

## AWARENESS ON ISLAMIC FEMINISM: Learning From Gus Dur and Husein Muhammad

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**Abstract:** *Women has been an interesting research discourse due to various remaining practical problems. This is mainly triggered by embedded patriarchal culture within society. Ironically, men in general take advantage of this situation and make a justification on the basis of religious propositions. Therefore, this study becomes necessary by presenting the two influential male scholars promoting gender equality effort. The author tries to cooperate the two figures in a feminist frame. This study uses a critical analysis approach. The results of this study indicate that Gus Dur tends to adopt social feminism, while Husein Muhammad tends to be liberal feminism. Both feminism views of Gus Dur and Husein Muhammad intersect on humanity based on Islamic values. Nevertheless, Husein explicitly wrote about Gender. On the other hand, Gus Dur's view was implied from his writings. The feminist view of the two figures emerges as a social unrest response towards inequality. Therefore the main principle they proposed was justice. To the author, Husein's view did not taken into account feminist view of western scholars; Husein inclined to the opinion of As-Saṭ bi and Ghazali. Meanwhile, independence of Gus Dur's feminist view has not been clearly seen.*

**Keywords:** feminism, justice, humanity, Islam.

**الملخص:** إن المرأة موضوع بحث جدّاب لما فيها من مسائل وقضايا خاصة في مجال التطبيق الواقعي. ومن الأسباب هو دوام الثقافة الأبوية. ومع الأسف فإن كثيرا من الرجال يستفيدون هذه الحالة بل ويقوون وجودها على دليل ديني. إن هذا البحث مهم بإحضار شخصيتين معروفتين (من الرجال) ولهما آثار واسهامات في الجنس. حاول الكاتب مقارنة

هاتين الشخصيتين في إطار الفكر النسوي . استخدم هذا البحث مدخل دراسة التحليل النقدي. دلّت نتائج البحث على أن نوع الفكر النسوي لعبد الرحمن واحد هو اشتراكي وأما لحسين محمد فلبراليّ. هناك نقطة توافق بين النضال النسوي لعبد الرحمن واحد وحسين محمد هو الروح الإنسانية على أساس القيم الإسلامية. وأما وجه الفرق بينهما فإن حسيناً كتب صريحاً عن الجنس. وأما عبد الرحمن واحد فتظهر أفكاره عن الجنس في كتاباته (عن طريق المفهوم). إن فكرة كل منهما نشأت عن الوعي الاجتماعي تجاه الظلم ، لذا فإن الشئ الأساسي الذي قدماه هو العدالة. طرح الكاتب النقد لفكرة حسين فإنه لم يعتبر بأفكار علماء الجنس الغربيين وهو يميل إلى رأي الشاطبي والغزالي. وأما عبد الرحمن واحد فإن فكرته عن الجنس لم تظهر قائمة مستقلة

**Abstrak:** *Wanita merupakan objek penelitian yang menarik, karena masih menyisakan berbagai persoalan terutama dalam praktiknya. Budaya patriarki yang mendarah daging menjadi salah satu pemicunya. Ironisnya kaum laki-laki banyak yang memanfaatkan kondisi ini serta memperkuat dengan dalil agama. Maka penelitian ini diperlukan dengan menghadirkan dua tokoh dari kalangan laki-laki yang cukup berpengaruh dalam perjuangan Gender. Penulis berusaha untuk mengkoparasikan kedua tokoh tersebut dalam bingkai pemikiran feminis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi analisis-kritis. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa corak pemikiran feminisme Gus Dur bersifat sosialis sedangkan Husein Muhammad bersifat liberal. Terdapat titik temu perjuangan feminisme Gus Dur dan Husein Muhammad, yaitu spirit kemanusiaan berdasarkan nilai-nilai Islam. Perbedaannya Husein secara tegas menulis tentang Gender. Sedangkan Gus Dur include (tersirat) kedalam tulisan lainnya. Latar pemikiran feminisme kedua tokoh tersebut lahir dari kegelisahan sosial terhadap ketidakadilan, oleh karenanya prinsip utama yang mereka ajukan adalah keadilan. Kritik penulis terhadap Husein, pemikirannya belum mempertimbangkan ahli feminis dari barat, ia condong ke pendapat As-Saṭbi dan Ghazali. Sedangkan Gus Dur independence pemikiran feminis belum terlihat jelas.*

## INTRODUCTION

Women remain interesting conversation in various fields, including in academics. Discussions, seminars and research have been conducted to defend the rights of women, but various practical problems are still unsolved. From the perspective of female psychology, many women still put themselves in the second class. Religious stigma also strengthens the position of women as a second and inferior class. On the contrary, men are a superior class, especially in Islamic family law (fiqh), a field that many people refer to religion.

