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Muslim Women's Studies


Journal homepage: <https://womenstudy.abu.ac.ir/>



International Journal of Muslim Women Studies

Deriving Feminine-Oriented Mystical States (Maqāmāt) and Conditions (Ahwāl) from Quranic Verses Based on Social Psychology

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 DOI: 10.22034/MWS.2025.734609

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 13 April 2024

Revised: 15 April 2024

Accepted: 8 May 2024

Keywords: Women, Feminist Quranic Hermeneutics, Divine Names of Beauty, Feminism, Social Psychology.

ABSTRACT

The perspective of mystics on women can be explored within two distinct frameworks. The first advocates detachment from women, viewing them as symbols of worldly attachment. In this view, women are considered ill-natured beings, created from the crooked rib of man, inherently subservient to men, complicit with Satan, and responsible for the deception of Adam. They are deemed detestable, as engagement with them distracts men from unity with, and exclusive devotion to, God. This conception is heavily influenced by the Biblical portrayal of women and an Eastern dualistic perspective that attributes an evil nature to their creation. The second theory posits that women manifest the Divine Names of Beauty (Jamāl) while simultaneously embodying latent Majesty (Jalāl). Alongside men, who manifest the Names of Majesty, women facilitate the manifestation of Divine Names in the world. In this perspective, the feminine, beautiful aspect of existence which women represent is considered a receptive and passive force, whereas men are regarded as the active force. Numerous Quranic verses serve as evidence supporting this mystical, feminine-centered viewpoint. Employing a descriptive-analytical method using thematic analysis, this research addresses the question of whether the mystical interpretation of the Qur'an is exclusively androcentric or if it also encompasses a form of feminine-oriented social psychology. The findings indicate that mystical commentators, in their exegeses of verses concerning women (āyāt al-nisā'), have acknowledged qualities that are fundamentally feminine and beauty-centered, leading to the extraction of five main themes.

E-ISSN: 000-000

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How to cite this article:

A. Meghdadian, (2024). Deriving Feminine-Oriented Mystical States (Maqāmāt) and Conditions (Ahwāl) from Quranic Verses Based on Social Psychology. *Muslim Women's Studies*, 1(2), 57-71. <https://doi.org/10.22034/mws.2025.734609>



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Introduction

Man and woman are two genders of a single essence and reality called human. In quasi-dualistic religions, such as Manichaeism, man was created by Ahura while woman was created by Ahriman, which makes her essentially impure. In the Manichaean religion, woman is viewed with a negative perspective (Jackson, 1965; 181-18). Judaism regards woman (Eve) as the agent who deceived man (Adam) and, therefore, considers her the second sex, believing that, on this basis, a penalty such as the pain of childbirth has been devised for her (The Holy Bible, Book of Genesis, 2:3). In Islam, woman is no different in essence from man. Moreover, contrary to Judaism, based on the teachings of Islam, the creation of woman and man goes back to the same origin, and the corporality of woman in Islam does not create a negative function for her. In Qur'anic thought, like man, woman can, by possessing two criteria—the right belief (faith) and action appropriate to her existential nature—succeed in actualizing her identity (Qur'an, Surah An-Nisa': 1). On this mystical threshold, gender difference is meaningless, and the unity of existential meaning encompasses femininity just as much as it encompasses masculinity. Belief in such a mystical vision has created a certain kind of feminine identity for women in Sufi Islam. Islam, in most cases, does not advocate equality between woman and man, but rather believes in preserving the independence of feminine identity as a different identity alongside masculine identity. From this perspective, woman will have a distinct human identity specific to herself, and this independent identity will consequently give rise to responsibilities different from those of men.

Statement of the Problem

The Holy Quran introduces a teaching referred to as “shakilah” (Qur'an, 17:84), which perhaps can be considered equivalent to the selection of the human genome (Iravani, 1399: 27). That each person acts based on the genetic foundations of the body and the archetypes and psychological patterns chosen by their genetic system indicates that the differences in lifestyle, bodily physiology, and selected unconscious psychological factors throughout human biological history can be considered based on numerous variables, one of which, undoubtedly, is gender identity. Based on the Qur'anic perspective, these differences in genetic “shakilah”, which create biological, ethnic, gender-based, age-based, and other classifications, are there solely to enable human beings to know and recognize their own identity and the identity of others, and ultimately come to believe that each person, woman or man, must be preserved within their own orbit, so that their dignity may remain intact (Qur'an, 49:13).

Therefore, in explaining the fundamental concepts of this research, the meaning of feminine identity must be seriously elucidated. Feminine identity, although considered to be based on the Divine Names of Beauty (Asma' al-Jamaliyah), is not devoid of “Jalali” (Majestic) characteristics, because from the mystical perspective, "behind the veil of every Majesty (Jalal), a Beauty (Jamal) is hidden; within the splendor of every Beauty, a Majesty is concealed" (Fayz Kashani, 1371: 244). This perspective is not far from the Jungian belief in the latent ‘animus’¹ and masculine-oriented ethics within the dark half of the feminine existence, and a woman's psychological balance is achieved when she reaches an inner peace with her shadow and does not consider it bad (Jung, 1398: 137).

By examining the mystical culture of Sufis regarding their perspective on the issue of feminine identity, it is emphasized that woman, as one of the manifestations of the Divine Names (Asma' Allah), must bring her “Jamali” (Beautiful) and “Jalali” (Majestic) attributes into balance and manifest her independent identity based on her own fixed essence ('ayn thābit). It is based on this research hypothesis that this study, by examining the verses of “An-Nisa” (Women), seeks to explore what perspective Sufis held and promoted regarding women, based on the specific culture of Islamic mysticism and Qur'anic verses.

Research Background

In the discussion of women in Sufism and mysticism, perhaps one of the earliest independent works is the book by Ms. Annemarie Schimmel. In this book, she primarily speaks about the value of the mother in Islam and some exemplary mothers throughout history, citing some Indian and Pakistani poetry, and of course, she refers to the feminine spirit in these poems:

Schimmel, Annemarie, (2001) *Meine Seele ist eine Frau: Das Weibliche im Islam*. Munich: Kösel-Verlag. [English: *My Soul is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam*. Translated by Susan H. Ray. New York: Continuum, 1997.] [Persian: Schimmel, Annemarie, (1381 AH) “Zan dar 'Irfān va Tasavvof-e Eslāmi” [Woman in Islamic Mysticism and Sufism], Translated by: Mahdavi Damghani, Farideh, Tehran, Tir, 2nd ed.]

¹ Animus: In Jungian psychology, it refers to the masculine aspect found within the shadow side of every woman's psyche.

The most comprehensive research in the form of a book in this field is also written by Suleyman Uludag, translated into Persian by Dr. Rahim Kushesh. This book contains the following sections: Misogyny, Marriage from the Sufi Perspective, Woman and Her Being a Calamity, Sexual Relationship, Woman and Love, Houris in Sufism, Piety and Woman, Women Who Were the Sheikh of Their Time, Masculinity and Femininity, Woman in the View of Ibn Arabi, Virtues of Female Mystics, Inspiration and Woman, Ecstatic State and Woman, The Ascension of a Woman, Female Mystics and the Veil, The Voice of Woman, Woman and Death, Female Lovers Who Were among the Saints, etc.

