

THE NORMS OF PREFERENCE IN ISLAM AND ITS WISDOM

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Abstract

This research of the norms of preference in the Islam, and their underlying wisdom, is a significant area of scholarly inquiry that intertwines with various disciplines, including theology, jurisprudence, ethics, and linguistics. These norms not only guide personal and communal conduct but also reflect the profound philosophical and moral framework underpinning Islamic teachings. God Almighty created the universe based on well-established norms: general ones for the universe and specific ones for mankind. This paper deals with a norm that is frequently repeated: The norm of preference between genders. The Islamic guidance is not to prefer one over the other, as it affirms the one origin of humanity based on which distinctions amongst people are on a different basis. The ultimate truth is that, it is worldly fortunes meant for divine purposes without which life cannot go on, that is, for integration in societies to be achieved. This research addresses the contentious issue of gender preferences in Islam, particularly in the context of familial roles and inheritance laws. Also, aims to dismantle misconceptions about the wisdom of preference. It is for harnessing and affliction and not meant to degrade the less preferred, as both genders have their virtue in complementing society. To realize the concept of preference generally and between genders specifically. Thus, this work discusses the norm of preference and provides a nuanced interpretation, suggesting that these preferences are contextually bound and aimed at protecting familial structures and social stability.

Keywords: Norm, Preference, Wisdom.

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of preference (At-Tafadhul) in Islam is pivotal for understanding the divine wisdom and guidance imparted through Islamic scripture. Preferences in the Qur'an encompass various aspects, including moral choices, religious obligations, and societal norms. This research explores these norms and delves into the underlying wisdom that shapes Islamic ethical and legal frameworks. Recent works has significantly contributed to this field, providing nuanced interpretations and analyses of Qur'anic verses concerning preference. Islamic preference norms are deeply rooted in the Holy Quran and Sunnah, which provide a comprehensive guide for Muslims to prioritize actions, intentions, and choices that align with divine will. These norms are not arbitrary but are constructed upon the principles of justice, mercy, and the public goodness.

They govern both personal conduct and communal obligations, emphasizing the balance between individual needs and collective welfare. The wisdom of these preferences lies in their ability to cultivate a harmonious and equitable society. By adhering to these guidelines, Muslims are

encouraged to pursue actions that foster social justice, economic equity, and spiritual growth. The normative framework in Islam integrates moral imperatives with practical guidelines, ensuring that preferences are aligned with gender considerations and lead to beneficial outcomes. Therefore, Understanding the norms of preference in Islam is crucial for both scholars and practitioners of Islam. It provides insights into the divine rationale behind specific guidance and its relevance to contemporary social and legal issues.

Moreso, in recent years, scholars have produced extensive research on the themes of preference and divine wisdom in the Qur'an. Ahmad and Rahman's (2020) work on the ethical dimensions of Qur'anic preferences highlights how these norms influence Muslim behavior and decision-making processes. They argue that the Qur'anic guidance on preference is not merely prescriptive but deeply intertwined with the holistic moral and spiritual development of individuals and communities.

Thus, the problem of this research relies on understanding the norms of preference as delineated in the Holy Qur'an as a significant aspect of Islamic jurisprudence and ethics. However, despite its importance, there is a paucity of comprehensive studies that systematically analyse these norms and elucidate their underlying wisdom. This research seeks to address this gap by examining the norms of preference in the Holy Qur'an and exploring their implications for contemporary social discourse. As this research, aims to bridge the gap between traditional interpretations and modern applications, offering valuable contributions to the fields of Islamic social law, and theology.

Objectives

Our paper in general, aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the norms of preference in Islam, supported by recent academic research, to highlight their enduring relevance and wisdom in guiding social issues and women right in Islam. Below are other sub-objectives:

1. To systematically identify the norms of preference as presented in the Holy Qur'an and categorize them based on context and application.
2. To explore the wisdom behind preferences, by understanding and underlying such wisdoms and divine rationale behind these preferences.
3. To analyse the classical and contemporary Tafsir literature to understand the interpretations of the verses related to the norms of preference and its wisdom.
4. To contribute to the scholarly discourse on Qur'anic ethics and jurisprudence.
5. To investigate how these norms influence Muslim ethical, social, and spiritual behavior.
6. To evaluate the relevance and application of these norms in contemporary society.
7. To investigate the implications of these norms for contemporary ethical dilemmas and societal challenges.

Theoretical Framework

The norms of preference in the Qur'an are rooted in the broader Islamic ethical system, which emphasizes justice, benevolence (al-ihsan), and the pursuit of good. These norms are not arbitrary but are designed to foster a balanced and harmonious society. They are derived from Qur'anic verses and the Hadith, and the interpretations of Islamic scholars. The norms of preference are intended to guide Muslims in making ethical and practical decisions that align with Islamic teachings and contribute to individual and societal well-being.

Moreso, as highlighted above, the sources of Norms of Preference and its wisdom are four:

1. The Holy Qur'an, as the primary source of Islamic law and ethics, providing broad principles and specific guidelines for preferred actions.
2. The Sunnah, which is the practices, sayings, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad, (May Allah be pleased with him) offering detailed examples of preferred behaviours.
3. The Ijtihad, Scholarly interpretation and reasoning to derive norms of preference in the context of contemporary issues not explicitly addressed in the Quran and Sunnah.
4. The Ijma or Consensus, which refers to the collective agreement of Islamic scholars on certain issues, providing additional authority to the norms of preference.

Whereas, among the wisdom behind the Norms of preference, are:

1. **Spiritual Development:** this includes proximity to God, as following preferred actions enhances spiritual growth and brings individuals closer to God (Allah). Also, it will lead individuals to the purification of the Soul, because preferred actions help in the purification of the soul from sins and negative traits.
2. **Social Harmony:** this will help in promoting justice and equity ensures fair treatment and harmony within the society regardless of gender differences. As the same time, there will be a continuous emphasizing of compassion and mercy, fostering mutual respect and support among individuals.
3. **Personal Well-being:** the norms encourage a balanced approach to life, prioritizing physical, social, mental, and spiritual well-being. Whereas, adherence to preferred actions leads to inner peace and contentment.