In the western world, religion is also used as justification for gender inequality. Western feminists try to gain legitimacy for their school from the Bible. They no longer write God, but also Goddess. The image of God in their religion is the masculine God, and thus they want alter into a more feminist God. Furthermore, in a book entitled *Feminist Approaches to The Bible*, a female activist, Tivka Frymer-Kensky, wrote a paper under the title: *Goddesses: Biblical Echoes*. Another activist, Pamela J. Milne, suggested that in Western traditions, the Bible becomes the most important source for oppression of women.<sup>1</sup>

For Karl Marx religion can be used as a tool that shapes gender roles. Religion for Karl Marx is opium for the people used to anesthetize most people to be submissive and obedient to the interests and values governed by the religious authorities,<sup>2</sup> where the major religions are led by men. Therefore to some extent men can use religion as a shield for the benefit of the women. Public development is set on men's interests only. Men are so powerful that "often" they make women as a complement, having insignificant role in the real world. From this views did the gender role dichotomy of the public and domestic areas between males and female develops.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, in the domestic area women still experience gender inequality. Ironically, gender inequality in households is seen as a private matter.

In contrast to Marx, the two figures, Gus Dur and Husein Muhammad, are male figures who fight for the justice for women

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<sup>1</sup> Phyllis Tribble and H Shanks, *Feminist Approaches to The Bible* (Washington: Biblical Archeology Society, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> John Raines, *Introduction: Marx on Religion* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002), 46.

<sup>3</sup> Dadang S. Anshori, Engkos Kosasi, and Farida Sarimaya, *Membincangkan Feminisme* (Bandung: Pustaka Hidayah, 1997), 3.

and place women in a proper place. Both figures have very strong pesantren family backgrounds. Both are the sons of famous Islamic boarding school founders. Although, traditionally Islamic boarding schools have perpetuated patrilineal culture since the long run (glorifying men in all aspects of life),<sup>4</sup> the two figures broke the assumption. Gus Dur in practical put lots of respect for women and Husein Muhammad in continuity give serious attention on women as well. Both of these groups are in context with the social and cultural conditions in Indonesia.

Consistency of Hussein and Gus Dur as feminists has attracted many researchers. Some similar research has been conducted such as a comparative study by Samsul Zakaria which compared Husein Muhammad and Musdah Mulia about women's leadership. The research specifically discusses women's leadership from the legal aspect.<sup>5</sup> Yusuf Rahman examines the interpretation style and approach used by Husein Muhammad in interpreting the Gender verses and the relevance of his thought in the development of gender discourse as mainstream thinking.<sup>6</sup>

Muhammad Thobroni studied feminism view of Husein Muhammad under the theme of Sexuality in the Qur'an. He studied the view using the sociological approach of Karl Menheim, so that Islam was found as a cultural and religious struggle. He examines ar-Rum: 31 about the concept of sexuality.<sup>7</sup> In another research, Susanti, in her research on feminism of Hussein Muhammad found that men and women are equal before the God and Humans. He also discussed the position of women in the public sector and domestic sector.<sup>8</sup>

The research on Gus Dur's feminism is not as many as research on Husein's feminis. Researchers who study Gus Dur are more

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<sup>4</sup> Nasaruddin Umar, *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender Perspektif al-Qur'an* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 1999), 73–76. M. Ainul Abied Shah, *Islam Garda Depan* (Bandung: Mizan, 2001), 235.

<sup>5</sup> Samsul Zakaria, 'Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Perspektif Hukum Islam (Studi Komparasi)', *Jurnal Khazanah* VI (June 2013): 65.

<sup>6</sup> Yusuf Rahman, 'Feminist Kyai, K.H.Husein Muhammad: The Feminist Interpretation on Gendered Verses and the Qur'an Based Activism', *Al-Jami'ah: Jurnal of Islamic Studies* 55 (2017): 293.

<sup>7</sup> Muhammad Thobroni, 'Makna Seksualitas dalam al-Qur'an Menurut Husein Muhammad', *Jurnal Al-Afkar* 14 (2017): 269.

