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## Liberalism, Feminism & Islamic Tradition

Dr. Meriam Shiebari.

2 books: heavily heavily aged + checked, but of a generation  
introducing our own worldview and the liberalism/feminism socialization  
we're undergone.

### LIBERALISM, FEMINISM & RELIGION I

- How & why did fem. develop?
- Opportunities and limitations of fem. for observant muslims?
- Should we develop & adopt 'Islamic fem.'?

~~femin~~

2

Feminism is a project for establishing conditions for gender equality: evolution  
of relative freedom that enable women to both formulate & enact  
self-determined goals & interests

What is equality?  
equity?  
etc.  
etc.

<1600  
1600-1700  
1800-1850-1910  
1918-1930s  
1960-1990s  
1990s-present

Med. Europe  
Seeds of change  
Org. feminist  
Wom. 1st wave fem  
Inventor  
2nd wave  
3rd wave

Brief history -1600 seeds?, 1800 organized movement begins.

& 1990's to present: 3rd wave feminism.

1600's - Women in Medieval Europe very much influenced by Christian  
interpretations.

- original sin
- rational understanding

unmarried often sent to convents, which had <sup>over</sup> isolation, but also  
the potential for self-growth [witches!]

• Once married, women often didn't have any legal identity or status independent of her  
husband. No authority over personal property or legal agreements. Even her body belonged  
to her husband! (Inheritance passed codes e.g. adultery not illegal for men). Minimal  
education.

### 1600-1800s - seeds of change.

- Enlightenment, 1690-1790. Philosophers began to question women's subordination  
and inferior rationality. John Locke for example attacked divinely instituted  
monarchy & social constructs.
- Descartes - 1637, philosophical rationality of individual, and that rationality is not  
the sole domain of men. <sup>+ note the prominence of  
male thought + male philosophers</sup>
- Other philosophers like Rousseau still reinforce traditional gender roles. But this  
is not to throw an & his work out the window! (e.g. Imen Chatai  
has similar things to say & that is problematic for women)!
- Francois Babe - French priest, also start to question given assumption of women  
inferiority.
- Mary Estelle - proto feminist. Working on social conditions of women, and  
examining things closer.

### 1800-1850s - organized fem.

- Early 1800s. First autonomous women's movements forming in Western  
Europe & N. America. Generally loosely-organized & short-lived networks.
- 1848: Seneca Falls convention. Modelled on declaration of independence (Crucially  
doesn't mention slavery or religion).
- In the UK, physical spaces start to emerge where they could actually discuss  
their things.
- Socio-economic, printing press, ~~first~~ idea propagation changes allow them movements  
to develop further.

### 1850 - WWI, First Wave Feminism

- Permanent, sophisticated, financed organizations in Europe + N.A. to set goals and  
control their own lives.
- Their goals, centres for both married & unmarried women & (legality + economic independence).
- Suffrage: gaining the vote <sup>refused to</sup> adopt husbands & none (parallel to women  
slavery), & Greater autonomy over their own bodies. <sup>\* seen as maybe too radical!  
some elements did become  
more radical</sup>
- However, traditional gender roles & still remain unquestioned, and still  
accepted (e.g. wage-earner, household ~~tasks~~ duties). <sup>& difficult to deal  
with.</sup>
- Suffrage, 1910-1920s, were gained in Canada, N. America, UK, France (1944?).  
Tried into electoral politics, where men were overseas during the war - opposing women  
would grant them the vote and let ~~them~~ them remain.



1918 - 1945 - interwar period

- Time of crisis: patriotism over feminism, which takes a backseat over other priorities (communities, enlisting, econ. recovery, etc.)
- Women forced to fill men's roles left as men went to war. But did this effect long-term change?
- Survey: 90% of housewives desired that their daughters would not live the same lives they did.