In a nutshell, the norms of preference in Islam serve as a comprehensive ethical, social and legal framework that guides Muslims in prioritizing their actions and behaviours. These norms are derived from foundational Islamic texts and principles, aiming to enhance spiritual development, social harmony, and personal well-being. By adhering to these norms, Muslims can achieve a balanced and fulfilling life while contributing to the overall betterment of society.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The norms of preference in the Holy Qur'an encapsulate a rich and nuanced ethical framework designed to guide human behavior towards justice, compassion, and balance. Scholarly contributions recently have illuminated various aspects of these norms, demonstrating their applicability and wisdom in contemporary contexts. By adhering to these divine preferences, individuals and societies can achieve moral integrity and harmonious coexistence.

Added to the above, these norms are characterized by their emphasis on balance and moderation. This principle ensures that no single individual, value or action is elevated at the expense of others, promoting a holistic and integrated approach to gender equality. For instance, the preference for justice must be tempered with mercy, reflecting the Qur'anic vision of a balanced and compassionate society. These days, scholars have produced extensive research on the themes of preference and divine wisdom in the Qur'an. Ahmad and Rahman's (2020) work on the ethical dimensions of Qur'anic preferences highlights how these norms influence Muslim behavior and decision-making processes. They argue that the Qur'anic guidance on preference is not merely prescriptive but deeply intertwined with the holistic moral and spiritual development of individuals and communities.

Ahmed (2019) examines the Qur'anic emphasis on social justice and its implications for economic policies. The study argues that the Qur'an's norms of preference advocate for equitable distribution of resources and the eradication of poverty. Moreso, the Qur'an's emphasis on social justice is often reflected in its norms of preference. According to Esposito and Voll (2020), the Qur'an prioritizes the welfare of vulnerable groups, including orphans, the poor, and women, as part of its broader commitment to equity and social justice. This preference is seen in verses that advocate for the fair treatment of women and the equitable distribution of wealth, aligning with contemporary human rights principles. Furthermore, in this paper there is a comprehensive discussion and analysis on gender equality issues in our contemporary world, indicating that, gender preferences in the Qur'an have been a focal point of recent scholarship. For example; Barlas (2019) argues that while some Qur'anic verses appear to prefer men over women, a holistic reading reveals an overarching aim to protect and empower women within a patriarchal society. This perspective is supported by Wadud (2018), who interprets gender-specific preferences as contextually driven, intended to elevate women's status in a manner consistent with broader Qur'anic principles of justice and equality.

Moreso, a study by Al-Attas (2019) focuses on the legal implications of Qur'anic preferences, examining how they shape Shariah law and its application in contemporary Muslim societies. Al-Attas asserts that understanding the Qur'anic basis for legal preferences can enhance the adaptability and relevance of Islamic law in the modern world. Moreover, Al-Shehri (2021) investigates the linguistic and rhetorical aspects of preference in the Qur'an. His research uncovers the intricate ways in which language is used to convey divine preference, emphasizing the importance of context and audience in interpreting these verses. This approach provides deeper insights into the interpretive strategies employed by classical and contemporary exegetes. In addition to these specific studies, broader thematic works like those by Esack (2020) and Mir (2018) provide comprehensive overviews of Qur'anic themes, including preference. Their analyses offer a holistic understanding of how preference operates within the larger framework of Qur'anic teachings and its implications for Muslim thought and practice.

However, as this research mentioned above, recent studies have illuminated various facets of this topic. For instance, a comprehensive analysis by Ali (2021) examines the concept of ethical preferences in the Qur'an, highlighting how these norms prioritize social justice and moral integrity. Ali argues that the Qur'anic framework of preference is intrinsically linked to its broader ethical system, which aims to cultivate a balanced and harmonious society. Another significant contribution is the work by Elmasry (2022), who focuses on the legal implications of preference norms in Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh). Elmasry's research emphasizes the dynamic interpretation of these norms by classical and contemporary scholars, illustrating how they adapt to changing social contexts while maintaining fidelity to the Qur'anic principles.

Additionally, a linguistic approach by Rahman (2020) provides insights into the rhetorical strategies employed in the Qur'an to convey norms of preference. Rahman's study underscores the role of language in shaping ethical and moral perceptions among believers, suggesting that the eloquence and precision of Qur'anic discourse play a crucial role in the internalization of these norms. The intersection of these norms with modern social issues is also a growing area of interest. For instance, Khan (2023) explores how Qur'anic preference norms can inform contemporary debates on gender equity and social justice. Khan argues that a nuanced understanding of these norms can contribute to more inclusive and equitable interpretations of Islamic teachings in the modern world.

Literature reviews by different scholars further consolidate the understanding of this topic. For example, a review by Ahmed and Hussain (2021) synthesizes various interpretations and applications of Qur'anic preference norms across different Islamic traditions. Their work highlights both the

diversity and coherence in how these norms are understood and practiced, pointing to a rich tradition of interpretative flexibility grounded in the Qur'an itself.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a qualitative and descriptive analytical research methods approach, drawing on classical tafsir (exegesis) and contemporary scholarly works. Primary sources will include the Qur'an and Hadith, while secondary sources will consist of academic articles, books, and dissertations on Islamic studies. This methodological framework will allow for a comprehensive and contextual analysis of the norms of preference in the Qur'an. This structured approach aims to provide a detailed and scholarly exploration of the norms of preference in the Qur'an, offering readers a comprehensive understanding of this critical aspect of Islamic scripture. While, focusing on textual analysis and interpretive methods. The research involves a comprehensive review of Qur'anic verses that discuss norms of preference, supported by those classical and contemporary exegesis (tafsir).

Data Collection:

Conduct a thorough review of recent studies, articles, and researches discussed the norms of preference in the Holy Qur'an and related topics such as Islamic ethics, social issues, jurisprudence, and morality. Primary sources are the Holy Qur'an, the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH) and authoritative tafsir literature such as works by Ibn Kathir, Al-Qurtubi, and Al-Tabari etc. While, books, recent academic articles, and theses that address Qur'anic exegesis and the norms of preference in Islamic theology are used as the secondary sources.

