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A Critical Evaluation of Amina Wadud's Feminist Hermeneutics in Quranic Exegesis

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Abstract

This study provides a critical evaluation of Dr. Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutical approach to Quranic interpretation, as articulated in Qur'an and Woman (1999). It examines her methodological departures from classical Islamic exegesis, including the historicization of Quranic rulings, reinterpretation of gender roles, marginalization of Hadith authority, and reconstruction of foundational concepts such as qawwamah, hijab, and legal testimony. Using a comparative framework, the analysis contrasts Wadud's feminist readings with established principles of Islamic exegesis, which emphasize textual fidelity, adherence to prophetic tradition, and scholarly consensus (ijma).

The findings indicate that Wadud's approach relativizes immutable Quranic ordinances, negates divinely ordained distinctions between men and women, diminishes the role of prophetic guidance, and introduces external ideological frameworks into the text. Consequently, her hermeneutics disrupt the epistemological foundations of classical Islamic exegesis by weakening the integral connection between revelation, Prophetic explanation, and interpretive methodology. The study concludes that while feminist engagement with scripture raises important contemporary questions, Wadud's interpretive model remains largely incompatible with mainstream Islamic orthodoxy and lacks methodological legitimacy within the classical exegetical tradition.

Keywords: Amina Wadud, feminist hermeneutics, Quranic exegesis, Islamic feminism, gender in Islam, traditional scholarship, usul al-tafsir.

Introduction: A Dangerous Intellectual Deviation

Dr. Amina Wadud's hermeneutical method is, in fact, a systematic intellectual assault against the agreed-upon principles of Islamic exegetical sciences, attempting to impose Western feminist theories onto Islamic texts. This article will present her fundamental objections and respond to them with strong arguments from traditional Islamic scholars.

Feminist Tafsir is the product of modern intellectual and social trends, aiming to reread the Qur'an through the lens of contemporary notions of gender equality. In the final decades of the twentieth century, as feminist hermeneutics emerged as a well-established intellectual discipline in the West, this movement influenced Muslim societies and gave rise to a new interpretive initiative [1]. Dr. Amina Wadud is considered the most prominent representative of this trend, and her book Qur'an and Woman is regarded as a foundational document of Muslim feminist exegesis. She claims that past interpretations of the Qur'an were shaped by male-dominated perspectives (patriarchy), and therefore, today it is necessary to read the Qur'an from a woman's perspective to provide new interpretations that uphold equality, rights, and gender balance [1].

However, the fundamental question arises: does Amina Wadud's exegetical methodology align with the principles of traditional Islamic scholarship—including the Qur'an, Sunnah, Arabic

linguistics, reasons for revelation (asbab al-nuzul), consensus (ijma), and jurisprudential rules—or does it deviate from them? This is not merely an academic question but one that is directly connected to the sources of religion and the enduring scholarly tradition of Muslims. The present study provides a detailed, analytical, and critical examination of this question.

Intellectual Background of Feminist Tafsir

The intellectual foundations of feminist tafsir are largely derived from Western feminist hermeneutics. In the West, this movement emerged in response to centuries of biblical interpretations that subordinated women and placed them in an inferior position relative to men. Western scholars responded by emphasizing the "voice of women in the text." This trend was imported into Muslim societies, where feminist scholars began to view the Qur'an as a "patriarchal text" similar to the Bible and sought to reinterpret it from a new perspective [1].

Within this context, Amina Wadud's methodology rests on several key theoretical assumptions:

That all historical interpretations of the Qur'an were written from a male perspective [1];

That the apparent clarity of Qur'anic injunctions reflects the specific social and historical conditions of 7th-century Arabia;

That the primary purpose of religion is ethical, and therefore the literal text may be reinterpreted according to contemporary moral standards [1].

These principles fundamentally diverge from Islamic epistemology, which is based on the Qur'an, Sunnah, consensus, Arabic linguistics, and the principles of jurisprudence. The traditional scholarly approach regards textual clarity, the authority of transmission, and the binding force of consensus as core principles.

