Discourse on Women's Leadership in Islam: Asghar Ali Engineer's Thought Analysis Study

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Abstract

The issue of women's leadership in Islam is still a determinant in various circles of scholars, both classical scholars, and modern scholars. However, with the presence of Islam on this earth, it will carry out its mission, justice, and experience. The purposes are to describe leadership from an Islamic perspective, to describe women's leadership from the Asghar Ali Engineer's perspective, and to analyze Asghar Ali Engineer's thinking about women's leadership. This study uses a qualitative method with a literature study approach. The data obtained were processed by description, interpretation, and analysis. The results of this study indicate that in the view of Asghar Ali Engineer, women are allowed to become leaders. As for the understanding of the classical scholars who forbid women to become leaders, Asghar Ali firmly said that the scholars did not see the social context when the verse was revealed so the interpretation that emerged was the distortion of gender issues.

Keywords: *Asghar Ali Engineer, Gender Equality, Women's Leadership*

Introduction

The study of women's issues is important to study because there are still many negative views on women, especially in leadership issues. Leadership is an important element in giving birth to a good social order. Therefore, humans have the role and function of being a

leader in this world at the same time.[1] The discourse on women's leadership is one of the elements of the ideals of gender equality. However, this raises the pros and cons between the figures because there are no religious texts that allow women to become leaders.[2] Then, women also become a very basic element in the social order. This is evidenced by the equal rights and obligations of women, therefore the existence of women is not a fulfillment of the shortcomings of men, but rather equal beings in life in this world, both in domestic and public matters. However, this is often ignored by people who tend to be influenced by culture, traditions and social structures that are dominated by men, giving rise to various discriminations against women. In addition, the role of traditional clerics reinforces the perceived weakness of women compared to men, through religious texts that are interpreted in a gender biased manner.[3]

Historically, Islam was present in the world to perfect human life. That perfection is found in peace, equality, and liberation. The most basic teachings in Islam are defending the weak, saving people from all forms of discrimination and oppression, and actualizing justice. In addition, Islam is not only limited to liberating humans from all forms of oppression, but also calls for equality between humans. Therefore, Islam is actually a suitable tool to unite the goals of equality between women and men.[4] However, several centuries after the death of the Prophet SAW, Muslims have transformed into feudal lords who have had a bad impact on women. The Qur'an explicitly recognizes the superiority of men, but this applies in only a few contexts. While the scholars allow this and state explicitly that men are superior beings compared to women. As a result, throughout the history of Islamic civilization, women have always experienced subordination, discrimination, and oppression. In addition, the concept of inequality has emerged between women and men, so that there are many doctrines that explain that women will never be able to become leaders and will never have the skills that men have.[5]

In the development of Islamic science, the birth of feminist interpretation is a response to traditional interpretations that tend to be patriarchal. This activity is carried out to review the interpretations made by traditional scholars of the Qur'an and hadith

[1] Rini Puji Astuti, "Optimalisasi Pemberdayaan Perempu-an Dalam Kepemimpinan Efektif," *An-Nisa': Jurnal Kajian Perempuan Dan Keislaman* 12, no. 2 (2019): 263–91, https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v12i2.19.

[2] Rudi Hartono, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Di Era Globalisasi," *Jurnal Pancasila Dan Kewarganegaraan* 1, no. 1 (2021): 82–99.

[3] Ida Novianti, "Dilema Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Islam," *Jurnal Studi & Anak* 3, no. 2 (2008): 255–261.

[4] Rosnaeni, "Pandangan Asghar Ali Engineer Tentang Kesetaraan Gender," *Tadarus Tarbawy* 3, no. 2 (2021): 346–353.

[5] Siti Khusnul Khotimah, "Fiqih Fiminis Presfektif Asghar Ali Engineer," *An-Nisa'* 8, no. 1 (2015): 101–112.

that tend to be gender biased. Of the many figures of Islamic feminism, Asghar Ali Engineer occupies a very important position because he has a very diamond understanding of religious texts, especially discussing women's issues. According to him, the superiority of men over women is something justified by the scholars with the aim of perpetuating their control over women. In fact, the Qur'an clearly states equality between women and men. This statement has two meanings. First, in general, humans are equal creatures. Second, women and men have equal rights in the economic, social and political fields. Even the two are equal in their freedom.[6]

