has been established is for the kind of men over the kind of women in general aspects related to both groups' lives. Those general aspects where all men are guardians over all women include

governance and judiciary, which the life of society depends on, and the foundation of these two responsibilities and positions is on the faculty of reasoning." (*Tafsir al-mizan*, Volume 4).

Allamah Tabatabai further explains that the reason for this is the greater power of reasoning in men compared to women and says the following:

"No scholar in Islamic law and studying this amount of its laws expects anything other than entrusting the reins of affairs in general and societal matters to those whose distinction is having more reason. This is because management in social matters such as



governance, judiciary, and war requires strong intellect, and it excludes those whose distinction is having stronger emotions and more personal desires from managing these affairs."

Then, Allamah Tabatabai refers to verse 33 of Surat Al-Nisa, which was

previously mentioned, and considers it as evidence for his argument.

### **A Critique of This Argument**

As stated, the term *qawwam*, based on lexical knowledge, means supporters and those responsible for affairs, and I have translated the mentioned verse as follows:

"Men are supporters of women  
and are responsible toward

them because God has given some of these men advantage over others and because of what they spend from their wealth. Thus, virtuous women are humble and keepers of hidden affairs as God has preserved."

In my view, this noble verse only points to men's obligation to support and care for women in terms of

livelihood, and it does not imply any superiority of men over women or a monopoly of their right to guardianship and leadership.

## Second Argument

Another verse that some jurists have argued on is verse 33 of Surah Al-Ahzab of the Quran, which says to the wives of the Prophet (PBUH):

"وَقَرْنَ فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ

الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ الْأُولَى.

“Remain in your houses and do not display yourselves as the display of the former *Jahiliya* times [pre-Islamic period called ‘Age of Ignorance’].”

Some jurists, like Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi in *Tafsir Nemuneh*, have interpreted the Arabic word *tabarruj* in the above verse, which is prohibited in this verse, to mean appearing in public. Based on this

interpretation, political and governmental positions for women, which necessitate public appearances, have been forbidden.

### **Objections to This Argument**

There are several objections to this argument:

The first objection is that the Arabic word *tabarruj* certainly does not mean any kind of public appearance. Otherwise, women's presence and

appearance in streets and public gatherings would also have been forbidden. Rather, the intention is a specific type of appearance, which is clearly mentioned in the verse, and that is the type of appearance of women in the *Jahiliya* times (pre-Islamic period called 'Age of Ignorance'), where they appeared with inappropriate dress and improper behavior. Therefore, the above verse does not imply the

prohibition of leadership, governance, or presidency for women, if they observe Islamic hijab and proper attire.

The second objection to the above-mentioned interpretation of some jurists is that the addressees of this statement are the wives of the Prophet (PBUH). It is possible that something may not be permissible for the wives of the Prophet but permissible for other women. For example, the wives of the



Prophet did not marry anyone after his passing away, but this does not mean that other women should not marry after the death of their husbands.

The third objection is that the command to avoid *tabarruj* in this verse is among a series of requests made to the wives of the Prophet, some of which are obligatory (*wajib*) and others recommended (*mustahab*). For example, the command to perform

prayer and give zakat is obligatory; however, the command to speak softly and to recite the Quran is recommended.

Therefore, even if *tabarruj* is interpreted as political leadership and governance, it is unclear whether avoiding it is obligatory or merely recommended for women. With this explanation, it becomes clear that this verse, in this context, does not imply

the obligation for women to avoid political positions and community leadership, nor does it prove the prohibition of guardianship for them.

To clarify this matter further, I present the text of the preceding and following verses of this noble verse for your consideration:

"يَا نِسَاءَ النَّبِيِّ لَسْتُنَّ كَأَحَدٍ مِّنَ النِّسَاءِ إِنَّ

اتَّقَيْتُنَّ فَلَا تَخْضَعْنَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَيَطْمَعَ الَّذِي

فِي قَلْبِهِ مَرَضٌ وَقُلْنَ قَوْلًا مَّعْرُوفًا. وَقُرْآنَ

فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ وَلَا تَبَرَّجْنَ تَبَرُّجَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ  
 الْأُولَى وَأَقِمْنَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتِينَ الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِعْنَ  
 اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ لِيُذْهِبَ عَنْكُمُ  
 الرِّجْسَ أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ وَيُطَهِّرَكُمْ تَطْهِيرًا.  
 وَاذْكُرْنَ مَا يُتْلَى فِي بُيُوتِكُنَّ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
 وَالْحِكْمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ لَطِيفًا خَبِيرًا.