A Comprehensive Review of Amina Wadud's Methodology

The most prominent feature of Wadud's methodology is her effort to reinterpret the Qur'an's words, historical context, and legislative objectives in a new exegetical direction [1]. Her basic premise is that the Qur'an advocates equality between men and women, but male interpreters throughout history have interpreted it according to patriarchal social norms. Based on this premise, she considers several key Qur'anic injunctions—such as inheritance, testimony, male guardianship (qawwamah), marriage, divorce, maintenance, and marital order—as "context-bound" and attempts to reinterpret them in light of modern gender theories

Linguistics occupies a central place in her methodology. She asserts that the meanings of Arabic words and structural features can provide new interpretations of Qur'anic injunctions, even if these meanings differ from classical lexicons and the consensus of previous scholars. For example, in Surah An-Nisa (4:34), she translates qawwamun as "supporter" rather than "maintainer" or "responsible," whereas Arabic lexicons, context, Hadith, and fourteen centuries of scholarly consensus define it as "guardian," "responsible," or "protector"

Wadud also assigns a secondary role to Hadith. She claims that much of the Hadith literature was compiled under male values and therefore cannot be considered absolutely authoritative when interpreting the Qur'an [6]. Similarly, she dismisses consensus (ijma) as a "patriarchal structure" and refuses to recognize it as a binding source of authority.

A central feature of her methodology is ethical hermeneutics. She prioritizes modern ethical principles—particularly equality—over the apparent meaning of the text. If the literal sense of a Qur'anic verse conflicts with contemporary ethics, she recommends altering its interpretation or restricting its application to the historical context [1][4].

Classical Islamic Principles of Tafsir

Within traditional Islamic scholarship, several foundational principles of exegesis have been firmly established by scholars, jurists, and mufassirun over centuries. The most fundamental of these is that both the Qur'an and Sunnah are definitive sources of guidance, and the interpretation of the Qur'an is inseparable from the Sunnah In interpreting a verse, Arabic linguistics, context (asbab al-nuzul), textual clues, Hadith, the opinions of the companions, scholarly consensus, and analogical reasoning (qiyas) are all considered essential [2][3].

Moreover, Islamic jurisprudence clearly dictates that "definitive texts" (nass qat'i) cannot be altered or reinterpreted according to modern values [18]. For instance, rulings on inheritance, marriage, divorce, testimony, and male guardianship are explicit in the Qur'an (qat'i al-dalala), and classifying them as a 7th-century cultural product is contrary to the methodology of Islamic scholarship [3][16][17].

Consensus (ijma) is similarly recognized as authoritative. Scholars such as Imam Shafi'i, Ibn Taymiyyah, Ibn Qudamah, Imam Ghazali, and others agree that continuous scholarly consensus—especially through practical transmission—is binding [3][8][18]. For example, the fourteen-century consensus that women cannot lead men in prayer was practically violated by Wadud when she led a mixed-gender congregation, highlighting a major deviation in her methodology and a prominent methodological divergence [1][18].

A Detailed Examination of Wadud's Objections and Scholarly Refutations

The following section presents Dr. Amina Wadud's core objections to traditional interpretations, followed by detailed refutations grounded in the classical Islamic sciences.

Objection 1: Quranic Rulings are Historical, Not Eternal

Wadud's Objection:

"The rulings concerning women in Medinan verses were specific to 7th-century Arab society and cannot be applied in the same way today" [1].

Islamic Response:

The universality of the Quran is firmly established. Allah says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

"And We have not sent you except as a mercy to the worlds." (Quran 21:107)

Dr. Israr Ahmed writes in his exegesis Bayan ul quran:

The Qur'an declares that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was sent for all humankind, as stated in the verse: "We have not sent you except to all people, as a bearer of good news and a warner." Unlike previous prophets who were sent only to specific nations, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was granted the unique status of being a universal messenger [2].

The principles governing gender relations in Islam are based on timeless human nature (fitrah), not temporary cultural conditions. The Quran repeatedly emphasizes its eternal applicability:

قُلْ هُوَ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا هُدًى وَشِفَاءٌ"

Say, 'It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure.'" (Quran 41:44).

Islamic scholars across centuries have maintained that while secondary applications (furu') may adapt through ijtihad, the core principles (usul) remain immutable [3].

Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi writes in Tadabbur-e-Quran:

"The distinction of the Quran is that its principles are for all times, although their methods of implementation may change according to the era. But this change must occur within the scope of Islamic jurisprudence (ijtihad), not through imitation of Western theories" [3].

