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**Al-Irfan** (Research Journal of Islamic Studies)

**Published by:** Faculty of Islamic Studies & Shariah  
**Minhaj University Lahore**

**ISSN:** 2518-9794 (Print), 2788-4066 (Online)

**Volume 08, Issue 15, January-June 2023,**

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## **Women Leadership as Head of State in Contemporary Muslim Thoughts: A Critical Analysis**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The matter of women as head of state has been the subject of repeated controversy. Concerns are often raised about the political empowerment of women in Islamic society. It is evident that Islamic society is dichotomized into two different segments ; traditionalists and modernists, and a crucial difference of opinion lies regarding woman as head of Islamic state between the two. On one side, Syed Maududi, Amin Ahsan Islahi, and Syed Jalal ud Din Umri, are highly reluctant regarding women's position as head of Islamic state and other political activities. Resultantly, they face bitter criticism of modern and secular Muslims alike. On the other side, Rehmatullah Tariq, Rafiullah Shahab and Asghar Ali Engineer claim that women have ample political rights in this respect as Islam does not inhibit them from assuming public office. The present paper intends to discuss the women leadership as head of Islamic state in view of Islamists, modernists. An attempt is also made to know the real intention of Sharī'ah regarding the role of women as head of Islamic state and its limitations ordained by Islam. A reference of feminist scholars is also made to know their point of view on the issue.

### **Keywords:**

Politics, empowerment of women, Islamists, leadership, Islamist, traditionalist, Feminist Scholars.

## INTRODUCTION

The issue regarding women as head of Islamic state has been the subject of heated debates. After industrial revolution in the West, women gained certain political, economic and social rights after a long struggle. Whereas Muslim societies lived according to their traditional patterns where women are designated to work in a particular sphere. The contemporary social change brought the issue of women leadership in the Muslim societies as well. Thus, the issue of women leadership is discussed and examined by scholars and various approaches come to the surface i.e. orthodox, liberal, conservative and secular. A gross difference of opinion lies among them regarding participation of women in political activities. There are two main approaches and sharp contrast lies between their opinions. One of them is traditional scholarship regarding female leadership and the other is modern approach.

Traditionalists do not in the favor of women as leaders. Most of them regard it impermissible that a Muslim woman hold the public office. They argue that political responsibility rests on the shoulders of men and it is only the obligation of man to earn a livelihood because nature has bestowed him with power as he is held '*qawwam*' (maintainer) of his wife. They are convinced if woman goes outside the home to involve in political matters, she will become a potential source of moral chaos.(1) Contrary, modern and liberal scholars interpret religious text regarding female leadership in view of human perspective. They have tried to challenge this stance. Liberal and west oriented scholars claim that orthodox represented patriarchal norms and subjugated women to imprison them within the four walls of domesticity. They are convinced that restrictions charged by orthodox are not determined by religion but by local customs and cultural ethos. They recommend that *Qur'ānic* text must be read in the contemporary context as Islam does not inhibit women to participate in social and political activities and they have equal opportunities to be at par with men in society. They want to tackle many questions regarding basic sources of *Sharī'ah* and reinterpret to prove the egalitarian message of Islam. Consequently, they face considerable opposition in conservative Muslim circles.

The opinion of three traditional and three modern scholars are being analyzed here to understand the nature of argument of both groups. According to first approach i.e. Syed Maududi (d.1979), the great Islamic scholar of 20<sup>th</sup> century and the founder of *Jamā'at-i-Islami* to, Amin Ahsan Islahi (d.1997), a renowned Islamic scholar and Syed Jalaluddin Umri (d.2022), a Muslim woman cannot serve as head of Islamic state. They argue from various perspectives to bolster their views. Second view is propagated by modern Muslims i.e. Rehmatullah Tariq (d. 2003), Asghar Ali Engineer (d.2013) an

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(1) Maudoodi, Abu Al a'la, Sayid, Islami Riyasat, Islamic Publications, p. 514

eminent Islamic scholar and human rights activist, and Rafiullah Shahab, who uphold that women have ample political rights. They are agreed about women's electing as head of state and cite many examples to strengthen their arguments. They claim that traditionalist and orthodox scholars, who deprive women of their political rights, politicize Islam for their own interests. (1)

Syed Maududi, Amin Ahsan Islahi and Syed Jalaluddin Umri argue that women inherently lack the qualities of leadership. They are convinced that women are ineligible for the position of leadership. This notion is connected to Islamic legal text to prove its legitimacy, and this discourse has been associated with Islam. On the other hand, Rehmatullah Tariq, Rafiullah Shahab and Asghar Ali Engineer advocate female leadership. They believe that the Holy *Qur'ān* does not bar women to assume public office.

