

## The Fifth Study

### **Creation of the First Couple of Human Beings: an Analytical investigation of Muslim Feminist Perspectives<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:**

The present research aims at examining the Muslim feminist perspective on the creation of the first human beings as it is one of the pivotal concerns of the feminist thought. This is because feminists argue that the claim that men are superior to women is primarily based on the Qur'anic account of creation of the first human beings which is interpreted that Eve was not only created from, but also for Adam. Therefore, all the Qur'anic verses related to creation of the first human beings are stated to have a holistic view of the Qur'anic context in this regard. Then the feminist perspectives on this issue will be presented and discussed. Finally, the research examines whether all Muslim exegetes decisively say that woman was created from man or not.

**Key words:** Couple of Human Beings - Analytical investigation - Muslim Feminist perspective.

**مستخلص:**

يهدف البحث إلى دراسة الآراء التي تتبناها النسوية الإسلامية فيما يتعلق بخلق أو زوج من البشر، وتعد هذه النقطة من أهم محاور الفكر النسوي. ويرجع هذا إلى أن النسويات ترى أن الزعم بأن الرجال أفضل من النساء يستند بشكل رئيسي على قصة خلق أول رجل وامرأة في القرآن الكريم، التي فسرها كثيرون على أن حواء لم تُخلق من آدم فقط، بل إنها ما خلقت إلا لأجله. من أجل ذلك، يتناول هذا البحث الآيات القرآنية التي تحدثت عن قصة الخلق من خلال إيراد الآيات ذات الصلة كلها لأجل الوصول إلى تصور كلي للمسألة في القرآن الكريم، ثم يثني البحث بعرض ومناقشة آراء بعض النسويات المسلمات حول هذه الآيات، ثم يختم البحث ببحث ما إذا كان جميع المفسرين مجمعين على أن المرأة خلقت من الرجل، أم أنه ثمة خلاف بينهم في هذا الأمر.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** النسوية الإسلامية - دراسة الآراء - خلق أو زوج من البشر.

## Introduction

The issue of creation of the first human beings, i.e. Adam and Eve, is related in many Qur'anic verses. The creation of woman in particular is "a concern central to feminist theology" (Hassan, 1985). This is because, for feminists, the argument of the superiority of man's over women is primarily based on the "belief that woman was created from and for man" (Hassan, 1985). Therefore, they discuss the Qur'anic statements and verses relating to this question from a feminist viewpoint. In this research, the feminist standpoint on this issue will be discussed drawing on two works: "Made from Adam's Rib: The Woman's Creation Question," an article by Riffat Hassan and a book entitled *The Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Qur'anic Text from a Woman's Perspective* by Amina Wadud.

## Qur'anic Verses Relating to Creation

In the beginning, let us have an overview about the Qur'anic verses relating to creation. There are hundreds of verses which include the linguistic root *kh-l-q* and its derivatives or different forms. Of this root, 10 forms occur 239 times in the Qur'an: *khalaqa* 151 times, *khuliqa* 11 times, *khalq* 52 times, *khāliq* 8 times, *khāliqūn* four times, *khallāq* twice, *mukhallaqah* twice, *ikhtilāq* once, *khalāq* six times, and *khuluq* twice. (Badawi & Abdel Haleem, 2008, p. 282). Yet, the verses that speak of the creation of living beings may be grouped into three categories:

**First**, verses that underline the fact that all creatures are created from two genders, male and female, such as al-Ra'd: 3, al-Najm: 45, al-Dhāriyāt: 49, al-Qiyāmah: 39, al-Naba': 8, and al-Layal: 3;

**Second**, verses that indicate that all people are traced back to one male and one female and therefore they should deal justly and equally with each other such as al-Ḥujurāt: 13; and

**Third**, verses that underline that all human beings are created from one *nafs* (being) and give a short account of the creation of the first human beings, Adam and Eve, such as Al-Nisā': 1, Al-An'ām: 98; Al-A'rāf: 189, and Al-Zumar: 6.