The argument that Quranic rulings were merely products of 7th-century Arab culture ignores the revolutionary nature of these rulings within their historical context. Islam transformed Arabian society by granting women unprecedented rights to inheritance, property ownership, consent in marriage, and legal personhood—rights that Western women would not gain for over a thousand years. If these were merely cultural accommodations, they would have reinforced existing tribal norms rather than transforming them fundamentally.

The stability of Islamic family law across centuries and continents demonstrates its foundational wisdom rather than cultural contingency. While application details may vary through legitimate ijtihad, the core principles of mutual rights, responsibilities, protection of lineage, and family stability remain essential for human flourishing in every era. Wadud's historical relativism undermines the divine wisdom behind these rulings and rejects fourteen centuries of scholarly consensus that has preserved Muslim identity through numerous civilizational challenges.

Hermeneutical and Rational Analysis:

This methodological approach to understanding sacred texts connects to broader discussions in philosophical hermeneutics. As demonstrated by philosophers like Anthony Flew in his transition from atheism to theism, the interpretation of religious texts requires balancing their historical origins with contemporary understanding through disciplined reasoning [19]. Flew argues that neither literalism frozen in ancient times nor relativism that severs texts from their core principles constitutes valid interpretation. Rather, what's required is distinguishing between eternal principles and their temporal expressions to enable authentic application to new circumstances while maintaining fidelity to the text's essential meaning.

Applied to the Quran, this rational framework independently arrives at the same methodological conclusion as classical Islamic scholarship: distinguishing between eternal principles (usul) and their temporal expressions enables dynamic application (ijtihad) while maintaining fidelity to the text's core objectives. This validates the traditional Islamic distinction between immutable principles and adaptable applications, demonstrating that the Islamic scholarly tradition's approach represents sophisticated hermeneutical practice recognized by independent philosophical inquiry, not merely theological assertion.

Objection 2: Gender Differences in the Quran are Cultural, Not Natural

Wadud's Objection:

> "The distinction between men and women is merely socially constructed, not natural. The differences stated in the Quran were according to the requirements of the Arab society of that time" [1].

Islamic Response:

The Quran establishes differences based on creation, not convention:

وَلَيْسَ الذَّكَرُ كَالْأُنثَىٰ

> "And the male is not like the female." (Quran 3:36)

Dr. Israr Ahmed writes in his book Islam aur Aurat ki Haisiyat:

> The distinction that the Quran establishes between men and women is not merely social but natural and inherent. This difference lies in their creation, psychology, emotions, and capabilities, which forms the basis of their separate responsibilities [4].

Professor Khurshid Ahmed writes in Islam ka Nizam-e-Hayat:

> The rights granted to women by Islam and the duties assigned to them both consider their natural differences. Men's guardianship (Qawwam) is their responsibility, not their right. This system is based on inherent realities, not cultural prejudices [5].

The Quranic vision of gender relations is one of complementary equality—equal in spiritual worth and human dignity, but different in function and responsibility. This approach avoids the pitfalls of both patriarchal oppression and radical sameness, instead offering a balanced model that respects created nature while ensuring justice and dignity for both genders. The Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) practical implementation of these principles—through his respectful consultation with his wives, his appointment of women to positions of responsibility, and his revolutionary reforms granting women unprecedented rights—demonstrates how natural differences can be harmonized with social justice.

Wadud's social constructionist approach rejects the wisdom behind divine creation and seeks to impose a homogenizing ideology that denies the beautiful diversity Allah has created. It fails to recognize that true justice comes not from treating different beings identically, but from giving each what is appropriate to their nature and beneficial for their spiritual and worldly flourishing.

Hermeneutical and Rational Analysis:

Contemporary philosophical anthropology, as discussed by thinkers like Roger Scruton, recognizes that human differences extend beyond mere social construction to encompass real ontological distinctions that shape social roles [20]. Scruton argues that denying natural differences in the name of equality often leads to greater injustice, as it ignores the complementary nature of human relationships that allow societies to flourish.

This philosophical perspective supports the Islamic understanding that gender distinctions reflect created reality rather than arbitrary social conventions. The Quranic approach recognizes biological, psychological, and emotional differences that modern science continues to validate, while ensuring these differences translate into complementary social roles rather than hierarchical oppression.