Third approach based on feminist scholarship i.e., Fatima Mernissi, Amina Wadud assume that misogynist interpretation of Islamic legal text and its perpetuation is the primary factor to deprive women from political leadership. They assert that patriarchal nature of society is another factor of the exclusion of women from political arena.

Another Pakistani scholar and feminist, Arifa Farid, picks up the same arguments that Muslim scholars of medieval times have relied on some misogynist traditions which represented inferiority about women. She cites many traditions among which one is also: "those who entrust their affairs to women shall never prosper". She argues that Fatima Mernissi has examined many misogynist traditions and proved in a convincing manner that the above-mentioned tradition is fabricated. She is convinced that on the basis of these traditions we are caught in a perpetual cycle of misogyny as a consequence of which women have been deprived of many political and social rights which continues even today. In her view, a new feminist scholarship is required to endeavor against this misogynist tradition. (2) She also points out that a lot of controversy is prevalent among *Ulamā* in the contemporary Muslim world regarding gender issues. She assumes that basic sources of Islamic legal structure are interpreted traditionally to subordinate women to men. Moreover, cultural ethos, socio-economic concerns and pressures or preferences also matters a lot. She contends that political status of women needs to be interrogated within the framework of religion, because, in her view, many verses of the Holy *Qur'ān* are interpreted traditionally to subordinate women to men. (3)

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(1) Engineer, Asghar Ali, *The Quran, Women and Modern Society*, New Dawn Press, 2005, p. 206

(2) Arifa Farid, *Muslim Women in World Religions Perspectives*, The Director, Bureau of Composition, Compilation and Translation, University of Karachi, 1994, p. 75

(3) *Ibid*, p. 75-76

## ***QUR'ĀNIC PERSPECTIVE REGARDING FEMALE LEADERSHIP***

In the Holy *Qur'ān*, there is no provision to preclude women from being in authority. The Holy *Qur'ān* mentions no approval or disapproval concerning this matter. It may be assumed there is no clear evidence regarding permissibility or impermissibility of women's leadership from *Qur'ānic* viewpoint. Traditional minded scholars often cite particular verses from the Holy *Qur'ān* to promulgate the notion that only men deserve the authority to rule within the family to society at large and women are not allowed be appointed as rulers. The most important one is pointed out:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۗ

“Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women)”. (1)

Regarding this verse, it is argued by many scholars that only men are eligible to be appointed as rulers, i.e. governors and judges. It is believed that the word ‘men’ mentioned here is specific for husbands. This verse is applied regarding family life only and it cannot be applied to any other field such as leadership, judgment, or government. It is assumed that no other concept can be taken from this verse.

According to *Maulana Maudoodi*, it is not fair to confine this verse to conjugal relations because it is extended to the society at large. He is convinced that only men are eligible and best suited to be guardians of family. He argues that woman cannot become guardian (*‘qawwamun’*) of public sphere on the basis of the reasoning that she is not even made guardian *‘qawwam’* of her own home. He sees the position of men as ruler and women as follower of men from family to society.

He renders the word *‘qawwam’* as one who is responsible to manage the affairs of an individual or an institution. That is why, man is made manager, protector and governor of women's affairs. He applies the meaning of the word *‘qawwam’* to superiority of men over women on account of being privileged with which women inherently lack. For him, this is the primary reason according to this verse that men assume the position of *‘qawwam’* (governor). It is because women are not attributed with the qualities which are privileged to men. Women need protection on account of their natural weaknesses. (2)

Regarding this verse, *Amin Ahsan Islahi* asserts that man is responsible for financial requirements of his family. For him, the applicability of this verse is extended to the society at large. He argues that men are privileged to become in charge of women because they spend from their wealth. He claims that according to Holy *Qur'ān*, men are

(1) Al Quran, 4 : 34

(2) Maududi, Abul Al a'la, The Meaning of The Quran, Trans by Ch. Muhammad Akbar, Edit. by A. A. Kamal, Lahore: Islamic Publications, 2000 vol.1, p. 333

preferred as rulers or leaders both within the family to society. He is strictly against any possibility of female leadership. (1)

Like Maududi and Amin Ahsan Islahi, Syed Jalaluddin Umri is also against female leadership. He basis his analogy of prayer leadership to political leadership. He argues that majority of *Ulamā* is agreed that women are impermissible to lead men in prayer. He has cited this analogy regarding political leadership. He argues that women's impermissibility to lead men in prayer is the underlying cause to prohibit women from assuming the position as ruler of Islamic state. He argues that a man is superior to woman; that's why he is preferably eligible to be elected as head of family and ruler in worldly affairs. (2)

Syed Jalaluddin Umri explicitly states that it is the sole responsibility of ruler to implement the *Shari'ah* laws on account of being held '*qawwam*' (ruler). According to Syed Jalaluddin Ansar Umri, women are deprived of the qualities that are assigned to men by nature. For him, it is sufficient reason to exclude women from the sphere of political leadership. (3)

According to another scholar, Yusuf Salahuddin, (d. 2020), the meaning of the word 'in charge' is ruler. He argues that women are ineligible to carry out the duties that are required from a ruler or head of state. For him, only men deserve the right to lead the state. He considers the physical weakness of women and financial responsibilities of men as the sufficient cause to deny women any share of political leadership.