Research related to women's leadership has been carried out by many experts. Among them, Tamer Koburtay, Tala Abuhussein and Yusuf M. Sidani (2022), *"Women Leadership, Culture, and Islam: Female Voice From Jordan. Journal of Business Ethics".* The result of this research is that Jordanian and Arab society generally benefit more from the increased participation of women in leadership. Across all issues in the Arab world, a more balanced representation of women in leadership at the political, organizational and societal levels will be an important step

towards community development and commitment to important contributions to a more just, productive and inclusive life. Then, explore how women leaders describe the root causes of their problems and solutions, and how they explain the strengths of various forces in facilitating or hindering their leadership journey. This research also reflects their attitudes about the interaction between religious understanding and cultural norms/practices to explain their empowerment or powerlessness. This study also reflects their attitudes about the interaction between religious understanding and cultural norms/practices to explain their empowerment or powerlessness. This study uncovers how female leaders lament the disappointing power of patriarchal sociocultural values in preventing women from advancing to leadership positions.[7]

Susan R Madsen and Maurren S. Andrade (2018*), "Unconscious Gender Bias: Implications for Women's Leadership Development".* Journal of Leadership Studies. The result of this research is that training and development must incorporate elements of unconscious gender bias to help women leaders identify invisible barriers and recognize these biases within themselves and in their organizations.

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[6] Asghar Ali Engineer, *Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam*, ed. Farid Wajidi and Cici Farkha Assegaf (Yogyakarta: LSSPA, 2000): 58.

[7] Tamer Koburtay, Tala Abuhussein, and Yusuf M Sidani, "Women Leadership, Culture, and Islam: Female Voices from Jordan," *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2022, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-022-05041-0.

More broadly, it also defines the urgent need to increase the effectiveness of women's development programs by ensuring that training is based on current research and theory focusing on gender, leadership, adult education, and organizational change. In addition, monitoring several research-based tools, principles and strategies that work as a theoretical framework.[8]

Nasirudin Al Ahsani (2020), *"Kepemimpinan Perempuan pada Masyarakat dalam Perspektif Sa'id Ramadan Al-Buti: Telaah Hadis Misoginis".* Jurnal Al-Hikmah. The result of this study is the Hadith narrated by Bukhari which means "a people will not be lucky if it is led by a woman" certainly has reasons that form the basis of the Hadith. The hadith does not state that women are prohibited from becoming community leaders. However, al-Buti has two requirements for a female leader: a) have expertise; b) the assignment will not allow him to ignore Sharia law. Al-Buti's views are in line with those of Muhammad Ghazali, Abu Hanifah, ibn Hazm, Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, Ali Jumʿah and Mahmoud Hamdi Zaqzouq. Al-Buti also highlighted that a woman could become a member of the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) because the Prophet negotiated with Umm Salamah after the Hudaibiyyah agreement. As for the positions of ministers and judges, it is not advisable to forbid them based on the hadith.[9]

Suhada (2019), *"Kesetaraan Gender: Posisi Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Islam".* Jurnal Mumtaz. The results of this study are a leader is a person who develops functional tasks to oversee the process to influence the thoughts, actions, and feelings of other people, groups, and individuals to achieve common goals. In Islam there are several leadership principles, namely responsibility, monotheism, prudence and justice. Women's leadership is often a contentious issue in Islamic societies, with some for and against. Meanwhile, from the perspective of gender equality, there is a view that Islam does not place the rights and obligations that exist in human anatomy in the opposite position.[10]

Hikmatul Hasanah dan Suprianik (2019), *"Kepemimpinan Perempuan Perspektif Islam dan Gender".* Jurnal An-Nisa. The results of this study explain that the position of women can be described in various aspects, including economic aspects, social aspects, reproductive aspects, and leadership aspects. So far, women are often only placed in member positions in the management, many people who are

[8] Susan R. Madsen and Maureen S. Andrade, "Unconscious Gender Bias: Implications for Women's Leadership Development," *Journal of Leadership Studies* 12, no. 1 (2018): 62–67, https://doi.org/10.1002/jls.21566.

[9] Nasirudin Al Ahsani, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Pada Masyarakat Dalam Perspektif Saʿīd Ramaḍān Al-Būṭī (Telaah Hadis Misoginis)," *Jurnal Al-Hikmah* 18, no. 1 (2020): 57–74, https://doi.org/10.35719/alhikmah.v18i1.23.

