

## Exploring The Interpretation And Context Of Qur'anic Verse 4:34: A Scholarly Inquiry Into The Discourse On Spousal Relations In Islam

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### Abstract

*Domestic violence is one of the most pervasive human rights violations denying women equality, security and dignity, self-worth and their right to enjoy fundamental freedoms. It's a major contributor to psychiatric symptomatology in women, in both the developed and developing world. Previous literature suggests that other than many factors, women's attitudinal acceptance of spousal violence, play a major role in domestic violence. It is worth investigating that why women justify spousal violence in a Muslim society whereas Islam strongly condemns spousal violence? Therefore, the study would unveil those drivers and the factors which act as the greater source of women's attitudinal acceptance toward spousal violence on the one hand and would examine the real teachings of Islam regarding the matter and also its practical approach while addressing the problem. For this purpose, it would be necessary to analyze the verse (4:34) that has given rise to much controversy, either as a result of misinterpreting the precise meaning of its key concepts, or as a result of misusing it, whether deliberately or unintentionally. The study is qualitative and inductive and deductive methodology would be applied to conclude objectively. The conclusion drawn is that until the real Islamic teachings would not inculcate into the society the traditional values and patriarchal attitudes can't be changed and the female fabric of society would keep suffering the domestic violence and this attitudinal acceptance of spousal violence would be continued parallel blaming the religion.*

**Keywords:** *Spousal Violence, Domestic violence, Patriarchal attitudes, Social Learning Theory, Islamic Teachings.*

### Introduction

Domestic violence is a “pattern of coercive and assaultive behaviors that include physical, sexual, verbal, and psychological attacks and economic coercion that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partner” (Zarling & Berta, 2017). Domestic violence takes place in all societies regardless of ethnicities, social and economic backgrounds, cultures, religions, and geographical borders (Horstman, Bond & Eriksson, 2019) and is one of the most pervasive human rights violations (Seabrook, Ward, & Giaccardi, 2019) denying women equality, security, dignity self-worth (Huecker & Smock, 2019) and their right to enjoy fundamental freedoms (Harland, Peek-Asa & Saftlas, 2018). Domestic violence against the women alienates her from the community and have devastating physical and mental health consequences (Horstman, Bond & Eriksson, 2019). The women who have been victims of domestic violence

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is at higher risk of post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and also have greater tendencies of committing the suicide compared to the women who have not undergone domestic violence. However, when we compare the literature on spousal violence around the world, the difference seems to lie in the public condemnation (Rizvi & Feroz, 2019). National investigation in the United States reveals that on average, 24.3% of women experience physical violence by an intimate partner during their lifetime (Davis & Padilla-Medina, 2019). Globally, one in three women experiences violence from an intimate partner (Miller & Segal, 2019), and one of the regions witnessing its highest prevalence is the South East Asian region (37.7%) (World Health Organization, 2017). Across the 28 States of the European Union, a little over one in five women has experienced physical spousal violence (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014). Surveys in Arab countries show that at least one out of three women is beaten by her husband (Elghossain, Bott, Akik, & Obermeyer, 2019) and a study found that 50 % of married women in Pakistan are physically battered by their husbands (Zakar & Krämer, 2011).

Approximately 50% of women in low income countries believe that beating wives, or physical spousal violence, is justified (Yount et al. 2013). Despite the governmental efforts toward the prevention and control of domestic violence, still globally 2 to 91% of women and girls had a positive attitude towards domestic violence. Poverty, rural residence, gender inequality in schooling, decision making, ethnicity, religion, and exposure to the media were associated with women's attitudes toward domestic violence. Cultural orientations and social norms are more salient features of social life that encourage violence. Therefore, it is worth investigating why women justify violence, either they assume that the Legal infrastructure of the state would not favor the victims of domestic violence, or the victims would have to face the lethargic, unsupportive, obstructive and even demeaning attitude of law enforcement agencies, so they prefer to remain silent and bear the violence to which they are subjected, or those women have perception that Islam has allowed wife beating in any circumstance? The present study would focus to respond these questions by highlighting the real teachings of Islam regarding the matter and also its practical approach while addressing the problem and would clarify certain misunderstandings that have arisen over the verse (4:34) of the Qur'an.