<sup>8</sup> Susanti, 'Husein Muhammad antara Feminisme Islam dan Liberal', *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf dan Pemikiran Islam* 4 (2014): 197.

concerned by his view on democratisation, humanism, Indigenism, Islam, and Humor. Musdah Mulia studied Gus Dur's view on Gender with the title, "Islamic Law and Feminism Dynamics in Nahdhatul Ulama". Masdah Mulia suggested that Abdurrahman is a NU figure who participated in voicing women's justice that had previously been carried by his father (Wahid Hasyim), grandfather (Hasyim As'ary) and father-in-laws (Bisri Syansuri).<sup>9</sup> Erna Fatmawati wrote about Gus Dur's view of women leaders. She found that in Gus Dur's view, women are allowed to be a leader and can actively participate in public sectors depending on integrity, ability and balance in management.<sup>10</sup> The book that specifically discusses Gus Dur's view on gender equality is "Gus Dur in the Eyes of Women", exploring his thought from the perspective of women, both directly and indirectly.

All of the studies above tried to present the feminist thoughts of Husein Muhammad and Gus Dur from various angles. However, critics of their feminist view have not yet been shown. Herein this study emphasizes on a critique of their feminist view. In addition, the above research is more thematic (women's leadership, sexuality, interpretation, and law). Meanwhile, this study makes an attempt to see comprehensively the view of the two male figures and subsequently reveals the pattern of their feminist thought. The author also tries to elaborate their thoughts to find a meeting point and the differences between the two.

## FEMINISM IN ISLAM

Feminism discourse in Islam arises due to injustices within society in treating women. Feminist in a broad sense refers to everyone who has an awareness of women's rights and dignity and tries to find a way out correctly.<sup>11</sup> Margot Badran defines feminism as women's awareness of subordination, pressure, confinement from family and society for their identity as women and they are trying to change.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Musdah Mulia, 'Hukum Islam dan Dinamika Feminisme dalam Organisasi Nahdhatul Ulama', *Khazanah: Journal Mahasiswa UII*, 2013, 59.

<sup>10</sup> Erna Fatmawati, 'Perempuan, Abdurrahman Wahid dan Kepemimpinan Perempuan dalam Management Pendidikan Agama', *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Teaching* 2 (2019): 8–9.

<sup>11</sup> A. Khudori, *Pemikiran Islam Kontemporer* (Yogyakarta: Jendela, 2003), 127.

<sup>12</sup> Margot Badran, 'Feminism', in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Islamic World*, by John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 245.

Likewise, Nina Nurmila refers to the awareness to come out from the pressure and subordination of women because of their sex status and eliminated from the public sector work, so they are trying to achieve equality in gender relations between men and women.<sup>13</sup> From the definition, Nurmila's emphasizes on "awareness" to get out of pressure and subordination and in action which will eventually eliminate the pressure.

Feminism in a contemporary theocracy means the right of a woman believer to demand full responsibility in understanding the verses of the Qur'an and arouse claims of religious mastery in a nation that is not democratically elected. Islam firmly distinguishes the exclusive dimension of humanity from the Prophet Muhammad in order not to be confused with the word of Allah Swt. This is based on the assumption that the ulama 'and imam are just ordinary human beings who are not free from error and only Allah is the most right.<sup>14</sup> Women everywhere are devoting energy to preserving their families, educating children, while outside the household women play a role in efforts to realize the welfare of society. However, their role are less recognized and appreciated. A social movement that aims clearly to improve the position and role of women and fight for their rights to be more equal emerged in the 18th century, in France.<sup>15</sup>

The development of thoughts today appears to sound that demand of social reform and the most dominant is the improvement of the role of women. This is a good and brilliant idea as long as each party, both men and women understand and understand their rights and obligations.<sup>16</sup> Women's rights and roles have always been regarded as intellectual and actual problems throughout history. From the 18th century until today, problems arise relating to the appearance and personality of women. Such problem is so dominant that its influence extends to all levels of society.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Nina Nurmila, *Women, Islam and Everyday Life: Renegotiating Polygamy in Indonesia* (London: Routledge, 2009), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Mernissi, *Fatimah dan Hassan, Riffat, Setara di Hadapan Allah* (Yogyakarta: LSPPA, 2000), 110–111.

<sup>15</sup> Ihromi T. O, *Kajian Wanita dalam Pembangunan* (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 1995), 30–31.

<sup>16</sup> Ukasyah Athibi, *Wanita Mengapa Merosot Akhlaqnya* (Jakarta: Gemma Insani, 1998), 246.

<sup>17</sup> Ibnu Musthafa, *Wanita Islam Menjelang Tahun 2000* (Bandung: al-Bayan, 2000), 46.