[10] Suhada, "Kesetaraan Gender: Posisi Keperempuanan Perempuan Dalam Islam," *Mumtaz* 3, no. 1 (2019): 169–90.

familiar with this say that women are active in community organizations and do not have the character of a brave man. There are only a few mass organizations whose members must be all women, so leaders from the bottom to the center need women, such as organizations under the auspices of Nahdlatul Ulama', namely: organizations under the auspices of Muslims, Fatayat, and Muhammadiyah, namely Aisyiah. The above conditions resulted in the work program proposed by women not being widely accepted and implemented in the existing political world. This is due to first, the education factor is very influential and greatly determines the activities of women during their participation as administrators of political parties, all tasks assigned to women can be completed because of the education that women receive. The two obstacles faced by women in political parties are through several issues such as education, employment, gender justice and equality, family roles, patriarchal culture, religion and family relations. The three women who have the expertise or ability to lead the state can become heads of state in the context of modern society, because the modern government system is different from the monarchy that prevailed in the classical period, which was owned by the head of state and controlled all state affairs. Meanwhile, in this modern era, there are different parts to shape the performance of a nation's leader.[11]

Previous research has discussed the issues of women's leadership in Islam. However, issues related to the discourse of female leadership from the perspective of Asghar Ali Engineer are very minimally discussed. Therefore, the theme raised in the study is a differentiator from previous studies. The objectives of this study are, *first,* to describe the leadership of women from an Islamic perspective. *Second,* describe women's leadership from the perspective of Asghar Ali Engineer. *Third,* analyze Asghar Ali Engineer's thoughts on women's leadership.

Method

This research is a library research, where the researcher collects data, studies, understands, and processes it into research material. This is a study that uses various literatures in obtaining research data.[12] This study uses a qualitative approach, in this case the researcher aims to explore information relevant to the object of study.[13] This study

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[11] Hikmatul Hasanah and Suprianik, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Perspektif Islam Dan Gender," *An-Nisa': Jurnal Kajian Perempuan Dan Keislaman* 12, no. 1 (2019): 22–44, https://doi.org/10.35719/annisa.v12i1.6.

[12] Mestika Zed, *Metode Penelitian Kepustakaan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2004): 5.
[13] Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D* (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2016): 8.

uses primary and secondary sources. The primary sources in question are works written directly by Asghar Ali Engineer. While the secondary sources in this study are the literature, both journals, books, documents, and others related to the object being studied. In data processing, the researcher used three methods, namely the method of interpretation, the method of description, and the method of analysis.[14]

The interpretation method used by the researcher aims to explore the works of Asghar Ali Engineer in order to gain a concrete understanding. In using the description method, the researcher will explain the thoughts of Asghar Ali Engineer. Finally, the analytical method used by the researcher aims to analyze the thoughts of Asghar Ali Engineer regarding women's leadership.

Discussion

Islamic Perspective Women's Leadership

14 centuries ago Islam has succeeded in eliminating all forms of discrimination and suffering experienced by women. Al-Qur'an as a foothold for Muslims, has explained the equal rights of women and men, especially in leading. In this case, there are many considerations that make someone a leader, including the abilities and requirements. Therefore, leadership in a region, organization, state and others does not only refer to men, but it can be done by women.[15] Historically, women's leadership has had many successes. Like Queen Balqis with her expertise in leading the kingdom of Sa'ba. With his expertise in leading, K.H Husein Muhammad stated that the success of Ratu Balqis in leading was because he was able to control his people with his democratic attitude. Apart from Ratu Balqis, women have had many successes as leaders, such as Margaret Tacher, Benazir Butho, Indira Gandhi, Hasina Zia, and so on. This is proof that in women there is a competent capacity to lead.[16]

Women's leadership in Islam can be categorized into two categories, namely domestic and public. As explained by the Qur'an through the letter An-Nisa verse 34, the leader in a marriage is a man. In this case, it can be understood that there are no limitations for women to become leaders outside the domestic area, because women are human beings who have the same rights and obligations as men. Women are given the right by God to be active in the social, educational,

[14] Wahyudin Darmalaksana, *Cara Menulis Proposal Penelitian*, *Fakultas Ushuluddin UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung* (Bandung: Fakultas Ushuluddin UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2020), 25.

[15] Huzaemah Tahido Yanggo, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam," *Misykat* 1, no. 1 (2016): 1–18.