Data Analysis:

A detailed examination of relevant Qur'anic verses and classical tafsir to identify recurring themes and patterns, analysing discussing verses of preference and explore their linguistic, historical, and contextual dimensions. As thematic coding is adopted in categorizing the identified themes into broader categories such as moral preferences, social preferences, and spiritual preferences. In addition to the comparative analysis by comparing classical interpretations with contemporary scholarly works to highlight developments and continuities in understanding these norms.

Chapter One: Allah's General Universal Preference Norms in His Vast Creations - and Mankind

The linguistic meaning of Sunnah is: The followed manner; and Allah's Sunnah/ norm is hence: "The way in which God treats human beings based on their behavior, actions and their attitude towards the law of God and His prophets, and the consequences of that in this world and the hereafter", and it is the general law that governs humans (Zaydān, 'Abd al-Karīm 1993; 13).

It is also called the **divine Sunnah/norm**: the divine system that governs the behavior of mankind in discipline and steadiness, and there are those who prefer the expression of **Allah's norms** pertaining norms related to humans, where the meaning of education and upbringing may be inferred (Ramaḍān, Khamīs Zakī n.d: 6). If we consider the general concept of divine norms, it goes beyond mankind to Allah's preset norms for the universe, His management of its bodies, orbits and galaxies. (It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They all float, each in an orbit) [Yāsīn: 40].

The Linguistic meaning of preference is the opposite of imperfection. Virtue (preference) is the highest grade, e.g., He is better in the ancestry, means has more (Root of preference: al-Fīrūzābādī 2005), and so and so has done a favor for his people: that is, claims to be more virtuous, and the favoured upon or less virtuous is the defeated (al-Zamakhsharī 2003: 2/204). Additionally, the notion of *يتفاضل تفاضل* portrays the individual as *متفاضل* symbolizing excellence, while individuals

engage in a competition for superiority. Abu Bakr and Umar set an example in their competition for excellence in good deeds.

The norm of preference in the universe: There is preference and discrimination in everything among humans and others; this will be explained throughout the paper, starting from places, time, preference between angels, and grades of paradise.

The virtue of the place: Scriptures and narrations had details pertaining to the preference for certain places over others. If Allah has preferred the three **cities** (Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem) and their three mosques (the Grand Mosque, the Prophet's Mosque, and the Al-Aqsa Mosque), blessed them, and made it one of the greatest scenes to worship Him as the only creator, other places maintain a general virtue, unless inflicted with a specific trait that makes it otherwise, temporarily, as indicated in the Prophet's saying (PBUH): "The Earth has been made for me a place of worship and purification. So, whenever it is time for prayer to any person from my Ummah, let them pray." (al-Bukhārī 2002: 429, Muslim 2006: 851). Allah's selection of a creature does not mean that God Almighty is pleased with that creature and condemns others. The Messenger of God (PBUH), mentioned the preferred places by saying: "Do not set out on a journey except to three mosques: the Sacred Mosque, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and this mosque of mine" (al-Bukhārī 2002: 1189, Muslim 2006: 1397).

Among the virtues of Mecca Al-Mukarramah, Almighty Allah chose it to be the first house established for people on earth, saying: "Indeed, the first house established for people belonged to the one in Mecca. Blessed and a guidance for the worlds" [Āl 'Imrān: 96]. d: 1]. When the prophet (PBUH) migrated to Madina, he looked back at the Grand Mosque and said: "Had your people not sent me away, I would have never left" (al-Tirmidhī 1996: 3629).

Allah swore by Mecca in the first verse of Chapter al-Balad, and it has special legal rulings such as its sanctity: ([Say, O Muhammad], I have only been commanded to worship the Lord of this city, who made it sacred and to whom [belongs] all things. And I am commanded to be of the Muslims [those who submit to Allah]) [al -Naml: 91]. This is in addition to implying a greater punishment for wrong doers living within it, and prohibiting Dajjal from entering it, apart from obliging Ihram before entering it and before parting with its Mawaqeeet. Not to forget the multiplied rewards to a hundred thousand at the grand mosque, and the coming of all prophets and messengers, and the righteous servants of Allah, from the inhabitant of the heavens and earth to Mecca, as well as the sacred places within the grand Mosque: The Holy Ka'abah, the Black Stone, the Zamzam spring, the room of Ismail, and the mountains of al- Safa and al- Marwah. The sanctity of al- Madinah and Jerusalem has similar provisions to that¹.

The virtue of time: Just as the Almighty Allah preferred some places over others, He preferred some times over others, so He preferred the month of Ramadan over the rest of the months of the year. Almighty preferred the last ten nights of Ramadan over the rest of the nights of the year and made (Laylatul -Qadr) the best of it ever; He says: (The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months) [al-Qadar: 3], also preferred the month of Hajj, which is one of the sacred months, and preferred the first ten days of Dhul-Hijjah over the rest of the year: (And [by] ten nights) [al-Fajr: 2], and the best of all is the day of Arafat, in which the Prophet (PBUH) said about supplication: "The best supplication is on the day of 'Arafah". If the virtue of place and time meet, the blessings are hoped to be multiplied, as well as if the virtue of two times meets, such as if the day of 'Arafah falls on Friday, for example, which the Prophet (PBUH) described as "the best day on which the sun rose" (al-Bukhārī 2002: 907).