Like Maududi, he is also convinced that the dominant line of reasoning to prohibit women aspiring to the office as head of state is that women are denied to become guardian of home as accorded in *Qur'an*. That's why, a woman cannot be burdened with the heavy responsibility as a ruler of entire society. (4)

Unlike Salahuddin, Prof. Rafiullah Shahab argues that men support women financially. In his view, this verse indicates the conjugal relations of men and women. He criticizes that Salahuddin renders the meaning of '*qawwam*' as ruler, protector and organizer to deny the rights of women's political leadership while he himself restricts the meaning of this word as the financial responsibilities of men towards women.(5)

Rehmatullah Tariq argues that the word '*qawwam*' does not mean ruler. He renders the meaning of the word '*qawwam*' as provider or one who supports financially. He states this verse indicates an important point regarding family life that man is responsible

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(1) Islahi, Amin Ahsan, Maulana, Islami Riyasat, Dar al Tazkir, p. 162

(2) Umri, Jalal ud Din, Sayyid, Musalman Aurat k Huqooq Aur Un Par Atrazat ka Jaiza, Al Faisal, Nashran o Tajran Kutb, Lahore, 1986, p. 52

(3) Ibid, p. 194

(4) Salah ud Din, Yusuf, Aurton k Imtiazi Masail o Qawanin, Darussalam, p. 91

(5) Prof Rafiullah Shahab, Mansab e Hukumat or Musalman Aurat, Sang e Meel, Publications, Lahore, p. 261

and breadwinner of women in Islamic society. According to him, this verse is exploited to prove the leadership of men.(1)

Asghar Ali Engineer argues that conservative scholars cite their viewpoint against permissibility of female leadership. He believes that it is necessary to understand the word '*qawwam*' to interpret this verse in true sense. He argues that the word '*qawwam*' is interpreted by traditional minded scholars as ruler and men's authority over women.

He intends to prove his assertion by citing the interpretation of this verse by various scholars. He describes that Muhammad Asad renders the word '*qawwam*' as one who takes full care of'. Muhammad Ali defines the word '*qawwam*' as 'maintainer' and Ahmed Ali renders it as 'guardian'. Consequently, for Engineer the word '*qawwam*' indicates one who takes full care or maintains his wife and acts as a guardian. According to him, this word does not mean as ruler or authority of men over women.(2)

He argues that conservative *Ulamā* cite this verse to endorse their point, to retain their hegemony and distort the meaning of this significant word.(3)

Amina Wadud, a renowned Western scholar rejects the interpretation of this verse in sense that man as ruler and woman as dependent. She asserts:

“An individual scholar who considers faddala an unconditional preference of males over females does not restrict qiwamah to the family relationship but applies it to society at large. Men, the superior beings, are qawwamuna ala women, the dependent, inferior beings”. (4)

It means that women are restricted from being people in authority because it is claimed that the meaning of this verse is confined to matrimonial life and the meaning of this verse cannot be extended to the political leadership or any other meaning in such sense. She contends this verse is confined to family life only. According to her, the word '*qawwam*' refers to the position of authority in general and not the governance of men at all.

According to traditionalist view, this verse is interpreted in the most general terms possible regarding the relations of men with women, whereas modern and west oriented scholars argue this verse is interpreted regarded the relations between husband and wife and not extended to the guardianship of men from family to society at large.

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(1) Allama Rehmatullah Tariq, *Aurat Or Masla-i-Ammarat*, Idara Adbiyat, Multan, 1986, pp. 45-46

(2) Engineer, Asghar Ali, *The Quran, Women and Modern Society*, New Dawn Press, 2005, pp. 199-200

(3) *Ibid*, p. 20

(4) Amina Wadud, *Quran and Woman: Reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, p. 72

## THE HOLY *QUR'ĀN* AND THE QUEEN OF SABA

The incident of queen Sheba stated in the Holy *Qur'ān* is also cited by both sides of scholars. The rule of queen Sheba is condemned nowhere in the Holy *Qur'ān*; rather this incident is cited in appreciative manner. Maududi, Amin Ahsan Islahi and Syed Jalaluddin Umri contend that the incident of Queen Sheba's rule is concerned regarding the abrogated *Sharī'ah* of Hazrat Suleman. They argue it is not obligatory to follow this example. On the contrary, Rehmatullah Tariq, Asghar Ali Engineer and Rafiullah Shahab cite this example from the Holy *Qur'ān* and advocate the leadership of women.