### **Factors Associated with Female's Attitudinal Acceptance of Spousal Violence: An Overview**

Patriarchal values are historically dominant in Pakistan, and almost all the social institutions reinforce and support them (Mumtaz and Mitha 1996). Young girls are raised to tolerate and accept intimate partner violence as a part of life in Pakistan (Niaz, 2004). United Nations statistics 2015 reporting over 50% of teenage girls believed that violence enacted upon them is justified (UNESCO. Global guidance on addressing school related gender-based violence, 2016). From childhood, a girl is socialized to be silent, patient, and submissive, to become a selfless person who is pleased to keep her husband happy (Hamid, Johansson, & Rubenson, 2010; Hussain, 1999; Winkvist & Akhtar, 2000). The family is viewed as a highly important social institution whose unity and cohesiveness should be maintained and particularly the marital bond must be preserved at all costs. Literature suggests that battered women are generally advised to forgive their husbands in order to protect their children and their home. In the majority of cases, even if violence is disclosed, family, police and even health professional are not of great help, given the importance attached to maintaining the marital link (Ali et al. 2015). Women often prefer to stay in an abusive relationship due to real or imagined fear of harm by their husbands, lack of financial support, concern for their children's safety and future, stigmatization, emotional dependence, lack of support from the family and friends and, finally, hope that their husband will change their behavior (Andersson et al., 2010; Niaz, 2004). Perceptions of the legitimacy of men's violence to intimate partners are constituted through agreement with the notions that men should be dominant in households and intimate relationships and have the right to enforce their dominance through physical chastisement, men

have uncontrollable sexual urges, women are deceptive and malicious, and marriage is a guarantee of sexual consent (Straton, 2002).

Patriarchal gender norms and associated gender inequity result in high rates of spousal violence in Pakistan, with over 70% of wives reporting abuse (Ali et al. 2011). The contemporary patriarchy condemns women to be a property of their father, later husband and any disobedience is considered punishable. The lower educational attainment is related with the attitude of acceptance of Spousal Violence (Uthman, Lawoko & Moradi, 2009). As in many other Asian countries, spousal violence is not yet considered to be a serious social issue in Pakistan, despite its great prevalence and negative health consequences (Ali and Khan 2007). Most women accept and justify Spousal Violence in light of their training of conventional gender roles (Rizvi & Feroz, 2019) cultural and religious norms (Biswas, Rahman, Kabir & Raihan, 2017) Attitudinal acceptance favoring the climate of Spousal Violence is likely to exacerbate the issue further (Sardinha & Catalan, 2018). According to a survey the most vulnerable households is also a major cause, where women themselves accepted spousal physical violence as a general norm (Biswas, Rahman, Kabir, & Raihan, 2017). The research team from Scotland draws conclusions that the hierarchical structure of the patriarchal family has historically legitimized wife beating for subordination, domination, and control of women and that women are victims of men's brutality to a far greater extent within marriage than outside of marriage. They say:

Females, whether they be sisters, mothers, wives or daughters, are more likely to be subject to control through the use of physical force than are their male counterparts especially in their capacity as wives that the risk of spousal violence is the highest. Women were very rarely assaulted by strangers on the streets, only 15 percent of the cases involving female victims occurred outside the family setting compared to 85% occurring within their families (Dobash and Dobash, 1978:437). It seems that the marital status for women may contribute to woman battering. It has been noted that the "marriage license (is made) a hitting license" (Straus, 1976:543). Numerous societies and cultures accept male dominance and subordination of women in public as well as in the private spheres of life (Huecker & Smock, 2019), and therefore the husband's role is authoritarian, as he assumes responsibility for maintaining the family structure by whatever means he feels are justified, including violence (Sardinha & Catalan, 2018).

Among the few available studies from Pakistan are those that women's views on religious teachings about spousal violence (Shaikh, 2016), and barriers to reporting spousal violence (Anderson et al., 2003). Religion is not just a set of spiritual beliefs, but overwhelmingly dominates in the social, political, and personal lives of individuals (Ayyub 2000; Farmer 2007). People usually have great trust in religious institutions like the mosque and the madrassa (religious school). For example, the internationally reported gang-rape victim, Mukhtar Mai, kept silent until the local imam persuaded her and her family to file charges against the influential perpetrators (Ali 2005).