Uludag, Suleyman, (2020) "Sufi Gözüyle Kadın" [Woman from the Sufi Perspective]. Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları. [Note: Original Turkish publication details assumed for citation. User provided Persian translation details.] [Persian: Uludag, Suleyman, (1399 AH), "Zan dar Negāh-e Sūfi" [Woman from the Sufi Perspective], Translated by: Kushesh, Rahim, Tehran, Sabzan, 1st ed.]

Among articles, the closest one to this research is Bahmani Motlagh, Yadoll, Sharbati, Ali, (2011), "The Status of Woman in Islamic Mysticism and Sufism (With an Emphasis on the Works of Sanai, Attar, and Jami)", *Women and Culture Research Quarterly*, Year 3, No. 10.

By examining this research background, the innovative aspect and necessity of the present study become entirely clear. None of the existing researches have examined the verses of "an-nisā" (women) from a mystical point of view and introduced feminine-centered temperaments from a feminist psychology perspective; however, the present research undertakes this important task.

Research Method

This research, with the aim of discovering and explaining semantic patterns related to feminine social psychology in mystical commentaries on the "āyāt al-nisā" (verses on women), has utilized the method of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a systematic method for identifying, organizing, and analyzing meaningful patterns (themes) within qualitative data. The approach of this analysis has been inductive (data-driven) and follows the six-step model proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Data Sources and Research Corpus

The data for this research consists of mystical exegetical texts (including books and commentaries) concerning the verses related to women (āyāt al-nisā') in the Holy Quran. These sources include prominent mystical commentaries such as the works of "Ibn al-'Arabī, Rūzbihān Baqlī, 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, al-Qushayrī, Maybudī, and other mystics mentioned in the research background and the rest of the article.

Thematic Analysis Procedure

1. Familiarization with the data: In the initial stage, all selected verses and their related mystical commentaries were read repeatedly and carefully so that the researcher became thoroughly acquainted with the depth and breadth of the data.
2. Generating initial codes: At this stage, the textual data (commentaries) were examined line-by-line and actively, and every phrase, sentence, or idea related to feminine attributes, roles, or characteristics was marked with a brief code (semantic label). This initial coding was done manually. Examples of initial codes included "Bilqīs's attention to detail," "Zulaykhā's admission of the truth," "the persuasive power of Shu'ayb's daughter," "Gracious humility and modesty," and "the mentoring influence of the mother."
3. Searching for themes: After extracting all initial codes, semantically related codes were grouped together to form potential themes. For example, codes such as "quick hearing and acceptance of good," "attention to the details of the letter," and "acuity in discernment" were organized around the core concept of "Being an 'Ear' and Acuity (Firāsāt)."
4. Reviewing the themes: The extracted themes were reviewed at two levels: first, checking the internal coherence of each theme with its related codes and referencing the data; and second, examining the entire thematic map in relation to the research question. At this stage, some themes were merged or separated.
5. Defining and naming the themes: In this step, the nature, scope, and boundaries of each theme were clearly defined, and an expressive name was chosen for it. Finally, five main themes were identified and introduced as the core of the analysis.
6. Producing the final report: The final stage is presenting the analyses related to each theme in the form of this article, accompanied by solid evidence (direct quotations from the commentaries).

Validation and Limitations

To increase validity, effort has been made to extract and present evidence for each theme directly from the primary mystical sources. Also, with awareness of the interpretive nature and re-analysis inherent in thematic analysis, it is

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noted that the possibility of other themes or readings from the same data is not ruled out. The focus of this article is on extracting and explaining themes that have appeared recurrently and meaningfully within the context of analyzing mystical commentaries on the “āyāt al-nisā” and are directly related to the concept of feminine identity and social psychology.

Feminine-Centered Ethics in the Quran

Feminism has been defined as feminine-centered ethics. Feminine-centered ethics possesses characteristics that are less commonly found in the masculine perspective, although these attributes may also exist within the layer of the masculine animus. In the Holy Quran, the terms “niswah” and “nisā” are both plural and mean “women,” and they have no singular form derived from their own root (Al-Farāhīdī, 1409, Vol. 7: 303). “Mar’,” which is from another root and is apparently the feminine of mar’ (man/person), is the singular of these two words (Ibn Fāris, 1404, Vol. 5: 316). Although Islamic exegesis (tafsīr) and jurisprudence (fiqh), in dealing with the women verses, like other Abrahamic religions, have historically made use of a kind of patriarchal writing, modified Islamic feminism (see Aqdā’ī, 1396: 138) has been able to reconcile Islamic identity with feminine identity.

The mystical concept of pure life (al-ḥayāt al-ṭayyibah) refers to attaining the assured soul (al-nafs al-muṭma’innah) and entering the paradise of Divine Names and Attributes that Almighty God attributes to Himself under the phrase “My paradise, and not the paradise of bliss” (jannat al-na’īm), as referred to in the verse "O thou soul at peace! Return unto thy Lord, content in His good pleasure! Enter thou among My bondmen! Enter thou My Garden!" (Qur'an, 89:27-29). Achieving this status is not exclusive to one gender or one class. The Holy Quran says, "Whosoever does right, whether male or female, and is a believer, him verily We shall quicken with good life" (Qur'an, 16:97). Therefore, whoever performs righteous deeds, be they male or female, provided their action is accompanied by faith and heartfelt belief, He will grant them a pure life. Thus, based on the Quran's logic, the balance between rights and responsibilities for women is a principle: "And women have rights similar to those against them in a just manner" (Qur'an, 2:228). Based on this and according to some interpretations, in the rest of the verse, "And men have a degree above them," the intended meaning of "degree" is the greater responsibility of men, not merely a greater right for men, nor the authority to impose this right upon women (Ṭurayḥī, 1375, Vol. 2: 298). Rather, men independently have greater responsibility and rights than women (‘Arūsī Ḥuwayzī, 1415, Vol. 1: 222).

It should not be assumed that if we extract attributes of beauty (ṣifāt jamāliyyah) from the Holy Quran and present them as feminine characteristics, men cannot adopt these features within the layer of their “anima”² and the context of their own beautiful attributes. Conversely, it should not be thought that women, in possessing these attributes, are merely role models for other women. The Quran explicitly states that women can be exemplary models for all believers, both male and female; as Almighty God says that God sets forth, for those who believe, the example of Pharaoh's wife: "And God sets forth as an example for those who believe the wife of Pharaoh" (Qur'an, 66:11).