Islam explicitly explains that men and women are equal before God, especially in doing good deeds. This is reflected in the word of God Surah al-Nahl: 97 which means: “Whoever does the pious deeds of both men and women in a state of faith, then surely we will give him a good life and in fact we will reward them with a reward that is more than what they have done”.<sup>18</sup>

The verse implies that Allah Swt. commands humanity (regardless of male or female) to always try to do good to anyone, so that they can achieve a noble and honorable position before Allah Swt. A woman is like a double-edged sword. If she is good at carrying out basic tasks and function as outlined, she can be a qualified capital to establish Islamic, strong, and virtuous society. Islam is serious and intensive in giving attention and empowering women. Teaching women with *tarbiyah* (education) and *ri'āyah* (supervision), ordered to give rights according to their *fitrah*. This has never been given before by any religious community throughout the entire world history.<sup>19</sup>

Justice means giving human beings the rights they must deserve and God is a Creator that no one has any rights over. Allah has given each human being the character according to the desired task of His creatures. Justice essentially means to give people the opportunity to move according to their potential, rights and obligations and character. Therefore, it should be believed that there is equality between men and women in humanity, but this does not mean believing in the equality in their role.<sup>20</sup>

## GUS DUR'S VIEW ON WOMEN

Gus Dur's ideas about women were the same as his views on humanity in general, both men and women. There are three basic concepts about “human”, namely: (1) their high position before other creatures; (2) its noble status as caliph on earth; and (3) the ability of his intellect in formulating basic humanitarian problems. All those concepts are human nature that is believed given by the God as a Creator, so that

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<sup>18</sup> Mujjama' al-Maalik Fad Li Tiba'at Al-Mushaf, 'al-Qur'an' (Asy-Syarif Madinah Munawwarah, BOX 6262, Kerajaan Saudi Arabia), 417.

<sup>19</sup> Musthafa, *Wanita Islam Menjelang Tahun 2000*, XIII.

<sup>20</sup> Sayid Muhammad Husain, *Dunia Wanita dalam Islam* (Jakarta: Lentera, 2000), 35.

humans are entitled to a noble position both before God and other creations in the universe.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, based on assumptions (proven speculative postulates), a principle-based conclusion can be drawn. Humans must be protected in terms of their dignity and allowed to grow to ensure their functional capacity. This includes demands to respect basic rights which are a necessary condition for personal development capacity and other functional capacities. These include respects for the basic values of human life in accordance with their dignity, the preservation of their human rights individually and collectively, the preservation of the right to develop themselves without fear of the threat of restraint, the right to express opinions openly, and the strengthening of the right to develop personalities without interference of other people.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the function of personal development above, Islamic cosmology gives a special position to humans as a *khalīfah fi al-ard*. The definition of “caliph” itself is a representative of God or vicegerent in charge of exercising God’s power on human earth. In general, the caliph also means leaders, regulators, maintainers, protectors and so on. In that capacity, human existence is carrying out social-social functions as distinguished from the capacity of self-development functions which are essentially individual. Regarding this social function, Gus Dur based himself on the word of God: “*Laqad kāna lakum fī rasūlillāh uswatun ḥasanah*” Exemplary in particular is the role of the Prophet Muhammad in pursuit the welfare of all mankind (*rahmatan lil ālamīn*). This function includes the necessity to fight for welfare in a comprehensive and thorough manner, while at the same time fighting against an exploitative, inhuman and unequal social lives.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to the principles in enforcing gender justice, Gus Dur spoke about women’s obligations and rights. He bases his view on the different social-cultural reality of Islamic countries, especially Indonesia, Gus Dur fights for women’s rights based on socio-cultural

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<sup>21</sup> Faizatun Khasanah, *Etika Gus Dur* (Ciputat: Cinta Buku Media, 2018), 66.

<sup>22</sup> Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan: Nilai-nilai Indonesia dan Transformasi Kebudayaan* (Jakarta: The Wahid Institute, 2007), 30.

<sup>23</sup> Abdurrahman Wahid, *Pergulatan Negara, Agama dan Kebudayaan* (Depok: Desantara, 2001), 153.



conditions in Indonesia with the principle of humanism. The Islamic basis of Gus Dur's effort is *al-kulliyah al-khams*.<sup>24</sup> Gus dur quoted surah al-Nisa':34, "*al-rijāl qawwāmūn 'ala al-nisā'*", Gus dur interpreted this verse as an anthropological distinction. Here *qawwāmūn* means the responsibility of men for women's safety. Anthropological understanding can also apply to psychological understanding, that men protect women as a "weak" creature.<sup>25</sup> From the perspective of feminist philosophers, it is also associated with the position of religion, where the church which confines women's freedom and God, who positions himself as a mask, which psychologically brings inferiority to feminists.