In some Arab and Islamic countries, selective excerpts from the Qur'an may be used to prove that men who beat their wives are following God's commandments (Douki, Nacef, Belhadj, Bouasker, & Ghachem, 2003). Shari'a (Islamic law) may be used to sanction male authority over female relatives and the legitimate use of physical violence (Hajjar, 2004). Therefore, religious beliefs play a significant part in shaping not only the way people live, their choices, and their social lives. The popular literature propagates various stereotypes, such as the idea that "ideal wives" passively and habitually bear violence in the name of religion (Hajjar, 2004; Haj-Yahia, 2002) and do not effectively resist it. Misinterpretation of religion is common to justify spousal violence (Ali et al. 2011). Particularly Women's risk of violence becomes high when their partners and others share beliefs about the acceptability of violence (Alio et al. 2011). The problem is usually attributed to the Qur'anic verse 4:34 that seems to legitimize wife beating if read out of context. Therefore, it would be necessary to put forth the

religious and theological emphases on compassion, justice, and liberation in Islam that is strongly in opposition to violence against women.

### **The Forgotten Islamic Teachings Before Patriarchal Ideologies**

Family is seen in the society as an institution with loosely defined yet commonly known distribution of privileges and duties and with a hierarchy based on age and nature of relationship. This hierarchy gives some persons a right over lives of others and this right does not violate the independence and self-determination yet it provides guidance based on experience and motivated by affection and love. The person getting such guidance feels himself or herself morally obliged to abide by the rules set out by his or her elders and such following is motivated by the respect such person has for the elders in the family. This is a social mechanism in which there is always room for arguments, disputes, conflicts and even quarrels. Such disagreements and disputes in no way mean that parties to the conflict think ill for each other and the differences normally subside after a wave of arguments and the life goes on. But spousal violence is not any way allowed in any situation or circumstances and also there is very little research available on spousal violence in Islamic history (Semerdjian, 2004), it is possible to deduce Islam's legal position on spousal violence from the Qur'an, Sunnah (Prophetic practice) and the context of historical and contemporary fatwas (legal verdicts). Since our discussion is restricted to one aspect of spousal violence, namely wife abuse, it is necessary to contextualize Islam's legal position on spousal violence by examining, albeit briefly, Islam's attitude toward the treatment of wives as illustrated by the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions. Because there are two main modes of interpretation that have been developed by scholars to understand the Quran. The first form involves explaining the Quran intra-textually, or in other words, allowing varying verses from the Quran to elucidate one another (Qur'an, 16:89). The second form involves interpreting the Quran based on the example of the Prophet, who was referred to by his wife as a "walking Quran (Hambal, 1993 Hadith No: 14645)." By using these two modes of hermeneutics, we can now turn to our sources in order to understand how Islam has consistently condemned domestic violence. Primarily, it would be necessary to make an analysis of the verse (Quran, 4:34) which appears to encourage wife-beating.

“Men are the **protector and maintainer** of women, because Allāh has made one of them excel the other, and because men spend out of their wealth on them. So virtuous women are those who are obedient (to Allāh) and guard (their own chastity as well as the rights and secrets of their husbands even) in (their) absence, as Allāh has guarded (the women's rights). As for those women (on whose part) you apprehend disobedience and bad behavior, you may admonish them (first lovingly) and (then) refuse to share their beds with them and (as a last resort) **punish them (mildly)**. If they, then, obey you, you shall seek no other way against them. Indeed, Allāh alone is High, (and) Great” (Quran, 4:34).

It should also take into consideration that the fundamental essence of women's dignity has been established by Islam, and this has been referred to either by some other Qur'anic verses, or by Prophet (PBUH)'s sayings and practices (sunnah). Otherwise, the Qur'an's credibility, and Islam's inherent respect for women's dignity, would remain subject to criticism and distrust, as it has been for decades.

### **Literal & Contextual Interpretation of “Qawwāmūn”- قَوَّامُونَ, “Waḍribūhunna” “Nushūz- نَشُوزٌ”**

It would also instructive to highlight that this verse starts that “Men are the protector and maintainer of women,” so the translation of (qawwāmūn- قَوَّامُونَ) as “protector and maintainer” is not exactly what qawwāmūn means. Qawwāmūn means “figures of authority who are in

charge of and take care of (something)” (al-Rāzī 1981, vol. 10, pp. 90-91). Unfortunately, most scholars have used this verse to prove that men are superior to women in most aspects of life because they are physically and emotionally stronger and are allegedly more rational. However, the verse definitely does not validate this belief in any way. The generality of these causes shows that the resulting principle (Men are the maintainers of women) is not confined to the husbands. In other words, it does not say that man is the maintainer of his wife, rather it gives authority to men, as a group, over the whole group of women, in common affairs which affect the lives of both sexes on the whole.