"O wives of the Prophet! You  
 are not like any other woman if  
 you are pious to God. So, do  
 not speak softly, lest he in  
 whose heart is a sickness

should covet, but speak with appropriate speech. Remain in your houses and do not display yourselves as the display of the former *Jahiliya* times (pre-Islamic period called 'Age of Ignorance'). And establish prayer, give zakat, and obey God and His Messenger. God only intends to remove from you the impurity and sin, O

people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with extensive purification. Remember what is recited in your houses of the verses of God and wisdom. Indeed, God is Subtle and Aware."

### **Third Argument**

Some jurists have referred to a narration in *Nahj al-balaghah* that warns men against consulting with

women and giving them authority. For example, in “Letter 31” of *Nahj al-balaghah*, addressed to Imam Hasan (AS), it states:

"إِيَّاكَ وَ مَشَاوِرَةَ النِّسَاءِ ، فَانَّ رَأْيَهُنَّ إِلَى  
 أَفْنٍ وَ عِزْمَهُنَّ إِلَى وَهْنٍ ... وَ لَا تَمْلِكُ  
 الْمَرْأَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهَا مَا جَاوَزَ نَفْسَهَا ، فَانَّ  
 الْمَرْأَةَ رِيحَانَةٌ وَ لَيْسَتْ بِقَهْرْمَانَةٍ."

This means: “Avoid consulting with women, as their opinions are easily weakened, and their

resolve is unstable... and do not give a woman control over matters beyond herself, for a woman is like a flower, not a steward (*qahramanah*).”

### **Objection to This Argument**

Evidence shows that the instruction to avoid consulting with women in such narrations-assuming their authenticity - was specific to particular cases, special individuals, or certain conditions. For



example, there is a parallelism in this narration that indicates that the instruction to keep women in the house and not consult with them was directed toward the women of Imam al-Hasan's household. My argument is evident from the rest of the statement, which says:

"و إن استطعت أن لا يعرفن غيرك

فافعل."

“If you can ensure that these women do not see anyone besides you, then do it.”

Therefore, one cannot use this statement to argue against consulting with knowledgeable and wise women. Can we say that consulting with a scholarly figure like Lady Fatimah (peace be upon her) was also forbidden? Or was consulting with Lady Zainab, titled "the wise woman of Banu

Hashim,” not allowed either? Moreover, the verses of the Holy Quran show that some wise women guided men with their advice. For example, verse 26 of Surat al-Qisas mentions that the daughter of Prophet Shu'ayb advised her father to hire Prophet Moses:

"قَالَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا يَا أَبَتِ اسْتَأْجِرْهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ

مَنْ اسْتَأْجَرْتَ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ."

“One of his daughters said, 'O my father, hire him. Indeed, the

best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy.'”

(Surat al-Qisas, 26)

We know that Prophet Shu'ayb acted upon this advice and hired Moses. Another example is the advice of Pharaoh's wife when they found a box floating on the Nile River and saw the young child inside, who was later named Moses. When her husband

wanted to kill the child, that wise woman said:

"وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرَّتُ عَيْنِي لِي وَلَكَ  
لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا".

(سوره قصص، آیه 9)

"And the wife of Pharaoh said,  
'This child will be a comfort of  
the eye for me and for you. Do  
not kill him; perhaps he can  
benefit us, or we can adopt him  
as a son.'" (Surat al-Qisas, 9)

Therefore, based on these verses, it cannot be said that consulting with women is always harmful and that no consultation should be done with any woman. As for the other phrase in the above narration that says, “Do not give a woman control over matters beyond herself, for a woman is like a flower, not a steward,” I point out that the series of prohibitions mentioned in this letter

includes a mix of forbidden and disliked (*makruh*) actions. For example, before this sentence, it states:

"إِيَّاكَ أَنْ تَذَكَرَ مِنَ الْكَلَامِ مَا كَانَ

مُضْحِكًا"

"Never say anything humorous."