Objection 3: Hadith Should Not Be Considered a Primary Source in Exegesis

Wadud's Objection:

> "The Hadith collections contain many narrations against women that contradict the Quran. Therefore, the Quran should be interpreted only from the Quran itself" [6].

Islamic Response:

The Quran itself mandates following the Prophet's example:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ

> "There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern." (Quran 33:21)

Mufti Taqi Usmani states in his book Tafsir-e-Usmani:

> "The Quran itself appointed the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as its interpreter... Interpreting the Quran without the Sunnah is like taking medicine without a doctor's prescription" [7].

Allama Waheed uz-Zaman Khan writes in Tafsir-ul-Quran:

"Just as Allah took responsibility for preserving the Quran, He also arranged for the preservation of Hadith. Hundreds of thousands of memorizers and Muhadditheen from the Ummah preserved the Hadith. Rejecting Hadith essentially means rejecting a commandment of the Quran" [8].

Indeed, the preservation of Hadith represents one of the most remarkable achievements in intellectual history. Through a multi-layered system of memorization, written documentation, transmission verification, and scholarly criticism, the Muslim community preserved the Prophetic tradition with a degree of accuracy and reliability that exceeds the preservation standards of many ancient texts. This preservation was itself a fulfillment of divine promise and a testament to the centrality of the Sunnah to Islamic identity.

Furthermore, Wadud's selective approach—accepting Quranic verses that align with modern sensibilities while rejecting the Prophetic framework that gives them meaning—creates a hermeneutical incoherence. It presumes that later generations, separated by fourteen centuries and cultural transformations, can better understand the Quran's intent than the immediate community to whom it was revealed and who were trained by the Prophet himself. This notion contradicts the historical and epistemological reality that the Sahabah (Companions)—who received the Quran directly from the Prophet and observed its application in his life—are the primary authorities for understanding its meaning.

Rejecting Hadith ultimately means rejecting Islam as a complete and practical way of life, reducing it to a text open to subjective and arbitrary interpretation. It severs the connection between the Muslim community and its living tradition, leaving each individual to become their own prophet in interpreting divine will. The Islamic scholarly consensus across all orthodox schools of thought has always maintained that the Quran and Sunnah are twin revelations, with the latter serving as the indispensable key to understanding and implementing the former.

Hermeneutical and Rational Analysis:

In the philosophy of language and interpretation, as articulated by Donald Davidson, understanding any text requires knowledge of the author's intentions and the context of its production [21]. Davidson's principle of "radical interpretation" suggests that to understand a text's meaning, we need evidence about what its author meant, which in religious texts comes precisely from supplementary historical sources like Hadith.

This philosophical insight validates the Islamic position that the Quran cannot be properly understood without reference to the Prophetic tradition that contextualizes its revelation and demonstrates its application. Wadud's approach of interpreting the Quran in isolation violates basic principles of textual hermeneutics recognized across philosophical traditions.

Objection 4: Male Leadership in the Family is a Historical Concept

Wadud's Objection:

"The concept of male leadership was a product of 7th-century Arab society. It cannot be enforced in today's era" [9].

Islamic Response:

The Quranic principle is wisdom-based, not arbitrary:

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

"Men are in charge of women by what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend from their wealth." (Quran 4:34)

Maulana Muhammad Yusuf Ludhianvi writes in Islami Nizam-e-Hayat:

> "The Islamic concept of Qawwamiat (guardianship) is based on wisdom. Every system requires a center of leadership. Islam has given family leadership to men because they are naturally more capable of understanding matters, have stronger nerves, and possess the ability to bear financial responsibilities. This is not male superiority but a heavy responsibility placed upon him" [10].

"In the Islamic system, Qawwamiat is merely an administrative term, not a means of exploitation. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said: 'The best among you are those who are best to their families.' This leadership is based on service, not domination" [11].

Contemporary sociological research increasingly validates the Islamic perspective that clear leadership structures correlate with family stability and child wellbeing. The Islamic model avoids both the chaos of leaderless families and the oppression of authoritarianism by embedding qawwamah within a framework of mutual consultation (shura) and accountability to divine law. The Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) own domestic life exemplified this balance—exercising gentle leadership while consistently consulting his wives and honoring their opinions in family and community matters.

