

## Critical Study of Riffat Hassan's Thoughts on the Misogynist Hadith 'The Creation of Women'

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### Abstract

The purpose of writing this article is to examine Riffat Hassan's thoughts, as well as criticize his views on the hadith on the 'creation of women' which he considers to be a misogynist hadith. This was done by Riffat with the aim of deconstructing and offering another interpretation, with feminist analysis, in order to produce an egalitarian understanding. The method used in this paper is qualitative with a literature study approach. The main data used in this study are Hassan's thoughts contained in the book entitled Women's and Men's Liberation and the book Equal Before Allah. These two articles clearly illustrate Riffat Hassan's thoughts on misogynistic hadith. The data analysis used is by presenting the data (Riffat Hassan's views on the hadith on the creation of women), then examining in depth the truth of the data, then criticizing this view. The results of this research are (1) explaining the influence of thought and cultural background which influenced Riffat Hassan's feminist thinking, (2) explaining the results of Riffat's reinterpretation of the theory of the creation of women, and his rejection of traditional interpretations which seem to demean women, (3) various criticisms of Riffat's thoughts regarding the misogynistic hadith 'creation of women', starting from criticism of sanad to problematic *matan*.

**Keywords:** Riffat Hassan, misogynistic hadith, gender equality

### INTRODUCTION

Since the 19th century, the Islamic world has begun to show its spirit of revival from the backwardness of civilization. This is certainly a very good step to improve the glory of Islam (M Dahlan, 2015). This is marked by the continued development of Islamic renewal thinking, which previously experienced the disintegration of civilization and scientific stagnation. If in the Middle Ages the West experienced a 'dark age' which then

gave birth to an intellectual awakening, in the Islamic world the momentum of the 'second awakening' actually came from the influence of modernization in the West (Mujahidin, 2013). Therefore, modern thought patterns in Islam are not much different from the spirit of enlightenment in the West which talks a lot about human rights, religious pluralism, freedom of thought, and including gender equality, as a discourse that was born from the struggle for thought and reading of the basic teachings of Islam which were absorbed from the Koran and hadith (Kurnianto, 2007., Fadhilah, N., 2022).

Regarding the last issue above, namely gender equality, remains an interesting study, especially with the emergence of feminist movements which raise gender issues based on Islamic postulates, namely the Koran and Hadith. The emergence of feminist figures such as Amina Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, Nawal el-Saadawi, Riffat Hassan, and others, attempted to react to inequality and injustice imposed by a social order that is patriarchal bias towards women by deconstructing and interpreting religious postulates (Hidayatullah, 2010).

As for this article, Riffat Hassan's feminist thoughts seem interesting to study and criticize regarding his views on gender equality. In fact, there has been a lot of research on Riffat Hassan's thoughts up to the present day, starting from research on the interpretative approach used by Riffat Hassan (Nurmala, et al, 2023), comparisons of Riffat Hassan's thoughts with other feminists in interpreting normative propositions (Stack, 2020), to other products. a product of interpretation about gender equality (Imran & Wei, 2019), and criticism of misogyny (Morady, et al, 2019). What is interesting is that Riffat put the initial foothold in building his deconstruction of gender equality by attempting to reinterpret the theory of the 'creation of women' (Fadhilah, N., 2023). Because according to him, the theory of the creation of women that has so far been understood only contains myths put forward by religious scholars to shackle women's freedom. As a consequence, this will give rise to negative stigma and injustice towards women in more complex matters.

Therefore, more specifically, this article will discuss Riffat Hassan's thoughts regarding the theory of 'the creation of women' as a starting point in deconstructing gender equality. Second, a discussion of misogynist hadiths relating to the creation of women, and third, a critical view of the thought products and methodology of hadith criticism carried out by Riffat Hassan. In this case, it is necessary to criticize the 'validity' of the interpretive

deconstruction that he carried out. To test the extent of Riffat's accuracy in assessing a hadith, which he later called a 'misogynist hadith'.