Therefore, what is important in Islam is not merely the equality of men and women with each other, but rather the proportionality and balance of the rights and responsibilities of each relative to themselves, which is the primary priority of Islam's perspective on the issue of rights and duties of women and men. This is why harming a woman is no different from harming a man (Qur'an, 33:58), and causing hardship for both women and men is unacceptable in Islam (Qur'an, 85:10). It is through this lens that women, if they themselves are not subjected to hardship, can also participate in work outside the home, as the daughters of the Prophet Shu’ayb used to do (Qur'an, 28: 23). And if they have matured, they have the authority to make decisions regarding their own future (Qur'an, 65: 2). Even migration (hijrah) becomes equally obligatory or recommended for women and men under equal conditions (Qummī, 1404, Vol. 2: 362). And to the same extent that men enter into a covenant with the Prophet, women can also enter into a covenant with the Sacred Lawgiver (Qur'an, 60:12). Thus, women and men, within the layer of their “anima” and “animus,” according to their gender and capacity, have balance and proportion in the responsibilities and rights ascribed to them, and therefore, in these matters, they are not compared to each other at all.

The Mystical Perspective on Women

In a prophetic hadith it is stated that "Three things from your world have been made beloved to me: women, perfume, and the coolness of my eye is in prayer"³ (Al-Ṣadūq, 1362, Vol. 1: 165). Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, among the early Sufis

² Anima: Feminine qualities that are found within the unconscious or shadow of men.

³ And He praised a people who asked Him for spouses and offspring, and He included this in their description in His saying, the Mighty and Majestic: "They say, 'Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes'" (Qur'an, 25:74). And this 'comfort to the eyes' does not veil the 'coolness of the eye' [of spiritual insight]; rather, it unveils it and draws one nearer to it, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of God be upon him) said: "From

and mystics, in explaining this hadith believes that if prayer, according to the prophetic narration, is the light of the Messenger of God's (peace be upon him) eye, then in the Holy Quran, this supplication and request from the believers is presented to the Divine Court: 'Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes.' (Qur'an, 25:74). Therefore, women for the perfected ones, i.e., the prophets and mystics, are not only an obstacle or distraction but a cause for their closeness to God. Because that which, in the logic of faith, is the 'coolness of the eye'—namely, spouse and children—cannot be considered an obstacle or hindrance to another 'coolness of the eye' for believers, which is prayer; rather, it must be a factor for spiritual unveiling and drawing nearer to the Divine Court⁴ (Al-Makkī, 1417, Vol. 2: 416).

Ibn al-'Arabī, in commenting on this prophetic hadith, says, "Can it be that something made beloved to the Prophet (peace be upon him) would distance him from God?! Never! Rather, that which is made beloved to the Messenger of God (peace be upon him) certainly brings him closer to God... It is through this that whoever recognizes the value of women and the value of making them happy will never cease loving them; rather, the perfection of a mystic is to love women, because love for them is a prophetic legacy and a love attributed to God (not a physiological, body-centered desire or caprice)" (Ibn al-'Arabī, n.d., Vol. 2: 190).

Shaykh Rūzbihān Baqlī, based on the belief held by the Sunni tradition concerning the Prophet's love for the wife of his adopted son after her divorce (Qur'an, 33:37), the love of Prophet David for the wife of one of his soldiers assuming his death in battle (Qur'an, 38:23), and ultimately the care and love of Joseph for Zulaykhā had he not seen the proof from his Lord (Qur'an, 12:24), writes, "Read from the book of the prophets, so that you may know that in love, there is no blame, and in the moment of love, without the bridge of your love, we have no passage over the Jeyhoun of Divine Oneness (tawḥīd). The prophets and saints are sanctified from the accusation of carnal, lustful nature in human love" (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 1366: 11). In other words, Ruzbihan, based on the Sufi wisdom 'metaphor (al-majāz) is the bridge to reality (al-ḥaqīqah)' (Qummī, 1379: 348), considered metaphorical love as the bridge to entering true divine love, saying, "This is the ladder of the degrees of love for the Possessor of Majesty for whoever understands; as this love-stricken stranger said, 'Human love is the ladder to the love of the All-Merciful'" (Baqlī Shīrāzī, 1366: 88).⁵

Ibn al-'Arabī believes that women do not differ from men either in a spiritual or a bodily respect. The ruling of being human is a single expression that exists for both woman and man. If they differ, it is due to an incidental matter that causes a distinction between the female sex and the male sex. However, when the distinguishing factor between woman and man is removed, a single ruling is given for both sexes at the level of unity (jam'), and that is the true unity that exists within the fixed entities (al-a'yān al-thābita) (amidst multiplicity). Just as when you look at the sky of a world and the earth of that same world, you define them as two different things while the two have no difference (and both are part of space and the realms). Look, all goodness has one source, but at the level of manifestation, each goodness is counted as a separate beauty" (Ibn al-'Arabī, n.d., Vol. 3: 87).

Therefore, from the perspective of mystics and Sufis, attention to women is not of a gendered nature, but rather due to their possessing positive feminine-centered temperaments and characteristics, some of which we will refer to below.

"Being an Ear" ("udhun" Listening wholeheartedly)

Among the women verses, one can refer, based on the intuitive interpretations of mystics, to feminine temperaments which, incidentally, have also been mentioned in social psychology studies, albeit in a different context and hue. The first of these temperaments is "being an ear" (al-udhun). The most authentic feminine ethic, which in a way constructs other woman-centered ethics and forms the "shakilah" (inherent nature) of women, is attention to detail (Tang, 1395: 13). Attention to detail results from receiving all minute information. It is an issue that the Holy Quran has named "being an ear," meaning being entirely hearing and perceptive, and has introduced His Prophet with this very attribute:

your world, three things have been made beloved to me: perfume, women, and the coolness of my eye has been placed in prayer."

⁴ Abu Talib al-Makki writes, "And He praised a people who asked Him for spouses and offspring, and He made that part of their description in His saying, the Mighty and Majestic: 'They say, 'Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes' (25:74). And 'comfort to the eyes' does not detract from the 'coolness of the eye' [of prayer], rather it unveils it and brings one closer to it, as the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: 'From your world, three things have been made beloved to me: perfume, women, and the coolness of my eye has been placed in prayer.'"

⁵ In the theological doctrine of Twelver Shi'ism, the issue of the infallibility of the prophets is an accepted matter. Therefore, it is emphasized that Ruzbihan Baqli's interpretation is not in harmony with correct Shi'a beliefs and is merely a Sufi notion based on Sunni theology concerning the fallibility of prophets.

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"And among them are those who torment the Prophet and say, 'He is an ear (he listens to everyone).' Say, '[He is] an ear of good for you'" (Qur'an, 9:61). Although some translators have taken "udhun" to mean gullible and considered it the sarcasm of the hypocrites against the Messenger of God (peace be upon him), the continuation of the verse, which introduces the Prophet as "an ear of good," indicates that from the Quran's perspective, this attribute is acceptable and established for the Prophet in matters of good.

Based on this, 'Abd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, in his mystical commentary on the verse about "udhun", considers this characteristic specific to those who possess soundness of heart, quick acceptance, the power to affirm, and who deem the speech and actions of others truthful. He says that possessors of the quality of "udhuniyyah" (being an ear) have a state of acceptance towards good matters, and this is the epitome of human perfection. Passivity and susceptibility to good and the easier acceptance of a soul make that soul more predisposed to perfection than other souls. This state is neither weakness nor foolishness, because a weak and foolish person accepts everything, but a person who is an "udhun" has a refined nature and quick acceptance in the face of good (Kāshānī, 1422, Vol. 1: 267).