Amin Ahsan Islahi argues that king ignores everything except himself in autocratic type of government. He asserts even *Pharaoh* consulted the matters of state with his courtiers. It indicates that his rule too, was not autocratic in such sense. Likewise, Queen Saba used to consult with her courtiers. He argues it cannot be assumed that the rule of Queen Sheba was consultative or even democratic. He indicates when members of her assembly ensured they have enough sources to fighting; the Queen did not abide by their suggestion because she was well aware that Hazrat Suleman had strength and wisdom.(1). Amin Ahsan Islahi makes it clear that Queen Sheba adopted the policy of peace because it was better for her to avoid warfare.

Gohar Rehman argues that the rule of Queen Saba is cited as a textual evidence regarding women's holding leadership position. He seems not ready to accept this assumption presented by the advocates of female leadership who claim that the Holy *Qur'ān* does not preclude women to lead the state. Gohar Rehman firmly believes that women are not entitled to rule.

He describes that any saying or practice of the Prophets or their companions that is cited in the Holy *Qur'ān* without any prohibition, is practicable. But the practices of unbelievers mentioned in the Holy *Qur'ān*, cannot be followed unless it is endorsed by the Holy *Qur'ān* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He states though the rule of Queen Saba is mentioned in *Surah Al Namal*, but it is also mentioned in the very next verse, that she was among the unbelievers.(2)

Allah Almighty states:

وَجَدْتَهَا وَقَوْمَهَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ

“I found her and her people prostrating to the sun instead of Allah.”(3)

According to Rafiullah Shahab, it is permissible for a Muslim woman to assume public office. He cites the *Qur'ānic* incident of Queen of Sheba. He appreciates that the queen ruled over a vast empire. A National Assembly was established by her to manage

(1) Islahi, Amin Ahsan, Maulana, *Tadabur ul Quran*, Faran Foundation, Lahore, vol. 4, p. 733

(2) Gohar Rehman, *Islami Siyasat*, Maktaba Tafhim al Quran, 2014, p. 42

(3) *Al-Namal*, 27: 24

the affairs of state. That Assembly was comprised of 312 members. Queen of Sheba was the woman of high caliber among the members of Assembly, and managed the system of state with political insight. He argues it is stated nowhere in the *Qur'ān* that she was rusticated from the rule after she converted to Islam.(1)

He does not admit the assumption that the incidents of Queen Saba is inapplicable on account of being relevant to the abrogated *Sharī'ah* of Suleiman. He argues it is not indicated in the Holy *Qur'ān* that queen was rusticated from rule after her embracement of Islam. He asserts that women cannot be deprived from the position of leadership based on this assumption. (2)

Rehmatullah Tariq cites the leadership of Queen Sheba in an appreciative manner that she was a brave and courageous woman with leadership traits. He argues if it is assumed that female leadership is the major cause of destruction, it would be against the commandments of Divine orders because the Holy *Qur'ān* has appreciated the leadership of Queen Sheba. He argues this *Qur'ānic incident* indicates that women cannot be deprived from the right of leadership as nature has bestowed women with these qualities.(3)

Asghar Ali Engineer advocates female leadership. He describes there is no disapproval mentioned in the Holy *Qur'ān* regarding the rule of Queen of Sheba. Rather it is indicated that she was a very wise and legitimate ruler who consulted her male counselors regarding political matters and made wise decisions. He argues if her rule was disastrous or Allah Almighty had denied female leadership, the Holy *Qur'ān* would have condemned it. But nothing happened in this respect. (4)

Amina Wadud, a Western scholar states that it is not indicated in the Holy *Qur'ān* that the women are not entitled for leadership. Contrary, political and religious practices of the Queen Saba are mentioned with admiration. She is convinced it is not implicated in the Holy *Qur'ān* that women are prohibited from being in authority. (5)

Conservatives scholars, however, are strictly against any authority of women to rule. They refrain from citing the incident of Queen Saba to support women's authority to rule. They justify the prohibition of female leadership on account of being the example of Queen Sheba regarding pre-Islamic times. On the other hand, for modern and liberal scholars, the instance of Queen Saba is sufficient evidence to endorse their views regarding permissibility of female leadership.