Virtue among the angels: and the best of them is Gabriel, the faithful spirit who is praised by the Lord of the worlds, where the Almighty says: ([That] indeed, the Qur'an is a word [conveyed by] a noble messenger. [Who is] possessed of power and with the Owner of the Throne, secure [in position], Obeyed there [in the heavens] and trustworthy). [Al- takwir: 19-21]. Allah describes him with seven

attributes; Gabriel is the best of the three angels who are the best angels ever, namely Michael and Israfil. The Prophet used to mention them at the beginning of his supplication when he awakens at night, where he says: "O Allah, Lord of Gabriel, Mikael and Israfil, the Creator of the heavens and earth..." (Muslim 2006: 770). These three angels are mentioned for their perfection, their selection, and their closeness to Allah (Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawzīyah: 1998: 1/43). They are among the greatest angels who are the holders of the throne, entrusted with heaven and hell, and entrusted to safeguard humans and the recording of their deeds. As for the comparison between the three archangels, scholars have different opinions on that (al-Shāyī' 1427 AH: 373-374).

Heavens are levels or grades that differ greatly, and those favoured by Allah in those levels are placed according to their faith and piety. The people of paradise vary in their bliss in heaven; it is not the same for those living in al Firdaus (the highest level in Paradise) as for others in lesser grades of heaven. Allah has mentioned a description of the heavens of those who feared His place. Allah says: (But for he who has feared the position of his Lord are two gardens) [al-Raḥmān: 46], then He says: (And below them both [in excellence] are two [other] gardens) [(al-Raḥmān: 62]. It is clear that the two heavens differed from each other according to the deeds, as well as the preference for the hereafter over the world, as Almighty says: (Look how we have favoured [in provision] some of them over others. But the Hereafter is greater in degrees [of difference] and greater in distinction) [al-Isrā': 21].

Additionally, here is an example of general preference in the universe i.e. the preference of human over all creatures, and for this, the Almighty honours them, as He says: "And We have certainly honoured the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" [al-Isrā': 70]. This human preference Almighty has granted mankind for being endowed with attributes not granted to other creatures, and for them to perform their mission as vicegerents and bearing their entrusted duties.

Moreover, there is a preference for what is eaten from the earth, in his saying: (And within the land are neighbouring plots and gardens of grapevines and crops and palm trees, [Is growing] several from a root or otherwise, watered with one water; but we make some of them exceed others in [quality of] fruit. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reason) [al-Ra'd: 4].

Chapter Two: Allah's General Norm of Preference amongst Mankind:

Almighty Allah had created all people in the best of stature, then made them different and variants in many of their abilities, conditions, and affairs, as is required by the necessity of their social life, so He made them into males and females, also made each of them with his own attitude, temperament, inclinations, and efficiency, as well as making them different in races, ethnicities, lineages, moral and material conditions, abilities and faculties. Allah says: (... It is we who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate) [al-Zukhruf: 32]. Thus, without this disparity, social and cultural life would not have been based on the exchange of ideas, knowledge, experiences, benefits and interests between individuals and groups...

Although, these differences do not mean the superiority of some people over others by birth and instinct, or by privilege in the ranks of status and honour according to genealogy, money and authority. The rich are not better than the poor with their wealth, nor the one with the most honourable lineage than the one with a humble one, nor the owner of power and authority is superior over others with his power and authority, nor the master owner or most honourable is better than who he owned (slave).

Therefore, whatsoever people may be proud of among each other and boast about and practice various forms of distinction and injustice in treatment, all fall apart in the scale of Islam, based on the principle of equality among the sons of Adam, so that nothing is left between them to distinguish them from one another other than piety, in His explicit declaration: (O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted) [al-Hujurāt: 13]. Man has already been honoured in his perfect creation, in having the angels prostrate (bow down) for him, in being blessed with reason and instinct, and harnessing the whole universe for him, and in providing him with divine revelations for his guidance.

In the above verse, there is a clear indication of the correct criterion for preference, which is based on divine justice between His creation, the criterion of piety in which all creations are equal, regardless of their differences in gender, color, homeland, social status or any other thing. Some of them are part of an individual's choices with the guidance of Allah. Allah does not accept that anyone may boast in pride and feel superior over others by their faculties. The standard set by Islam can be lived up to by all and does not divide people into classes above each other, which is a criterion that alleviates mankind's moral standards and integrity.

Accordingly, the concept of preference is **involuntary**: as a person's will is not part of it, as one may be born at a place and time chosen by Allah, does not choose his parents and social status, his gender and form, his faculties, nor does he choose his wealth or poverty, and so on. The other part of the norm of preference encompasses **will**, as people may distinguish themselves from others by their ethics by using their will. Every person can choose to be superior even if obstacles were removed from their path, and here comes the virtue of Almighty Allah, and the virtue of this religion, so that this may be the real core of preference, be it in religious or worldly matters.

As for preference where mankind has no choice: it is a divine norm whose greatest purpose is an affliction, the Almighty says: (And we test you with evil and with good as trial, and to us you will be returned) [al-Anbiyā': 35] and (And We have made some of you [people] as trial for others - will you have patience? And ever is your Lord, seeing) [(al-Furqān: 20]. In order to achieve another norm, the norm of harness, the boss and the subordinate are both devoted to each other and so are the rich and poor, the healthy and sick. This is for societies to rise and for the earth to be populated. Al-Qurtubi mentions this in his interpretation of the Almighty's saying: (And thus we have tried some of them through others that the disbelievers might say, "Is it these whom Allah has favoured among us?" Is not Allah most knowing of those who are grateful?) [al-An'ām: 53]. He says: "This means that each one is trailed by his companion, the rich are tested by the poor, he must console him and not mock him, and the poor tested by the rich and must not envy him nor take from him other than what he gives. Each must put up with the other. Al-Dahhak explains the meaning of "Will you have patience?" i.e.: "on the Truth." Sedition is when the afflicted envies the healthy, and the healthy despises the afflicted, and patience is when both control themselves, from pride and boredom" (al-Qurtubī 2006: 15/390), Shaykh al- Shinqīṭī said in Allah's saying: "And We have made some of you [people] as trial for others" i.e.: Almighty "made some people a test for one another" (al-Shinqīṭī 2005: 1025).