The first category stated above indicates that from everything found in the universe there is a pair. Most Qur'anic exegetes state that this is not confined to living creatures, but also alludes to other creatures, i.e. inanimate objects such as sun and moon are a pair, sky and earth are a pair, happiness and sadness are a pair, and so on (Al-Rāzī M. i.-H., 1420 AH, p. 347). This is made to show that nothing in the world is independent and all creatures are dependent on each other and Allah alone is the One on Whom all depend; the Self-Sufficient.

The second category signifies that all human beings have one origin, and therefore, they should have firm belief that all are equal, regardless of color, race, etc. Having this conviction should lead people to deal justly and equally with one another and no group of people should show superiority over another group.

The following section will focus on the third category, i.e. the Qur'anic verses that give a short account of the creation of the first pair of human beings, Adam and Eve. The issue of creation of woman will be elaborated on here by primarily exploring the first Qur'anic verse of the chapter of *al-Nisā'* (women). In the beginning, all the Qur'anic verses related to creation of the first human beings are stated in order to have a holistic view of the Qur'anic context in this regard. They are as follows:

### Al-Nisā' (Verse No. 1):

Allah the Almighty says,

"يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾"

People, be mindful of your Lord, who created you from a single soul, and from it created its mate, and from the pair of them spread countless men and women far and wide; be mindful of God, in whose name you make requests of one another. Beware of severing the ties of kinship: God is always watching over you.

### Al-An'ām: (Verse No. 98):

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْشَأَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ فَمُسْتَقَرٌّ وَمُسْتَوْدَعٌ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٩٨﴾

It is He Who has created you from a single person (Adam), and has given you a place of residing (on the earth or in your mother's wombs) and a place of storage [in the earth (in your graves) or in your father's loins]. Indeed, We have explained in detail Our revelations (this Quran) for people who understand. (Al-An'ām: 98)

### Al-A'rāf (Verse No. 189)

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا فَلَمَّا تَغَشَّاهَا حَمَلَتْ حَمْلًا خَفِيفًا فَمَرَّتْ بِهِ ۖ فَلَمَّا أَثْقَلَتْ دَعَوَا اللَّهَ رَبَّهُمَا لَئِنْ آتَيْنَا صَالِحًا لَنُكَونَنَّ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٨٩﴾

It is He who created you all from one soul, and from it made its mate so that he might find comfort in her: when one [of them] lies with his wife and she conceives a light burden, going about freely, then grows heavy, they both pray to God, their Lord, 'If You give us a good child we shall certainly be grateful.

### Al-Rūm (Verse No. 21):

"وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً ۗ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾"

And among His Signs is this, that He created for you wives from among yourselves, that you may find repose in them, and He has put between you affection and mercy. Verily, in that are indeed signs for a people who reflect. (21)

**Al-Zumar (Verse No. 6):**

"خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْأَنْعَامِ ثَمَانِيَةَ أَزْوَاجٍ يَخْلُقُكُمْ فِي بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ خَلْقًا مِّنْ بَعْدِ خَلْقٍ فِي ظُلُمَاتٍ ثَلَاثٍ ذَٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَهُ الْمُلْكُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ فَاتَىٰ تُصْرَفُونَ" (٦)

He created you all from a single being, from which He made its mate; He gave you four kinds of livestock in pairs; He creates you in your mothers' wombs, in one stage after another, in threefold depths of darkness. Such is God, your Lord; He holds control, there is no god but Him. How can you turn away.

In these Qur'anic verses, we find that the term *nafsin wāḥidatin* is repeated in all verses with only one exception, which is the verse of the chapter of al-Zumar, in which it was replaced with *min anfusikum*. The words *minha* and *zawjahā* also occur in 3 out of the 5 verses. It is worthy here to note that three Arabic verbs are used in these verses for creation, namely *khalāqa*, *ja'ala* and *ansha'a*.

It is noteworthy also here to focus on these three verbs, namely, *khalāqa*, *ja'ala* and *ansha'a*, which signify here to create or bring into existence. Yet, the question here is: Do they signify the same meaning, with no difference whatsoever? Al-Ṭabarī says *ansha'akum* means created you from nothing and hence brought you to existence after you had not been (Al-Ṭabarī, 2000, p. 562). Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī (d. 502 AH) states that *al-Inshaa'*, the verbal noun of *ansha'a*, means *ijād al-Shay' wa tarbiyatuhu* i.e. to create something out of nothing and grow it up or take care of it.