1960s - 1980s - 2nd wave feminism

- "Watching the blacks refuse to work or ride the bus is less than human dignity, [white women] could say, 'Me, too'." → Betty Friedan
- Inspiration by civil rights movements. (But they didn't get behind it, lack of social movement cooperation, unlike today).
- Goals: reproductive rights & violence. Various gains in civil laws. Disposed of property and earning of women on their own.

1990s to present, 3rd wave feminism

- Many of the issues we are now familiar with (e.g. abortion, gay rights, education, women's studies, healthcare access, etc.).
- Equal pay, started in 2nd wave, developed in 3rd wave.

Feminism's expanding horizons

- Expansion of feminism to include non WASP and non-elite women.  
c.f. Joan Scott's 'For feminism's difference problem'.  
Crucially though, religionism does not fall under this expanding horizon.
- The theory of intersectionality becomes more relevant. e.g. "Black feminism", "Womanism".  
Some actually felt oppressed by both movements (e.g. gender dis. in Islam movement) & racial discrimination in feminism movement.
- 3rd wave feminism (coming after black feminism) deals with subjectivity of colonization + neo-colonialism.  
↳ critical of mainstream western liberal feminism. ("imposed feminism")

- But also contrary, feminism as a tool / vector to impose Western emancipation.  
→ c.f. Ashleigh's article. "Do Muslim Women really need saving?".  
in summary: desires that change depending on your intersectional social conditioning.  
Female desires very ~~good~~ greatly ~~and~~ and are not universal.

Opportunities & Limitations of Fem. for observant Muslims

- Facilitations in women's lives. - access to education, oppor. etc.
- Resonance w/ Islamic Norm & justice? (issues: access to the mosque)
- Expanding boundaries of feminism & womanhood.
- Claiming & reconnecting existing 'Islamic' feminism.

Limitations & fault-lines

- Superficially, & practically, there are often many resonances, but deeper dissonances of the underlying ~~for~~ presumption, morals, goals with the Islamic framework - 'Universal' values that aren't quite universal.
- Moral vision & liberal commitments: → Dr Sharmeen Sabur's article.  
→ ~~for~~ fem. shaped out of an outgrowth of liberation generally. We have (in the west) been deeply conditioned by the liberalistic mindset, perhaps more than we now. In a similar way to radicalisation, liberation & struggling with it is also a HUGE ~~is~~ is issue.
- Liberalism: theory: a political theory  
reality: an overall philosophy of life. → it sheds out and promotes much further out than we would otherwise expect!  
↓  
↓ drives government and state institutions.  
↓  
↓ benefits:  
1) • Individ. freedom + autonomy.  
2) • Secularised (protestant) religion.  
3) • Challenge to authority. w/o restraint.  
4) the highest ideal of the framework to pursue individual goals, united or not adhering to other parties. Something indiv. desires (assuming independent satisfaction of others).  
↳ but how does this 'autonomous will' formulate??  
universal values and framework of reason?



## • What does Islam stand on freedom & autonomy?

- individuals are accountable before God for our ourselves
- Which element are we giving freedom to? Our soul? aql? nafs?
- On the other side, Submission. Only leaving to what God wants, and to free the human ~~heart~~ heart from the human self, and freedom from desires. → (1st part of Shahadah - La ilaha)
- autonomous will circumscribed by divinely ~~is~~ mandated obligations to family, community, etc.

But how do know what God's will is? How do we reconcile this with abuse / injustice from ppl who claim to know what God's will is?

## \* Feminism & women's autonomy

- Feminism as -ve and +ve freedom. Independence from men's influence, and agency to effect their own paths.

## 2) Secularised, (Protestant) religion

- Rejection of Church authority & organised religion.
- Removal of supernatural & mystical elements from religion. Profound discomfort with public religious displays, in protestant or post-protestant ~~relig~~ societies.

## Differences of protestant/secular religion against Islamic tradition

### Protestant

- Religious rituals, observance & laws are only contingently linked to religion's kernel, as stated prof.

i.e. Islam as separate

from Inner.