It is clear that this prohibition indicates something that is disliked (*makruh*) and does not imply prohibition (*haram*). Therefore, the context of the statement in the

mentioned letter from *Nahj al-balaghah* does not indicate that giving authority to women is *generally* forbidden.

#### **Fourth Argument**

Another argument that opponents of women's guardianship have cited is verse 228 from Surah Al-Baqarah, which states:

"وَالرِّجَالُ عَلَىٰ نِسَائِهِمْ دَرَجَةٌ."



“For men, there is a degree [of advantage] over women.”

This group believes that because of the degree [of advantage] that men have, women cannot attain guardianship and leadership.

### **Objection to This Argument**

The first objection to this argument is that if we consider the entire verse, it

maintains a balance in virtue for both men and women. The Quran says:

"وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْنَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ  
وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ".

(سوره بقره، آیه 228)

"And women have deserved rights similar to how they have responsibilities, and men have a degree [of advantage] over them, and God is Mighty and Wise."

Therefore, just as men have certain better qualities than women, women also have rights and other better qualities than men. So, there is no reason to look at the verse one-sidedly and ignore the other side.

Another objection is that having a degree [of advantage] in certain qualities for men generally does not mean that a woman who possesses

high levels of knowledge, wisdom, management skills, and other qualifications for leadership should be deprived of leadership.

### **Fifth Argument**

Another argument that opponents of women's guardianship rely on is a narration found in Sunni sources. This hadith is narrated by a person named Abu Bakrah, who says:

"لَمَّا بَلَغَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ (و

آلِهِ) وَسَلَّمَ أَنَّ أَهْلَ فَارِسَ قَدْ مَلَّكُوا عَلَيْهِمْ

بِنْتَ كِسْرَى قَالَ: لَنْ يُفْلِحَ قَوْمٌ وَلَوْ

أَمَرَهُمْ امْرَأَةٌ" (صحيح بخارى، حديث

(4425

"When the Prophet (PBUH)

received the news that the

people of Persia had made the

daughter of Khosrow their

leader, he said: 'A people who

entrust their affairs to a woman

will never prosper.'" (*Sahih al-Bukhari*, hadith 4425)

### **Objection to This Argument**

The fundamental objection to this argument lies in the problem with its chain of transmission (*sanad*), as found in *Sahih al-Bukhari* and similar books. Even some Sunni scholars have considered this hadith to lack a valid chain of transmission. This issue has also been discussed in Volume 59 of the

journal "*Al-Tajdid*," where a group of scholars has labeled this hadith as inauthentic, claiming it was falsely attributed to the Prophet (PBUH).

### **Sixth Argument**

Some opponents believe that practical experience has shown that women have not been successful in leading society and have in some cases, caused problems. These opponents also point

to specific examples to support their views.

### **Objection to This Argument**

The objection to this argument is that there are also many cases where men's leadership has been unsuccessful and has caused significant harm. Can it be argued, based on this, that guardianship should not apply to men either? Moreover, there are examples of leadership at the highest levels and



governance by women in large countries like India and Germany, among others, which have been as effective as the leadership of many men in similar countries.

So far, we have reviewed the most important arguments of those opposed to women's guardianship along with the objections raised against them. Now, I will proceed to explain the arguments of those who support it.

## Arguments for the Supreme

### Guardianship of Women

Some of the arguments that establish the guardianship of women include the following:

#### First Argument

The first argument is based on verse 71 of Surat al-Tawbah, which states:

"وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ  
بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ

الْمُنْكَرِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ  
 وَيُطِيعُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ  
 اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ."

“Believing men and women are guardians of one another. They command what is right and forbid what is wrong; they perform prayers, give zakat, and obey God and His Messenger. God will soon bestow His mercy

upon them. God is Mighty and  
Wise.”

According to this argument, due to the general applicability of the mentioned verse, there is no difference between men and women when it comes to assuming guardianship over others, and either of them can rightfully be the guardian and leader of society.

## **Objection to This Argument**

One might argue that the meaning of “guardianship” (*walayah*) in this verse refers to mutual affection and love for one another, as some jurists have translated it in this way.