According to what is stated in mystical commentaries explaining the meaning of "udhun," "being an ear" is considered an aspect of intellect. Al-Qushayrī, commenting on this verse, mentions that it was asked, "'Who is the intelligent one?' The answer was: 'The perceptive one who pretends to be unaware.' It was asked, 'Who is the intelligent one?' They said, 'The perceptive one who feigns ignorance (al-fatun al-mutaghāfil)'" (Al-Qushayrī, 1981, Vol. 2: 41). In describing "udhuniyyah," the important point is that a person who is an "udhun" actually pays attention to details, and women are generally more detail-oriented than men. This is a truth referred to in Islamic mysticism as "the science of physiognomy and insight ('ilm al-firāsah)," and [the prophet] Khidr is considered one of the possessors of this science, based on which he performed actions whose wisdom even Moses did not initially understand (Fayḍ Kāshānī, 1417, Vol.1: 36). Although the interpretation of "udhun" cannot be easily applied to women and their detail-orientedness, as a kind of instantiation of a refined nature and quick acceptance among women, this issue can be considered a beauty-based (jamālī) attribute and, through this, from a mystical-psychological perspective, woman-centered. Sociological realities also completely confirm that women are more perceptive and detail-oriented than men. For example, countries led by women had much more successful management during the Covid-19 crisis compared to other countries.

Among Quranic narratives, the Queen of Sheba, Bilqīs, is a clear example of this feminine detailed perspective. When the Prophet Solomon sent a letter via the hoopoe to Yemen, which was under this woman's rule, Bilqīs reacted to the style of writing and the gracious, worthy tone of the letter: "She said, 'O eminent ones, indeed, to me has been delivered a noble letter'" (Qur'an, 27:29). Using the adjective "noble" for the writing shows how this queen paid attention to the details of matters purely based on writing, when the addresser was not present. Al-Qushayrī explicitly refers to this detail-orientedness and "udhuniyyah" of Bilqīs, saying she comprehended Solomon's letter with her entire heart and whole being, and therefore had no answer to it. And because she understood the value and worth of this letter and, with her acuity (firāsah), paid it due respect, she was able to both accept Islam and keep company with Solomon while also retaining her worldly kingdom (Al-Qushayrī, 1981, Vol. 3: 35). Ibn al-'Arabī, in explaining the loftiness of Bilqīs's rank in acuity and detail-orientedness, points to another matter: the use of the passive verb "was delivered/cast" (ulqiya). Ibn al-'Arabī says one reason for Bilqīs's wisdom is that she speaks with her entourage in such a way that they do not understand the source of the news reaching her, so they always assume their queen is connected to matters hidden from their eyes. This way, there is always fear among the members of her government to be mindful of their behavior in running state affairs, lest news of their misconduct reaches their ruler through a channel they know not (Ibn al-'Arabī, 1946, Vol. 1: 154). Therefore, attention to detail does not contradict the breadth of vision and the pursuit of perfection; rather, it is along the same line, and this issue is even present in spiritual and otherworldly matters like supplication concerning women.

The Holy Quran exemplifies this through the vision of Āsiyah, the wife of Pharaoh, who in her supplication to the Divine Court says: "'My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise...'" (Qur'an, 66:11). The fact that Āsiyah asks God not just for Paradise, but for the state of "indiyyah" (closeness to/being 'with' God), which is a mystical status, shows a kind of feminine detail-orientedness in supplication. It is for this reason that "'Ayn al-Quḍāt," commenting on this verse, says: "One's spiritual aspiration (himmat) should be as high as that of Pharaoh's wife Āsiyah, who in her prayer asks: 'My Lord, build for me near You a house in Paradise.' This 'near You' is nothing but the Paradise of the elect" (Hamadānī, 1341 : 136). Is it not so that for the disciples of the path (ṭarīqah) and wayfarers to God (sālikūn ilā Allāh), the purpose of going to Paradise is nothing but the Almighty Lord, proximity, nearness, vision, and hearing His speech, and this is the very state of "indiyyah" that Pharaoh's wife asked God (Rifā'ī, 1425: 79). Ibn al-'Arabī deduces two other points regarding Āsiyah's acuity and detail-orientedness from this supplication of hers. First, that Āsiyah prioritized the heavenly neighborhood (proximity to God) over the place, abode, and house in Paradise, first saying "near You" and then presenting "a house in Paradise." "Āsiyah gave precedence to mentioning the neighbor over the abode in her saying: 'near You a house in Paradise'" (Ibn al-'Arabī, 1946, Vol. 1: 175). Second,

she is so much an “*udhun*,” a person of understanding, meticulous, and perceptive, that alongside the status of “*indiyyah*” with God Himself in Paradise, she does not request to be in the company of Moses or any of God's other creatures. Ibn al-‘Arabī believes that a woman who, like Āsiyah, reaches the state of “*indiyyah*” is free from the “*taḥṭiyyah*” (being under/subordinate) of any man, be it Moses or any other creature. For a perfect one cannot be under the guardianship of another perfect one, as any state of “*taḥṭiyyah*” or being a subset is a descent from the state of “*indiyyah*”⁶ (Ibn al-‘Arabī, n.d., Vol. 3: 11).

“*Ilqā*” (Influencing others’ Opinions) and “*Himmat*” (Spiritual Aspiration/Pull)

Another characteristic of feminine “*jamālī*” (beauty-based) ethics emphasized in the Quranic story of Bilqīs is women's power of “*ilqā*,” (influencing those around them, based on the use of both emotion and logic. A hallmark of the feminine “*shakilah*” (inherent nature) that represents feminine identity is that women generally have a stronger ability than men to impart their consultative opinions to those around them. This matter can also be observed in other Quranic verses. For example, the influence of Shu‘ayb's daughter on the Prophet (Moses) in advising her father, who was both spiritually a prophet and of advanced age in experience—“And our father is an old man (Qur’an, 28:29)” —demonstrates the extent of this influence. Shu‘ayb's daughter says to her father: “Father! Hire Moses as a worker! He is strong and trustworthy.”⁷ The subtle and detail-oriented feminine perspective is also completely evident in this incident. Based on Shi‘a hadith texts, the Infallible Imam (peace be upon him) was asked: “Moses ibn ‘Imrān's strength was visibly apparent, but how was his trustworthiness discovered by Shu‘ayb's daughter?” The Imam (peace be upon him) replied thus: Moses said to Shu‘ayb's daughter: “Since I am single, I don't know well if I should walk behind you. If possible, you come a little after me and indicate which path I should take.” And this indicates Moses's trustworthiness in respecting others' boundaries (Qummī, 1404, Vol. 2: 138). The author of the mystical commentary *Kashf al-Asrār* also points out that Shu‘ayb's daughter understood Moses's strength from him single-handedly removing the stone from the well and drawing water from it, and knew his trustworthiness from him preventing her from walking in front of him. Therefore, he is physically strong and, in terms of chastity, trustworthy (Maybudī, 1371, Vol. 7: 295).