[16] Samsul Zakaria, "KEPEMIMPINAN PEREMPUAN DALAM PERSEPEKTIF HUKUM ISLAM (Studi Komparatif Antara Pemikiran KH . Husein Muhammad Dan Prof. Siti Musdah Muliah," *KHAZANAH* 6, no. 1 (2013): 65–97.

cultural, and political fields. However, there are many differences of opinion between commentators regarding the word qawwam contained in Surah An-Nisa verse 34. Some commentators say that the term qawwam only applies to men. As Ibn Kathir said that men are leaders of women, decide on their behavior and warn if women deviate from orders. Therefore, leadership only applies to men.[17] This statement was agreed upon by several scholars such as Al-Qurtubi, Ibn Arabi, Al-Razi, Abu Ja'far, and so on. They believe that men are superior beings, and that superiority is a fitrah for men, because physically and mentally, men have advantages over women.[18] Meanwhile, according to M. Quraish Shihab, the term qawwam contained in Surah An-Nisa verse 34 means attention, defense, protection, meeting needs, and coaching. Therefore, the leadership in the domestic sphere given to men should not encourage him to act arbitrarily. Furthermore, the leadership given to men actually makes them responsible beings and behaves fairly towards women. This justice can be achieved if men give

women the freedom to do their activities in the public sphere.[19]

in Islamic Shari'ah, both in the form of teachings and history, have reflected the equality of the rights of men and women, especially in the public sphere, meaning that Islamic teachings provide opportunities for human beings to use all their abilities in activities, especially being leaders. However, according to traditional scholars, leadership cannot be pursued, because leadership is a talent that men get from the time they are born. Meanwhile, women are only active in the domestic area. Therefore, leadership is a task that must be done by men.[20] Psychologically, women are emotional, passive, loving and obedient creatures. This confirms that the domestic area is considered the nature of women. Biologically, men's brains are superior to women's, so men are considered more mature, perfect, intelligent than women. So that the statement is considered true by some women, even these things are women's nature.[21]

As Nasarrudin Umar said about equality between women and men in Islam, including:

[17] Aminah, "KEPEMIMPINAN PEREMPUAN DALAM ISLAM PERSPEKTIF MUHAMMADIYAH DAN HIZBUT TAHRIR INDONESIA Aminah," *Al-Mazahib* 1, no. 2 (2012): 307–324.

[18] K.H. Husein Muhammad, *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan: Pembelaan Kiai Pesantren*, II (Yogyakarta: PT. LKiS Pelangi Aksara, 2007): 14.

[19] Muhammad Quraish Shihab, *Perempuan: Dari Cinta Sampai Sekes, Dari Nikah Mut'ah Sampai Nikah Sunnah, Dari Bias Lama Sampai Bias Baru*, VIII (Tangerang: Lentera hati, 2010): 17.

[20] Raihan Putry, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Islam," *Jurnal MUDARRISUNA* 4, no. 2 (2015): 626–657.

[21] Novianti, "Dilema Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Islam."

first, men and women are equal creatures as servants of Allah SWT. Second, equal as a leader on earth. Third, have the same rights and obligations. Fourth, Adam and Eve participated in creating the history of human civilization. Fifth, both have potential.[22] It can be understood that humans are creatures that have equal abilities to carry out various activities. Therefore, the verses of the Qur'an and Hadith relating to the leadership of men over women must be reviewed so as to produce interpretations that are not gender biased. Then, there are many assumptions about women's abilities that have not developed so far, causing women to be powerless in the public sphere, this is due to the culture, social environment, and the teachings of traditional scholars who consider the superiority of men over women.[23]

In Islam, there are no restrictions for women to carry out activities outside the domestic sphere, while certain limitations are only found in the household realm. This is intended so that women do not forget their role as mothers for their children and wives for their husbands.[24] As for the hadith that prohibits women from becoming leaders, Yusuf Al-Qardawi asserts that the hadith is an authentic hadith which implies that women are not allowed to become leaders in the public sphere. Meanwhile, according to Al-Ghazali, in terms of leadership there is no tendency to either gender, both male and female. However, to be a leader one must have the ability.[25]

Islam is very concerned about social issues, one of which is the formulation of criteria that must be met by someone when wanting to become a leader, including:

a. Behave fairly. When someone has become a leader, then he is required to be fair to all his people.

b. A leader must be knowledgeable, intelligent, wise, physically and mentally strong. This is intended so that a leader is able to be responsible for the mandate that has been given.

c. A leader must also be people who believe in Allah, carry out His commands and stay away from His prohibitions.

d. A leader must be responsible for carrying out his leadership as mandated.[26]

Thus, the formulation can be understood that in leadership there is no tendency towards men, but women also have the right to be leaders. Then, in general, Islam has provided various opportunities for women

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[22] Nassarudin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Gender Perspektif Al-Qur'an*, I (Jakarta: LKis, 1999): 263.