## **Response to This Objection**

This objection can be responded to by pointing out that the rest of the verse indicates that the concept of *walayah* here goes beyond mere friendship and

affection. This is because, following after mentioning *walayah*, the verse refers to commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong. This right to command what is good and prevent wrongdoing is a function that is a form of guardianship.

Of course, it may also be argued in response to this objection that according to this interpretation, the guardianship of men and women in this

verse is limited to the right to command what is right and forbid what is wrong, and this verse does not serve as evidence for the supreme guardianship (*walayah 'uzma*) for women.

## **Second Argument**

Another argument to support the guardianship of women is a noble hadith that indicates that 50 out of the total 313 officials of the global

government of Imam Mahdi (AJ) will be women. I have explained this in my book *Imam Mahdi and the End Times* (*Imam Mahdi va Akher al-Zaman*) the following:

Imam Mahdi (AJ), like any other great leader, will have officials and commanders under his command who must possess specific abilities and qualities.



Islamic narrations mention that 313 loyal and capable companions will be the commanders of the uprising and the officials of the global movement of the awaited Mahdi at the time of his reappearance. It is clear that the total number of supporters and followers of the Imam must be far more than this number; otherwise, creating a large-scale movement across the world would be difficult. Therefore, the 313

companions of Imam Mahdi (AJ) mentioned in the narrations refer to the management and command staff of the army under his leadership.

According to a hadith in the first volume of the book *Tafsir Ayyashi*, which is also found in the first volume of *Mu'jam ahadith al-Imam al-Mahdi* and the seventh volume of *Majma' al-zawa'id*, 50 of the 313 officials of the global uprising of Imam Mahdi (AJ) will

be women. This narration, which is attributed to Imam Muhammad al-Baqer (AS), is as follows:

و يجيء - والله - ثلاث مائة و بضعة عشر رجلا  
 فيهم خمسون امرأة يجتمعون بمكة على غير ميعاد  
 ... و هي الآية التي قال الله: " اينما تكونوا يأت بكم  
 الله جميعا ان الله على كل شيء قدير. "

"By God, 313 people will come, 50 of whom are women, who will gather in Mecca without any prior arrangement... This is the meaning of the noble verse

in the Quran that says: Wherever you may be, God will gather you all together. Indeed, God has power over everything.'”

### **Objection to This Argument**

Some writers have attempted to justify this narration by claiming that this matter—namely the guardianship and leadership of women—is specific to the era of the appearance of Imam Mahdi (AJ), during which men and women will

reach perfection, and that this matter does not apply to our current time.

### **Response to This Objection**

In response to this objection, it can be said that if the leadership of women was something forbidden and illegitimate, Imam Mahdi (AJ) would certainly not allow such a forbidden act to be implemented during his rule. As for the claim that people, including women, are not perfected until the

time of Imam Mahdi (AJ) and are not suitable for leadership, one could argue that this objection can equally apply to men.

As you have observed, I have provided several objections against the arguments of those who oppose women's guardianship, and I have also presented arguments to establish the possibility and legitimacy of women to assume leadership roles in society.

## **Conclusion**

Based on what has been presented, there are strong arguments supporting women's capability for supreme guardianship and for assuming the highest positions of leadership and management in political, religious, cultural, economic, and social arenas. Moreover, I have explained that all the arguments of the opponents of this view are flawed and unreliable.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Equality of Women and Men**

Since women have been subjected to more oppression and coercion than other groups throughout history, the effort to rescue them from the chains of oppression and social inequality is more necessary. This is to restore their rights to enjoy the benefits of a just life and to free them from misogynistic



constraints. Therefore, here, I will first address the issue of social justice, which ensures a life of human dignity and the enjoyment of life's blessings for all segments of society. Then, I will explain women's rights in this context and describe the deprivations imposed on them.

Social development, which often leads to social justice, contributes to society's health, peace, physical

security, and mental security, thereby paving the way for continued development and progress in other areas of life. In most countries of the world, although the rights of all people have been taken away from them, the rights and freedoms of women, in particular, have been violated more by rulers, legislators, some proponents of religious law, and patriarchal cultures.