Based on the verse “So do not be soft in speech [to men], lest he in whose heart is disease should covet, but speak with appropriate speech” (Qur’an, 33:32), the Quran believes that a religious woman, in expressing her consultative opinions (like Shu‘ayb's daughter) or her authoritative views (like the Queen of Sheba), should not use the effect of a submissive feminine voice—whether in tone or by employing a kind of victimhood implying weakness—to influence and tempt her audience. Rather, she must state her proper and correct opinion without hesitation and with seriousness when presenting her consultative or directive view (Rashdī al-Zayn, 1416, Vol. 2: 1091).

Of course, alongside this power to impart their opinion, most women are often not self-opinionated in decision-making. Bilqīs says to her entourage: “O eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I would not decide a matter until you witness [for] me” (Qur’an, 27:32). This does not mean that a woman, in response to years of patriarchal perspective, should refuse to acknowledge the truth and replace sincerity with guile in expressing her opinion. If in the Quran, the “guile of women” is described as great from the tongue of the *Azīz* of Egypt, it refers to this very power of “*ilqā*” they possess. But we see that those same women, in the position of truth and confession, easily admit their mistake despite their reputation being at risk.

Bilqīs, in front of her entourage who have surrounded her (*al-mala*’), highlights concepts they are oblivious to, while simultaneously pretending in a way that preserves their status so that they do not realize their lower mental capacity compared to this wise, virtuous woman. That is, with the words “advise me in my affair” (*aftūnī fī amrī*), she considers them people of opinion.

In the literature of Sufis, when the power of “*ilqā*” and the transformative influence of a mystic reaches its highest level, it is referred to as “*himmat*” (spiritual aspiration/pull). “*Himmat*” is an attraction (*jadhbah*) from the side of the

⁶ (Āsiyah, the wife of Pharaoh,) said, “My Lord, build for me a house near You in Paradise.” Note that the state of “*indiyyah*” (being with/near God) compelled Āsiyah to speak. And note further that Āsiyah did not ask to be with Moses in Paradise, nor with any other of God’s creatures; rather, she asked to be in the presence of God Himself. This shows that the state of “*indiyyah*” had overcome and dominated Āsiyah; and in this state, a perfect individual cannot be under the guardianship of another perfect individual—placing them together in any way would constitute a kind of descent in rank.

⁷ It refers to the verse where the daughter of Shu‘ayb says, “O my father! Hire him, for indeed the best you can hire is one strong and trustworthy” (Qur’an, 28:26).

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guide (murshid) and spiritual master (murād) that overpowers the disciple's own effort and practically drives the disciple on the spiritual path. Ḥāfiẓ frequently refers to this teaching:

همتم بدرقه راه کن ای طائر قدس که دراز است ره مقصد و من نوسفرم
“Himmatam bādarqah-ye rāh kun ay ṭā’ir-i quds
Ki darāz ast rah-i maqṣad va man nosafaram”

“O Sanctified Bird, let your spiritual aspiration be my escort on the path,
For the road to the goal is long, and I am a novice traveler.”

(Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī, 1374, Ghazal 328)

“Himmat” can be bestowed upon the wayfarer (sālik) by the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), as Ḥāfiẓ again says:
حافظ اگر قدم زنی در ره خاندان به صدق بدرقه رهت شود همت شحنه نجف

“Ḥāfiẓ agar qadam zamī dar rah-i khāndān bi ṣidq
Bādarqah-ye rahat shavad himmat-i shuḥnah-i Najaf”

“O Ḥāfiẓ, if you walk sincerely on the path of the [Prophet's] Household,
The spiritual aspiration of the Guardian of Najaf will be your escort.”

(Ibid., Ghazal 296)

By contemplating these verses, we fully understand that “himmat” is a kind of pull and attraction from the master, guide, or beloved. Sufis have also considered this “himmat,” in a mystical interpretation, to be among the characteristics of feminine identity. In the commentary on the verse "And she certainly determined [to seduce] him, and he would have inclined to her" (Qur'an, 12:24), in ‘Arā’ is al-Bayān, it is stated that “himmat” was innate and God-given to both Zulaykhā and Yūsuf; Yūsuf’s “himmat” was that he was beautiful (primordial beauty, “jamāl al-qīdam”), and this characteristic created attraction in Zulaykhā. Zulaykhā’s “himmat” was a manifest love that even for a moment preoccupied Yūsuf’s mind (primordial love, “maḥabbat al-azal”). But since mere mental “himmat” without action is not punished, Yūsuf was able to control his heart’s excitement and thoughts in the face of the “himmat” and pull of love, beauty, and Zulaykhā’s expressed desire (Baqī Shīrāzī, 2008, Vol. 2: 160).

Nevertheless, the minimum level of “ilqā” and “himmat” is the jurisprudential al-amr bi’l-ma’rūf wa’l-nahy ‘an al-munkar (enjoining good and forbidding evil). Mystics believe the verse "The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong" (Qur'an, 9:71) refers to this very power of “ilqā” that believing men and women have over each other. Maybudī writes about this, "Umm Salamah said: 'O Messenger of God, why does God Almighty mention all the men in migration (hijrah), but does not mention women?' The Lord of the Worlds sent this verse in response to her: 'I do not waste the reward of any worker among you, men or women, who are believers.' And the meaning of 'some of you are from others' is that you are all from one another, brothers and sisters to one another, fellow believers to one another, and kin to one another, meaning kinship in religion, in support, and in loyalty" (Maybudī, 1371, Vol. 2: 390). Therefore, women, if not more than men, then alongside men, must utilize their power of “ilqā” and “himmat” to revive truth and honesty.

Being a “Ṣiddīqah” (A Truthful Woman)

In Islamic mysticism and Quranic terminology, a “Ṣiddīq” (male) or “Ṣiddīqah” (female) refers to one who possesses an extraordinary degree of truthfulness and (taṣḍīq). This is not merely honesty in speech, but a profound existential state where one’s attributes, actions, and entire being are in perfect alignment with, and bear witness to, the Divine Attributes and Realities. Their inner truth mirrors the Divine Truth.

One manifestations of truthfulness (ṣidq) is the acknowledgment of truth (i’ tirāf bi’l-ḥaqq) in both word and action⁸ (Majlisī, 1404, Vol. 8: 185). Accordingly, it must be said that another prominent characteristic of feminine identity highlighted in the Quran is the acknowledgment of truth. Historical experience has shown that women, more than men, if they realize their words or practical conduct are flawed, acknowledge the truth without pride or arrogance. Clear examples of this sincerity can be seen in the acknowledgment of the women of Egypt regarding Joseph’s innocence: "They said, 'Perfect is Allah! We know about him no evil'" (Qur'an, 12:51); Zulaykhā’s confession of her own wrongdoing: "The wife of al-‘Azīz said, 'Now the truth has become evident'" (ibid.); or Bilqīs’s acknowledgment of her and her people’s mistake in sun-worship in the verse: "She said, 'My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to All, Lord of the worlds'" (Qur'an, 27:44).