Most scholars ignored the word “some” and said that “all” men excel over “all” women while it is explicitly said in the verse that “some” excel over “some” others. Other scholars who recognized the importance of the word “some” said that it means “some” men are superior to “some” women. If this were true, then the verse should have been expressed differently. It should read “Bimā faddala Allāh ba‘adahum (men) ‘alā ba‘dihinna (women).” Therefore, even the scholars who have paid attention to the word “some” could not distinguish who are those “some” that have superiority over “some” others.

Moreover, the word “nushūz,” high-handedness (nushūz) which has been translated as “being disobedient,” “rebellious,” “recalcitrant,” or “disloyal,” means “violating and breaching the marital relationship by the wife through introducing a third party into her relationship with her spouse” (i.e. committing infidelity). Some scholars even went so far as to call any wife that is disobedient to her husband “nāshiz.” It means “unfaithful behavior which leads to an unlawful relationship outside of the marriage bond,” which calls for a series of actions in order to restore family unity and harmony to its regular constancy. It should be clear here that the aim is not to harm the wife but rather to warn her about the seriousness of the problem at hand. Logically, if the wife intends to violate the sacred marital bonds by getting involved in an illegitimate relationship with another man, she has the choice then to get divorced, but she cannot continue under any circumstances in the sinful relationship.

If the husband fears (or experiences) any disloyal behavior, three immediate measures are described to attempt to resolve a situation that could otherwise lead to a divorce: The husband needs to clearly warn his wife that the situation has to stop, and stop right away sharing the bed with her. At the same time, he needs to “shun” her, that is to say “ignore” her, and for instance stop talking to her. According to the exponents that verse 4:34 gives a man the authority to “shun” her, or to “ignore” her, only when his wife is about to do something highly damaging, such as trying to invite a lover into the house, he has the right to sternly warn her to stop and to use force against her if she does not stop this lewd acts.

The problem of abuse comes from the misinterpretation of the word “iḍribūhunna” which is usually translated as “beat them”. The root of this word is “ḍaraba”! If one consults an Arabic dictionary you would find a long list of meanings ascribed to this word. In the Qur’an, depending on the context, one can ascribe different meanings to it.<sup>2</sup> The linguistic interpretation of this verse shows that the verse may not refer to beating when using the Arabic word iḍribūhunna but indeed, it was the patriarchal values that prevailed prior to Islam and those that survived following the Prophet (PBUH)’s time that lead to understanding the term iḍribūhunna as beat them (Suliman, 2001). Otherwise the word ḍarab (the root of iḍribūhunna) can mean a variety of things, including to take away, explain, cover, condemn, strike the earth,

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<sup>2</sup> For detail see following verses of the Quran: To travel to get out: 3:156; 4:101; 38:44; 73:20; 1:273 To strike: 2:60; 7:160; 8:12; 20:77; 24:31; 26:63; 37:93; 47:04 To beat: 8:50; 47:27 To set up: 43:58; 57:13 To give (examples): 14:24-45; 16:75,76,112; 18:32,45; 24:35; 30:2858; 36:78; 39:27,29; 43:17; 59:21; 66:10-11. To take away, to ignore: 43:5 To condemn: 2:61 To seal, to draw over: 18:11 To cover: 24:31 To explain: 13:17.

or set up (Mernissi, 1991). Haddad indicates that the verse 4:34 does not imply physical beating, since the Arabic root word of the verb *wadribūhunna* is also used to indicate washing the face with water and to travel the earth” (Haddad, 2000). “To shun” is very close to the meaning of “**to avoid**” (another possible translation of “*daraba*”) which is already used in the expression “**avoid them in bed**”. “To shun” is more intense than “to avoid”, and reflects a deliberate and manifest intent “to avoid” someone. Two modern English translation of the Quran by Laleh Bakhtiar (2011) and Safi Kaskas (2016) translated the verb “*daraba*” as “go away from them” or “depart away from them” respectively. Laleh Bakhtiar (2007) suggests that the word *wadribūhunna* should actually be translated to mean “to go away,” because “God would not sanction harming another human being except in war” (McMahan, 2004). On the contrary, all peaceful retaliatory measures described in the verse (warn her, and avoid her in bed, and shun her) are meant to be implemented immediately in order to convey a firm but peaceful message that the situation has to stop. All three expressions are separating by “wa” (and) and not by “fa” (then), which denotes that the measures are immediate and not consecutive.