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(1) Rafiullah Shahab, *Mansab e Hukumat or Musalman Aurat*, p. 34

(2) Rafiullah Shahab, *Mansab e Hukumat or Musalman Aurat*, p. 68

(3) Allama Rehmatullah Tariq, *Aurat Or Masla-i-Ammarat*, pp. 77-80

(4) Engineer, Asghar Ali, *The Rights of Women in Islam*, Vanguard Publishers, 1992, p. 78

(5) Amina Wadud, *Quran and Woman: Reading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, p 40, 89



## **SUNNAH OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (SAW)**

Abu al Al'a al-Maududi, Amin Ahsan Islahi and Syed Jalaluddin Umri argue that Islam does not allow women to assume the position of leadership. They rely on the reference of the *hadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) reported by Abu Bakra, that states, "Allah has benefited me from the words of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) on the day of the battle of Camel, when I was about to participate in the Battle of Camel". According to Abu Bakra when the Prophet Muhammad came to know that the Persian people had entrusted the reign to the daughter of *Kisra*, he stated:

“A nation can never prosper which assigns its reign to a woman”. (1)

Syed Maudoodi quotes the *hadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to preclude women from assuming the position as ruler of Islamic state. (2) Like Maududi, Amin Ahsan Islahi also argues that women are not qualified to assume the position as ruler. The tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) reported by Abu Bakrah is cited by Amin Ahsan Islahi to bolster his views. He argues that Abu Bakrah did not participate in the war on account of this tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW). (3)

Syed Jalaluddin Umri cites the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to prohibit women from serving as political leader. He explicitly states that woman are not qualified for the authority to rule. According to him, this type of act would directly cause the destruction of entire nation.(4)

Unlike Jalaluddin Umri, another scholar, Javed Jamal Daskavi argues that the *hadīth* transmitted by Abu Bakrah is regarded as quite authentic. He argues that *Imam* Bukhari has compiled only authentic *Ahadīth*. He criticizes Prof. Rafiullah Shahab that his knowledge of *jar'h wa ta'dil* is inadequate. He asserts that all of the reporters of this tradition are unreliable. (5)

Rehmatullah Tariq indicates that reporters of this tradition did not belong to *Mecca* and *Madīnah*. He believes this tradition is forged because eminent companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had not heard this tradition. He is convinced that all of its narrators are unreliable. (6)

According to Rehmatullah Tariq, the tradition reported by Abu Bakrah is purely a political tradition. He argues that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) said these words when

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(1) Bukhari, Muhammad bin Isma'il, Abu Abdullah, Sahih Bukhari, translated by Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Darussalam, Riyadh, vol. 5, p. 43

(2) Maududi, Abu Al a'la ,Sayyid, Islami Riyasat, , p. 509, Islahi, Amin Ahsan, Maulana, Islami Riyasat, p. 162

(3) Ibid p. 162

(4) Umri, Jalal ud Din, Sayyid, Muslman Aurat k Huqooq Aur Un Par Atrazat ka Jaiza, p. 194

(5) Daskavi, Javed Jamal, Islam Or Aurat ki Hukumat, p.69-70

(6) Allama Rehmatullah Tariq, Aurat Or Masla-i-Ammarat, pp. 45-46

Persian King tore his letter into pieces. He intends to say that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) predicted the destruction of Persia and did not relate it to the leadership of women.(1) He is convinced this tradition was brought forward after twenty-five years of the Prophet's departure from the world. He argues that many traditions are cited to deprive women from the status privileged by Islam. He contends that it has been the common practice to cite such narrations attributed to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) to gain political interests. According to him, it is evident from the historical facts that no tradition is found regarding political leadership of women. (2)

Like Rehmatullah Tariq, Rafiullah Shahab cast doubt on the authenticity of this *Hadīth* due to character of its reporters. Regarding this tradition, he argues that all of the four narrators of this saying of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) are regarded as unreliable. He has impugned Abu Bakrah's integrity because, according to him, Umar (RA), the second Caliph, had flogged him for the crime of false accusation. Abu Bakrah had not admitted his sin and resultantly, Umar (RA), commanded that his witness would not be accepted anymore. He argues Ayisha, the wife of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) participated in the Battle of Camel, and this narration was fabricated to besmear her character. He further argues that among thousands of companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) who were present at that time, no one except Abu Bakrah mentioned this tradition. He repeatedly asserts that women are entitled to grant authority to rule. (3)

Rafiullah's dismissal of this tradition is based on the evidence that Abu Bakrah mentioned this *Hadīth* after Ā'isha (RA) was defeated in the Battle of Camel. Female companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) including Ā'isha (RA) had no knowledge regarding this tradition. Besides this, if the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) residing *Mecca* and *Madīnah* had any knowledge regarding this tradition, they might had never have accompanied Ā'isha (RA), the wife of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). He argues if Ā'isha (RA) herself had heard about this tradition, she would never have led the Battle of Camel. He repeatedly asserts that it was an attempt to denounce Ā'isha (RA).(4)