⁸ And God’s saying: “That He may question the truthful about their truthfulness” (Qur’an, 33:8). That is, He will examine those who possess truthfulness in speech to see if they also possess truthfulness in their actions and deeds. In other words, He intends to make the audience realize that confessing the truth is not enough without acting upon it.

The Sufi-oriented exegete Ibn 'Aṭā' says: When Zulaykhā, to save herself, said regarding Joseph, "What is the recompense of one who intended evil for your wife but that he be imprisoned?" (Qur'an, 12:25), it was clear she was not yet immersed in the state of selfless love (maḥabbah). Therefore, she did not exercise sincerity in her speech and did not prefer Joseph over herself. But when Zulaykhā became immersed and bewildered in love for Joseph, she spoke the truth and reached the state of sincerity (ṣidq). The sign was that, without fearing for her life or reputation, she preferred Joseph's exoneration from the accusation over what awaited her, and said: "Now the truth is evident, and it was I who sought to seduce him, and he has always been of the truthful" (Sulamī, 1369, Vol. 1: 104). It is for this reason that al-Qushayrī considers self-sacrifice (īthār)—preferring the beloved over oneself—as the sign of sincere love, just as the wife of the Azīz of Egypt did for Joseph (Al-Qushayrī, 1374: 455).

One of the conditions for pledging allegiance (bay'ah) to the Prophet is also known to be this acknowledgment of truth. The Quranic verses state that women must not spread slander: "And not give rise to slander, fabricating it between their hands and their feet [i.e., secretly]" (Qur'an, 60:12). Sincerity in acknowledging the falsehood of slander is so important from the Quran's perspective that it is included among the conditions for women's allegiance to the Prophet. This acknowledgment of truth, based on the principle "Speak the truth even if it leads to your destruction" (Warrām, 1410, Vol. 1: 12), is desirable even in situations detrimental to women themselves. It is for this reason that the Quran explicitly states that women must not conceal what God has created in their wombs and attribute it to a man other than the source of the sperm: "Nor is it lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs, if they believe in Allah and the Last Day" (Qur'an, 2:228).

Although Lady Maryam, upon initially receiving the angelic news of bearing a child, wished for her own death, she never—despite others' reactions—considered denying the divine gift or, for instance, aborting the child who was called the "Word of God," namely Jesus. The Quran's description of Lady Maryam is: "And she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was of the devoutly obedient" (Qur'an, 66:12). She believed in the truthfulness of God's words, meaning both the outward and inward reality of her son Jesus, who was the "Word of God," and confirmed all of it (Ibn al-'Arabī, n.d., Vol. 3: 283). She also acknowledged the heavenly books, and thereby attained the state of "al-qānīṭīn" - those who humbly submit to and obey the truth. In the mystical path of spiritual perfection, this acknowledgment of truth elevates so profoundly that it raises a woman like Maryam to the rank of the "Ṣiddīqūn" (the Truthful) and she takes the title "Ṣiddīqah" (Al-Tirmidhī, 1422: 399). Maybudī, explaining this state of Maryam, writes:

"And his mother was a Ṣiddīqah" (Qur'an, 5:75); elsewhere He said: "And she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures" (66:12). Kalbī said: "Her being a 'Ṣiddīqah' was that when Gabriel came and said, 'I am only the messenger of your Lord to give you a pure boy' (19:19), she confirmed Gabriel and she confirmed Jesus as the Messenger of God" (Maybudī, 1371, Vol. 3: 195).

The rank of the "Ṣiddīqūn" is a state that, according to the Quranic verses, is higher than the rank of the martyrs (shuhadā') and the righteous (ṣāliḥūn), and comes after the rank of the prophets. The possessors of this mystical rank are counted among those settled in divine favor: "And those will be with the ones upon whom Allah has bestowed favor - of the prophets, the steadfast affirmers of truth (ṣiddīqīn), the martyrs and the righteous..." (Qur'an, 4:69) The author of "Al-Luma' fi al-Taṣawwuf" considers the verification (taṣdīq) of the "Ṣiddīqūn" and the witnessing (shuhūd) of the martyrs as two aspects of those who have reached the state of certitude (yaqīn). He says: "The Quran states that there are signs on earth for the people of certitude: 'And on the earth are signs for the certain [in faith]' (51:20). This is also because when a human attains certitude about something from the world of meaning, the state of witnessing its conditions occurs for them. And when the veils are removed from the truths of meaning, the wayfarer to God (sālik ilā Allāh) emerges from the intertwined branches of creation, and God addresses them with the address of those brought near (muqarrabūn). This unveiling is among the functions of the state of the "Ṣiddīqūn." Just as God has also named them 'people of witnessing' and combined both titles in this statement: 'the steadfast affirmers of truth and the martyrs' (4:69) – the possessors of the state of verification through witnessing" (Al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī, 1914: 72).

Therefore, acknowledgment of truth leads to attaining the mystical rank of the "Ṣiddīqūn." In the case of Maryam, it is stated in the Quran that she attained this rank (5:75). And to the extent that this important matter became a mystical state for Maryam, Zulaykhā, and the women of Egypt—each at their own level and state—and since acknowledgment of truth is more pronounced among women due to their superior emotional capacity, the possibility of attaining the "rank of the Ṣiddīqūn" is more readily available for them.

"Istihyā'" (Modesty as a Life-Giving Principle)

The third characteristic of feminine ethics is "ḥayā'" (modesty, chastity). As lexicographers have stated, "khajālat" (shame/embarrassment) pertains to a past action, while "ḥayā'" pertains to an action that is to be performed in the future (Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, 1412: 268). Therefore, "ḥayā'" is a restraining and piety-creating factor for achieving

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greater successes and attaining the pure life (al-ḥayāt al-ṭayyibah). It is for this reason that “ḥayā” (modesty), which is the opposite of “waqāḥah” (shamelessness, thoughtlessness), and “ḥayy” (living), meaning life, are from the same root, because “ḥayā” creates a new life (Ibn Fāris, 1404, Vol. 2: 122). But what is the difference between “ḥayā” and “istiḥyā” and why, in this verse, does Almighty God not say the daughter of Shu‘ayb walked with “ḥayā,” but rather says she walked with “istiḥyā”?

To understand the answer to this question, we must review the root of “istiḥyā” in the Quran. “Istiḥyā” appears in the Quran with three semantic approaches. First, regarding the action of the Pharaoh's people who killed the sons of the Israelites and kept their daughters alive: "While they let your females live" (yastahyūna nisā'akum) (Qur'an, 2:49). In this verse, the use of the root “dhabah” (to slaughter) for the sons, and in the “taf’īl” form (Form II), which indicates gradual action, points to their slow, agonizing death. The use of the “istif’āl” form (Form X) for letting the daughters live also indicates the will of the doer. That is, the mothers, sisters, and little girls who remained had no desire for this inauspicious and torturous life themselves; rather, the Pharaoh's people had decided to spare them. Therefore, this verse is not related to the characteristic of “istiḥyā’.”