The method used in this paper is qualitative with a literature study approach. The main data used in this study are Hassan's thoughts contained in the book entitled *Women's and Men's Liberation* and the book *Equal Before Allah*. These two articles clearly illustrate Riffat Hassan's thoughts on misogynistic hadith. The data analysis used is by presenting the data (Riffat Hassan's views on the hadith on the creation of women), then examining in depth the truth of the data, then criticizing this view.

In an effort to examine Riffat Hassan's thoughts in depth regarding his views on misogynist hadith, as a step towards achieving an understanding of gender equality. So, the step taken by the researcher was to identify the central idea, namely Riffat Hassan's strong criticism of the misogynistic hadith (hadith on the creation of women) contained in the book entitled *Women's and Men's Liberation* (written with L. Grob and H. Gordon) and in the book entitled *Equal Before Allah* (written with F. Mernissi). Next, explaining Riffat Hassan's understanding of this theme, extracting related information, examining the historical and cultural context of figures related to gender equality. Then evaluate and criticize Riffat Hassan's thoughts critically, so as to produce a balanced conclusion.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Riffat Hassan's Cultural and Scientific Background**

It is important to know the scientific field and cultural context (cultural background) of a figure who will be discussed. Because ideas cannot be separated from the historical setting that surrounds them (Rahmadi, 2019). Therefore, a character's cultural context is part of the paradigmatic framework of the ideas offered by him. In this case, it is an important part to know the scientific and cultural background of Riffat Hassan, as the figure who will be discussed.

Riffat Hassan is a Muslim feminist from Lahore, Pakistan. Born around 1943, but it is not known exactly when his birth date was. However, what is clear is that Riffat was born into a respectable family, his father—who was familiarly called Begum Shahiba—was a prominent figure and had the lineage of a sayyid. It's just that his father adhered to traditionalist beliefs which were considered firm in maintaining patriarchal bias, as was

generally adhered to by Pakistani society at that time (Mernissi and Hassan, 1995). However, what is unique is that Riffat's mother is a 'radical' feminist - a term used by Riffat himself - because her mother is in conflict with many of her father's thoughts.

Riffat dares to go against his father, who is a very traditional patriarchal figure. All of Riffat's efforts to rebel against his father were inseparable from his mother's strong encouragement to continue fighting the patriarchal system adopted by his father. According to Riffat Hassan, his mother had a big influence on his educational success because she encouraged him to become an independent individual (Ikrar, 2022).

Riffat Hassan experienced anxiety in the academic and theological realm when he saw Muslim women losing their human and Islamic rights. This problem arises along with the dominance of patriarchal culture among Muslims. This experience became a reality for Riffat when she decided to marry a man who was also a victim of patriarchal culture. Her marriage to Dawar had to end after they were blessed with a daughter named Mona. His daughter is a source of confidence for Riffat to continue moving forward. Riffat's disappointment deepened when she was forced to remarry, this time to Mahmoud, an Arab Muslim man who continued to practice the patriarchal system and always used God's name in his every action (Morady, et al, 2019).

The patriarchal culture that has developed in Pakistan has established the reality of 'male domination' and positioned women as 'the other' in society. This creates discrimination and injustice against women. This historical background inspired Riffat Hassan to persistently and loudly voice the ideas of gender equality to create an egalitarian culture in the surrounding community (Mustaqim, et.al, 2002).

Regarding his scientific background, Riffat studied at St Mary's College University of Durham in England, where he received cum laude honors in the fields of English literature and philosophy. Meanwhile, his doctoral education concentrated in the field of Islamic philosophy at the same campus. At the age of 24, Riffat already held a doctorate in Islamic philosophy with his dissertation on the philosophical thoughts of Muhammad Iqbal, who was none other than a Muslim philosopher from Pakistan ( Mernissi and Hassan, 1995). This certainly influenced Riffat's further thoughts.

In 1976, Riffat became a professor and served as chair of the Religious Studies program at Louesville University, Kentucky. In 1983, Riffat was heavily involved in

research conducted by the Pakistani government within the framework of its Islamization program. However, Riffat's anxiety is increasing, why is it that when a country implements Islamization, the first action it takes is to force women to return to the house, cover their entire bodies, and tighten laws against women (Ansori, 1997).