(action is not contingent to belief)

### Islamic & Jewish

- Orthodoxy & Orthopraxy
- Bodily, physical practices are essential to acquiring belief and ethical disposition. ⇒ INSEPARABLE!
- Problematic to banning 'symbols of belief' - They're more than symbols, they're actual embodiments of faith.

e.g. hijab call to prayer

these could lead to show profound discomfort with public display.

## RECAP OF SEM 1

- Dev. of feminism under western liberal feminism + lack of universality.
- Exploring the relationship of autonomy between state, self & Islam.
- Secularism as understood in the Protestant context.
- Could Islam have achieved / evolved gender roles & understandings independent of a feminist movement? How much do we rely on these ~~text~~, or we indebted?
- Is Islamic feminism emerging out of a prescribed set of doctrines, or is it something that has or can emerge organically?  
→ decannalisation of state and authority.
- What exactly is autonomy. Or freedom?

↳ Limit of liberalism as not hurting others. Discussions about pornography, drug usage, burden on state.

tangentially related to ~~the idea~~ idea of spiritual norm and appreciation of barakah in a community  
and understanding of the unseen.

Cartesianism basis of modern science & thinking and separation of body and mind. Dichotomies? How does it relate to feminist thinking: that rationales can be separated from embodied self? relate to previous page and relationships between physical acts ~~and~~ and ~~body~~ embodied beliefs.

## Feminism AND Religion

- Organised religion, esp. monotheistic religions are often not compatible with the feminist project. → the onus is on, for example, Islamic feminists to prove this ~~otherwise~~!
- Basis of legacy of Christianity's subordination of women?
- "Agency" → resistance → challenging norms → progressive change?  
Is this the natural outcome? (choosing to stay home)
- So can 'agency' can be used to uphold traditional norms (e.g. hijab)?
- Or is this 'internalised oppression' (lol). Can feminism incorporate this definition of agency. (logical conclusion of progressive change means you must uphold norms?)

challenging norms that are not liberal.

↳ [this resulted in protracted discussion about women in masjid, position of prayer, access of women to masjid]



### 3) Challenging authority

#### • Concept of authority?

Authority (modernity) = power, pursuit of self-interest

Authority (historically) = right from an act of foundation, of mastery.  
Based on trust.

- decentralised power?
- decentralised ~~and~~ authority?

E.S. linking new jurisprudential issues as closely related to

authoritarian ~~views~~ views of the four imams.  
tawassul - Shaykh & tawassul  
parent-child relationship

requires trust/submission, as this can ~~not~~ always be broken.

SO. is a world devoid of authority possible?

Moved excellence without authority? Independently independent of relationships of trust?

Implications of gender of authority?

#### WHAT REPLACES PARIARCHAL AUTHORITY?

↳ Hats, peoples, sources of authority?

narratively?  
standing beside?  
real world examples?

↳ negative association of  
authoritarianism ~~about~~  
with patriarchy?

#### Highland ideal:

Lib:

- ability to act autonomously
- religion private
- challenging norms

Isl:

- Ubbudiyah, freedom for self
- practice produces belief.
- Hadith Qudsi - seeing the world as God wants you to see the world and be congruent with His ~~ideals~~ ideals.

[ ↳ Your ego is entirely removed ]

- no tension between internal + external.
- develop a pious self + pious society.

#### Should We Adopt & Develop An 'Islamic Feminism'?

### Sessions 3 & 4

- What is Islamic feminism?
- Methodology of feminist & scriptural interpretation.
- App. and limitation?
- Should we develop this framework?

#### MAJOR CONCERNS OF (AMERICAN) ISLAMIC FEMINISM:

- Why America → well known names, large academic body present
- Part of a larger progressive Islamic movement.
- Advocates full equality in public + private spheres through Quranic lens.
- Combination of scholarship & activism. Many advocacy organisations.

may ~~not~~ people, though, problematically, have little classical Islamic training.