As for *ja'ala*, in his *'Umdat al-Ḥuffāz*, al-Samīn al-Ḥalabī states that *al-ja'l* denotes many meanings, the first of which signifies creating and bringing into being (1996, p. 328). Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī states that it has five significations, the third of which is to make a thing of, or from, a another as in the Almighty Allah's Saying, "*ja'ala* (made) for you from, or of, yourselves wives" (1412 AH, p. 196). In his *Al-Mu'jam al-Ishtiqāqī*, Muḥammad Hasan Jabal states that the primary meaning of this verb is to transform a thing into a certain form or shape (2010, p. 1/316).

(N.42, 2022)

The word *khalaqa*, its primary meaning signifies the preparation of material in order to form a certain thing (Jabal, 2010, p. 601). When it is associated with or attributed to Allah, "it signifies the originating, or bringing into being or existence, anything, not after the similitude of anything pre-existing: the bringing into existence from a state of non-existence: for *خَلَقَ اللَّهُ الشَّيْءَ*" (Lane, 1984, pp. 799-800).

From the above-stated meanings, it is clear that the three verbs have common significance which is to create or bring into being. Yet, there is a distinct meaning of each as follows: *khalaqa* means to create something without a similitude or from nothing; *ja'ala* means to create a thing from another thing which already exists, or assign a function for something; and *ansha'a* means to create something and grow and take care of it.

#### **The First Verse of Surah al-Nisā' (4:1)**

Feminists argue that the Islamic tradition is patriarchal and that it was written by men who give superiority to men over women. They describe these traditional exegeses as 'oppressive readings of the Qur'ān' and argue that traditional exegetical works were biased against women as Muslim male exegetes wanted, by their exegetical articulation, to keep woman in a position of inferiority and thus "Islam is used as an instrument of oppression rather than a means of liberation". (Jawad, 2003, p. 107)

In her discussion of the creation of Adam and Eve related in the first verse of the chapter of al-Nisā', Amina Wadud proposes a discussion that essentially revolves around language. This is because, for her, "every discussion of the Unseen involves the ineffable". Therefore, she subscribes to the opinion of Kenneth Burke (d. 1993) that all words related to God or the Unseen must be investigated analogically (Burke, 1961, p. 14). This means that the words we use to refer to the supernatural are borrowed by analogy from the words we use every day for the natural, for socio-political realm, and for words concerned with

words such as dictionaries, grammar, etc. Influenced by Burke theory, Wadud focuses her discussion of the human-being-creation-related Qur'anic verses, especially 4:1 on certain vocabularies or words, namely, *min*, *ayat*, *nafs*, and *zawaj*.

In order to investigate such words as well as all other issues related to women, Wadud relies on two methods. First, she reads the Qur'an according to her threefold hermeneutical model: 1. the context in which the Qur'an was revealed, 2. the text's grammatical composition, and 3. the Qur'an's world-view, or consideration of the text in its totality (Wadud, 1999, p. 3). The second method is that of Fazlur Rahman who develops a methodology called 'double or two-fold movement'. This movement commences from the present context back to the time when the Qur'an was revealed and then the way around to the present. Put in Fazlur Rahman words, "Whereas the first movement has been from the specifics of the Qur'an to the eliciting and systemizing of its general principles, values and long-range objectives, the second is to be from this general view to the specific view that is to be formulated and realized now" (Fazlur Rahman , 1982, p. 7).

Accordingly, argues Wadud, fully understanding the implications of the Qur'anic text as expressed at the time of its revelation is a requirement for determining the proper meaning which in turn provide us with the "intentions of the rulings or principles in the particular verse". Having fully grasped this, these intentions should be reflected in the circumstances or cases of our time now, which serves to achieve the 'spirit' of the Qur'an.