Hermeneutical and Rational Analysis:

Social philosopher Michael Oakeshott warns against what he calls "rationalism" – the belief that all social arrangements can be designed from abstract principles without regard for evolved practices [22]. Oakeshott argues that successful institutions often embody practical wisdom accumulated over generations, not merely abstract reasoning.

This perspective supports the Islamic view that qawwamah represents an evolved wisdom about family structure that has demonstrated its effectiveness across cultures and centuries. The Quranic principle acknowledges natural tendencies and practical necessities rather than imposing an arbitrary hierarchy. Contemporary social science continues to find that families with clear leadership structures, when exercised with compassion and consultation, often show greater stability and satisfaction.

Objection 5: Hijab and Veiling are Cultural Traditions

Wadud's Objection:

"The commandment of Hijab was merely a tradition of Arab society. It is not necessary in the modern era" [12].

Islamic Response:

Hijab is divinely mandated, not culturally contingent:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُل لِّأَزْوَاجِكَ وَبَنَاتِكَ وَنِسَاءِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِن جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ

> "O Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves part of their outer garments." (Quran 33:59)

"The commandment of Hijab is established by the explicit verse of the Quran. This commandment is eternal because it is for the protection of chastity and modesty, which is necessary in every era" [13].

Maulana Abdul Malik Mujahid writes in Islami Tehzeeb-o-Saqafat:

"Hijab is a symbol of a woman's respect, not her inferiority. It protects her from all kinds of gazes. In modern Western society where women are being exploited by making them immodest, Islam's Hijab is actually a guarantee of a woman's honor and dignity" [14].

From an Islamic perspective, hijab is an act of worship (‘ibādah) and submission to Allah, fulfilling a commandment just like prayer or fasting. It is also a sociological principle that fosters respectful interaction between genders by directing focus away from physicality. Modern research in social psychology supports the idea that environments emphasizing modesty can reduce sexual harassment and superficial judgments, creating spaces where individuals are valued for their contributions and character.

The enduring practice of hijab for over fourteen centuries, resisting numerous social and political pressures—including intense colonial and secular campaigns to abolish it—testifies to its deep-rooted significance in Muslim identity and spirituality. It is not a relic of the past but a living, dynamic practice that millions of Muslim women embrace today as a source of spiritual fulfillment, empowerment, and identity. To dismiss it as a mere cultural tradition is to ignore its theological foundation, its practical wisdom, and its profound meaning in the lives of believing women across the globe.

Hermeneutical and Rational Analysis:

The philosophy of embodiment, as explored by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, emphasizes how clothing and bodily presentation shape human interaction and identity [23]. Merleau-Ponty argues that how we present our bodies to the world is not merely cultural but fundamentally tied to how we experience and constitute our identities.

This philosophical perspective supports the Islamic understanding that hijab represents more than cultural tradition—it embodies a particular relationship between the self, society, and the divine. The practice creates what philosopher Charles Taylor would call a "social imaginary"—a way of being in the world that structures relationships and meanings [24]. The persistence of hijab across diverse Muslim cultures suggests it answers to something deeper than mere cultural convention.

Objection 6: The Ruling of Two Women Witnesses is Discriminatory

Wadud's Objection:

"Considering two women equal to one man in testimony shows women's inferior status" [15].

Islamic Response:

The Quranic ruling addresses practical wisdom, not worth:

وَاسْتَشْهِدُوا شَهِيدَيْنِ مِن رِّجَالِكُمْ ۖ فَإِن لَّمْ يَكُونَا رَجُلَيْنِ فَرَجُلٌ وَامْرَأَتَانِ مِمَّن تَرْضَوْنَ مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ

> "And bring to witness two witnesses from among your men. And if there are not two men, then a man and two women from those whom you accept as witnesses." (Quran 2:282)

Maulana Muhammad Taqi Amini states in Islami Qanoon ke Mabadi:

"The ruling of two women in testimony is not an insult to women but an acknowledgment of their psychological and emotional structure. Women are more affected in emotional situations, so Islam included another woman to correct her memory. This is protection of women's rights, not their denial" [16].