HOW HAVE THESE ACADEMICS / MOVEMENTS BEEN INFLUENCED?

> Modernist - fair methodologies, looking at the spirit & intent of the verse over the literal letter of the law. Also contextualising verses and reapplying this contextual intention to modern understanding.

↳ for example, La ta'kulu riba: don't consume riba. Modernist interpretations would justify riba in the interests of economic justice.

• BUT IS IT NOT ARROGANCE & HUBRIS that you can interpret the spirit adequately; linking this back to usulul-fiqh, surely freedom from self-reliance leads to following Quranic injunctions. And shouldn't we accept hidden wisdom?

> Jewish - Christian exegesis, Feminist Learning.

- looking back at the traditions and finding strong female sources to draw upon.
- Major difference is the Quran is entirely divinely inspired.

> Muslim women's experiences in the community.

- Disturbingly, we can be responsible for pushing women away such that they start questioning core Islamic tenets. Cognitive dissonance between what the Quran says and how it is used to abuse them.

#### SOURCES OF ENGAGEMENT:

- 90% focus on Quran.
- 10% focus on Islamic tradition.
- Curiously, ~~most~~ germane orientalist studies on hadith have come, since 1950s, have come full circle, to support the traditional Islamic understanding of hadith.
- ↳ therefore, we can't pre-empt and check, given the rigour and robustness of transmission.
- Looking also at Law & Sufism.



## TRICKLE DOWN EFFECT.

### Methodology

- 1) Historical contextualisation.
- 2) Intratextual method.
- 3) Tawhidic Paradigm.

Studied by Ayshe Hidayatullah in "Feminist Edges of the Quran".

1)

- 'Descriptive' vs. 'prescriptive' revelation.
- S. Men are qawwam over women. Is it deriving (7th men, or prescribing that they should be so)?
- Asbab nuzul: reasons for revelation. Reading into why the verse was revealed.
- Historical contextualisation.

### Example 1: Wearing of the hijab.

- ↳ a historical context meant to apply to slavery / free women and differentiating those who are sexually available.
- ↳ but what is the source of this 'extreme condition'. And the verse is not necessarily conditioned to circumstances. Why shouldn't we ~~also~~ assume scriptural independence?
- ↳ this modernist interpret. is a post-rationalisation of an predicted outcome. Is also imposing / arrogant to declare this as correct and others as wrong.
- ↳ Enlightenment attitude of fitting religion only within the bounds of our (supposedly inflexible) reasoning.

2)

### Example 2: Polygamy:

- ↳ Wadud: Arguing that this approached a 7th Century framework at presence of war orphans and guardianship of vulnerable females.

- Intratextual method: Holistic reading of the Quran, esp. those emphasising and advocating justice & equality of all human beings.
- In effect, 'equality' versus 'hierarchy'. E.g. acting equitably is not possible for all wives. Did the Quran advocate or aim to eventually abolish polygamy?

THE PATRIARCHY LIES BOTH WAYS

→ you have a husband but also a father!

3)

- Tawhid
- Gendered hierarchy → idolatry (shirk) - Amine Wadud's conclusion, to mean that any of the readings that promote sexism are actuarial equivalent to shirk!

W.O.W. ← this, in her view, is a shift of the God authority to men. → idolatry.

- ↳ this methodology of 4 is applied to 4:34. That men should not have any authority / hierarchy to women.
- ↳ But this argument applies to all sources of authority. Parents, government, police, etc? Selective application of tawhidic paradigm.