Asghar Ali Engineer has challenged the authenticity of this tradition on account of some reasons. First of all, he argues this transmission is isolated one. He argues it is not obligatory to act upon the isolated tradition. He argues that *Ulamā* assume on the basis of this *Hadīth* that women are prohibited to hold the position of leadership. Secondly, he puts forth another reason; the possibility of being this *Hadīth* as forged one. He suggests the possibility of being this narration of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as fabricated in the context of the Battle of Camel. He points out that many renowned companions of

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(1) Ibid, p. 17

(2) Ibid, p. 9

(3) Rafiullah Shahab, *Mansab e Hukumat or Musalman Aurat*, p. 31-32

(4) Ibid, p. 82

Prophet Muhammad (SAW) including Abu Bakrah accompanied Ā'isha (RA) in this Battle and did not leave her alone. He argues if Abu Bakrah had known that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had condemned to appoint women as ruler, he would have had no reason to desert Ā'isha (RA) after recalling this transmission. He argues that many well-known companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had accepted the leadership of Ayisha. Thus, it cannot be assumed that women cannot become head of the state. (1) Thirdly, he argues this narration contradicts the commandments of the *Qur'ān* concerning the verses regarding Queen Bilqees. He also indicates that *Imam* Abu Hanifa had never accepted isolated *Hadīth* to establish a rule. On this basis, he asserts that an isolated *Hadīth* cannot be accepted to establish a rule. (2)

Thus, modernists cast suspicious on the authenticity of this *Hadīth* and do not accept it. Contrary, traditionalists and conservative minded scholars claim this *Hadīth* cannot be rejected. They condemn the authority of women as head of Islamic state on the basis of this tradition.

## HAZRAT Ā'ISHA (RA) AND THE BATTLE OF CAMEL

Abu al Al'a al-Maududi argues that women cannot be entrusted the authority to ruler an Islamic state. He upholds that advocates of female leadership endorse the legitimacy of female leadership by citing the evidence that Ā'isha (RA), the wife of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) led the war of Camel against Ali (RA), the fourth Caliph of Islam. For him, this inference is not right. He believes that any individual practice of any companion of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) cannot become a role model if it stands against the clear guidance of Allah and the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) regarding any matter. Later on, Ā'isha (RA) the wife of Prophet Muhammad, felt regret on her act. He argues that the single act of Ā'isha (RA) cannot be regarded as source to make it legitimate that Islam assigned women with the responsibility of political or state leadership. (3)

Amin Ahsan Islaahi does not allow women to hold public office on the basis of the participation of Ā'isha (RA) in the battle of Camel. He argues that women are not eligible to aspire public office according to Islamic law. He points out that only example regarding female participation in political affairs that is found in the early Islamic history, is the instance of Aisha's (RA) participation in the Battle of Camel. Like Maududi, Amin Ahsan Islaahi too, considers that this example is impracticable. He argues that Abdullah Bin Umar (RA), who remained quite neutral regarding this matter, expressed his opinion

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(1) Engineer, Asghar Ali, *The Rights of Women in Islam*, p. 76-77

(2) *Ibid*, p. 77

(3) Maududi, Maulana, Abu Al a'la ,Sayyid, *Islami Riyasat*, p. 510-511

that better situation for Aisha (RA) was to confine at home instead of involving in the battle. Later on, she deeply regretted the incident and confined herself within women's reform activities. (1)

Syed Jalaluddin Umri asserts that a woman cannot assume the authority to rule the Islamic state. He argues it is assumed from the instance of this Battle that Islam assigned political responsibilities to both men and women on equal basis. That's why, it is not fair to diminish the political and social role of women. He believes the assumption based on this incident is not right that Islam held women responsible for political affairs during the Prophetic period and the Caliphs, or it has been the Islamic conduct. He makes it clear that Ā'isha (RA) neither involved in the battle, nor she had any planning to lead the battle. She considered it necessary for the well-being of Muslims to go out. For him, this single instance is inadequate to legitimate that women are entitled for leadership positions. (2)

Sayyid Sulaimān Nadwī (d. 1953) a great scholar of Islam and a member of founding committee '*Jamiya Millia Islamiya*' states though woman are not allowed to be leaders or rulers. He also asserts it would not be fair to assume that women are precluded to hold leadership positions in all circumstances. He also quotes the instance of Aisha (RA), who led the Battle of Camel just for the cause of welfare. (3)