In pursuit gender equality, Aisyah Baidhowi focused on Gus Dur's efforts and thoughts about women in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Since Gus Dur was elected in 1984 as Chairman in the Conference Tanfidziyah NU of Situbondo, Gus Dur's always encourage Muslimat to pay attention and focus on social problem, not just women's issues. Gus Dur also always advised not to stay inside the organization but must continue expanding, in collaboration with community organizations outside.<sup>26</sup>

In his family, Gus Dur truly applies equality, not just a lifestyle. For him, equality departs from the same human rights spirit. Alā'i Nadjib wrote Gus Dur in the eyes of his nuclear family. The paper contains the results of Nadjib's interview with Gus Dur's wife and children. Nadjib portrays Gus Dur's life in the family, especially Gus Dur's attention to reproductive health. Based on the interview, many people listened to Gus Dur's attitude as a husband and father of his four daughters. Gus Dur applied democratic but responsible teaching approach in educating his family.<sup>27</sup>

In the issue of reproductive health and family planning (KB), Gus Dur redefined a hadith of the prophet stating that "the Prophet would be proud of many people." During this time the hadith was interpreted in terms of quantity. Then by Gus Dur was re-interpreted in quality not quantity, seeing the context of the development of

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<sup>24</sup> Wahid, *Islam Kosmopolitan: Nilai-nilai Indonesia dan Transformasi Kebudayaan*, 375–376.

<sup>25</sup> Wahid, 376.

<sup>26</sup> Alā'i Nadjib, *Gus Dur di Mata Perempuan* (Yogyakarta: Gading, 2014), 52.

<sup>27</sup> Nadjib, 47.

modern society today and the demands of national development with family planning policies aimed at improving health, education and economy for its citizens.<sup>28</sup>

In the household affairs, Gus Dur actively took part in it. As said by Alissa Wachid, Gus Dur took part in replacing diapers and looking after his children when they were babies. On the sidelines of his busy life, Gus Dur also took care of his children. When there were no servants, Gus Dur joined in domestic work such as sweeping and mopping. This shows that domestic work is not only the responsibility of the wife but a joint responsibility, because in his family the principle of mutual cooperation and mutual assistance must be applied.

### FEMINISM OF HUSEIN MUHAMMAD

According to Husein QS. al-Nisa': 1 which talks about about the creation of women which is used as a basis by some commentators to justify that women are created from the ribs of men, so that the quality of the first becomes better than the second creation must be reviewed and reinterpreted.

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

What this verse wants to reveal is that the creation of man begins with the creation of the self which is *nafs wāḥidah*, then the creation of a partner similar to it. From the two couples, a large number of men and women are created. The above did not explained in a clear expression, whether the “self” referred to male or female. There is also no clear expression whether what is meant by “partner” refers to male or female. Therefore, the subordinate interpretation of women towards men based on interpretation of “partner” in the verse as female, or the meaning of “self” is the men become inappropriate.<sup>29</sup>

Husein argued that the term “nafs” *nafs wāḥidah* (one self) and *zawjahā* (his companion) should be leaved ambiguous, while what is clearer is the following expression that men and women were created from the two couples. The spirit of the verse also implies togetherness

<sup>28</sup> Fahmina, ‘Tiga Prinsip Gus Dur Perjuangkan Perempuan’, *Fahmina Institute*, Desember 2018.

<sup>29</sup> Husein Muhammad, *Fiqih Perempuan: Refleksi Kiai atas Wacana Agama dan Gender* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2007), 30–31.

and pairing as the basis of life, not subordination to one another. In addition it is also explained about the types of men and women are of the same type in QS. al-Rum: 21,

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

Meanings:“ And among the signs of His power is that He created for you wives of your own kind, so that you tend and feel at ease with him, and make Him among you of love and affection. Surely in that there really are signs for those who think”.

Therefore, according to Husein, we should refer to verses that explicitly state that the creation of humans (men and women) is the creation of perfection.

With this perspective, at least all people can understand that women are not God’s creatures who must always and forever be looked down upon just because they are female, as the case with patriarchal traditions and culture. Indeed, contemporary history has also proven that a number of women have the strengths and capabilities as men. Some women are now beginning to master capabilities that were previously only owned by men, so that the male’s monopoly begins to be disrupted. This proves that women are equal to men in terms of roles, so that all traditions, teachings and views which despise women should be eliminated. Thus, religious texts that should be the basis of interpretation are ideally the univervesal principles of justice, equality, benefit, and respect for all, regardless gender, men or women.<sup>30</sup>

The Qur’an does not specifically explain in detail the origin of human events in one verse, but rather is scattered in several surahs and verses. The Qur’an only tells about human origins in the context of reproduction, namely from the extracts of starch from the ground, then turned into radiated semen, then into blood and eventually becomes a whole human being, as explained in QS. al-Mu’minun:12-14. According to M. Feṭullāh Gulen, human creation is a miracle, so it is not possible for a miracle to be explained by the theory of causality. But it is clear that if men and women did

