

The humanisation of women in the Tafsir Faidh Ar-Rahmân by Kiai Saleh Darat



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Dates:

Received: 24 Mar. 2023
 Accepted: 30 May 2023
 Published: 25 July 2023

How to cite this article:

Affandi, Y., Riyadi, A., Widayanti, R., Abdullah, A.D., Muhajarah, K. & Janah, N., 2023, 'The humanisation of women in the Tafsir Faidh Ar-Rahmân by Kiai Saleh Darat', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 79(1), a8732. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8732>

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The dehumanisation of women has been recorded in world history. In religions one can easily find interpretations that tend to be discriminatory against women. This research aims to see the humanisation of women in the *Tafsir Faidh Ar-Rahman* by Kiai Sholeh Darat towards the position of women in Islam. This research is a library research. Data collection was done through documentation. Furthermore, the data were analysed qualitatively by a descriptive method. The results of the study showed that. The humanisation of women in the *Tafsir Faidh Ar-Rahmân* by Kiai Sholeh Darat on the position of women in Islam is; he emphasised that women have an equal position with men. In terms of inheritance, Kyai Sholeh Darat wanted flexibility in understanding the verse regarding the portion of inheritance 2:1 so that the provisions can adapt according to the situation. In certain contexts, women may get the same share as men.

Contribution: The thoughts of Kiai Sholeh Darat have contributed to being one of the references in looking at women's issues in Islam objectively.

Keywords: The Holy Quran; women humanisation; interpretation of *Faidh Ar-Rahmân*; Kiai Sholeh Darat; Islamic thought.

Introduction

Acts of dehumanisation against women have been recorded in world history. The reality of this oppression is often found and perpetuated in the pages of history (Shihab 2002). In religions one can easily find interpretations that tend to be discriminatory towards women, who are always considered as inferior and subordinate. Particularly in the religions prior to the sending of the Prophet Muhammad, they were very unfriendly to women (Zaferuddin 2004). The Christian religion views women as lowly and contemptible creatures, because they are seen as sources of disaster and evil (Ismail 2000). The Torah states that women are worse than death (Djawas 1996). Meanwhile, in Jewish doctrine, women are seen as cursed creatures because they tempted Adam to eat the *Kuldi* which was forbidden by Allah so that they were both expelled from heaven (Al Barik 2006).

What about in Islam? A number of Qur'anic statements have strong patriarchal overtones. This can be seen from the text of the Qur'an which justifies men as *qawwam* over women and the permissibility of hitting his wife to teach her a lesson (QS. Al-Nisa:32), a woman's testimony is considered half the price of a man's (QS. Al-Baqarah:282), men are considered to have higher power over women (QS. Al-Baqarah:228), women get half of the share that men do from inheritance (QS. al-Nisa:11) and the permissibility for men to marry more than one woman (QS. al-Nisa:3).

Does it mean that Islam place women below men? Is the patriarchal system that occurred in the history of male dominance over women justified by Islam? Or is the patriarchal system a reality and history made in such a way as to reinforce a certain type of domination, such as the domination of men over women? The answer is that Islam does respect women as it is a religion that spreads mercy to the universe and it is no exception for women [*rahmatan lil 'alamin*]; Islam places great emphasis on the importance of respect for humans (Mulia 2007).

This can be seen from the statement of the Qur'an which provides information regarding the equality of origins (QS. al-Nisa:1, al-Hujurat:13), the equality of deeds and their rewards (QS. Ali Imran:195, al-Nisa:32, al-Ahzab:35–36, al-Mu'min:40), and both men and women have the potential for success (QS. Ali 'Imran:195, al-Nisa:124). However, in reading it, the nuances of equality that appear in the Qur'anic text are not explored so what appears in society tends to

emphasise its patriarchal values. According to Amina Wadud, this fact occurred because the majority of interpreters in Muslim history were men, while women and their experiences were omitted or interpreted according to the vision, perspective, will or needs of men (Wadud 1994).

Kiai Sholeh Darat is an *ulama'* who is productive in producing written works. The majority of his works use the Arabic *pegon* [*al-lughah al-mariki*]. One of the books is *Tafsir Faidh ar-Rahmân* which was written in the early 19th century. Kiai Sholeh Darat has elements of interpretation that have *isyary* nuances. Interpretation of *isyary* means interpreting the verses of the Qur'an which differ from their *dzahir* based on hidden cues that are only apparent to intelligent people (the inner meaning which is more of a broader *ta'wil*, not the outward meaning of the word but more of a symbol).