From there, Riffat became more serious about studying the Koran and reinterpreting the Koran. He found many 'irregularities' in tafsir products, as well as in the narration of hadith, which he considered to be dominated by patriarchal traditions (Mustaqim, et.al, 2002). So, it can be seen that Riffat Hassan's spirit of feminism which is based on religious postulates (feminist theology) is influenced by various factors, namely family, socio-cultural, education and political influence.

Apart from being busy as a lecturer and researcher, since 1987, Riffat has also become increasingly productive in writing about gender equality issues. Among his works are entitled *Equal Before Allah: Women-Man Equality in Islamic Tradition*, *Feminist Theology and Woman in The Muslim World*, *The Role and Responsibility of Women in Legal and Ritual Tradition of Islam*, *Women's and Men's Liberation*, and various other articles that raise issues -gender equality issues. So, there is no doubt that Riffat Hassan is an influential Muslim feminist who has made a big contribution, especially to Pakistani society. If you borrow the term used by Abdullah Saeed, then Riffat is included in the group *the progressive-ijtihadist*, namely modern scholars who seek to reinterpret religious teachings, so that they can answer the complexity of current problems (Saeed, 2006., Ramadan, 2004). Especially with a feminist approach, gender equality.

### **Riffat Hassan's Interpretation of the Creation of Woman**

The socio-historical approach involves a thorough and critical examination of the normative ideals presented in the Qur'an. This examination is followed by the connection of these ideals to the empirical-historical reality of women's conditioning in Islamic society. Regrettably, Riffat Hassan's empirical data reveals a notable "gap" between the ideal-normative standards and the historical-empirical-realistic circumstances concerning women. From her early years, Hassan experienced teachings that emphasized women's subservience and obedience, limiting their ability to determine their own attitudes, such as being

compelled into early marriages. Furthermore, despite hailing from a respected traditional Islamic family, she grapples with a familial crisis and conflict (Nurmala., et al., 2023).

In compiling his interpretation, Riffat Hassan offers an interpretive construction that is free from gender bias, which is known as the critical-historical-contextual interpretation method. How this method works can be described as follows. First of all, an examination of the accuracy of the meaning of the word or language is carried out, which involves a critical search of the history and roots of the word according to the context at a certain time. Next, Riffat applies semantic analysis to understand how the context and socio-cultural conditions at that time influence the meaning of words. Second, testing is carried out on the philosophical consistency of existing interpretations. Third, ethical principles are applied by referring to the principles of justice which reflect God's justice (Hassan, 1990).

For Riffat Hassan, the discourse of injustice can be traced to the root of the problem from the concept of the creation of women (Eve: Adam's wife). As is commonly known, in the views of earlier religionists, which were later used as interpretations of the Koran, that woman (Eve) was created from man (Adam). This has the consequence of understanding that the existence of women is no more than a complement, it means that women are not equal to men (Riffat Hassan, et.al, 1991).

This assumption can be traced from classical ulama's interpretations of Surah Al-A'raf [7] verse 189, An-Nisa' [4] verse 1, and others.

هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَجَعَلَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا لِيَسْكُنَ إِلَيْهَا

It is He - Allah -Who created you from a single being (*nafs wahidah*), and out of it He made its mate, that he may find comfort in her (Al-A'raf [7]: 189).

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

O men! Fear your Lord Who created you from a single being (*nafs wahidah*) and out of it created its mate; and out of the two spread many men and women (An-Nisa' [4]: 1).

Ibn Kathir, for example, interprets the word *nafsin wahidah* (single being) as meaning Adam, while the word *zawjaha* (partner) means Eve (Ibn Kathir, 1998). Likewise similar

interpretations by Ath-Thabari, Al-Biqai'i, Abu As-Su'ud, Al-Zamakhsyari, Al-Alusi, As-Suyuthi, Al-Maraghi, etc. According to Riffat Hassan, this must be criticized, apart from the existence of different interpretations from other interpreters such as Muhammad Abduh, Al-Qasimi, Thabataba'i, etc., there is also 'confusion' in the interpretation which is caused by the strong misogynistic bias in the 'traditionalist' interpretation (Hassan, 1995).