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<sup>30</sup> Muhammad, 33.

not belong to the same type, of course reproduction between the two would not occur.<sup>31</sup>

In the implementation of gender equality pursuit, Husein used academics and social movement. In academics, (*turāth*) Husein criticized books or classical religious textbooks which he saw oppressive to women. Through *Forum Kajian Kitab Kuning* (Association of Classical Textbook Study), for three years he discussed contents and reviewed the quality of the Hadith contained in the *Uqūd Al-Lujain fī Ḥuqūq al Zaujain*. As a result, he found 33 % hadith were *Maudhū'*, and 22 % hadith were *ḍa'īf*, while the rest of hadith were *ḥasan* and *ṣahīh* but in terms of Matn, the hadith were still debatable. The research was published under the title *Ta'liq wa Takhrij Syarh Uqūd al-Lujain*.<sup>32</sup> Husein also criticized Syech Nawawi al-Bantani in relation to gender. According to him the hadiths the Syech quoted mainly adopted patriarchal jurisprudence. Thus, Husein felt the need to review the hadiths comprehensively.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, for the social movement, in 2001 he established a number of non-governmental organizations for women's rights issues, including Rahima, Puan Amal Hayati, Fahmina Institute and Alimat. Since 2007 until now he has been a Commissioner of the National Commission on Violence Against Women. In 2008 he established the Fahmina Institute of Islamic Studies in Cirebon. He also actively participate in various discussion activities, Halaqah, and Islamic seminars, specifically related to issues of Women and Pluralism, both at home and abroad. He received the Cirebon Regency Regent award as Promoter, Fosterer and Actor of Women's Empowerment Development (2003), recipient of Award (award) from the US Government for "Heroes To End Modern-Day Slavery", in 2006. His name was also recorded in "The 500 Most Influential Muslims" issued by the Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Center, 2010, 2011- 2012.

The feminist thought of Husein Muhammad cannot be separated from gender interpretation. It can be seen in the book *Kiai Husein*

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<sup>31</sup> Muhammad Fetullah Gulen, *Islam Rahmatan Lil A'lam: Menjawab Pertanyaan dan Kebutuhan Manusia* (Jakarta: Republika, 2011), 165.

<sup>32</sup> Husein Muhammad, *Ta'liq wa Takhrij Syarh Uqūd al Lujain* (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> M. Noor Harisuddin, 'Pemikiran Feminis Muslim di Indonesia tentang Fiqih Perempuan', *Jurnal Al-Tahrir*, no. 1 (2015): 246.

Defending Women by M. Nuruzzaman, there are three big strategies used by the Kiai of Cirebon to read religious (Islamic) texts that are biased towards gender: *First*, referring back to the verses of the al-Qur'an ' and to correct mistakes in the stories that develop among Muslims. *Second*, he refers to verses that explicitly emphasize equality between men and women, and uses the verses to oppose various opposing interpretations. *Third*, he deconstructs or rereads verses which have been frequently cited as sources of justification for gender inequality.<sup>34</sup>

The author takes one example of Gender's interpretation by Husein Muhammad about women's leadership in prayer. According to Kiai Husein, a prominent figure of Islamic religious jurisprudence from the Shafi'ite school, Abu Ḥamīd al-Israyini (344-406 H) suggested: "All of fiqh scholars from various schools, except Abu Thaur (240H/854M), one of the great mujtahid, agreed to think that women's leadership in praying for the congregation of men is unacceptable."

However, Kiai Husein also quoted the opinion of other figures. Qadhi Abu Ayyub (348-450H) and al-Abdari argued that the validity of women as prayer priests for men was not only stated by Abu Tsaur, but also Ibn Jarir al-ṭabari (310H/923M) and Imam al-Muzani (175-264H). Al-ṭabari was a prominent commentator, historian, and founder of the school of jurisprudence, while al-Muzani was the principal disciple of Imam al-Shafi'i. The important point we pay attention to is that the two differing opinions both have a legal basis derived from the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad. The first view of jurists who strictly forbade women from becoming imams (for men) comes from the following hadith of the Prophet: "From Jābir, The Prophet PBUH said: Women shall not be the imam of prayer for men, Bedouin people for Muhajir people and bad people for believers" (Narrated by Ibnu Majah).<sup>35</sup>

Kiai Husein also cited other supporters of the hadith that are still in tune, forbidding women's leadership in prayer, from Imam Syarifuddin al-Nawāwī dalam *al-Majmū' Syarḥ al-Muḥaḍḍab* work of Abu Ishaq al-Syirazi saying that: "*Women shall not be the imam of*

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<sup>34</sup> Komnas Perempuan, *Perempuan dalam Relasi Agama dan Negara* (Jakarta: Komnas, 2010), 149.