→ 4:34 } Verses that further expand or reflect upon these issues.  
33:71  
30:21

### OPPORTUNITIES AND LIMITATIONS

- Proactive approach to legitimate concern.
- Couched in 'Islamic' idiom.
- Interesting and involving more women in the thread of Islam.
- ✓ Emphasising ethical concerns
- ✓ Right questions
- ✗ Same methodology
- ✗ Opp. & solutions / conclusions.
- Limitations
  - methodological inconsistencies
  - Treating equality as a 'timely, order ahistorical concept'
  - Far from 'gender justice' over the text
  - Limits of the text > Questioning the Divinity of the Quran. (and of course this is where some Islamic feminists have gone to! " )
- What is the concept of gender justice?
  - ↳ Unknown, and acceptance of sometimes problematic injunctions.
- How do we know our egalitarian reading is more faithful?
- Can we accept if we come to unwelcome conclusions?

### CAN WE SAY NO TO THE QURAN?

- faith-based objection
- Intentionally provoking a crisis of confidence in us. Struggling with our conscience in response to God.

Looking at 'Mi-qat' Muhammad' gives an excellent response to 4:34.

Do all rulings have to be rationalised?



Lesson by Shaykh Abdel Hakim - Mursi

BLACK FEMALE SLAVE

Hajar - a discussion leading into gender more widely. Proto-muslim of Hajar used as an example.

- Hajar somewhat treated differently in Quranic texts than in Biblical texts.
- Maryam often portrayed as womanhood, purity, sacrifice.
- Hajar brought up as a counterpoint. Hajar alone in wilderness.
- Maryam alone in wilderness.
- So why are they not frequently paired together in the scripture?

Discussion of pre-modern or depiction of Hajar - Reuben. very much as a earth-fallen subject. Acceptance, cognitive nature, of her rejection. Almost a recollection of the fall itself. The ~~fall~~

In essence, the christian perspective very much throws down the line of Ismail, and raises the line of Isah.

- Jewish treatment followed very much the same lines. to Genesis trope

↳ Hajar as fault through her DNA; Egyptian blood.

A pre-emptive stroke of a pre-emption stroke of a self-defensive move of throwing out Hajar by Sarah.

- SLAVE vs. FREE WOMAN AS A MOTHER → another common trope.

- 2 types of women? The law - Hajar (hard, secular philosophy)
- vs. the faith - Sarah (divine, inspired faith)

- In pushing out, Hajar, representing sexuality + maternity is also pushed out. Chastity.

"Text of terror" throwing out of Hajar + Sarah a patriarchal terror.

Hajar as a single mother locked in against patriarchy

↳ an evolution from pre-modern readings to a heroism in modern readings.

(also her role).

• Justification of race-based slavery?

the modern feminist + christ. lit

MODERN, FEMINIST READINGS =

• Exegetic reading now play Abraham as the villain! with immoral, sexist and racist actions. A necessary reading to resolve problematic issues for women?

• Hajar could possibly seen as an archetype of Israel itself! Expulsion and discrimination

↓  
Hajar also as a matriarch of Islam?

→ Islamic rituals established by a woman!

Pilgrimage routines, hajj, based of Hajar's actions. Yet Hajar as a figure does not receive the same level of focus as Maryam, e.g. Why? Islam's identity for Hajar?

Quran does not name her, and mentions her only once.

Sarah's laugh in the Quran. ~~How~~ Do any of these interpretations actually cast Hajar in a -ve light?

Expulsion, not as female oppression, but as part of God's divine plans to reestablish the pure faith of God and the Kaaba through a matriarchal figure.

where is Hajar's gene?

Deployment of the Hajar legend to reinforce political / social movements.

Water as a symbol of mercy, coming not when you want it, but when you have resigned to a God. → Zam-zam.

SURRENDERING TO GOD

↓  
but still emphasizing strength of the female through test, not strength; sacrifice, not action. Feminine traits.

Washed talks about the Hajar legend as an ~~inherent~~ feature of the patriarchy.

→ there is a strong American feminist reading and ways of these sources. To deflect blame and be apologetic?

Pasquini vs. Kalam.

separate ~~readings~~ interpretations, less, ideas?