But someone cannot protect or beat his wife at the same time. A few verses earlier states “*عاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ*” “And consort with your wives in kindness” (4:19). The word *ma‘rūf* (*مَعْرُوفٍ*), which has been used in this sentence, is the opposite of “*munkar*” which means wicked. So, wife beating is disgraceful and the exact opposite of kindness as God has stated that “He ordained love and kindness between you” (30:21). Then how love and kindness would have left there after when husband beats his wife? Therefore, according to the Holy Qur’an a man is neither the lord nor the master of woman but simply responsible for her maintenance. Because of their typical mind set and conservatism, some clergies however unable to perceive the loveliness and significance of this feminine favoring holy verse. Particularly, presenting the husband as a protector of his wife in the beginning of the verse and ended it up with beating his wife not even in the picture. Their shortsightedness depicts their anti-Qur’anic argument which is a crystal clear proof of their confusion about the word *قَوَامُونَ*. It indicates that marriage is a sharing between two halves of society and that its objectives, besides perpetuating human life, are emotional well-being and spiritual harmony. In fact, an entire chapter exclusively entitled “The Women” describes guidelines of behavior, a code of ethics and conflict resolution in all aspects (e.g., care, inheritance, marriage, divorce, conflict resolution, etc.) that relate to women (Qur’an, 4:1-176). As Nigosian (2004) stated: “Unquestionably, the Quran and the Hadith markedly improved the role and status of women relative to the pre-Islamic period”.

The question that imposes itself now is: How did a very singular remedy to a very particular case (the wife’s infidelity) that prevents a husband from becoming a “cuckold” and a wife from turning into an “adulteress,” turn into a stick or a weapon in men’s hands to perpetrate acts of violence against all women? It is pertinent to highlight that If Men are responsible (*qawwām*) for keeping their wives satisfied sexually and financially in order to protect them from being unfaithful to them (*nāshiz*). If the wife established a relationship with another man because her husband did not fulfill his duty well, then he is also to be blamed and is liable to rectify the harm that he had caused. In brief, in some rare cases, some wives have sexual desires or financial needs that are not fulfilled by their husbands and it may lead them to commit some acts of infidelity. It is the husband’s duty to fulfill these needs and stay fully attentive and alert to guard this sacred relationship by protecting his wife from becoming engaged in a forbidden relationship with another man.

### **Cultural & Historical Context of Revelation 4:34**

In pre-Islamic Arabia, known as the Age of Ignorance (*Jahiliyyah*), women “did not enjoy much freedom and social equality” (Sheehi, 2000). women were viewed and treated as mere “tools of reproduction and sexual pleasure” (Hasan, 2019, p. 43). Practices of physical and emotional abuse of females such as female infanticide (killing of babies) and the custom of

inheriting the wives of deceased relatives against the will of the women, even the wives of the deceased father were common. Islam eliminated all these distinctions and introduced egalitarianism for all segments of society, specifically women. Other than female infanticide, drinking, gambling, and adultery were all socially acceptable in pre-Islamic culture, and the Qur'an is clear in criticizing and sharply attacking these norms and practices. It is a well-known fact that the Qur'an adopts a gradualist philosophy for social change. Gradualism is God's merciful recognition of the human condition and its limitations in the face of change. For this reason, the Qur'an was revealed gradually in accordance with the circumstances, needs, and capabilities of Muslims, since it would have been impossible to introduce the perfect Islamic society all at once. For example, the Qur'anic prohibition against drinking alcohol among Arabs was imposed upon Muslims gradually. For example, whereas early revelations discourage the use of intoxicants (Qur'an, 2:219, 4:43), and the final revelation on this matter clearly condemns and prohibits them (Qur'an, 5:93-94). So, the verse should be understood in accordance with its social, cultural, and historical context in which the Qur'an was revealed because it has been delivered to a certain society at a specific time. Its purpose was to solve some existing problems or correct some problematic situations. Other verses were revealed in order to introduce new values to the society that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was seeking to establish. For example, in order to understand verse 4:34, it is crucial to know the nature of relationships between husbands and wives at that time and the social values of the seventh century community in the Arabian Peninsula. Otherwise we will neither understand the true meaning of the verse, nor apply it properly in our contemporary societies. The verse 4:34, which refers to a strike/ tap, was revealed early in the Medinan period at a time when cruelty and violence against women was a social norm. Seen within this context the strike is a restriction on existing practice, and not a recommendation. Unfortunately, given the remaining Jahiliyyah blinders and despite all efforts by the Prophet (PBUH) to the contrary, many Muslim men unjustifiably misconstrued the Qur'anic verse as sanctioning the reprehensible practice of wife beating, and ignored the Sunnah, powerfully exemplified in the Prophet (PBUH)'s own household (Al-Hibri, 2003).