Riffat not only strongly rejected the views of the classical commentators above, but also questioned why it seemed certain that Nafs Wahidah was Adam and Zawjaha was Eve. In fact, according to him, the word nafs in Arabic is actually neutral. That is, it can refer to men or women. Likewise, the word zawj cannot be automatically interpreted as wife (read: woman), but is also neutral, meaning partner. Quoting the Taj Al-'Arus dictionary, Riffat stated that only the Hijaz people use the term zawj to refer to women, while other regions use the word zawjah. Then the question is, why does the Koran, which is not only intended for Hijaz people, use the term zawj instead of zawjah, if what is meant is really women? (Abdul Mustaqim, 2002).

If understood further, the interpretation as above arises from the understanding of the hadith which states that women are made from rib bones. As narrated by Al-Bukhari,

اسْتَوْصُوا بِالنِّسَاءِ، فَإِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ خُلِقَتْ مِنْ ضِلْعٍ

"Advise women because women are created from ribs (*khuliqat min dhila'in*)" (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol 3). This understanding of the hadith is then used as the basis for interpreting the verses of the Koran relating to the nafs in wahidah. So that it provides an understanding that women are second creatures (the second sex) or subordinate to men so they are considered not worthy of being equal to them (Nasaruddin Umar, 2003). This kind of hadith is considered by Riffat to be a misogynist hadith.

The term 'misogynistic hadith' does not mean that the Prophet hated women - because in reality the Prophet really respected to women - but the editorials of hadith produced by hadith narrators sometimes give the impression, by subsequent readers, of discrimination against women (Fudhaili, 2005). 173

Furthermore, Riffat questioned the word 'Adam'. According to him, the word Adam comes from Hebrew which means land, this indicates a generic term for humans (Riffat Hassan, 1995). So the word Adam is in line with the use of the words al-basyar, al- insan, an-nass which indicate the meaning of man, not gender. From this it can be seen that Riffat was influenced by the thoughts of Muhammad Iqbal, who interpreted the word Adam as a concept, not as a person (Abdul Mustaqim, et.al, 2002).

In this case, Riffat attempts to deconstruct the classical understanding of the creation of women originating from Adam's rib. In his view, this understanding is incorrect. Because according to Riffat, Adam and Eve were created from the same substance (*jinsun wahidun*). Not that Adam was created first from the ground, then Eve was created next from Adam's rib. Such stories, according to Riffat, are only israiliyat stories or fairy tales that originate from the Bible (Genesis 2). If this story had not been included in Genesis, leading to the understanding above, then of course this erroneous opinion would never have occurred to Muslims.

The story of the creation of women as stated in Genesis 2, it is difficult to believe that it entered the Islamic tradition directly, because very few Muslims at that time studied the Bible. It is more likely that the story has undergone assimilation from the hadith literature in the early Islamic period. Meanwhile, the redaction of the hadith transmission has most likely distorted the main message of the hadith, by allowing it to be narrated meaningfully (Riffat Hassan, 1995).

The implication is that Riffat rejects the validity of the hadith, both in terms of sanad and matan (content). Apart from the fact that the hadith had clearly misogynistic content, the hadith was also criticized by Riffat from the sanad (hadith transmitter) line which he considered problematic. Because there are narrators who are not tsiqah, namely Maysarah Al-Asyja'i, Haramalah Ibnu Yahya, Zaidah, and Abu Zinad. Riffat's assessment is based on the book *Mizan Al-I'tidal fi Naqd Ar-Rijal* by Adz-Dzahabi, a 19th century critic of hadith. 14 AD. So it is on this basis that Riffat gives dha'if (weak) status to the hadith even though the hadith in question comes from an authoritative source, Al-Bukhari.