Nimrod, Pharaoh - egotistical patriarchy

Abraham, Moses - positive patriarchy

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES OF PATRIARCHY?

Isa Arefi is a great antecedent - as not yet fully understood, similarity with others.

• Modern inversion of happiness from causing potential of ego humanity, as opposed to traditional monastic view of submission, and fulfillment of duties.

# ANATOMY AND LOGIC OF ISLAMIC TRADITION

MARIAM SHEIBANI

- What is Patri. and what is it exactly that troubles us about it?
  - is it historically or socially derived?
  - is it the toxicity of its reality
  - or the concept itself of granted authority to men over women.

Grete Jansen? Thoughts of feminism. What is the moral value assigned to both active/passive actions? Are rights themselves patriarchal? Shadow of men.

→ A false framework of patriarchy that we're trying to equalise with in fact, this could be failed / prevent in itself!

- Patri vs. powerlessness! Vertical + horizontal consideration



- Equity:
  - spiritual / ontological
  - legal?
  - social / empirical
  - biological

How many are valid? How many are not?

ACTIVE  
RECEPTIVE.

- If Islamic feminists lived on an island, would they have followed the same historical trajectory of modern society?
- The goal of the march of liberal progress? Adjust course? Can we?

Taking stock:
 

- Unprecedented access.
- Enormity of framework.

reference to women's stress

- 1) Ash'ari thoughts
  - Modernist inclination towards Muta'zili 'rationalism' as opposed to Ash'ari understanding. However, they both agreed that the morals were correct. (i.e. God is still right).

2) By His Grace, God has promised that His commands will bring realisation, peace + justice for us in this world + next, even if beyond comprehension. They challenge us.

→ ref. Q 4: 26-28, 21: 107, 11: 118-119 → focus on the capacity of men to rise above the disputes between different types of people.

are women in fact increasing the yokes and burdens of the laypeople by over restrictive ruling? Contrary to the message declared in this verse.

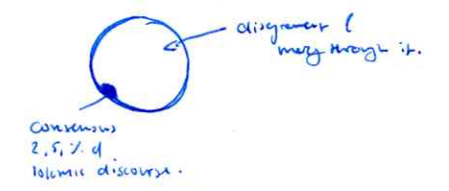
- the <sup>problematic view of for women</sup> ~~husn~~ al-dhann billah, <sup>we</sup> ~~we~~ won't always be able to assess and rationalise these meanings?
  - have a good opinion about God. → e.g. women's rights
- impositions as a challenge to us in an effort to cultivate our character & ethics.

3) By His Grace, God has promised to safeguard the Prophet's s.a.w. community and to preserve its right guidance after its passing.

Q 15: 9. The promise of mujadideen. (hadith) - a reformer at the head of a century to revive & renew the ummah / religion

Imam Al-Ghazali almost unanimously acclaimed as a reformer. (despite controversial statements about women - BUT THIS WAS NOT THE CRISIS HE HAD TO DEAL WITH)

- preservation of hadith, Quran, Arabic, thought, study, compilation, thought, leadership. → hafidh.
- the weight of ijma: consensus. Tirmidhi - God will be w/ the majority. Scholarly authority & continuity. → [requirements to do ijma]



4) Quran's status of God's divine unadulterated speech, is non-negotiable.
 

- the Quran is not a straightforward legal manual. [OM Islam: but it's not in the Quran]

The Quran does not spell out all the legal norms → but it is clear that the Prophet s.a.w. was sent down to elucidate these laws.



- |            |                          |  |
|------------|--------------------------|--|
| Mutawattir | - 100%                   | } <u>Graded</u> Graduation of health and their authenticity. |
| Sahih      | - 85-100%                |  |
| Hasan      | - 50- <del>100</del> 85% |  |
| Daif       | - < 50%                  |  |

Ex. The hadith as a series of data-points or oneedotes which show us the normative legacy of the Prophet S.A.W.