Omaima Abou-Bakr (2016), made responsible Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (839–923) who was among the earlier exponents of the Qur'an and stated that “an innocent and harmless verse 4:34 was over time given a patriarchal, male-centric interpretation by scholars like al-Ṭabarī”. Because al-Ṭabarī have provided the patriarchal reasoning, who argued that "abandonment in bed" could not be the actual meaning of the Qur'anic phrase (Hasan, 2019, p. 132). So he concluded that the better interpretation of "wahjurūhunna fil madhāji" is "tie them in bed" and “wadribūhunna” is beating them (al-Ṭabarī, Vol:5, P. 41-43). Further, this verse has been used by some patriarchal men to justify physical violence against women.

### **Overview of Islamic Guidelines**

The Qur'an (2: 229-237) clearly indicates that marriage is sharing between the two halves of the society, and that its objectives, besides perpetuating human life, are emotional well-being and spiritual harmony. Its bases are love and mercy. The Qur'an eloquently describes the reciprocal marital relationship stating “...they (your wives) are your garment and you are a garment for them...” (Qur'an, 2:187). In the Qur'anic paradigm, marriage is represented as a means of tranquility, protection, encouragement, peace, kindness, comfort, justice, mercy, and love (Qur'an, 2:187; 4: 25; 30:21). There are many examples in Qur'an and Ahadith that describes the behavior of Muslims towards husband and wife. The relationship should be one of mutual love, respect and kindness. Allah says in Quran, “O believers treat women with kindness even if you dislike them; it is quite possible that you dislike something which Allah might yet make a source of abundant good” (Qur'an, 4:19). Therefore, good conduct with wives is regarded as the base of marital relationship for which men are advised to live with their wives on a footing of kindness. It is also stated in the Quran as follows: “And harass them

not, so as to straighten life for them” (Qur’an, 65:6). Allah the almighty has even forbidden us to call each other by bad names and to humiliate (Qur’an, 49: 11). These were the basic foundations of Muslim society established in Madinah and further developed into an ideal state, the final verse in the Qur’an on male and female relationship (Qur’an, 9:71) regards women and men as being each other’s protecting friends and guardians (‘awliyya) which emphasizes their cooperation in living together as partners. Based on such legal texts, classical and contemporary Muslim scholars view all forms of spousal violence as oppression (Abd al Ati, 1977; European Council for Fatwa and Research, 2005). Abuse against wives is a form of injustice and is hence prohibited, as decided by the Council of the International Islamic Fiqh Academy (IFA):

“What is meant by violence is words and actions committed by a member of the family against another member, which are marked by severity and harshness, and which cause physical or moral harm to the family as a whole or to one of its members. This behavior is forbidden because it contradicts the objectives of Islamic law as regards the preservation of life and reason, and because it contradicts the divine approach that is based on righteousness and kind treatment” (IFA, 2009).