According to this methodology, Wadud discusses the origin of humankind by investigating the first verse of the chapter of al-Nisā', especially the words referred to above, namely, *ayat*, *min*, *nafs* and *zawj*. Surprisingly, the said verse does not include the word *ayah* or *ayat*, although it (the word *ayah*) is mentioned in another related Qur'anic verse (Al-Rūm-30:21). The verse of Al-Nisā' reads:

Yā-ayyuhā al-nāsu ittaqū rabbakumu alladhī khalaqakum min nafsīn wāḥidatin wakhalāqa min'hā zawjahā wabatha min'humā rijālan kathīran wanisāan ...

Yet, Wadud states it as follows:

Wa min ayatihi an khalaqa-kum min nafsīn wāḥidatin wa khalaqa min-ha zawjahā wa baththa minhuma rijālan kathīran wa nisa'an (4:1).

### *The Origins of Humankind*

Wa min ayatihi an khalaqa-kum min nafsīn wāḥidatin wa khalaqa min-ha zawjahā wa baththa minhuma rijālan kathīran wa nisa'an (4:1).

And *min* His *ayat* (is this:) that He created You (humankind) *min* a single *nafs*, and created *min* (that *nafs*) its *zawj*, and from these two He spread (through the earth) countless men and women. (4:1).

The above verse<sup>9</sup> presents the basic elements in the Qur'anic version of the story of the origins of humankind, that story commonly understood as the creation of Adam and Eve. To aid our understanding, we will look at these four key terms: *ayat*, *min*, *nafs* and *zawj*.<sup>10</sup>

#### *AYAH*

An *ayah* (pl. *ayat*) is 'a sign' which indicates something beyond itself.

Just as a waymark must not cause a traveller to rivet his eyes on itself, but direct him towards a certain place which is the real destination of his travel, so every

Although there are three forms of this root  $\text{آ ي ي}$  (' y y) which occur 380 times in the Qur'an: *āyah* (singular form) 86 times; *āyatān* (dual form) once; and *'āyāt* (plural form) 295 times, none of these forms appear in the first verse of the chapter of al-Nisā. So, to put it right, this part of the verse as stated by Wadud –in these exact words- is mentioned in only one verse in the Qur'an (Al-Rūm-30:21), which reads:

Wamin āyātihi an khalaqakum min turābin thumma idhā antum  
basharun tantashirūn

Accordingly, the word *āyāt* (sing. *āyah*) investigated by Wadud in this context of discussing the origin of humankind in light of the first verse of the chapter of al-Nisā' is missing in this verse. For Wadud, *ayah* is "a sign which indicates something beyond itself" (1999, p. 17). She divides *āyāt* into two types: explicit and implicit. Explicit *āyāt* are "linguistic: verbal symbols and words". Although they are explicit, when they provide information about the Unseen, they cannot be fully identified or understood by 'human faculties'. They can only be perceived through revelation. Implicit *āyāt*, on another hand, are non-linguistic, "empirical signs which can be perceived by humankind". Wadud concludes that both types are meant to complete the goal or purpose of the Qur'an; providing guidance.

In her analysis of the word *min*, she says that it is used in Arabic in two ways: 1) as preposition, from, to "imply the extraction of a thing from other thing(s)", or 2) to mean "of the same nature as". Accordingly, when the word *min* in the verse (4:1) is interpreted with one of these ways, it implies a different meaning. According to the first sense, the verse then means that the "first created being (taken to be a male person) was complete perfect and superior". Thus, she concludes, the second created being, taken to be a woman would be inferior, derivative and less than the first being. On the contrary, she argues, when the second meaning is considered, then the verse would mean that both created beings are of the same nature and therefore they are equal. She states that the Qur'an exegetes subscribe to the first meaning and cite

**(N.42, 2022)**

only al-Zamakhsharī as an example and argues that he employs Judeo-Christian report to substantiate his opinion.

As for the word *nafs*, she refers to the grammatical nature of the word as being feminine and that conceptually it is neither feminine nor masculine. Accordingly, she concludes that –in the Qur'anic story of creation, Allah did not intend to begin creation with a male person, Adam. She underlines that this omission should be well noted and should be expressive of the gender-free language in the creation account in the Qur'an.