Included in this part of Preference in the Quran are additional circumstances and conditions, or honor, that distinguish people from each other where **Prophets (peace be upon them) are preferred**, which is a selection by God Almighty, for qualities that He knows in them. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was dignified with prophecy, a trail for the honorable people of Mecca at that time. The Qur'an records this in Allah's saying: (And they said, "Why was this Qur'an not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?") [al-Zukhruf: 31]. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an instructed us not to discriminate between prophets and messengers, for reasons far from uniqueness and gender, as this preference comes with its reasons in one verse, the Almighty says: (Those messengers - some of them we caused

to exceed others. Among them were those to whom Allah spoke, and He raised some of them in degree. And We gave Jesus, the Son of Mary, clear proofs, and We supported him with the Holy Spirit...) [(al-Baqarah: 253]. Their preferences relate to the variant circumstances they were distinguished by without discriminating any of them in comparison to others, as Allah says: (We make no distinction between any of His messengers) [al-Baqarah: 285]. Al-Qurtubi says: "The prohibition of preference is in terms of prophecy, which is one trait that none can be preferred over the other by. However, preference is in the different conditions and variant miracles. Prophecy in itself cannot be less distinguished, but there are additional events so that some of them are Olo Al-Azm or messengers of determination, some others were taken by Allah as companions, and some spoke to Him and were raised to higher ranks" (al-Qurṭubī 2006: 3/260)²

One of the most prominent examples of preference falls within the will of mankind and their choices. It is the preference of the Mujahideen over those who chose to stay behind. This preference was linked to their provisions of their lives and wealth. The Almighty says: (Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] - other than the disabled - and the mujahideen, [who strive and fight] in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives. Allah has preferred the mujahideen through their wealth and their lives over those who remain [behind], by degrees. To both Allah has promised the best [reward]. But Allah has preferred the mujahideen over those who remain [behind] with a great reward) [al-Nisā': 95].

Areas of Preference and their Rules:

The Holy Qur'an has proven this disparity, whether in livelihood, knowledge, prestige, and others. Allah says: (And Allah has favoured some of you over others in provision. But those who were favoured would not hand over their provision to those whom their right hands possess so they would be equal to them therein. Then is it the Favor of Allah they reject?) [al-Naḥl: 71], and His saying: (Allah extends provision for whom He wills and restricts [it]. And they rejoice in the worldly life, while the worldly life is not, compared to the Hereafter, except [brief] enjoyment) [al-Ra'd: 26].

Disparity in **livelihood** is a common norm that exists in all peoples and nations, and even the socialist regimes failed to abolish it. Achieving equality in this issue is not possible since equality between unequal people is not possible. People are not equal in intelligence, strength, and talents. Equality of opportunity remains, however, that everyone receives the same opportunity in education, treatment, and the minimum standard of living. The abolition of inequality is injustice in itself as it contradicts nature, and Islamic law or Sharia rectifies the situation, and provide for the poor from the wealth of the rich, and rectifies the situation, provides for the poor from the wealth of the rich. It considers this disparity a sedition and a test.

And preference in **the blessing of children**, as the Almighty says: (To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He creates what he wills. He gives to whom He wills female [children], and He gives to whom He wills males. Or He makes them [both] males and females, and He renders whom He wills barren. Indeed, He is Knowing and Competent) [(al-Shūrā: 49-50]. There is a preference in **health** and lack thereof, and a disparity in **knowledge**, whether in terms of mental abilities or acquired knowledge, and everyone is a facilitator for what was created for them, and the disparity in **Prestige and position**, the leader should be harnessed to serve those he is in charge of taking care of, and the cared for citizens should be devoted to other work, and so on.

Accordingly, what was an involuntary differentiation - but a destiny from Allah - we do not have to object it, and bothering about it is a waste of time and effort, so it is useless, and what was differentiation from what falls within the choice and competition in it, person must strive in this area, and we have in the Qur'an the clear statement that the Almighty has said: (And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives) [al-Najm: 39], and He confirmed it by saying: (To each

[category] We extend - to these and to those - from the gift of your Lord. And never has the gift of your Lord been restricted.) [al-Isrā': 20], and in the field of advancement and relapse, Almighty says: (He has succeeded who purifies it. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]) [al-Shams: 9-10].

As for the **wisdom** of this preference, first of all, it is a form of affliction for the continuance of the norm of harnessing among human beings. It is for the establishment of societies and civilizations that can only be based on, Almighty says: (It is We who have apportioned among them their livelihood in the life of this world and have raised some of them above others in degrees [of rank] that they may make use of one another for service. But the mercy of your Lord is better than whatever they accumulate) [al-Zukhruf: 32], "This disparity is necessary for the diversity of roles required for the caliphate on earth, and if all people were the same, life would not be possible in this way, and there would be too many tasks that have no equivalent of competencies, and no one to do it" (Sayyid, Qutb 2003: 5/3187).

Chapter Three: The concept of Preference between genders and its wisdom:

The misconception of preference between male and female is based on misunderstanding religious texts. It was utilized by those who want to obliterate Islam as a tool for distortion. The creation of human beings, like other creatures, is based on the principle of partnership, which is the basis of life. Each has his role and virtue in performing what was created for him, as Allah created them (male and female) from one soul, partners, and equal in many fundamental assets, which we summarized as follows:

First: Equality in humanity: The Almighty says: (O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women...) [Al-Nisā': 1] There are hadiths which also confirms the same meaning, most notably the saying of the prophet (PBUH) "Women are the sisters of men" (al-Imām Aḥmad 1413: Pg 5869) & (Al-Tirmidhī 1996: 105).

Second: Equality in obligations: In religious texts, women are addressed to all legal obligations, which indicates their eligibility, directed to both genders. Shaykh Mahmud Shaltout says: "Perhaps you take the pledge of allegiance of the Prophet (PBUH) to women as an allegiance independent of men because Islam considers them to be responsible for themselves and independent of the responsibility of men" (Maḥmūd, Shaltūt N.D: 3). There is no difference between moral, social, political, scholarly and other responsibilities, except in some exceptions in the presence of special provisions for each gender in line with their instinct and role in life to achieve integration that requires such particularities.

Third: Equality in reward: the preceding entails the similar penalties according to their deeds, Allah says: (And their Lord responded to them, "Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another) [Āl 'imrān: 195].