Rehmatullah Tariq indicates that *Imam* Hassan delivered eloquent lectures on the occasion of the Battle of Camel to oppose it but he mentioned nowhere regarding the tradition reported by Abu Bakrah. He indicates that twenty thousand followers of Hazrat Ali (RA) and thirty thousand followers of Ā'isha (RA) had no knowledge regarding this tradition on the occasion of the Battle of Camel. He asserts if this tradition existed, there was possibility to prevent Ā'isha (RA) from involving in this political matter, but nothing happened in this respect. (4)

Rafiullah Shahab states the important role of Ā'isha (RA) in the Battle of Camel. He contends if women were prohibited from being in authority, the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) had not assembled under the command of Ā'isha (RA). (5)

Asghar Ali Engineer describes that Ā'isha (RA) fought the battle of camel against Ali, the fourth caliph of Islam and many prominent companions of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) accompanied her. They did not even oppose or left her alone on account of involving in this matter. He indicates that even Abu Bakrah, the narrator of this transmission did not oppose her in this respect. He argues if Abu Bakrah had known

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(1) Islahi, Amin Ahsan, Maulana, Islami Riyasat, p. 166-169

(2) Umri, Jala ud Din, Sayid, Musalman Aurat k Huqooq or un par Atrazat ka Jaiza, Al Faisal, Nashran o Tajran Kutb, Lahore, 1986, p. 19-20

(3) Nadvi, Sayid Suleman, Seerat e Ayesha, Shoukat Book Depot, p. 125-127

(4) Allama Rehmatullah Tariq, Aurat Or Masla-i-Ammarat, p. 22

(5) Rafiullah Shahab, Mansab e Hukumat or Musalman Aurat, p. 71

that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) prohibited regarding female leadership, he might have had Ā'isha (RA) left the battlefield after recalling the tradition of the Prophet (SAW). (1)

Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan feminist admires Ā'isha (RA) who politically played an important role in the armed resistance against Ali (RA). She remarks that Ā'isha (RA) moved towards mosques and assembled masses to take up arms against Ali (RA). She describes that Ā'isha (RA) was the only lady who led thousands of people in the battlefield.(2)

Traditional minded scholars often cite the instance of Ā'isha's (RA) participation in this Battle to prove the women's authority to rule. For modern and liberal scholars, however, it is indicated from the example of Ā'isha's (RA) participation in the Battle of Camel that women are not prohibited from assuming public office from *Shari'ah* point of view.

## FATWĀ OF ASHRAF ALI THANVI

A prominent scholar from Indian Subcontinent, Ashraf Ali Thanvi (d. 1943) issued his famous *fatwa*. He indicates that the *Hadīth* transmitted by Abu Bakrah is concerned regarding the autocratic rule by women, not democratic rule. He is convinced that the *Hadīth* reported by Abu Bakrah would not apply in case like those of Bilqees where a woman runs the matter of state with the help of the members of assembly. He makes it clear that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) condemned the rule of the Persian King's daughter who was an autocratic ruler. (3)

This *fatwā* indicates that the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) pertaining the daughter of the Persian King, is the instance of autocratic rule. On the other hand, the example of Queen Saba cited in the *Qur'ān* is the example of democratic rule. It may be assumed in the words of Ashraf Ali Thanvi, that women are entitled to be elected as a head or ruler of Islamic state in democratic rule.

Muhammad Sharif Chaudhary, an Indian scholar cites the *fatwā* of Ashraf Ali Thanvi, which was given to advocate the rule of the Queens of *Bhopal*. In view of Ashraf Ali Thanvi, in an Islamic state, female leadership is not prohibited in a democratic government where the ruler manages the matter of state with the consultation of elected representatives. Ashraf Ali Thanvi himself cited the *Qur'ānic* incident of Queen Saba to endorse his views. (4)

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(1) Engineer, Asghar Ali, Rights of Women in Islam, Vanguard Publishers, 1992, p. 77

(2) Fatima Mernissi, The Forgotten Queens of Islam, University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 66.

(3) Thanvi, Ashraf Ali, Maulana, Imdad al Fatawa, Maktaba, Dar al Uloom, Karachi, vol, 5, p. 91-93

(4) Muhammad Sharif Chaudhry, Women's Right in Islam, Adam Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2003, p 173

Rafiullah Shahab and Asghar Ali Engineer both have cited the *fatwā* of Ashraf Ali Thanvi to strengthen their views. Rafiullah Shahab states that Ashraf Ali Thanvi justified the rule of the queens of *Bhupal*. The *Qur'ānic* incident of Queen Sheba is mentioned by Rafiullah Shahab. He argues if a woman runs the system of Govt with consultation of other people in a democratic rule; she would be entitled to rule. He elaborates that the *Ḥadīth* of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), transmitted regarding the daughter of the Persian King, is the example of the autocratic rule whereas the example of Queen Bilqees cited in the *Qur'ān* is the instance of the democratic rule. He argues that the queens of *Bhupal* ruled over the state of *Bhupal* for the period of eighty-four years and no one among the *Ulamā* objected it. In this way, he demonstrates that Ashraf Ali Thanvi justified from the *Qur'ān* that a women are admissible to become a ruler of Islamic state in a democratic rule. (1)