Justice (R) Tufail Ahmed Janjua writes in Islami Qanoon ki Riwayati Tashreeh:

"In different matters of testimony, Islam has given women different statuses. In financial matters, the testimony of two women is required, but in specific women's matters (such as birth, breastfeeding), only women's testimony is valid. This is the distribution of responsibilities according to each person's expertise" [17].

This nuanced system refutes the charge of discrimination. It recognizes that expertise and reliable knowledge vary by context. Just as a cardiologist's testimony on a heart condition carries more

weight than a dermatologist's, Islamic law assigns testimonial weight based on the witness's most likely sphere of reliable knowledge and experience within a given socio-historical framework. The ruling in Surah Al-Baqarah was a progressive step in its time, formally admitting women's testimony in financial matters—a right often denied in pre-Islamic and contemporary societies.

Furthermore, classical and contemporary jurists have emphasized that this ruling pertains to ideal witnesses (ʻudūl) in formal court settings for specific financial cases. It does not preclude women from being sole witnesses in countless other scenarios, nor does it prevent a qualified female judge (qādiyah) from presiding over cases and evaluating all testimony. The ultimate goal of Islamic law is the establishment of justice (iqāmat al-ʻadl), and its rulings on testimony are instruments to achieve that justice reliably, not pronouncements on the absolute worth of individuals.

Therefore, Wadud's objection imposes a modern, egalitarian absolutism onto a pre-modern legal text, missing its contextual wisdom, protective intent, and place within a larger, differentiated legal system. It judges a single ruling by the standard of abstract equality, while Islamic law employs a pragmatic, context-sensitive approach aimed at substantive justice, social stability, and the preservation of rights for all parties involved.

Hermeneutical and Rational Analysis:

Legal philosopher John Rawls distinguishes between "formal equality" (treating everyone identically) and "substantive justice" (treating people appropriately according to relevant differences) [25]. Rawls's difference principle allows for inequalities if they benefit the least advantaged.

This philosophical distinction helps clarify the Islamic position on testimony. The Quranic ruling doesn't assert women's inferior worth but recognizes contextual differences that affect testimonial reliability in specific circumstances. Rather than pursuing formal equality, it aims for substantive justice by creating conditions where women's testimony can be given with maximum reliability and confidence. The ruling can be seen as protective in its historical context, ensuring women's participation in legal processes while accounting for social realities that might otherwise undermine their testimony's acceptance.

Conclusion: The Consensus Position of Islamic Scholars

Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutical approach is fundamentally irreconcilable with Islamic orthodoxy because:

It violates the sanctity of the Quran and Sunnah by subjecting divine revelation to contemporary secular ideologies.

It opposes the natural and inherent principles (fitrah) of Islamic teachings that have guided successful Muslim societies for centuries.

It is based on blind imitation of Western theories that themselves undergo constant revision and criticism within Western academia.

It rejects the consensus (ijma') of the Muslim Ummah, creating division where unity is divinely mandated.

Maulana Abdul Rashid Naumani writes in his book Tahafuz-e-Islam:

"Today, the biggest attack on Islam is being carried out in the name of Quranic exegesis. People are trying to mold Quranic verses according to their personal desires. We should protect ourselves from all such trials and remain steadfast on the methodology of the pious predecessors" [18].

Authentic Islamic scholarship welcomes critical engagement but rejects deconstructive approaches that undermine revelation's divine origin. The tradition offers robust mechanisms for addressing

contemporary issues through ijtihad within established parameters, ensuring dynamism without compromising the immutable principles that have preserved Muslim identity through centuries of civilizational challenges.

Hermeneutical and Rational Analysis:

Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre argues that traditions of inquiry develop their own standards of rationality through ongoing internal debate and application [26]. According to MacIntyre, judging one tradition by another's standards constitutes a category error.

This perspective illuminates why Wadud's approach faces rejection within Islamic orthodoxy. She applies standards from modern Western feminism to judge an Islamic legal tradition that has developed its own sophisticated internal rationality over centuries. Rather than engaging the tradition's internal reasoning processes (like ijtihad within usul al-fiqh), she imports external criteria that the tradition has compelling reasons to reject based on its own epistemological foundations. The Islamic scholarly consensus represents not stagnation but the living application of a tradition's internal rationality to new challenges.

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