Like the term *nafs*, the word *zawj* is grammatically masculine and conceptually is neither masculine nor feminine. Reviewing the usages of this term throughout the Qur'an, Wadud infers that Qur'anic statement that everything is created in pairs (51:49) proves that each created thing is contingent upon its *zawj*. In this contingency, the creation of both the original parents is irrevocably and primordially linked and thus the two are equally essential (Wadud, 1999, p. 21). In the context of her elaboration on this term, Wadud discusses gender roles and masculinity and femininity in light of the Qur'an. She states that although the Qur'an distinguishes between male and female (3:36), it does not exclusively attribute distinct characteristics to each of them, except for child-bearing for women. Accordingly, she argues, apart from this biological function of woman, all other "psychological and cultural" functions such as child rearing and care are not feminine essential characteristics. Rather, she adds, masculinity and femininity are not primordial, natural characteristics of male or female, but they are constructed as a result of cultural factors which determine how each gender should act or function (1999, p. 22).

From the above-stated presentation of Wadud's view, it is found that her discussion revolves around one major theme: proving equality between man and woman by negating the argument that the first created female being, Eve, was created from the first created male being, Adam. Here arise some questions: Do all Muslim exegetes decisively say that woman was created from man? And if we say, for the sake of argument, that woman was created from man; does this imply that woman is inferior to man? The next section will present Riffat Hassan's view of the issue of creation of the first beings and will conclude with answering these questions.

In her "Made from Adam's Rib: The Woman's Creation Question," Riffat Hassan compares the description of creation of Adam and Eve in the Bible to that of the Qur'ān. She notes that there is a specific reference to the creation of Adam and Eve in Genesis: 2, while there is no corresponding reference in the Qur'an, except for a verse in the sura-chapter of Al Imrān (54) which clearly states the name of Adam, with no mention of Eve (Hassan R. , 1991, p. 45).

She further elaborates that the Qur'an speaks of the creation of human beings in two ways: First, mentioning the different stages of creation, which she terms "evolutionary process", and second, dealing with it "as an accomplished factor or in its totality" (Hassan, 1985, p. 137). Enumerating all the occurrences of both, she contends that none of them can be relied on as evidence for the creation of man before woman or for supporting the idea that man was the origin and woman was created from him.

Riffat Hassan argues that Muslims in general believe that women do not have the same position of men and that they are inferior to men. In her opinion, there are three reasons for this belief: the creation of God is man and not woman who is believed to be created from his rib; woman alone was responsible for man's expulsion from paradise or *jannah*, and therefore all her daughters –women in general- inherit this sin from her; and woman was created from man and for him and she therefore cannot

(N.42, 2022)

be equal to him (1991, p. 44). In the context of discussing these three assumptions, she raises three questions: "(1) How was woman created? (2) Was woman responsible for the Fall of man? and (3) Why was woman created?" She investigates this issue of man-woman equality by answering these three questions.

Regarding woman's creation, she contends that the wide-spread belief among Muslims that woman was created from a crooked Adam's rib "has no basis whatsoever in the Qur'an" and that it is based on Genesis 2: 18-24. On the contrary, she adds, the linguistic and grammatical structure of most Qur'anic phrases speaking of the creation of the first human being may be interpreted that the first created being was a female, not a male. Yet, she analyzes the Qur'anic usage of masculine and feminine terms and imagery, without favoring one party over another, in the creation story of first created beings from a single source to conclude that "God's original creation was undifferentiated humanity and not either man or woman" (Hassan R. , 1991, p. 45). This leads her to inquire about the source of the conviction spread among Muslims that woman was created from a crooked rib of Adam.

Investigating this point, she concludes that this conviction was formed due to infiltration of the Genesis story of creation through the Hadith literature. She refers to six hadiths narrated by Abu Hurayrah, may Allah be pleased with him and recorded by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, the most two authentic hadith collections for Sunni Muslims. They hadiths are:

1. Treat women nicely, for a woman is created from a rib, and the most curved portion of the rib is its upper portion, so if you would try to straighten it, it will break, but if you leave it as it is, it will remain crooked. So treat women nicely (M. M. Khan, 346).
2. The woman is like a rib, if you try to straighten her, she will break. So if you want to get benefit from her, do so while she still has some crookedness (M. M. Khan, 80).

3. Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not hurt (trouble) his neighbor. And I advise you to take care of the women, for they are created from a rib and the most crooked part of the rib is its upper part; if you try to straighten it, it will break, and if you leave it, it will remain crooked, so I urge you to take care of woman (M. M. Khan, 81).
4. Woman is like a rib. When you attempt to straighten it, you would break it. And if you leave her alone you would benefit by her and crookedness will remain in her (Siddiqui, 752).
5. Woman has been created from a rib and will in no way be straightened for you; so . . . benefit by her while crookedness remains in her. And if you attempt to straighten her, you will break her, and breaking her is divorcing her (Siddiqui, 752),
6. He who believes in Allah and the Hereafter, if he witnesses any matter he should talk in good terms about it or keep quiet. Act kindly towards women, for woman is created from a rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is its top. If you attempt to straighten it, you will break it, and if you leave it, the crookedness will remain there so act kindly towards women (Siddiqui, 752-53).

Having examined these hadiths, Riffat Hassan argued that:

1. They are flawed in both their *matn* (text or content) and *isnad* (chain of transmitters).
2. These hadiths contradict the teachings of the Qur'an as they provide a theology of woman that is based on "generalizations about their ontology, biology, and psychology contrary to the letter and spirit of the Qur'an".
3. The hadiths under investigation should be rejected, and their authenticity should be challenged in order to promote egalitarianism in Muslim societies.

**(N.42, 2022)**

4. Despite this, these hadiths have continued to be an important part of Islamic tradition, in part because they are recorded in the two most highly venerated Hadith collections; Al-Bukhari and Muslim.

In her investigation of these hadiths, she argues that they are flawed or defective with regard to their chains of transmitters. She further contends that these hadiths should be rejected because they contradict the Qur'an as they contain the word *ḍil'* or rib, which makes them subscribe to the Genesis account of creation, and not the Qur'an. But, can we doubt the *isnād* of hadiths recorded in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*? And does this word 'rib' in the context of these hadiths refer to actual or metaphorical rib?

As for *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* or *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, they are regarded by Muslim scholars of Ḥadīth, such as Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643 AH), al-Nawawī (d. 676 AH), and Zayn al-Dīn al-'Irāqī (d. 806 AH), as the most two authentic, reliable and authoritative books after the Book of Allah; the Glorious Qur'an. In his *al-Taqrīb wa al-Taysīr li-Ma'rifat Sunan al-Bashīr al-Nadhīr fī Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*, al-Nawawī states, "The first collection of only *ṣaḥīḥ* (authentic) hadiths is *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and then *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* [comes next]. They both are the most authentic books only after the Qur'an." (al-Nawawī, 1985, p. 26) Accordingly, the *isnāds* (chains of transmission) of the hadiths quoted by Riffat Hassan cannot be criticized. Based on this fact, there is a flaw in her argument that these hadiths are flawed or defective with regard to their chains of transmitters. Her argument is spurious and must be rejected.

Regarding the word rib, these hadiths state "created from *ḍil'*," and not "created from *ḍil'* of Adam". Here, scholars say that there are two interpretations of *ḍil'* in this context. First, to take it in its *ḥaqīqī* (literal) meaning and thus it would mean that woman is created from the rib of Adam. The second opinion is that the literal meaning is not intended here and it is used in *majāzī* (metaphorical) sense, meaning that its nature is unpredictable and unusual like a crooked rib (al-Mubarkfūrī, 1999, p. 2/426). Al-Sha'rawī (d. 1998) says that had Eve been created from a rib of Adam, Allah would have said in the Qur'an 4:1: "*ja'ala* (made) out of him his mate," as the Arabic verb *ja'ala* is the verb which suits this sense, i.e. creating a thing out of an existing thing. But, Al-Sha'rawī continues, as He, Glory be to Him, uses the verb *khalāqa* (created), this implies that the creation of Eve was independent from the creation of Adam (Al-Sha'rawī, 2006, p. 9). This gives preponderance to the opinion that the metaphorical sense is the intended one in these hadiths.