In the verse "Indeed, Allah is not hesitant (lā yastahyī) to present an example, that of a mosquito" (Qur'an, 2:26), contrary to what nearly all translators have understood—that God does not feel shy to give the example of a small insect—some lexicologists have taken “yastahyī” to mean "to cause to remain/to preserve" (lā yastabqī), and have interpreted the verse to mean that God, in giving examples for humans, has not even left unsaid the example of a small insect (Ibn Manẓūr, 1414, Vol. 14: 213).

However, in the third verse, "And Allah is not hesitant (lā yastahyī) about the truth" (Qur'an, 33:53), exegetes have interpreted “istiḥyā” as “ṭalab al-ḥayā” (seeking modesty/feeling hesitant). That is, Almighty God does not command any of His servants to feel shy (ḥayā’) regarding truth and reality: "He does not command feeling shy about it" (Ṭurayḥī, 1375, Vol. 1: 115).

With this explanation, “istiḥyā’”—the third feminine-centered characteristic in the Quran—does not speak of “ḥayā’”—observance as meaning withdrawal and having no boldness whatsoever. In the customs of some eras, women's success was counted as boldness (gustākḥī), while the logic of the Quran is that in the divine system, every possessor of virtue should see the result of his action according to his virtue and superiority (Qur'an, 11:3), and every striving human according to his effort (Qur'an, 53:39). And that in the sphere of action, men and women are no different; God does not waste the reward of any doer and explicitly declares that they are equal to one another in action: "Indeed, I will not allow to be lost the work of any worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another" (Qur'an, 3:195).

In contemporary Persian, “gustākḥī” (boldness/audacity) is taken as the opposite of “ḥayā’” and “istiḥyā’.” However, one must not forget that the word “gustākḥī” in our mystical literature did not have a negative meaning; rather, it was used to mean speaking comfortably/freely. As when Fāṭimah, the wife of Aḥmad Khaḍrawayh, "when she came before Bāyazīd, removed her face veil and spoke to him freely (gustākḥ). Aḥmad was astonished by this and jealousy overcame his heart. He said, 'O Fāṭimah! What was this boldness (gustākḥī) with Bāyazīd?' She said, 'Because you are intimate with my nature (ṭabī’at), and he is intimate with my path (ṭarīqat)'" (Ḥusaynī, 1385: 289).

A meaning close to this has also been reported regarding women's disputation with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself in narrations, and more importantly, the Quran itself explicitly states that women used to have verbal debates with the Messenger of God: "Allah has certainly heard the speech of the one who argues with you" (Qur'an, 58:1). Through this, “istiḥyā’” does not conflict with “gustākḥī” (boldness), and “gustākḥī” does not conflict with “ḥayā’” (modesty). The modern meaning of “gustākḥī” is transgressing one's limits, whereas in mystical literature, “gustākḥ” was someone who did not hold back from claiming their right. But what does “istiḥyā’” in the case of Shu‘ayb's daughter refer to?

The answer is that, considering the difference between “ḥayā’” and “khajālat” (shame), and with attention to the meaning of “istiḥyā’”—which, based on the above explanations, means being an agent that causes “ḥayā’” in others and becoming a conduit for “ḥayā’”—one of the characteristics of feminine identity is that women can act in a way that individuals in society are raised with preventive education. Instead of doing something and then feeling ashamed, they compel themselves and others to observe “ḥayā’,” without withdrawing from society or being unable to boldly demand their right. This capability exists among women more than men, and of course, it also exists in men who have manifested their “anima” from their unconscious.

Mystics, while distinguishing between types of “ḥayā’”—observance (Kharghūshī, 1427: 404), considered “istiḥyā’” in this verse a sign of Shu‘ayb's daughter being noble (karīmah). Because she wanted to invite Moses, and it is a characteristic of the host, when inviting a guest, to behave with such humility that the guest does not decline the invitation (Al-Qushayrī, 1374: 324). With this explanation, feminine “ḥayā’” is a kind of gracious (karīmānah) interaction stemming from humility, not a kind of humiliation or shame about feminine identity, the nature of interaction with men, or presence in society. This type of “ḥayā’” is fundamentally unacceptable in Islam and

contradicts the fourth identity-forming characteristic of women, which is being an educator (*murabbī*), guide (*murshid*), and spiritual sustainer (*rabb*) for others.

“Rubūbiyyah” (Spiritual Nurturing) and “Murshidiyyah” (Mentorship)

The fourth identity-forming characteristic for women from the Quran's perspective is their potential to be educators (*murabbī*) and guides (*murshid*) in spiritual upbringing. Although in the masculine-centered view of Islamic history, women, as in other ideologies, have been considered the weaker sex, the reason why Imam Bāqir (peace be upon him) states that respect for the mother is two-thirds and for the father one-third is precisely because the mother's influence in spiritual and physical upbringing is greater than the father's. Imam Bāqir (peace be upon him) said: "Moses asked God three times: 'My Lord! Advise me.' And God said each time: 'I advise you to [be mindful of] Myself.' Then he said: 'My Lord! Advise me!' He said: 'I advise you to [be mindful of] your mother.' He asked again: 'My Lord! Advise me!' God said: 'I advise you to [be mindful of] your mother.' He said once more: 'My Lord! Advise me!' He said: 'I advise you to [be mindful of] your father.'" Imam Bāqir (peace be upon him) added: "This is why it is said that the mother's right to kindness is two-thirds and the father's is one-third" (*Al-Ṣadūq*, 1376: 511).

This important matter, of course, is not solely confined to women who are mothers themselves. Among influential women who did not have the status of motherhood, one can mention the impact of Moses' sister in shaping the future of Moses and Israelites. Exegetes have identified the person referred to as "his sister" (*ukh'tuhu*) (*Qur'an*, 28:11) as someone named Maryam. She was the wife of Joshua ibn Nūn, the successor of Moses. It is said that she was older than her brothers Moses and Aaron, and her intelligence and acuity (*firāsah*) are mentioned. On the other hand, Āsiyah, the wife of Pharaoh, also had a profound impact on the upbringing of a generation without being a mother, and from the Quran's perspective, possessed the woman-centered characteristic of being a spiritual educator and guide.

Umm al-Aswad, the daughter of the mystic (‘*arifah*) A‘yun ibn Ṣunṣun—whose father was Sunni and whose grandfather was a notable Christian—through her correct choice and study, became the first Shi‘a in the A‘yun family and a narrator of hadith from Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him). She was the cause of her four brothers—Zurārah ibn A‘yun, ‘Abd al-Malik ibn A‘yun, Ḥumrān ibn A‘yun, and Bukayr ibn A‘yun—becoming Shi‘a (*Ibn Dāwūd*, 1342: 392).

Umm al-Aswad had a stronger relationship with Zurārah among her brothers, and it was she who closed Zurārah's eyes upon his death (*Gharawī Nā'inī*, 1386: 44). We must not forget that Zurārah is the one about whom Imam al-Ṣādiq (peace be upon him) said: "Were it not for Zurārah, the traces of prophethood would have been obliterated" (*Al-Shaykh al-Mufīd*, 1413: 66).