Religious scholar Basheer Ahmed, (2009) currently working in Islamic Society of North America stated that “Under no circumstances is violence against women encouraged or allowed in Islam. Therefore, according to the Taha Jabir Alalwani and Maher Hathout, that even light tapping is not appropriate (FTI, 2007). They argue that verse 4:34 should be interpreted in light of the historical and environmental context. Taking it as an absolute to apply to any time or any person is erroneous, given that the Qur’an orders one to live with his wife in kindness and equity. These scholars also argue that to interpret the word waḍribūhunna to mean “hitting” is to err with the practice of the Prophet (PBUH) who during a severe situation of marital discord, practiced a period of separation (or boycott) from his wives, which renders the meaning of waḍribūhunna to “boycott them” and not “beat them”. Haddad (2000) reiterates that “wife beating is clearly outside the teachings of Islam, and that verse 4:34 does not refer to permitting violent acts against women, emphasizing that those claiming that Islam sanctions wife beating have decontextualized the verses and misrepresented Islam entirely.” When the classical Muslim jurist Ibn Rushd was asked whether a man who caught his wife performing lewd acts with a foreign man in bed could beat his wife and imprison her, he responded that the husband may forgive his wife or divorce her and anything beyond that would be considered a transgression (Abou El Fadl, 2006). Because, When the continuation of the marriage relationship is impossible for any reason, men are still taught to seek a gracious end for it, “When you divorce women, and they reach their prescribed term, then retain them in kindness and retain them not for injury so that you transgress (the limits)” (Qur’an, 2:231) and Qur’an 65:2 mentioned earlier. Given the above, it seems evident that wife beating is not only “immoral”, but is inconsistent with the five fundamental objectives of Islamic law (maqāsīd al Sharīah), namely, namely, the protection of self, religion, honor, and intellect (Zīydān, 1981). It is also inconsistent with the Prophet (PBUH)’s example and many traditions that describe beating as “hateful and detestable” (Abou El Fadl, 2009, p. 111). The nineteenth-century Syrian jurist, Ibn Abidin, moreover, declared that any harm that left a mark on the wife could result in the physical punishment of the husband (Alkiek, et al., 2017).

Therefore, Islamic law addresses wife beating under the harm (concept of darar) that includes several types of abuse against a wife, including: The failure of a husband to provide obligatory support (nafaqa) for his wife, which includes food, shelter, and clothing. A husband’s absence from the home, his inability to fulfil his wife’s sexual needs, or mistreatment of his wife’s family members can result in dissolution of the marriage contract. Harm (darar) also includes physical abuse against a spouse (Semerdjian, 2004, p. 121). Physical assault and



torture is another authentic reason by which a Muslim woman can get rid of her husband: Narrated Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s wife and mother of the believers 'Ā'īsha, that Habībah daughter of Sahl was the wife of Thābit ibn Qayīs Shimmās. He beat her and broke some of her part. So she came to the Prophet (PBUH) after morning, and complained to him against her husband. The Prophet called on Thābit ibn Qayīs and said (to him): separate yourself from her (Abū Daw'ūd, Hadith No. 2230). Once a companion of the Prophet (PBUH) asked to him, "What do you say [advise] about our wives?" to which the Prophet (PBUH) replied, "Share with them the same food you have for yourself, and clothe them by which you clothe yourself, and do not beat them, and do not revile them" (Abu Dawud, Hadith No. 2143).

The Islamic teachings are opposed to injustice and cruelty, and needless to say this means that we should be opposed to injustice and cruelty toward women. How can a man carry out the "greater jihad" of working to make the world a better place if he has created a cruel and tyrannical kingdom at home? Until recently Muslim societies (and of course non-Muslim ones too) were quite apathetic toward the issue of cruelty toward women. Things seem to be improving. Wives in Islam are not required to be servile and submissive toward their husbands. They are required to be servile and submissive toward God.

The Quran refers to the Prophet (PBUH) as a mercy to humanity (Qur'ān: 21:107), the model whose example should be followed (Qur'ān: 68:04). Based on this, it is clear that he would have carried out any and all of the commands (imperative forms of the verb) in the Quran that were revealed to him. It is well-established that Prophet (PBUH) never hit his wives, although they argued with him and held different opinions from him (). The Honorable 'Ā'īsha, wife of the Prophet (PBUH), was one of the most respected legal experts during her time. She delivered to her society great legal opinions and practices once she said: The Messenger of Allah never struck a servant or a woman (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim, Hadith No. 2328). If the interpretation of 4:34 as 'beat them' was accurate, this would mean that the Prophet did not carry out God's command. This in itself suggests that 'beat them' is a misinterpretation. He clearly believed that it was not within his Sunnah to do such a thing. Therefore, he showed by his behavior that 4:34 and the use of the word daraba means 'go away from them' and let the emotions subside, rather than 'to beat' (Bakhtiar, 2011).