Because key civil and military positions, as well as the reins of power in high-ranking roles within various countries, are typically held by men, the voices of women facing oppression and deprivation often receive less attention. In countries governed by the absolute authority and power of men, women are considered weak and condemned to silence, leading to their inability to protest or resist any

oppression imposed upon them. However, divine retribution is always soaring above all human societies, and sooner or later, it will come to the aid of the oppressed and deprived. How fitting it would be for rulers, legislators, and religious jurists to remove the dark shadow of oppression, discrimination, and coercion from their society's people, especially women, before they are caught in the talons of divine justice

due to the sighs of the oppressed and the weak. By doing so, they can safeguard themselves from the fire of divine wrath and the storm of nations' anger.

### **Examining Two Criteria:**

#### ***Equality and Justice***

There are two general perspectives in articulating women's rights and freedoms:

- The first perspective: The fundamental criterion is the absolute *equality* between men and women in the division of duties, rights, and freedoms.
- The second perspective: The criterion is justice and not just equality. That is, as long as the equality of women's duties and rights is accompanied by justice and fairness, equality is

implemented. However, when equality leads to a lack of fairness and justice for women, the real criterion will be justice.

I will explain the two mentioned theories below:

### **Equality-Based Perspective**

According to this view, the division of duties within the family and society must be based on absolute equality;

moreover, being a man or a woman should not lead to any difference in determining responsibilities and rights (either social, economic, political, or cultural). Many feminist schools of thought emphasize this issue and demand complete equality of women with men in enjoying the benefits of life and in the distribution of social, economic, political, and cultural



responsibilities, including in civil positions and military positions.

### **Justice-Based Perspective**

According to this view, since there are undeniable physical and mental differences between men and women, equality in rights and responsibilities is acceptable as long as it is accompanied by justice and ultimately benefits women. However, if equality in the distribution of responsibilities and

rights contradicts justice and fairness and causes problems for women or society, then justice should be considered as the primary criterion.

For example, in the case of drafting for deployment to a battlefield, an equal number of women and men is not fair for women. Women are mostly less prepared than men for the battlefield, which is a place of violence and harsh physical activities.

Meanwhile, their presence in other areas, such as treating and nursing the wounded behind the front lines and preparing supplies for frontline fighters, is more effective and suitable.

In such conditions, the equality of women with men for deployment to the front lines of war is incompatible with justice and fairness. Therefore, in this case, justice is considered the criterion and measure for the

distribution of responsibilities and rights among the segments of society.

Proponents of this view explain the differences between women and men as follows:

## **Physical and Psychological Differences**

### **Between Women and Men**

There are undeniable physical and psychological differences between women and men. However, as previously mentioned, these

differences are for the purpose of the growth of society through both men and women, with each complementing the other. Now, to facilitate the discussion, I will highlight some of these differences. Some researchers have categorized these mentioned differences into the following groups:

1. Physical differences.
2. Psychological differences.
3. Emotional differences.

**First Category:**

The physical differences between men and women are as follows:

1. On average, men have a larger physical build compared to women.
2. The average height of men is taller than that of women.
3. Women experience faster physical growth than men.
4. Men are generally more violent than women.

5. Men have more muscular development than women.

6. Women reach physical maturity faster than men.

7. On average, girls start speaking earlier than boys.

8. The average brain volume of men is greater than that of women.

Women's brains are larger in proportion to their body weight compared to men's brains in

relation to their body weight. Researchers have shown that the brain size difference is due to the varying neural connections needed for different size of muscles, organs, body proportionality, and also neural density.

### **Second Category:**

The psychological differences between most men and most women are as follows:



1. Mostly, men are more inclined towards rough tasks compared to women, and women are more inclined towards delicate tasks compared to men.
2. Mostly, men are more prone to commotion compared to women.
3. Mostly, women tend to avoid violence more than men.
4. Mostly, women exhibit quicker emotional responses to matters of

interest or repulsion compared to men.

5. Mostly, women have a greater interest in jewelry and makeup.

6. Mostly, men have a greater ability to conceal their sorrows and troubles.

7. Mostly, women are more tender-hearted compared to men.

**Third Category:**

The emotional differences between most men and most women are as follows:

1. Mostly, men have a greater tendency to be the pursuer, while women have a greater tendency to be the pursued.
2. Often, a woman's expectation from a man is courage and bravery, while

a man's expectation from a woman is attractiveness and charm.