The three aforementioned principles entail many practical principles determined by the Holy Qur'an, the most prominent of which are:

- 1- By virtue of her humanity, women are honoured and preferred over the rest of creation, as the Almighty says: "And we have certainly honoured the children of Adam" [al-Isrā': 70]; thus, honouring humanity is (for piety) and not for gender.
- 2- She is also demanded to enjoin what is right, making progress and bearing vicegerency, the Almighty said: (The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, establish prayer, give Zakāh, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Those - Allah will have mercy upon them. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise) [al-Tawbah: 71].

3- Women have a full potential in all fields, such as religiosity, the economic right to own property, disposal, and inheritance, and social potential, such as the right to choose her own husband, and the prohibition of forcing her to marry against her wish. She has the potential to participate in politics, in pledging allegiance, election, and others, as all of this is detailed in the books of jurisprudence based on the Quran and Sunnah.

The Actual Concept of Preference and its Wisdom:

The wisdom of Preference between genders is similar to that general one amongst human beings. Allah distinguished men and women and varied their roles, not to diminish the status of women or elevate men but so that human life may be established in an organized fashion and to achieve the purpose of its existence. This is because Islam is the religion of instinct and because instinct has made each of them distinct characteristics for certain functions for human life and their vicegerency on earth. It is with this diversity between the genders and diversity in traits and functions that duties, shares, and positions are formed. The Almighty Allah says: (And thus We have tried some of them through others that the disbelievers might say, "Is it these whom Allah has favoured among us?" Is not Allah most knowing of those who are grateful?) [al-An'ām: 53]. The verse shows the ugliness of objecting to Allah's command and the need to surrender to His judgment and not interfere with His will. "Allah forbids the believers from envy and from desiring what He has preferred for some people of prestige and wealth. This preference is Allah's choice, by His wisdom and regulation and through His knowledge of the conditions of the servants and what suits each from them in extending their livelihood or otherwise..." (al-Zuhaylī, Wahbah 2009: 5/45).

In addition, the Qur'an forbids desiring Allah's preference for one of the genders over the other, saying: "And do not wish for that by which Allah has made some of you exceed others. For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. And ask Allah of his bounty. Indeed, Allah is ever, of all things, knowing" [al-Nisā': 32]. This section revolves around this verse, because there are those who think that it refers to the superiority of men over women, and the verse puts an end to the subject of desiring what is for others to forbid it, and that each gender be concerned about He preferred for them.

The reason for the revelation of this verse: The books on reasons for verses' revelations and interpretation of Qur'an mention narrations where women ask to have what they see as favourable for men. These narrations revolve around Um Salamah's question to the Prophet (PBUH) narrated by Mujahid, he said: "Um Salamah said: O Messenger of Allah: men invade, and we do not, but we have half of the inheritance! Then, the verse was revealed," and Mujahid interpreted it, by saying: "women say: 'we wish we were men, to invade and earn what similarly like men". Qatadah and As-Siddi say, when the Almighty Allah revealed: (... for the male, what is equal to the share of two females.) [al-Nisa': 11] the men said: Indeed, we wish to be favoured over women by our good deeds in the Hereafter, by having double their reward, just as we were favoured over them in inheritance. Then the Almighty revealed: (For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned) [al-Nisa': 32]. (al-Ṭabarānī 1995: 6/663-667).

Chapter Four: The Meaning of Wishful Thinking and the Reasons for its Prohibition

"Wishful thinking: craving a desirable thing, and endophasia with what is and what is not, and after the Almighty forbade some of the actions of the limbs, He forbade wishing what is for others, which is an intrusion to it with the heart out of envy. This is to purify their inner deeds so the inner will be in accordance with the outer or apparent. This prohibition of wishful thinking includes

anything granted by Allah such as intellect and beauty, as there is no benefit in desiring it to those who did not get it” (al-Marāghī 1946: 5/22-23).

Additionally, Al-Shaarawy believes that wishing what is for others desiring the impossible; he says: “Notice how the prohibition came for asking for others’ share, and not for desiring or requesting as He says: (And ask Allah of his bounty), and did not say: And wish from Allah’s bounty); what is the wisdom here? Wishing is requesting what is close to impossible, so Almighty Allah expressed the aspiration of souls to what they do not have through wishing because that is a choice and a decision made by Allah for a reason, by his knowledge and managing the conditions of the servants. Accordingly, what is for others will not be yours. As for requesting from the Almighty, He expressed it by having to ask from Allah to bestow his favors upon His servants.” (al-Sha’rāwī 1991: 4/188).

Furthermore, the author of *Fi Dhilal al-Quran* says in its interpretation: “The verse is general in forbidding desiring for what Allah preferred some believers over others with types of preference... It is better to request from Allah to request His blessing instead of wasting oneself with sorrow in looking at the difference instead of feelings associated with this aspiration of envy and hatred, which may cause mistrust of Allah and mistrust of His justice of distribution. Such consequences are catastrophic, usurping peace of mind, and causing anxiety and negative thinking. On the other hand, going directly to Allah's bounty is the beginning of going to the source of blessing and giving, which is then the habitat of tranquility and hope, and the source of positivity in searching for the means of prosperity” (Sayyid, Quṭb (2003: 5/642). The verse is general, and the specificity of the reason for its revelation does not negate the generality of the prohibition for wishing what’s for others. Therefore, Rashid Rida believes that wishful thinking falls within the circle of will: “A strong-willed person is not such, and Allah is not pleased with believers unless they have strong determinations, as He guides them with this prohibition to the will in their thoughts that speak to them, to distract it from the wandering in what is for others, as they distract their bodies from entering others property without their permission...” (Rashīd Riḍā 1328 AH: 5/59).