[23] Abdul Rahim, "Peran Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Gender," *Jurnal Al-Maiyyah* 9, no. 2 (2016): 268–295.

[24] Yunaha Ilyas, *Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Al-Qur'an: Studi Pemikiran Para Muffasir* (Yogyakarta: Labda Press, 2006): 172.

[25] Aminah, "KEPEMIMPINAN PEREMPUAN DALAM ISLAM PERSPEKTIF MUHAMMADIYAH DAN HIZBUT TAHRIR INDONESIA."

[26] Putry, "Kepemimpinan Perempuan Dalam Perspektif Islam."

to be active in various fields, including becoming leaders. Islam has described many female characters, this aims to describe the existence of equality between men and women, especially as leaders.[27] In leadership there are the most basic values, namely ability, intelligence, capacity, and ingenuity. Leadership is also very closely related to politics, therefore there is no difference in the political rights of both men and women. These political rights are the right to express opinions, become members of the government, gain power, lead agencies, organizations, and even countries.[28]

Asghar Ali Engineer's Perspective of Women's Leadership

Before Islam came, women in Arab lands received treatment they should not get. Women are in a subordinate position and always experience oppression by men. However, this has changed since the first time Islam was present in Arab lands, women experienced drastic changes and they felt protected and got their rights. This is in accordance with the words of the Prophet SAW that women can inherit, have their own rights, and can choose to determine their

lives.[29] The notion of Islam as a religion that brings salvation is a right thing, because it is proven by the liberation of women and the recognition of equality between men and women.[30]

The controversy regarding women's leadership has always been a debate among scholars. Even though it is clear in the Qur'an that there is no absolute verse forbidding women to become leaders. The arguments that are always used by traditional scholars to prohibit women from becoming leaders are Surah An-Nisa verse 34. Asghar Ali explains that the term qawwam contained in this verse is interpreted by traditional scholars with the term ruler to prove the superiority of men. Then, Asghar Ali emphasized that the verse should be understood in accordance with the current social situation. According to him, the social order at the time of the Prophet SAW still had the influence of feudalism and did not recognize the similarities between men and women.[31] In understanding Surah An-Nisa verse 34, Asghar Ali uses a social approach because according to him the Qur'an consists of two points of view, namely normative and contextual. Asghar Ali explained that the verse

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[27] Annisa Fitriani, "Gaya Kepemimpinan Perempuan," *Jurnal TAPIs* 11, no. 2 (2015): 1–23.

[28] Zaetunah Subhan, *Perempuan Dan Politik Dalam Islam* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2006): 39.

[29] Rasyid Abdul Ridho, "Reformulasi Tafsir: Studi Pemikiran Gender Asghar Ali Engineer,"

SOPHIST: JURNAL SOSIAL POLITIK KAJIAN ISLAM DAN TAFSIR 2, no. 2 (2020): 218–251.

[30] Siti Musdah Mulia and Anik Farida, *Perempuan Dan Politik* (Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2005): 46.

[31] Engineer, *Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam*, 71.

only describes male leadership in the household area. The term qawwam contained in this letter is as a regulator in the household, breadwinner, fulfiller of needs. Therefore, the term qawwam is contextual, not normative. If the Qur'an states qawwam in all aspects of life, then women will forever be shackled in living their lives. Thus, Asghar Ali with the spirit of liberation describes the equality of women and men.[32] Regarding the views of traditional scholars who interpret this verse to prohibit women from becoming leaders, Asghar Ali said firmly that these statements are not in accordance with the spirit of the Qur'an. As long as the explanation of the Qur'an does not prohibit women from being leaders, then women can play any role in their lives without violating the limits that Allah Has set.[33]