<sup>35</sup> Komnas Perempuan, 151.

*prayer for men.*” Nevertheless, al-Nawāwi in his review, said that the quality of this hadith is weak (*dha'if*). Meanwhile, scholars who support the validity of female imams also rely their arguments on the hadith of the Prophet:

“Prophet Muhammad PBUH once visited the house of Umm Waraqah and gave her a prayer muezzin, while asking (Umm Waraqah) to be an imam for the residents of her house. Gus Dur said: I really saw, his muezzin was an old man.”

The opinions above are based on the hadith of the Holy Prophet. In his book, Kiai Husein then measured the level of validity (truth) of the hadith used by both parties. He also referred to several views of the scholars towards this case. Kiai Husein said, in many matters relating to relations between men and women, both in the religious and social fields, there was a meeting between women and men, both together, face to face, as well as women’s activities that invited men’s attention, the male fiqh scholars always argue about the reasons for *khauf al-fitnah* (preventing from slander, i.e., an atmosphere that disturbs or teases men’s hearts and minds).<sup>36</sup>

## CRITICAL STUDY OF THE FEMINISM VIEW OF GUS DUR AND HUSEIN MUHAMMAD

As a Moslem feminist, Husein Muhammad has tried to respond to the problems of contemporary life with a methodological paradigm of feminist interpretation. The principles of interpretation are actually Hermneutic in nature. It is just that he did not base his thoughts on western philosophers. He has based his thoughts on two well-known thinkers in the Islamic world namely *al-Ghazali* dan *al-Syaṭibi*.<sup>37</sup> The principle of interpretation relating to the text is taken from the principle of al-Syaṭibi on knowledge of conditions and contexts *muqtaḍayat al-aḥwal*, literal condition of *nafs al-Lughah*, context of *mukhaṭab* (audience), *konteks mukhaṭib* (speaker). Meanwhile, the principle of interpretation is based on the horizon of the context of the text by knowing the outer context *al-Umūr al-*

<sup>36</sup> Muhammad, *Fiqh Perempuan: Refleksi Kiai atas Wacana Agama dan Gender*, 3

<sup>37</sup> Eni Zulaiha, ‘Analisa Gender dan Prinsip-prinsip Penafsiran Husein Muhammad Pada Ayat-ayat Relasi Gender al-Bayan’, *Jurnal Studi al-Qur’an dan Tafsir* 3 (June 2018): 1–11.

*Kharijiyyah* an understanding of the traditions, customs of the Arab community in language, acting and interacting when the Quran were revealed. Understanding of the text can also be done by using rational reasoning *iḥālāh 'alā dalīl al-Naql*, through indications of a number of contexts, cues, symbol symbols of *rumūz*, changes in *ḥarākat*, the preceding context *al-ṭawābiq* dan *lawāhiq* (accompanying context) and things that are not limited.

As Huda Sya'rawi from Egypt (1879-1947) attempted to combine customs with Islamic teachings by showing the influence of the Islamic reform movement pioneered by Muhammad Abduh in the 18th century in Egypt. He led the first feminist union in the Arab world in 1923. Feminists who were influenced by Marxism in the 20th century held that exploitation of women was the impact of class differences supported by gender ideology and religion. This results in unequal gender roles and positions in the family and society making women victims of oppression. The same also happens in Indonesia, where patriarchal culture supported by religious dogma also colors Gender inequality.

In addition to culture, Islamic science (fiqh) and law also contribute to the cause of gender inequality. In his work "*The Order of Things, Archeology of Human Sciences*", Foucault shows the relationship between the discourse of science and power. In this context the Islamic science is Fiqh which is widely criticized by Husein Muhammad. The discourse of the science that wants to find the true and the false is basically driven by the will to power. Science is carried out to establish what is true and eliminate what is considered false. Here it becomes clear that the will for truth is an expression of the will to power. It is impossible for knowledge to be neutral and pure. Here correlation always occurs, that is knowledge contains power as well as power contains knowledge.<sup>38</sup> Foucault's thesis is proven and strengthened by the interference of power in the interpretation of the thematic al-Qur'an issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs over the perpetuation of gender inequality.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> K. Bertens, *Filsafat Barat Kontemporer Prancis* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2001), 321.

<sup>39</sup> Tinggal Purwanto, 'Kesetaraan Gender dan Relasi Kuasa dalam Tafsir al-Qur'an Tematik Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia', *Jurnal Palastren* 1 (July 2019).