Based on this background, the researcher examines the ideas of Kiai Sholeh Darat under three main reasons. Firstly, Kiai Sholeh Darat is seen as a classic figure who has contributed many thoughts regarding the liberation of women from all forms of discrimination and equality between men and women in all sectors of life. Secondly, the thoughts of Kiai Sholeh Darat, even though he is a classic figure, are able to describe classical Islamic values in a modern context so that these thoughts are considered comprehensive. Lastly, the issue of feminism in Islam is still interesting to study along with the ongoing debate about the role and position of women in Islam.

Method

This research belongs to library research as it collects and traces works in the form of books, articles and journals that have relevance to the problem under study (Saryono 2006). Considering that the research is theoretical in nature, the method used is qualitative. The approach used in this study is a gender approach to understand the raised social reality. The main task of gender analysis is to provide meanings, conceptions, assumptions, ideologies and practices of new relations between men and women, as well as their implications for a greater social life (social, economic, political, cultural) (Nasution 2009). Thus, there are no longer unfair views of women on the grounds that they are irrational, emotional and weak, which causes women's position to be considered less important (Mufidah 2003).

Results and discussion

The humanisation of women in the Tafsir Faidh Ar-Rahman by Kiai Sholeh Darat

Here it can be understood that the Qur'an according to Kiai Sholeh Darat is free, open and autonomous. Almost the same idea was conveyed by Farid Esack by understanding the Qur'an as a 'progressive revelation' (Esack 2000). Therefore, to avoid an authoritarian attitude, one must remain aware that the text of the Qur'an is a 'work that is constantly changing' or 'progressive revelation' so that all forms of interpretation and understanding will continue to be active, dynamic and progressive.

In Kiai Sholeh Darat's analysis, this is what is morally justified. According to him, if the Qur'an is interpreted into a meaning that is stable, fixed and does not change, then the consequence is that the text becomes closed and seals its meaning with the reader's interpretation. Morally this is not justified because it is a form of arrogance as readers claim to have knowledge that is identical to God's. Thus, it seems as if he thinks that his interpretation is identical to the actual meaning of the text. For Kiai Sholeh Darat, this would result in the loss of textual autonomy, and even theologically this would be a problem since it contradicts the absolute knowledge of God. The Qur'an explicitly states the absoluteness of God and his knowledge which cannot be compared with anyone's (As-Samarani 1935).

Women's power and leadership (QS. al-Nisa [4]:34)

Verses of Qur'an are often used as legitimacy to convince women to obey their husbands. Men are leaders for women and women cannot lead in the public sphere.

According to ash-Shabuni, *qawwamun* means a leader for two reasons. Firstly, men have more reason than women. Secondly, men protect and support their families in all ways. The consequence of this understanding is that women must obey Allah and their husbands both at home and outside. If the wife is *nusyuz*, then the husband has the right to give reprimands and directions and even beatings for the sake of educating his wife and maintaining the good name of the family. According to ash-Shabuni, the position of a husband for his wife is the same as that of a leader for his people.

Meanwhile, Al-Tabari in his commentary hides *ar-rijālu qawwāmūna 'ala al-nisā'*, [men are in charge of women], (Surah an-Nisa' verse 34), meaning men act as educators and guides for wives in carrying out their obligations to Allah SWT and their own husbands. The primacy of men over women is based on that men have the obligation to provide dowries and maintenance, and it is also said that men have priority in terms of intellectual and managerial capacity. Therefore, they [men] are given the obligation to take care of women based on this (Ali n.d.:400).

In this case, Thabarî strengthens his interpretation with the *hadith* of the Prophet which is in accordance with his opinion:

'al-Mutsanna told me, he said, Abdullah bin Salih told us. He said Muawiyah bin Salih told me from Ali bin Abi Talhah from Ibn Abbas, about his words (the man is the leader for women). He said, (the meaning of men) is a leader for women, so women must obey them on things that Allah commands women to obey them; do well to their families, and guard their wealth. The advantage that Allah gives to men over women is because of the living and business they give (Al-Qurthuby, 1935).