Asghar Ali's view of the hadith narrated by Abu Bakrah which forbids women to become leaders, Asghar Ali establishes the hadith as a hadeeth hadith. He refers to Umar Ahmad Usmani's statement that the hadith did not appear before the camel war. But when the camel war was about to start, suddenly I Bakrah remembered this hadith because at that time the wife of the Prophet, Ayesha, was leading the war against Ali.[34] In fact, according to him, if the hadith is authentic, it will contradict the statement of the Qur'an in Surah Al-Naml verses 32-35 about Queen Balqis and Surah At-Taubah verse 71. Thus, Asghar Ali stated that women are allowed to become country leader.[35] For him, traditional scholars want to apply the hadiths of the Prophet in today's life without reviewing the context in which the Prophet said them. In addition, traditional scholars often add certain explanations even though the explanations are not related to these hadiths. For example, referring to the hadith that prohibits women from being leaders, traditional scholars explain that a woman cannot play a role in the public sphere, even become a leader in that field. Some other classical scholars say that women are not allowed to have the right to vote, because according to them women are not perfect in using their minds.[36] If Allah does not approve of women being leaders because it will give birth to various sufferings, then the Qur'an strictly does not explain the leadership of Queen Balqis with a special explanation.[37] Thus, it can be understood that the Qur'an expressly states the existence of equality between women and men, where God gives gifts to humans in the form of equal rights in this life both in the economic, social, political, and other fields.

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[32] Engineer, 71.

[33] Hadi M Masruri, "PERAN SOSIAL PEREMPUAN DALAM ISLAM: KAJIAN HISTORIS-NORMATIF MASA NABI DAN KHULAFA' RASYIDUN," *Egalita Jurnal Kesetaraan Dan Keadilan Gender* 7, no. 1 (2012): 22–41.

[34] Engineer, *Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam,* 118.

[35] Engineer, 119.

[36] Engineer, 112.

[37] Engineer, 116.

The logical consequence of the equality between men and women described by the Qur'an is that women are allowed to become leaders. According to Asghar Ali, it is very difficult to explain the gender equality contained in the Qur'an extensively and authentically which covers all social problems experienced by humans, both women and men. therefore, he conducts a historical study of women's lives during the jahiliyyah period, this he does to show that the Qur'an forbids all forms of immoral behavior during the jahiliyyah period. In addition, he wishes to explain thematically various issues regarding women contained in the Qur'an. In other words, the Qur'an normatively upholds equality between women and men. Therefore, Allah gives equal opportunities and rights to men and women both in the social, economic, political, property, and honor fields. This shows clearly that the spirit of Islam is the spirit of equality and eliminates the form of superiority between women and men. The functional differences between women and men are biological differences. However, according to Asghar Ali Engineer, these differences do not eliminate equality, but must be distinguished between biological functions and social functions.[38]

Analysis of Asghar Ali Engineer's Thoughts on Women's Leadership

The most basic concept of gender equality in the Qur'an is the basic ingredient of human creation. Asghar Ali calls it a normative verse. The normative verses related to gender equality are Q.S An-Nisa verse 1, Q.S Al-Isra verse 70, and Q.S Al-Ahzab verse 35. Then, he rejects the statement regarding the creation of air from the ribs, because it describes the lowliness of women which later gave rise to the view that women were second class creatures both in essence and in their roles.[39] Besides that, Asghar Ali's methodology regarding the categories of normative and contextual verses looks very simple, but it is very important to study in order to understand religious texts, both the Qur'an and hadith. The normative category refers to the principles and values of the Qur'an, namely equality, justice, and equality. These values are eternal, meaning that they can be realized throughout the ages. While the contextual category is the verses that were revealed to the Prophet to respond to the situation and social conditions at that time. By referring to Ibn Taimiyah's statement, according to Asghar Ali, religious statements can change according to the times.[40] The purpose of this categorization

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[38] Naila Farah, "Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam: Studi Atas Teologi Pembebasan Asghar Ali Engineer," *YINYANG: Jurnal Studi Islam, Gender Dan Anak* 15, no. 2 (2020): 183–206.

[39] Engineer, *Hak-Hak Perempuan Dalam Islam,* 66.

[40] Engineer, 18.

is to fulfill, support, and guarantee the benefit of the Muslims.