And through this, we must believe that what remains of the blessings of prophetic traces in the hands of the people of the world is due to the efforts of a lady named "Umm al-Aswad," who, by reviving a characteristic of her own feminine identity—namely, being a guide (*murshid*) and spiritual master (*murād*) and building a generation (*naslsāzī*)—succeeded in having such a profound impact in the world of Islam. And is a lady who, according to Astarābādī's expression, is considered a mystic personality (*shakhṣiyyat ‘arifah*) (*Astarābādī*, 1422: 400).

Based on the logic of mysticism, women are the manifestation (*maẓhar*) of the Divine Names of Beauty (*Asmā' Jamāliyyah*), while simultaneously containing attributes of Majesty (*Ṣifāt Jalāliyyah*) within themselves. The system of names governing the world, in the mystical perspective, is formed through the conjugation (*tanākuh*) of a beautiful (*jamālī*) name and a majestic (*jalālī*) name. Each of these names is a sustainer (*rabb*), a creator, and a nurturer of its own manifestations, and sometimes, through blending with one another, they bring forth other nominal manifestations. Based on this, it is said that alongside the name "Al-Walī" (The Protector), whose manifestation is ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (peace be upon him), if the name "Al-Barī" (The Originator), whose manifestation is Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (peace be upon her), had not existed, creation would not have taken form. And since these two are the two outstretched hands of Almighty God—"Rather, His hands are outstretched" (*Qur'an*, 5:64)—and the expansion (*bast*) of divine light is the all-encompassing existence (*al-wujūd al-munbasit*) and the Muḥammadan Reality (*al-ḥaqīqah al-Muḥammadiyyah*), therefore, if these two had not existed, the "Muḥammadan Reality" would not have appeared either. This is the meaning of that sacred (*qudsī*) tradition: "O Aḥmad: Were it not for you, I would not have created the spheres, and were it not for ‘Alī, I would not have created you, and were it not for Fāṭimah, I would not have created you both." Then He said: "Jābir, this is among the secrets that the Messenger of God commanded us to conceal except from its people" (*Namāzī Shāhrūdī*, 1418, Vol. 3: 169).

Therefore, we see that regarding the noble verse "Indeed, it is one of the greatest [things]" (*Qur'an*, 74:35), two interpretations have been reported. First, that this great sustainer (*rabb kabīr*) is the guardianship (*walāyah*) of the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Alī (peace be upon him); and the other, that this great sustainer is the existence of Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (peace be upon her) (*Al-Baḥrānī*, 1374, Vol. 5: 528).

Seeking Belovedness (Maḥbūbiyyat-ṭalabī)

Rumi, in a mystical interpretation of the verse "Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire of women" (Qur'an, 3:14), which says the love of inclination towards women has been adorned for mankind, considers God Almighty as the agent and performer of this adornment and says:

«زینَ لِلنَّاسِ حَقّ آراستست
ز آنچه حقّ آراست چون دانند جَست؟»
“Zuyyina li'l-nāsi ḥaqq ārastast
Zānche ḥaqq ārast chūn dānand jast?”

"God has said in the Quran that the love of desires, such as [the love of] women, has been adorned (made attractive) for people so that they find them pleasing. The One who placed this inclination within human beings is God. So, how can they possibly possess the ability to free themselves and escape from that which God has adorned to draw them toward?" (Rumi, 1397, Vol. 1: 93)

Ibn al-‘Arabī further believes that the most perfect degree of divine witnessing is attained in the sexual act with women. Because in such a state of union, love reaches a point where the lover finds himself within the beloved and the entire will of the beloved permeates his whole being. It is here that a person experiences a kind of annihilation (fanā‘) that resembles annihilation in God (fanā‘ fī Allāh). And since God is jealous, after His servant experiences the state of annihilation in the world of metaphor (‘ālam al-majāz), He has commanded him to perform the major ablution (ghusl) as a symbol of washing away the pleasure from other-than-God from himself, and to understand that he must experience this same state of annihilation and total engagement of all his existential components not in the metaphorical world, but in the world of meaning and reality (‘ālam al-ma‘nā wa al-ḥaqīqah), and not with a human beloved, but with his God (Ibn al-‘Arabī, 1946: 217).

Rumi believes that even the Prophet, who in the state of proximity is immersed in the Divine Essence, is affected by aspects of his corporeal humanity even at that peak of spiritual immediacy. It is for this reason that before descending into the revelatory trance, he would ask his wife ‘Ā‘ishah, who possessed a share of femininity and freshness and was nicknamed "Ḥumayrā'" (the rosy-cheeked young woman), to speak to him so that the Prophet would not remain in that peak state and would return to his earthly state.

آن که عالم مست گفتش آمدی
یا حمیراء می زدی

“Ān keh ‘ālam mast-e guftash āmadī
Kallimīnī yā Ḥumayrā' mī-zadī”

“He, whose words leave the entire world entranced and enraptured, would, when entering the state of receiving divine revelation, say to his wife Aisha: "O Humaira, speak to me, lest my soul depart from my body (from being so utterly immersed in divine revelation)” (Rumi, 1397, Vol.1: 78).

Therefore, in the logic of many Sufis and mystics, belovedness (maḥbūbiyyat) is an inherent part of women's nature. Its prohibition applies only in unlawful contexts; otherwise, for accelerating the spiritual journey (sair al-sulūkī) and understanding divine knowledge (ma‘rifah), this important element is needed. It is for this reason that woman is one of the two beloved things chosen by the Messenger of God from the world.

Conclusion:

Contrary to many dualistic religions that believe woman is a creation of evil, or patriarchal readings of Abrahamic faiths that consider her to be created from the remnants of man, Islam, particularly with its mystical approach, does not think this way regarding women. Muslim mystics, based on the “āyāt al-nisā’” (verses on women), believe that certain mystical characteristics are feminine-centric, though men, within the layer of their beauty (jamāl), can also be adorned with these stations. Using the method of thematic analysis, the present research has examined and elaborated on five of these features: "being “udhun” (a receptive ear), “ilqā’” (imparting influence) and “himmat” (spiritual aspiration/pull), being a “ṣiddīqah” (a woman of truth), “istiḥyā’” (modesty as a life-giving principle), and “rubūbiyyah” (spiritual nurturing) and being/become the beloved (maḥbūb). It is worth noting that the thematic analysis approach leaves open the possibility of discovering other themes; however, this inquiry has focused on themes that were prominent and explorable at the intersection of the mystical perspective on the “āyāt al-nisā’” and the components of feminine social psychology. Ultimately, the hypothesis was proven that in general women, due to their God-given inherent nature (shakīlah), are more successful in manifesting these five characteristics than men are. Men can also attain this state by strengthening their beautiful (jamālī) attributes, which, from the mystical perspective, are manifested within the interior of majestic (jalālī) attributes. As indicated, in Jungian psychotherapy, the balance between the “anima” and masculine-oriented ethics with the “animus” and feminine-oriented ethics evokes almost this same meaning.

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