Moreso, Muhammad Abdo says on the verse interpretation: “A wonderful brevity which includes many types of preference, including what Allah preferred the gender of men over women, and **what Allah preferred the gender of women over the gender of men**, in that specificity is a preference, i.e. an additional honor in its owner over others” (Rashīd Riḍā 1328 AH: 5/59). And the verse guarantees the rights of women, Allah says” (... and for women is a share of what they have earned). Al-Shaarawy said: “Therefore, it is not to be said that, a man is better than a woman, each of them has an acquired field, and the successful of them is successful in their inner field”, here he wants to say that, each of them is virtuous and favored upon by another thing (al-Sha’rāwī 1991: 4/188).

The reason for wishful thinking in the past and the present: “Some people have abused the verse of wishful thinking and its likes in detracting of women, making some women wish if they were men, and the hatred of having baby girls for some, even though the verse has reassurance for women, (... and for women is a share of what they have earned), that is, each of the genders has a share of what he\she has gained in the bliss of the world whether in abundance or little, and they should be satisfied with what Allah has given for each. It was said: (... For men is a share) luckiness (of what they have earned), because of what they have done in jihad etc., (... and for women is a share of what they have earned) from obeying their husbands and for guarding their chastity” (al-Zuhaylī: 5/42). Ibn Ashour says: “At our contemporary times, this kind of desire has become a trial for Muslims ethnicities, who has become widespread in seeking of equality in everything while suffering fatigue for which they did not get any avail... Wishful thinking is seeking of what is difficult for the seeker” (Ibn ‘Āshūr 1984: 5/28-29).

Therefore, there is misunderstanding in some verses, for example, the saying of Almighty Allah: (So is one brought up in ornaments while being during conflict undefined [attributed to Allah]?) [al-Zukhruf: 18]. What is meant here are idols, not baby girls, as quoted by Al-Qurtubi: "It was said: The origin in the ornament is their idols, which they forged of gold and silver and decorated them. It was said by Ibn Zayd and Al-Dhahak. and the meaning is "while it is in (the dispute undefined" on this saying: i.e., silent about the answer. Al- Farraa'a says, as he predicts: Would such be in a state worthy of worship?" (Al-Qurṭubī: 16/72). Dispute: arguing and presenting evidence, and the reality of the situation, in the past and the present, affirms this interpretation: women are no less than men in eloquence and fluency in speech, whether it is in poetry or prose.

The Almighty says: (And the male is not like the female) in Mary's story, (But when she delivered her, she said, "My Lord, I have delivered a female." And Allah was most knowing of what she delivered, "And the male is not like the female) [Āl 'imrān: 36]. According to most commentators of the Qur'an: it is not from the words of Allah, but from the words of Mary, so it did not come to determine the real preference, and the mother of Mary did not mean to detract from the female, but wanted to state that a female is not fit for what she wanted, like the male" (al-Marāghī 1946: 3/140, al- Shawkānī 2007: 3/215).

Moreover, Allah's sayings: (But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]) [al-Baqarah: 228] which is an appendix to the Almighty's saying: (And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise). Scholars have different opinions on this verse, as Ibn Abbas believes that the degree is a reference to exhorting men to good companionship and being generous to women in money and morals. Ibn 'Atiyyah said: "It is a good and skillful saying, which was suggested by al-Qurṭubī" (Sayyid, Quṭb 2003: 1/246).

Moreso, from **what is inferred** from the verse of (Trusteeship) in the Almighty's saying: (Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth) [al-Nisā': 34], it is a mandate to protect and spend on women, so, it is not an honor that deserves preference, so we see them counting the virtues of men such as i'tikaaf, attending funerals, running during the walk between Safa and Marwa, taking blood money and so on. If we reflect on that, we do not find what they mentioned as a favor, as "If the woman were less than the man or incompetent, she would be exempted from the religious obligations or some, because an incompetent person need not fulfill any religious obligation. In other words, the verse indicates that the relationship between man and woman is complementary, and each of them has a specific function they were created for and therefore, their conditions are distinguished, and their traits differ in this world only while maintaining complete equality between them in the hereafter" (al-'Azm, 'Ābidah 1996: 56).

Therefore, trusteeship is not for every man over a woman, but rather the regulation of the family relationship between a husband and his wife. While for the father or brother, it is called guardianship, which differs from Trusteeship, as reviewed in its contents from jurisprudence books. (al-'Azm, 'Ābidah 1996: 88-89).

Thus, it should be noted that women are honored and preferred by receiving the largest share of respect and obedience, she is more deserving of honor and companionship than the father, as stated in the hadith: A man came to the Messenger of Allah and (PBUH) said: "O Messenger of Allah, who is the most deserving of people for my good companionship? He said: Your mother, he said then who? He said: Your mother, he said: Then who? He said: Your mother, he said: Then who? He said: Your father" (al-Bukhārī 2002: 5971). Thus, obeying one's mother is an atonement

for guilt, or she prevents her disloyal son from entering Paradise. Additionally, Mother's prayers are answered, all of which have well-known evidence (al-'Azm, 'Ābidah 1996: 209-211).

Furthermore, a woman is distinguished as a wife when the Holy Qur'an gives her equal rights to her husband; the Almighty says: (And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable) [al-Baqarah: 228], and the Prophet (PBUH) singled her out by mentioning and recommending her in his sermons. Moreover, women have material gains such as dowry, Allah (SWT) says: (And give the women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously) [al-Nisā': 4], also the right to alimony (Let a man of wealth spend from his wealth, and he whose provision is restricted - let him spend from what Allah has given him. Allah does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it. Allah will bring about, after hardship, ease) [al-Ṭalāq: 7]. She has the right to spend moderately from her husband's money, while he is not entitled to that, and she has the right to enjoy her money alone, the jurisprudential rule says "the alimony of every person in his money except for the wife", and the daughter and sister have the right over her guardian as a father or brother, whether materially or morally.

Additionally, one of the things that only females **enjoy in this life is wearing gold and silk**, without being deprived of it in the Hereafter, while it is forbidden for men in this life.

Therefore, women are **competitors with men** in good deeds in this life and receive their reward in the hereafter, and this is what the religious sources expressed by acquisition, and they compete with men in piety, fear of God, and observing Him in secret and in public. Allah says: (Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted) [al-Hujurat: 13].