The statements of classical scholars stating that women are not allowed to become leaders have been dismissed by modern commentators with new methods of interpretation. As said by Asghar Ali regarding qawwam, according to him the word does not refer to men as a whole, but has the meaning of husband, this is based on the essence of the verse, namely the husband (man) is obliged to meet the needs of his wife (woman). Therefore, the verse discusses the issue of the household sphere, not the public sphere.[41] Differences of opinion between modern and classical Islamic thinkers can be categorized into two categories, namely fundamental teachings and non-fundamental teachings. Thus, the issue of leadership is a teaching that is not fundamental because it will change according to the progress of the times and human civilization. As Faisar Ananda said that the issue of leadership in Islam is not a sacred thing, therefore leadership is something that can be occupied by women and men.[42] In addition, the opinion regarding granting the right to lead to women was explained by an Islamic feminist figure, namely K.H Husein Muhammad, he stated that women can become leaders in any space, this can be applied as long as women meet the leadership criteria. These criteria are based on intellectual aspects, justice, capacity, achievement, and others, not based on aspects of gender, ethnicity, race, and so on.[43]

For Asghar Ali, the Qur'an does not completely ignore events that have occurred in history, on the contrary, the Qur'an is very concerned about phenomena and their effects. Therefore, Asghar Ali uses a socio-historical approach. Then, for him the verses of the Qur'an exist to respond to social phenomena, therefore the socio-historical approach is very important to understand the Qur'an. According to him, the gap in the interpretation of the Qur'an is caused by the commentators who do not look at the social context when the verse was revealed.[44] This approach is an attempt to respond to the statements of traditional ulama who are gender-biased, and to rearrange Islamic values that tend to be humanistic, namely progressive, fair, and welfare, especially in looking at women's issues. Referring to the explanation of the Qur'an, Asghar Ali views that Allah does not state the superiority between certain sexes. It can be seen that Asghar Ali wants to reconstruct interpretations that tend to demean women and perpetuate women's subordination, thus giving birth to new

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[41] Engineer, 61.

[42] Faisar Ananda Arta, *Wanita Dalam Konsep Islam Modern* (Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus, 2004): 112.

[43] K.H Husein Muhammad, *Islam Agama Ramah Perempuan* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2013): 22.

[44] Ahmad Baidowi, *Tafsir Feminisme:Kajian Perempuan Dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Para Mufassir Kontemporer* (Bandung: Yayasan Nuansa Cendikia, 2005): 42.

interpretations such as marriage, inheritance rights, leadership and so on. The subordination of women should be seen through the social context at that time, thus if society or the social context changes, the subordination of women must also change.[45]

Modern Islamic thought has broken through the spaces that have been covered by classical scholars, especially in the field of leadership. Liberation theology is an ideology in Islam that was initiated by Asghar Ali which places great emphasis on freedom, equality and justice and firmly rejects forms of discrimination, exploitation, and oppression. In addition, liberation theology becomes a space for the weak to awaken their status through religious principles.[46] Thus liberation theology is a progressive theology, because the role of this theology in addition to being a source in living life, this theology is a source for carrying out struggles to give birth to a just and humanist social structure. In general, Asghar Ali positions religion in a high and holy position and is able to elevate human status in the realm of equality.

Conclusion

Based on the results of a study of various literatures collected and analyzed through research, it can be concluded that the opinions that arise regarding women's leadership should have an answer to a definite truth. In Islam, women's leadership is categorized into two parts, namely domestic and public. The conditions formulated by Islam to become a leader are to behave fairly, have sufficient knowledge, have faith in Allah and be responsible. Asghar Ali Engineer as a Muslim scholar formulated liberation theology as a theology that upholds equality between men and women. For Asghar Ali Engineer, there needs to be a review of the interpretations that lead to injustice by looking at the existing social context, because the Qur'an is actually normative and contextual. Through this thought, Asghar Ali encourages Muslims to look back at religious texts that uphold textual and contextual equality, so that the resulting interpretation is not gender biased and discriminates against one particular gender. Thus, Asghar Ali Engineer does not prohibit women from becoming leaders. This study has limitations because it only examines female leadership from the perspective of Asghar Ali Engineer, so further studies are urgently needed. This study recommends academics to further develop gender studies in Islam more deeply.

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[45] Ridho, "Reformulasi Tafsir: Studi Pemikiran Gender Asghar Ali Engineer."

[46] Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam Dan Teologi Pembebasan*, ed. Agung Prihantoro, 5th ed. (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2000): 31.

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