Turning into Gus Dur, for some people he is such a controversial, riddle, eccentric, and even inconsistent figure. This is mainly due to his out of the box thinking which was sometimes against the mainstream. Gus Dur was treated as a discourse text that could be interpreted from various aspects, depending on where aspect the interpreter interpreted Gus Dur's thoughts and attitudes. According to the author from a feminist point of view, Gus Dur is a feminist figure who lacks courage in presenting his ideas. Thus his style of thinking is not typical (independent), from the spirit of his effort can be categorized as a social feminist.<sup>40</sup>

The author disagrees with Martin Van Bruinessen, who stated that Gus Dur was included in the category of liberal thinkers, including his feminist ideas among NU. Gus Dur was said to be the locomotive of NU whose feminist ideas were implemented in the NU women's organization.<sup>41</sup> The pattern of Gus Dur's efforts on feminism did not seem liberal (absolute freedom and men are equal to women in all respects). Gus Dur's effort was softer with the spirit of Islam and polite Indonesian culture, where men and women have the rights and responsibilities of each.

Gus Dur was more inclined towards socialist feminism, which was based on patriarchal, class, gender, and reproduction culture. Socialist feminism adopts the praxis theory of Marxism, namely the theory of awareness in the oppressed groups so that women are aware that they are a disadvantaged class. Awareness process is by way of evoking emotions of women to change the situation.<sup>42</sup> Gus Dur in a cultural way tried to raise women's awareness of Gender justice especially through the NU organization and reform of the law. However, there are several principles from socialist feminism that Gus Dur did not agree with, including the rejection of private

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<sup>40</sup> Social Feminism is double branch theories which extend Marx's feminism on the role of capitalism in oppression against woman and radical theory feminism on the role of gender and patriarchy. Read, Ian, Buchanan "Socialist Feminism." *A Dictionary of Critical Theory*. Oxford Reference Online. Oxford University Press. Web. 20 October 2011. Rosemary Putnam Tong, *Feminist Thought* (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 1998), 20.

<sup>41</sup> Sri Mulyati, *Gus Dur Dimata Perempuan* (Yogyakarta: Gading), 61.

<sup>42</sup> Ratna Megawangi, *Mebiarkan Berbeda? Sudut Pandang Baru tentang Relasi Gender* (Bandung: Mizan Pustaka, 1999), 133.



ownership. Gus Dur in this case has a rationale for private ownership summarized in *af'al al-khamsah*.

In making up his arguments, Gus Dur used several logical thinking approaches, namely logics (philosophy), contextual interpretation, *ijmā'*, *qiyās*, *'aqāid Al-fiqhiyyah*, taking into account the historical socio-historical conditions of Indonesia. In the context of Gender, Gus Dur's thoughts implicitly entered into his great works, namely justice and humanity. Thus, to understand Gus Dur's ideas, the big idea must be seen, in from Gus Dur's case, there would be an inconsistency, depending on the circumstances surrounding the situation. Especially when Gus Dur was already sick, Gus Dur's decision depended on information obtained from his trusted people, which was sometimes incorrect.

## CONCLUSION

Gus Dur and Husein Muhammad are two Kyai who are worthy of being examples of progressive feminist figures in their day and are still relevant today. They appear with a reformism idea and struggle on marginal groups (women), within the frame of Islamic tradition. Indeed, they introduced the face of Islam to the world which defends women's right *rahmatan li al'ālamīn*. Gus Dur with his humanism spirit fought for gender equality, while serving as president issued a presidential decree in 2000 on mainstreaming gender, replacing the nomenclature of the Minister of Women's Role to the Minister of Women's Empowerment, including women sitting in Gus Dur's cabinet such as Khofifah Indar Parawansa and Erna Witoelar, a female leader in the NU. Husein Muhammad with the spirit of Islam and the Arabic language skills obtained from the Islamic boarding schools of Lirboyo and family traditions is keen to reassess Islamic sources that are "cynical to women". Husein's did not only struggle for woman empowerment in his thoughts, but he is also active in efforts to empower women by establishing Fahmina Institute, Puan Amal Hayati in collaboration with Sinta Nuriyah etc. In the pesantren tradition criticizing Kyai is taboo, but here the writer criticizes the two great characters above. Gus Dur in feminist thought is less courageous in issuing opinions (not independent), it can be proven by writing about women entering into other sub-thoughts. Thus to gain Gus Dur's feminist thoughts, the author must read almost all

of his works and then obtain feminist ideas. Husein Muhammad in interpreting Gender verses uses a hermeneutical approach, but he did not collaborate with ideas from the western scholar, more inclined to al-Ghazali and Syaṭibi.

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