The description above is different from the view of Kiai Sholeh Darat who explained that there are at least two ways to understand the word '*qawwamun*' in the verse above. Firstly, 'men are *protectors* of women according to the advantages that Allah has bestowed upon some over others,

and according to the wealth they spend on others'. Secondly, 'men are *supporters* of women according to the advantages that Allah has bestowed upon some over others, and according to the wealth they spend on others'.

However, according to him, even though the word *qawwamun* can be interpreted in various ways, what is important for Kiai Sholeh Darat is that this verse does not determine the relationship between men and women absolutely and does not depend on it. On the other hand, status depends on the actions of humans ('according to the wealth that is spent on others') and the actions of God, that is, on the advantages conferred on one over the other. In addition, the verses of the Qur'an that uses the word *fadl*, both related to reward or God's grace, show that both men and women can achieve it. This means, men or women have the right to receive God's reward and grace. The authority given to a man is not because he is a man, but because of the man's obligation to provide for women. However, if women have the same responsibilities as men, authority must be divided fairly between the two (Salih 1935).

The views of Kiai Sholeh Darat above emphasise that women and men as husband and wife have the same position. The two of them act as partners. There is no one who is higher or lower in position due to their gender. This is what is meant by the verse QS. al-Nisa [4]:34, which affirms the idea of a husband's position being higher than his wife so that he can act arbitrarily. However, it appears from Kiai Sholeh Darat's argument above that the word *qawwamun* depends on the wealth that is given and other advantages given by God. However, in understanding the verse, he still focuses on the word *qawwamun*.

Regarding the verse above, interpreters see the word *qawwamun* as a keyword to understand the verse. In this case, they are divided into two groups, normative and rationalist. For the normative group, Surah al-Nisa verse 34 discusses the superiority of men over women by placing men as leaders in the household and women as those who are led. This conclusion is based on the pronunciation of *qawwamun* which is interpreted as a leader and pieces of verses *bima faddalallah ba'duhum ala ba'din* and *wabima anfaqu min amwalihim*. The implication is that there are two things that determine the relationship between men and women: firstly, men potentially have an advantage over women, and secondly, with their advantages, men have the rights and responsibilities over the life of their family, wife and children.

There are arguments for alleviating the pain of 'hard creatures' and conditioning a domestic climate that is conducive for women to live, work and create. This condition is often seen as fate that cannot be changed simply because there is a demand to protect women from work violence. As a result, the existence of women is confined to the house to take care of the family and play the role of mother, while public duties become the area of male activity. In such a context, basing oneself on sexual differences between men and women is a justification for this condition.

Inheritance provisions for women (QS. al-Nisa [4]:11)

Many arguments are commonly used to explain the meaning of the verse. Al-Maraghy in his commentary mentions the wisdom contained in men's share that is twice that of women's is that men need a living for themselves and their family, while women only need a living for themselves. When married, the maintenance of the woman is borne by her husband (al-Maraghy 1986). In addition, there are also those who state that the distribution of inheritance 2:1 for men and women is caused by the provision of dowry and maintenance rights, namely women are entitled to maintenance and dowry (Muthahhari 1997).

However, in contrast to the above argument, Kiai Sholeh Darat argued that understanding the verse should not be rigid and static because the verse appears in a specific historical context. That is the reason, before the reader draws conclusions, it is necessary to look at the historical context when the verse was revealed.

Kiai Sholeh Darat explained that the verse was revealed related to pre-Islamic traditions where groups that meet the requirements for inheritance are people who fight or do *jihad*. As those who usually fight are men, women do not receive inheritance. However, when in Medina there was a controversy over women participating in wars. Men still insist that women are not entitled to inheritance because they are not required to fight. A number of women opposed this opinion and complained to the Prophet. Then the Prophet received a revelation giving women a share of inheritance which was often half that of men (As-Samarani 1935).

The opinion of Kiai Sholeh Darat is in line with Munawir Syadzali who said that al-Qur'an surah al-Nisa [4]:11 belongs to the category of contextual verses which are closely related to the sociocultural conditions that lie behind it. Logically, when the condition of women and men changes, no longer are such verses of the Qur'an being revealed. Therefore, the provisions of 2:1 can also change according to changing times and the demands of modern life. This is also the reason why some argue that the concept of 2:1 cannot be applied anymore for two reasons: firstly, all areas of modern life have placed men and women in the same position. Both are free to compete, help each other and struggle together to build self-potential in socioeconomic life. Secondly, formally, men and women have the same legal position (Samardi 1997).