According to Riffat, the creation of Adam and Eve was equal, from the same substance, and in the same way. Theological assumptions state that Adam (man) was the first creation, while Eve was created from Adam's rib, that women were the cause of his expulsion from heaven, that women were created as complements, and so on. These things cannot be accounted for and have no fundamental meaning. In fact, the creation of men and women are equal before Allah, in accordance with the concept of *fi ahsani taqwim*. 174

To strengthen his view, that the positions of men and women are equal, and that the Koran never builds a hierarchy that positions men higher than women, Riffat Hassan quoted the Koran verse Al-Baqarah [2]: 187, Ali Imran [3]: 195, and An-Nisa' [4]: 124. Among them:

فَاسْتَجَابَ لَهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ أَنِّي لَا أُضِيعُ عَمَلَ عَامِلٍ مِّنْكُمْ مِّمَّنْ ذَكَرِ أَوْ أَنْتِي بَعْضُكُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ



Their Lord answered the Prayer thus: "I will not suffer the work of any of you, whether male or female, to go to waste; each of you is from the other (Ali Imran [3]: 195). These verses hint at the equality of men and women. That Allah The All Just, and never lowers women over men (Riffat Hassan, 1990).

### **Criticism of Riffat Hassan's Thoughts Above**

In this case, several criticisms of Riffat Hassan's thoughts regarding the creation of women and the 'misogynistic' hadith he criticized will be presented.

*First*) the theological assumption of the creation of women is the root of the problem which gives rise to a gender-biased understanding which results in injustice towards women in various aspects of life. In this context, the efforts made by Riffat Hassan in deconstructing understanding and offering interpretations from a feminist perspective certainly need to be considered and accepted as part of the paradigm in Islamic thought (Riffat Hassan, 1991).

However, another problem arose, when Riffat suspected that the traditional interpretation which reduced women (while benefiting men's position) was because the mufassir were all men. "Interpreted only by Muslim men who have arrogated to themselves" (Riffat Hassan, et.al, 1991). Such suspicion is actually unnecessary, especially in building the construction of egalitarianism. Because indirectly, Riffat has damaged the concept of equality (egalitarianism), where both men and women must partner with each other without harboring hatred. In the sense that Riffat has been trapped in the demonization of the male gender.

Apart from that, it needs to be understood that Riffat's interpretation of the creation of women, related to the concepts of *nafsin wahidah*, *zawj*, and *'adamah*, is not purely a product of Riffat's thoughts. Because similar interpretations have been made by previous mufassir and thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Rasyid Ridha, Al-Qasimi, and the leading Shiite cleric, Thabataba'i, also had similar interpretations (M. Quraish Shihab, 1999). However, in this case it needs to be appreciated that Riffat's interpretation efforts use a critical methodology, namely a historical-contextualist approach, so that the interpretation is deeper and gives rise to various new possibilities that can be taken.

In his interpretation, Riffat follows Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutical interpretation method, double movement, to explore the universal value of Koran verses. Even in his interpretation, Riffat is very clever in tracing the philological meaning of a word in the Koran, even though it refers to pre-Islamic traditions, so that the true meaning of the term

can be found so that it can be contextualized in the present (Bidayah, 2013). This is something unique for Riffat in building his gender analysis.

*Second*) that Riffat also criticized the hadith issued by Al-Bukhari, and other narrators, which read (اسْتَوْصُوا بِالنِّسَاءِ فَإِنَّ الْمَرْأَةَ خُلِقَتْ مِنْ ضِلَعٍ). The hadith, which originates from Abu Hurairah, is considered dha'if (weak) by Riffat because there are 'flawed' narrators, namely Maysarah, Zaidah, Haramalah, and Abu Zinad. This assessment refers to the book Mizan Al-I'tidal by Adz-Dzahabi.

It seems that in this case Riffat was less careful and too hasty in determining the status of a hadith. In fact, the name of Maysarah which was weakened (dha'if) by Adz-Dzahabi was Maysarah ibn Abdul Rabih. Meanwhile, the Maysarah in Al-Bukhari's hadith history above is Maysarah ibn Imarah Al-Asyja'i, and he is an undiminished narrator. Likewise with the narrators of Zaidah, even though the Zaidah weakened (dha'if) by Adz-Dzahabi were Zaidah ibn Salim and Zaidah ibn Abi Riqad. Meanwhile, the Zaidah contained in the hadith history of Al-Bukhari above is Zaidah ibn Qudamah Ats-Tsaqafi, and he was a narrator who was not weakened by Adz-Dzahabi (Adz-Dzahabi, Vol 2).