- ① Reconcile the two (extenuating circumstances, etc.)

Shelf's order of priority →

- ② Give precedence to one test
- ③ Abrogation of previous test

- ③ Abrogation of previous test
- ④ Discreet.

Other schools of thought view these things differently.

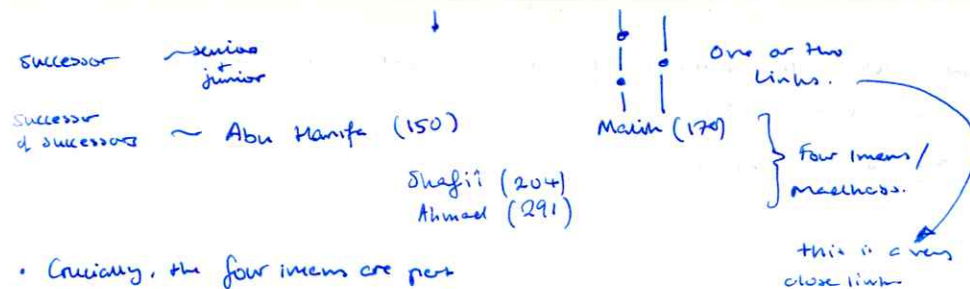
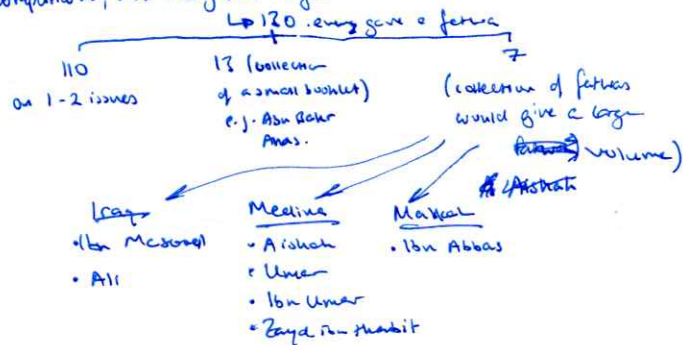
↓

The issues with contemporary engagement with modern health is that legal significance + moral significance is so critical and difficult to determine.

known  
All  
related  
text.

7. Scripture not received in a vacuum. A living tradition but embodied through practice with its understandings, internal coherence & mechanism for change - comprise the substance of tradition alongside scripture.

of 14-120,000 companions, how many were neutrals?  
↳ 130, even



- Crucially, the four imams are part of that third generation after the Prophet SAW. Who through health, we know are rightly guided.
- Crucially, they were also men. But what kind of men? Those who are close and understanding of the reasoning.

8. Every legal view, regardless of background, is assessed by some scholarly standards to determine if it represents a faithful & good-faith interpretation. These self-announced / standards are defending against prejudice & subjective experience.

these assessment methods are all the things we have previously been discussing.

- 9.

Good faith, misgiving, not.

But some isolated juristic views & many post-facto justifications are either problematic or ~~invalid~~ indefensible.

Primary doctrines: consensus, near consensus, core tenets

Secondary doctrines: highly prosocialistic, designed to meet historical moment.

Question: Separately, why are the p/s. doctrines given. Rationale/  
wisdom behind them?

Examples: ~~the~~ tery divorce vs other divorce methods.  
inheritance.

- What is the degree and effectiveness of influence of patriarchal norms on these legal rulings?

Yusuf Ramez. Member Egypt.

Assumption of benign patriarch  
(husband)  
- father

10. Legal institutions existed to ensure protection of women. Defunct now in our time?

- Rulings assure courts and legal councils
- Ween oversight over mens authorities



11. Law, not as read or detached from Islam's moral vision in  
Sunna, *Ṣūṭa*, and *Ḥaḍīṭ* ethics. While necessary, not sufficient and  
do not represent Islam's highest ideals.