From the several models of analysis of inheritance above, Kiai Sholeh Darat is one of the figures who understands this verse in a nonrigid and static way. This is in accordance with the hermeneutic analysis model which is open to various critical studies of texts. Hermeneutically, the verse above is not immune from various reading strategies, including sociohistorical analysis. Hermeneutics presupposes understanding the verse in its past context. Then the verse is presented and understood in contemporary times and the

current context so that it becomes meaningful and relevant today without losing the essence of the verse.

In order to understand it in the present context, Kiai Sholeh Darat examined the context and history of the verse's revelation. It turns out that the revelation of the verse is related to the pre-Islamic tradition in which the group that fulfils the conditions for inheritance are the people who fight. Because those who usually fight are men, women do not receive inheritance. When in Medina there was a controversy over women participating in wars, men continued to emphasise that women were not entitled to inheritance because they were not required to fight. A number of women opposed this opinion and complained to the Prophet. Then the verse came down to give women a portion of the inheritance half that of men.

According to Kiai Sholeh Darat, when men protested against this provision, a verse was revealed which emphasised that women were given a share according to what they demanded (QS. al-Nisa [4]:32). This verse at the same time emphasises the dynamic situation that allows men and women to get their rights according to what they have done.

The flexibility of God's law in that verse has implications for the enactment of that verse which is not rigid and static. From the perspective of Kiai Sholeh Darat, it can be understood that in certain cases the distribution may change, for example, it becomes equal between men and women. This happens because what is given to women and men in the inheritance portion is basically adjusted to the demands or implementation of obligations.

The reading model above is inseparable from the perspective of Kiai Sholeh Darat who sees the need for a balance of power between the writer represented by the text and the reader. This happens because the text has its own autonomy and meaning while the reader also brings subjectivity which can lead to other understandings. In this context, it can be seen that Kiai Sholeh Darat has his own understanding of the inheritance verse above.

Even so, Kiai Sholeh Darat did not provide further explanation regarding the autonomy of the text, meaning and subjectivity of the reader in terms of the balance of power between the author, the text and the reader, in contrast to Abu Zayd who explained the verse with the concept of its meaning and significance. It seems that as a balance of power, Kiai Sholeh Darat only offers the need for a historical reading of the verse and brings its universal message to the present. The possibility that what Kiai Sholeh Darat wants is the application of *shari'ah* values in inheritance law.

From the two interpretations of the Qur'an by Kiai Sholeh Darat, it appears that the position of women is equal to that of men. In this context, women are not objects of exploitation by men, but partners who complement each other in the public space. The position of women is no longer lower than men, neither do men

occupy a higher position and consider themselves superior. Instead, both have equal rights and obligations.

According to Kiai Sholeh Darat, moral principles and goals such as justice come from the Qur'an itself. The Qur'an teaches that in the sight of God there is no difference in gender, race or class. Men and women are seen as equal because they are rewarded and punished with the same rewards and have the same access to God's grace and goodness (QS. al-Nisa [4]:32). Women also have the same rights as their obligations, according to the values of decency and justice (QS. al-Baqarah [2]:228). The Qur'an also obliges men and women to call for good and forbid evil in the same weight.

Conclusion

The humanisation of women in the *Tafsir Faidh Ar-Rahman* by Kiai Sholeh Darat on the position of women in Islam are:

- asserting that women have an equal position with men. The pattern of relationships must be based on partners or partnerships;
- in terms of male leadership over women, Kiai Sholeh Darat believes that the interpretation of male leadership does not stand alone but depends on livelihood and other advantages given by God. Therefore, if the wife supports and has these advantages, then she may become the head of the family;
- in inheritance, Kiai Sholeh Darat wants flexibility in understanding the verse regarding the inheritance section of 2:1, so that the provisions can change according to the surrounding context.

In certain contexts, women may get the same share as men. From these two verses, it can be seen that Kiai Sholeh Darat supports the ideas of equality and partnership while at the same time rejecting hierarchical positioning.

Acknowledgements

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Competing interests

The authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Authors' contributions

Y.A., A.R., R.W., A.D.A., K.M. and N.J. contributed to the collection of data, data documenting and analysis, and manuscript preparation. All authors have critically reviewed and approved the final draft and are responsible for the content and similarity index of the manuscript.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for carrying out a research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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