Asghar Ali Engineer also mentions the *fatwā* of Thanvi. He describes that according to Ashraf Ali Thanvi, no objection is raised in the Holy *Qur'ān* concerning the rule of the Queen Sheba. Ashraf Ali Thanvi explained regarding three types of Govt. In the context of his *fatwā*, Engineer is convinced that the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) objected the autocratic rule (first category) whereas the Queen Sheba ruled over democratic Govt. He makes clear that the ruler is a part of consultative body in democratic system of Govt, where he has no authority by himself. In this way, he justifies that woman is admissible to aspire public office in an Islamic state in this sense. (2)

Maudoodi is convinced that it is unfavorable for women to leave their homes. He repeatedly asserts that actual duty of a woman is to maintain home, bringing children and planning for the care of her husband. He also acknowledges that women are permissible to struggle financially in times of poverty, incapacity of guardian or illness of her husband. But, at the same time, he makes it clear that this concession of *Sharī'ah* is only for adverse situations. As soon as, the crisis is over, it would not be permissible for women to work outside the home. (3)

Dr. Shoukat Ali criticizes that Maududi strictly stood against political leadership of women. He argues that views of Maududi regarding women are a ring of ambivalence on account of his contradict and inconsistent views. He argues that in his writings, Maududi is so emphatic to deny the women's rights to contest elections but later on, he surprised the world by presenting alternative views and changed discourse regarding women. He supported Miss Fatima Jinnah as a presidential candidate against Ayub Khan. (4)

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(1) Rafiullah Shahab, *Mansab e Hukumat or Musalman Aurat*, p. 55

(2) Engineer, Asghar Ali, *The Rights of Women in Islam*, Vanguard Publishers, 1992, p. 78

(3) Maududi, Abul a'la, *Sayyid*, Purdah, p. 192-193

(4) Shoukat Ali, *Dimensions and Dilemma of Islamic Movement*, Sang e Meel Publications, 1998, p. 387

Maududi explicitly demonstrated that women are not permitted to hold the position of leadership because it conflicts the *Shari'ah* injunctions. Though he repeatedly asserted if political and military responsibilities are entrusted to women, family life will be deteriorated because women are not entitled for such responsibilities that are assigned to men by nature. (1) But later on, Maududi himself supported Miss Fatima Jinnah for the candidacy of presidential elections against General Ayoub Khan as a necessary evil. He is being criticized on account of changing his views concerning this issue. In this way, he proved the admissibility of the women of *Jamā'at-i-Islami* to participate in political matters.

## CONCLUSION

After evaluating the status of women as ruler of Islamic state and its comparison with the contemporary thoughts, it is evident there lies stark contrast among intellectuals regarding women's position as ruler of Islamic state. Syed Maududi claims that modernist view regarding political status of women is the direct result of western agenda. Based on this assertion, he vehemently opposes women's position as head of state and reject it as a product of modern and western influence. Like Maududi, Syed Jalaluddin Umri and Amin Ahsan Islahi also consider the domain of home as the best place for women while bearing and rearing children. He assumes that women are quite incapable to become head of the state because they are deprived of the qualities of leadership.

On the other hand, Rehmatullah Tariq, Rafiullah Shahab and Asghar Ali Engineer assert that according to the fundamentalist and traditionalist view, the inherently role of women is to limit themselves within four walls of home while bringing children and it is considered an ideal role for them. The authority to rule is reserved only for men. Asghar Ali Engineer believes this masculine and feminine role is taken as cultural standard and these cultural ethos are regarded as immutable and for granted. Consequently, women are strictly forbidden to assume public office and public and sphere becomes male prerogative. Rafiullah Shahab is convinced that it is the real intention of traditional minded scholars to confine women within four walls of domesticity.

For Rafiullah Shahab and Rehmatullah Tariq and Asghar Ali Engineer, however, women's rights including political leadership are incorporated into the scriptural texts of Islam. Engineer's assumption that numerous cultural, political, social and historical factors, as well as patriarchal society; the major cause to exclude women from political arena, is well denied by Maududi, Amin Ahsan Islahi and Syed Jalaluddin Umri.



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(1) Maududi, Abu Al a'la ,Sayyid, Islami Riyasat, p. 515-516