So, in this regard, let the competitors compete, as they compete in asking for the bounty of Allah, and it is possible to distinguish and compete with knowledge and advancement in its degrees. Allah says: (Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do) [al-Mujadalah: 11]. As proven in the Qur'an, women enjoy physiognomy as stated in the story of the daughters of Shuaib (peace be upon him), and good resourcefulness in the story of Moses' sister, (peace be upon him) and farsightedness and civility in good governance as in the story of Bilqis with Solomon (peace be upon him).

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Findings of this research, suggest a coherent ethical framework within the Qur'an that prioritizes values which promote spiritual growth, social harmony, and justice. This framework is designed to cultivate an ideal Muslim character and society. The wisdom behind these norms is evident in their capacity to address both individual and societal needs, promoting a balanced and just order. The norms of preference in the Qur'an are multifaceted, reflecting a profound wisdom that seeks to balance individual rights with collective responsibilities. By prioritizing certain ethical, social and moral principles, the Qur'an provides a framework for achieving social harmony and justice. These preferences are not static but are interpreted in light of contemporary challenges, ensuring their relevance across different contexts and eras. Contemporary feminist interpretations of the Qur'an leverage its norms of preference to advocate for gender equality. Scholars like Barlas and Wadud argue that understanding the historical and social context of Qur'anic revelations allows for a reinterpretation that supports women's rights and empowerment.

In essence, Qur'anic teachings and wisdom have guided Muslim lives over centuries. Muslim scholars throughout history have contextualised the Qur'anic message to assist Muslims face the challenges of their times. Since modernity has nurtured a unique cultural, political, religious,

scientific and technologically advanced social construct, the need for Qur'anic guidance is now more pressing than ever. The norms of preference in the Holy Qur'an encompass a complex and multifaceted domain that continues to inspire scholarly investigation. The wisdom embedded in these norms, as revealed through recent research, offers valuable insights into their enduring relevance and applicability in guiding ethical, legal, and social dimensions of Muslim life. Thus, this research explored these norms, by contributing to a deeper understanding of Islamic ethics, jurisprudence and social matters, offering insights for both scholars and practitioners.

In addition, the findings of this research underscore the enduring relevance of the Holy Qur'an as a source of ethical guidance and wisdom. By examining the norms of preference articulated in the Qur'an, this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue on ethics and morality in both Islamic and broader academic contexts. Moreover, by exploring the implications of these norms for contemporary challenges, the research advocates for the application of Qur'anic ethics in addressing pressing global issues and fostering harmonious coexistence among diverse communities. However, further interdisciplinary research and dialogue are warranted to fully appreciate the depth and richness of Qur'anic ethics and its potential contributions to the contemporary ethical discourse. Among some most prominent findings of this research are:

1. The norm of preference is one of the universal divine norms that regulate life and the wisdom behind it to achieve other norms, such as that of harness, which is necessary for a society based on afflictions in the disparity of worldly fortunes, for the thankful and patient to be rewarded. Accordingly, it is not permissible to desire other people's worldly fortunes in general and particularly between the genders, as that involves objecting to Allah's decree. Instead, people should ask Allah for His bounty.
2. The norm of preference does not mean undermining the destitute, as each person has his own virtue Allah bestowed upon them by Allah.
3. A person shouldn't be discriminated against on the basis of racism of gender and color, as such things do not involve will. This is what made the Islamic civilization prevail over others; because the Qur'an views everyone as being of one origin.
4. Allah (SWT) has made both genders preferred in a way that suits their purpose of creation, to achieve social integration, and the transgenderism that some institutions are seeking at the present time is not right, as it contradicts instinct.
5. The Qur'an's emphasis on social justice is often reflected in its norms of preference. According to Esposito and Voll, the Qur'an prioritizes the welfare of vulnerable groups, including orphans, the poor, and women, as part of its broader commitment to equity and social justice.
6. Numerous verses emphasize the preference of spiritual over personality, gender and material pursuits.
7. Verses often stress the importance of collective well-being and social justice.
8. A person has the right of preference to others within his will and capabilities, as everyone is facilitated for their purpose of creation. Thus, preference in this life is a test that does not solicit that in the hereafter, where the real preference is granted.
9. The norms of preference in the Holy Qur'an encapsulate divine wisdom aimed at fostering a just, equitable, and spiritually enriched society.

10. Recent scholarship underscores the continued relevance of these norms, highlighting their adaptability and profound impact on contemporary Islamic thought and practice.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More research in the Qur'anic perspective on gender preferences and how it impacts gender roles and relations in Muslim societies.
2. Future research could expand on this by exploring how these norms of preference are applied in different cultural contexts within the Muslim world.
3. Conducting comprehensive studies to examine feminist interpretations of the Qur'an and how they address norms of preference related to gender.

Foot Notes

- 1) Revise the virtues of Mecca in the...
- 2) Al-Qurtubi says: "I have formed for some the verses that prove the differentiation between the prophets, and the texts that forbid differentiation, such as the Almighty's saying: "... We do not differentiate between any of his messengers) [Al-Baqarah: 285], and the hadiths about the virtue of Muhammad (PBUH) over the rest of the prophets, others that forbid discriminating amongst them. The meaning of prohibition contained in this chapter is the prohibition of releasing the tongues of human beings in it, in order not to involve their opinions and ideas. They discriminate among the prophets of Allah as the People of the Book have done by attributing to some of them what is not appropriate. Such a preference is entrusted to Allah and His Messenger, as He is not asked what He does. In His verses, the Almighty has given each prophet a kind of credit. Therefore, it is not permissible to prefer prophets over each other because their personalities or their own conditions or on moral or moral grounds were different. There is no contradiction between the hadiths; the prohibition of preference is based on the belief that deficiency is not right for some of them, and this is an infidelity a Muslim must walk away from, but the belief of the virtue of all, then their preference in virtue is not wrong from an Islamic perspective, as it is mentioned in the Quran. Almighty says: "Those messengers - some of them we caused to exceed others" (Al-Baqarah: 253).

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