3. Some scholars have said that the best phrase a woman wants to hear from a man is, "I love you." But the best phrase a man wants to hear from a woman is, "I am proud of you."

Due to these differences, men and women can accept each other, complete each other, love each other,

live together, and not become weary or bored with each other's characteristics.

### **Equality or Justice in the Distribution of Duties?**

Both equality and justice are considered high values and usually do not conflict with each other. However, in some practical cases, we reach a point where we must choose between the two. For example, if we have a glass

of water, a piece of cloth, and a small piece of bread, and we encounter three needy individuals in the desert: one on the verge of death from thirst but with no other problems, another suffering from hunger but well-hydrated and adequately clothed, and the third near death from cold with no need for food or water. Justice dictates that we give the glass of water to the thirsty person, the piece of bread to the hungry one,

and the piece of cloth to the unclothed person to save all three from death.

However, equality in distribution would require dividing the glass of water, piece of bread, and piece of cloth into three equal parts and giving each person one part of each. In such a case, we would neither quench the thirst of the thirsty, feed the hungry, nor save the unclothed person from the deadly cold. Here, justice stands in

opposition to equality, and we must choose one over the other.

In minor social issues, the situation is similar. For instance, if a group of men and women are members of an association and want to distribute tasks among themselves, and these tasks include:

- Lifting heavy steel beams to the roof of the association's building.



- Carrying bags of cement and packs of bricks for building repairs.
- Taking care of the members' children.
- Preparing snacks for the members, and similar tasks.

Here, equality would require that half of the steel beams, bags of cement, and bricks be carried by women and the other half by men. Similarly, childcare and snack preparation would be equally divided between the two

groups. However, justice dictates that the hard tasks be done by men, who generally have greater physical strength and endurance for tough jobs, while the delicate tasks are handled by women, who are typically more skilled in this area. Of course, if, exceptionally, an individual from either group has expertise in the other's tasks, they should also be utilized accordingly. As we observe, in this case as well, justice

sits on one side of the scale of decision-making, while equality sits on the other.

### **The Logic of Islam**

In the light of Quranic verses and Islamic traditions, it can be determined that from the Islamic perspective, both equality and justice must be recognized, but if equality is detrimental to women, priority is given to justice.

For this reason, the equality of men and women in terms of humanity, divinely given gifts, human rights, and material and spiritual privileges is accepted in Islam; although in the division of tasks, justice and fairness are priorities.

In some Quranic commentaries, such as the book *Tafsir Majma' al-bayan*, we encounter a question posed by the wife of the Holy Prophet of Islam and the Prophet's answer, which

illustrates the Islamic viewpoint. One day, Umm Salama (the wife of the Prophet) asked the Prophet: "Why should women not go to the front lines of war?" Other women had also asked the Holy Prophet the same question. In response to these questions, the following sacred verse was revealed:

"وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بِهِ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى

بَعْضٍ لِّلرِّجَالِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبُوا

وَلِلنِّسَاءِ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا اكْتَسَبْنَ وَاسْأَلُوا اللَّهَ

مِنْ فَضْلِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمًا".

(سوره النساء، آیه 32)

“Do not covet what God has favored some of you over others. Men have a share of what they earn, and women have a share of what they earn, and ask God for His bounty. Indeed, God is All-Knowing of all things.” (Surat Al-Nisa, verse 32).

## **Conclusion**

Throughout history, women have been particularly marginalized by male-dominated power structures, and their rights have been violated. This chapter demonstrates two perspectives on women's rights: equality-based and justice-based. The equality-based view advocates for absolute equality in duties and rights between men and women, while the justice-based view

considers physical and psychological differences, arguing that equality should only be pursued when it aligns with justice. The Islamic perspective, as highlighted in the chapter, values both equality and justice but prioritizes justice when equality may harm women.

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The editor of this book is not responsible for the content, interpretations, or ideas presented within. The editor's role was to ensure the accuracy and clarity of the translation without altering the original message or intent of the author. The English translation of this work from Persian was initially made by the ChatGPT AI tool and subsequently edited and modified by the editor.

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