Here the question is: why are Riffat Hassan and Wadud so determined to prove that man was not created before woman? What are the repercussions of such argument in their view? The answer here is that they argue that Muslims in general, and Muslim scholars in particular, see that women are inferior to men and that they cannot be equal to men, either before the Creator, Allah the Almighty, or in this worldly life. They further argue that Muslims base this opinion on the belief that woman is created for and from man and therefore she cannot be equal to him. To respond to this feminist argument, it is necessary to consider the following questions: Are Muslims, or specifically Muslim scholars, in agreement that woman was created from man? And if yes, does this mean that woman is inferior to man? The following section will review and analyze the views of some Muslim exegetes on this issue.



Most Muslim exegetes, such as al-Rāzī (13/80), al-Ṭabarī (11/562), al-Baghawī (2/146), Ibn ‘Aṭīyya (2/326), al-Ṭāhir ibn ‘Ashūr (7/395), etc., argue that the phrase *nafsin wāḥidatin* (one being) in these contexts refers to Adam, may Allah be pleased with him. For example, in his *Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb*, al-Rāzī (d. 606 AH) argues that Muslims are in agreement that the word (*nafs*) in this Qur'anic verse refers to Adam (PBUH), who was created from land; dust. With regard to the word (*zawjaha*), he states that it refers to *ḥawwā'* (Eve). Yet, as for the creation of Eve, he mentions two opinions: First, the opinion of the majority that she was created from one of the left ribs of Adam; and second, that she was created from the same genus of Adam and this opinion was attributed to Abū Muslim al-Aṣfahānī only. Al-Rāzī himself gives preponderance to the first opinion, of the majority, because, for him, if Eve was created from dust, just like Adam, then the verse should have stated 'who created you from two souls' (Al-Rāzī A. A.-H., 1420 AH, pp. 9/ 477 - 478).

Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH), beforehand, stated this same opinion, but he related a report by Ibn Ishāq in which he attributed the narration or account of the creation of Eve from Adam's rib to the People of the Book (Al-Ṭabarī, 2000, pp. Vol. 7, pp. 513-516).

On the contrary, Muḥammad ‘Abduh argues that the expression "*nafsin waḥidah*" here does not refer to Adam either by text per se or by its explicit and apparent meaning (Riḍā, 1990, vol. 4, 265). He states two perspectives in this regard: First, that the apparent meaning of this Qur'anic verse negates the interpretation that Adam is the intended entity by *nafs* here because this meaning contradicts the scientific and historical researches. Second, that there is no verse in the Glorious Qur'an that has non-probabilistic (*qat'ī*) indication that Adam is the father of all human beings (Riḍā, 1990, vol. 4, p. 267). Rashīd Riḍā explains that this opinion of ‘Abduh is beneficial in responding to the misconceptions that are raised in this respect, but, at the same time, it does not deny the opinion of those who believe that Adam is the father of all humankind. This is because ‘Abduh does not argue that the Qur'an undermines the opinion of those people, but it does not affirm it in a non-probabilistic way either (Riḍā, 1990, vol. 4, p. 267).

### **Conclusion**

From the very beginning, there has been a difference of opinion among Muslim exegetes concerning the creation of woman; as some argue that woman was created from Adam and other contend that there were two separate operations of creation of both of them, though they both were created from the same origin. Accordingly, the feminist argument that all Muslim exegetes are in total agreement that woman was created from the rib of Adam is not fully true. Rather, modern scholars, such as Muḥammad ‘Abduh, argue that *nafs waḥidah* does not refer to Adam. In the same vein, through analyzing the two verb *khalāqa* and *ja‘ala*, Al-Sha‘rāwī concludes that the creation of Eve was independent from the creation of Adam. The Qur'an is silent about this specific point which indicates that it aims to direct people to the fact they all are of one origin and heading to one destination. This is intended to promote *taqwā* and peaceful coexistence among people.

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