Prophet (PBUH) strongly reprimanded men who first hit their wives and would later have intimate relations with them (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith No: 5204). The Prophet (PBUH) has stated "The most complete persons in faith are those who have the best manners and the good among you are those who are good with their wives." (Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 71, p. 389). Further stated, "It is the generous (in character) who is good to women, and it is the wicked who insults them". When Prophet (PBUH)'s cousin 'Alī (R.A.) revealed his intention to marry with his daughter Fātima (R.A.) the holy Prophet said, "so I would marry her with you on the condition that you consort with her in kindness." Once Prophet (PBUH) was on a journey and he had a black slave called Anjasha, and he was driving the camels (very fast, and there were women riding on those camels). Prophet (PBUH) said, "Waīhaka (May Allah be merciful to you), O Anjasha! Drive slowly (the camels) with the glass vessels (women)" (Sahih al-Bukhari, Hadith Number: 6161). In reference to the relationship between husband and wife, Abu Hurairah, (d. 681/) stated that "he heard Prophet (PBUH) saying, a believer should bear no malice to his wife, if he dislikes one of her habits, he likes another of them" (An-Nawawi, 1999, p. 269). In his farewell pilgrimage sermon, he further asserted the importance of kind treatment of women, equating the violation of women's marital rights to a breach of God's covenant (SULAIMAN, 2015). Additionally, he discouraged women from marrying men who are known for their harshness, as evidenced in the story of Fatimah bint Qays narrated that

“She said: When my period of ‘iddah<sup>3</sup> was over, I mentioned to him that Mu'awiya b. Abu Sufyan and Jahm had sent proposal of marriage to me, whereupon Prophet (PBUH) said: As for Abu Jahm, he does not put down his staff from his shoulder, and as for Mu'awiya, he is a poor man having no property; marry Usama b. Zaid. I objected to him, but he again said: Marry Usama; so I married him. Allah blessed there in and I was envied (by others)” (Sahih Muslim, Hadith Number: 3512). Ibn Hajar, a scholar considered a medieval master of hadith, asserted that the example set by the Prophet (PBUH) is sufficient proof that hitting one's wife is reprehensible (Alkiek, et al., 2017).

A famous Islamic scholar, Badawi (1971) have analyzed that, “It is also true, however, that in many so-called “Islamic” countries, women are not treated according to their God-given rights. But this is not the fault of Islamic ideology but rather the misapplication or sometimes the outright denial of the ideology in these societies. Much of the practices and laws in “Islamic” countries have deviated from or are totally unrelated to the origins of Islam. Instead, many of these practices are based on cultural or traditional customs which have been injected into these societies.” Particularly, Middle Eastern countries have been notoriously bad at protecting women’s rights, this is slowly changing, and Islam can actually be used as justification for creating agencies that protect women’s rights. Whereas, Islam does not tolerate cruelty and injustice toward anyone, whether man, woman, child or even animal.

## Conclusion

In summary, the analysis of this verse (4:34) refutes the persistent belief that God in his divine book has ordered men to beat women because men are superior to them, and consequently women cannot have dominant roles over men in any sphere of activity. Thus, any Muslim who beats his wife violently or causes injury commits a grave sin and should be held accountable because Islam never permits wife beating. Principal objectives of the Shari’ah are to protect life and foster marital harmony, not condone violence. It recommended that, before dealing with the issue of wife-battering in Islamic perspective, one should keep in mind that the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) is the authentic source of interpretation. If someone would only rely on the wording and apparent meaning, and use the lenses of a grammarian or made its translation linguistically only without consulting the existing patriarchal values of that specific time of revelation and particularly ignoring the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH), how it is possible to comprehend the real objectives and intent of a message of the Holy verses and undoubtedly there is a greater possibility to misunderstand it, as happened in the case of verse (4:34).

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<sup>3</sup> In Islam, ‘iddah or ‘iddat is an Arabic term which means period of waiting must observe after the death of her husband or after a divorce, during which she may not marry another man. The length of ‘iddah varies according to a number of circumstances. Generally, the ‘iddah of a woman divorced by her husband is three lunar months, but if the marriage was not consummated there is no ‘iddah.

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