Likewise, other narrators criticized by Riffat, namely Haramalah and Abu Zinad. Even though both of them are tsiqah (trusted) narrators according to Adz-Dzahabi's assessment. Riffat's accusations against the four narrators who he considered 'flawed' are certainly not true. In this case, it is very clear that Riffat was not careful enough and was too hasty in assessing a hadith narration. It was also impressed that Riffat did not understand the scientific discourse of Jarh wa at-Ta'dil in the Ulum Al-Hadist branch.

*Third*) that Riffat also criticized the matan (content) side of the hadith. According to him, the hadith "women were created from a crooked rib misogynistic understanding, which only understands hadith literally. In fact, in another hadith, Al-Bukhari (to whom Riffat refers) also narrated a similar hadith but with a different editorial woman is like a rib, if you force it to straighten it, it will break. |

If the first hadith is compared with the second hadith, it will produce a moderate conclusion. Namely, grammatically in Arabic, the word min not only means 'from' but can also mean 'like' (Ar-Razi, 2000). So the first hadith, used by Riffat, can be interpreted as "Indeed, women were created like a crooked rib". If Riffat understood Arabic grammar well, of course this hadith would not be a problem.

Therefore, Riffat's literalist understanding makes him trapped in understanding the hadith, thereby accusing him of being a misogynistic hadith. More precisely, if the hadith is understood as a metaphor (majazi) as contemporary scholars do now, it certainly will not

give rise to 'misogynistic' assumptions (Mustaqim, 2002). In this case, the author is of the view that this hadith cannot be categorized as a misogynist hadith, because it does not fall into the category of muhkamat arguments, but is mutashabihat in nature and needs to be interpreted further. So this hadith is more accurate if it is understood as a symbolic-metaphorical meaning, that women have affection and must be loved.

*Fourth*) about misogynistic hadith. The word misogynist in terminology means hater of women (AS Hornby, 1989). So misogynistic hadith are understood as hadith that editorially seem to be gender biased and discriminatory against women. So according to Fatima Mernissi, who was later followed by several other feminists, hadiths which have discriminatory editorials must be rejected, or even must be removed from Islamic literature even if the hadith is considered authentic (Mernissi, 1994). However, this assumption is refuted by Muslim scholars that there are no misogynist hadiths, because in the historical records of the life of the Prophet Muhammad, he was very respectful, did justice and elevated the status of women (Fudhaili, 2005., Mustaqim, 2002). This means that the Prophet Muhammad never hated women at all. Instead, he attempted to dismantle the patriarchal cage in Arab culture that was deeply rooted; long before Islam came (Qasim Amin, 2003).

If we read the history of Islamic civilization carefully, the Prophet Muhammad really respected justice and equality for women. This was also continued during the time of Caliph Ar-Rasyidin. However, when the Islamic system of power shifted to a monarchy from the time of the Umayyad Daulah, onwards, for the sake of political interests; they 'justify' the act of creating false hadiths. At the same time, there were many hadiths which excessively degraded women. So it becomes confusing, which is actually the Sunnah of the Prophet, which is the custom of the Arab nation, and which is the custom of the Ajami nation which has experienced Arabization (Fatima Mernissi, 1994).

Likewise, another problem is that it must be understood that there are differences between the narration of the Koran and the hadith. (1) The Quran is narrated *tasalsul* or *mutawatir*, while the hadith is not like that. Even if we calculate the number of mutawatir hadiths, it is only a small number compared to the generality of hadiths which are ahad<sup>177</sup> (narrated by just one person). (2) The Koran is narrated according to the original (authentic) sentences of the Prophet Muhammad, and it is not permissible to narrate the Koran meaningfully. Meanwhile, hadith are allowed to use meaningful narration, resulting in many differences in hadith editorials. (3) There is a guarantee from God regarding the authenticity of the Koran, so that with its authenticity, attempts to imitate and falsify the Koran are never successful and are easily recognized. However, this does not apply to

hadiths, so there is often falsification of hadiths with certain motifs and backgrounds (Ghafur, 2002).

For at least the three reasons above, it is possible to distort the understanding of a hadith. By allowing the transmission of hadith in a meaningful way, which is then supported by patriarchal cultural motifs that are still strong in most Arab societies, it does not rule out the possibility that the editorial of the hadith has experienced assimilation with 'unconscious' motifs attached to its narrator. Therefore, misogynist redactions of hadiths may arise from such conditions.

So it must be distinguished between 'hadith' as living sunnah (the reality of the life of the Prophet Muhammad) and hadith as the result of assimilating the meaning of the messages/sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. The two are different things, even though they are both relied on in the name of the Prophet, considering that many hadiths are narrated meaningfully and very few hadiths are narrated according to the authentic conditions of the Prophet. This allows for a reduction in the meaning of the actual reality of what is narrated or written in history.

For example, the hadith says *lan yuflih qawm wallaw amrahum imra'at* "unlucky is a people who hand over matters to women". The hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari, At-Tirmidhi, etc. editorially discriminates against women, so that sometimes the hadith is used as an argument that women should not be leaders. However, in reality, this hadith was said by the Prophet Muhammad in the specific context of Queen Kisra, the ruler of Persia at that time, and is not general to all women (Al Munawar, 2004). This is what probably also happened in the hadith on the 'creation of women' above which was considered misogynistic by Riffat Hassan.

So in this case, to state the status of a hadith as misogynist or not, it must be read carefully regarding: whether the sanad of the hadith is valid or not, are there any similar or related hadiths (thematic discussion, then comparison and content analysis are carried out), is it possible that the hadith is it narrated with meaningful editorial (a friend's understanding of the Prophet's words) or is it an authentic sentence according to the words of the Prophet Muhammad (by comparing it with the hadith of the same theme, if it is a hadith ahad then it is necessary to refer to the universal values of the Koran and the reality of the life of the Prophet to understand the message morals). So that we are not careless in determining the misogyny of a hadith.

In this regard, a selective attitude is needed for 'readers' by paying attention to the basic meaning of what is stated in religious texts, namely the initial meaning expected by

the 'author'. As stated by Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, the function of reason as a medium of analysis does not mean denying the authenticity of religious texts, but both must be negotiated in order to find meaning that is taken in accordance with developments, both opening up and accepting each other (Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, 2003).

## **CONCLUSION**

Riffat Hassan has attempted to dismantle theological assumptions which he considers to be the root of the problems that cause injustice and discrimination against women. By using a critical-contextual interpretive approach, as proposed by Fazlur Rahman and other modern interpreters, Riffat has been quite successful in offering his interpretive products to deconstruct understandings that have been gender biased and confined by patriarchal culture. Which then inspired many Muslim feminists, especially in Pakistan.

However, Riffat Hassan's high enthusiasm for building gender equality by criticizing religious texts and 'traditional' interpretations, seems to need to be criticized as well. As explained in this article, when Riffat criticized the hadith of the 'creation of women', he was less careful and seemed rash in drawing conclusions. Likewise, in criticizing the Matan hadith, it seems that Riffat did not explore further similar hadiths. So it is clear that Riffat is critical on one side, but less critical on the other side. This is understandable, because Riffat does not have basic scientific knowledge of interpretation and hadith sciences, he only starts from his hobby of reading and studying autodidactically on these branches of Islamic science.

However, it needs to be appreciated that the efforts made by Riffat Hassan to reinterpret religious postulates are something brilliant, so that its existence is very necessary today. According to Mansour Fakih, the implication of this interpretation is the possibility of reconstructing Islamic law. Thus, understanding and interpretation of the teachings of justice, basic religious principles, will develop in accordance with understanding of social reality. The implications offered by Riffat, will gradually reform the system of society that is confined by patriarchy into a more egalitarian society.

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