

The Concept of an Ideal Society: A Review of Fazlur Rahman's Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The teachings of Islam are closely related to the concept of community. Islamic history and politics influence community structure and organisation based on Quranic tenets. Due to extremism of some Muslim leaders who are still caught in their own orthodoxy, Muslims have been lagging behind the rest of the world in terms of political, economic and social progress. This study examines the philosophy and ideas of Islamic thinker Fazlur Rahman, a modernist scholar and philosopher of Islam. Known as a prominent liberal reformer of Islam, he devoted himself to educational reform and reviving independent reasoning (ijtihad) among Muslims in order to shape an ideal Muslim society. Fazlur Rahman was a unique scholar in that he attempted to combine Islamic and Western elements without compromising the tenets of the Quran and Sunnah in achieving a modern ideal society. He was a liberal in that he believed the Quran was compatible and relevant for all times and human civilisation.

Keywords: *Ideal Society, Fazlur Rahman, Independent Reasoning, Western Elements, Liberal Reformer*

This article provides a critical appreciation of the educational thoughts of Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988), a major figure in the 20th century Muslim modernist trend, in particular his propagation of an ideal society. By situating his work in educational reforms, the article brings into relief element of his reformist agenda. The link between Fazlur Rahman's philosophy of education and community and his proposal for the Quran's reinterpretation are outlined and assessed in creating an ideal society. In particular, his ideas about the cause of Muslim decline which underpin his "ideal society" theory are investigated and how that could be resolved. The article emphasises the impact of Fazlur Rahman's interpretive approach on educational and reformist thought in the Muslim context. His reformist theory is assessed, bringing out in particular the gap between societal reality and his scholarly and reformist aims.

Renowned Islamic thinker and Islamic modernist, Fazlur Rahman, attempted to reconcile Islamic faith with modern Western values, such as rationalism, self-criticism, unbiased search for truth, freedom of conscience, human rights, democracy, etc. by critically examining Islamic classical conceptions and methods of jurisprudence and a new approach to Islamic theology and Quranic exegesis. For example his double-movement methodology of Quranic hermeneutics, to appreciate the worldview that the Quran makes available, Fazlur Rahman argues that one must engage in a method of interpretation that consists of a double movement, from the present

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situation to Quranic time, then back to the present (Rahman, 1983). The first step, then, is for the modern interpreter to consider the text of the Quran in its original socio-historical context. This context is important, Fazlur Rahman avers, because, far from being an ahistorical document, the Quran is a divine response, through the Prophet's mind, to the moral-social situation of the Prophet's Arabia, particularly to the commercial Meccan society of his day (Rahman, 1983). Earlier interpreters had failed to realize, Fazlur Rahman argues, that the Quran responds to specific historical problems, and that one cannot simply apply the solutions it proposes to these problems to the very different problems confronting later generations of Muslims. In order to apply the Quran's message to contemporary problems, one must first understand the various parts of the Quran in the context of their origin, and then one must seek to understand specific verses in the context of the whole. Only then can one enunciate statements of general moral-social objectives that can be distilled from specific texts in the light of the sociohistorical background (Rahman, 1983). Once this has been accomplished, the next interpretive movement begins in which one seeks to apply the Quranic worldview to the present time. Fazlur Rahman argues that the stages of the hermeneutical process are complementary; either one taken alone, he claims, would be incomplete. The intellectual effort involved in this double movement should be regarded. Fazlur Rahman argues as a form of *ijtihad* that traditional form of Islamic reasoning which seeks to extend one's understanding of the Quran in order to apply its principles to novel situations (Harrison, 2010). By doing so, Fazlur Rahman attempted to create his version of an ideal society but without compromising core Islamic teachings (Fontaine, 2008). This study looks at how Muslims can solve real-life problems in accordance with Islamic law by drawing on Fazlur Rahman's ideas and suggestions.

Islam as a religion recognises the rights of individuals and society. A Muslim as a servant of Allah has individual rights but he or she also has social rights and responsibilities to the community. Hence, this would require a formation of an ideal society which meets the needs of the individual and society. The ideal society as a philosophical discourse has its origins in Plato (428-348 BC) and this idea has evolved ever since Plato in his most famous and widely read dialogue, *The Republic*, proposed the concept of paradise as a recipe to achieve community happiness. The ideal society for Plato is as immutable as a Doric temple; for, in an ideal state, change can bring about only decadence and corruption. Society must therefore be protected from all that could upset the civic order and induce change. The guardians must devote themselves entirely to the service of the state. They may not possess material riches (which give rise to jealousy and conflict); they may not indulge in frivolities (which could compromise their integrity); nor may they entertain private ambitions. All they have must be held in common: room, board, wives and children (Hummel 1994). Also Abū Naṣr al-Farabi (872-950), a renowned philosopher and jurist, has also highlighted the concept of *al-Madinah al-Faḍilah* (the virtuous city) (Kamal 1995). It seems that al-Farabi had not stipulated the role of the prophethood or religion as a prerequisite for establishing cities, states or a civilization, although he agreed that the prophethood plays the vital role in establishing excellent cities. In sum, the ideal states, which were founded by the prophet-rulers, for al-Farabi were the actual and normal states. But if the balance in the society collapses, al-Farabi observed, these perfect states will go astray, and people will lose truth, happiness, right path, morality, stability, solidarity and all virtues which had been achieved under the leadership of the prophet-ruler (Akhmetova 2017). Both philosophical ideas of Plato and al-Farabi on ideal society have influenced the development of Fazlur Rahman's philosophy, who was attempted to combine Islamic and Western elements without compromising the tenets of the Quran and Sunnah in achieving a modern ideal society. In the West, scientists have proposed various concepts of ideal society, such as, socialism and capitalism as a model of an ideal society among adherents of Marxism and individualism and liberalism respectively (Mutahhari 1986).

Methodology and Conceptual Framework

This article aims to examine the philosophy and ideas of Fazlur Rahman, a modernist scholar and philosopher of Islam. This article uses descriptive qualitative approach which is an attempt

to understand various concepts found in the research process, using content analysis techniques and library research. Qualitative content analysis is one of the several qualitative methods currently available for analyzing data and interpreting its meaning (Schreier 2012). As a research method, it represents a systematic and objective means of describing and quantifying phenomena (Downe-Wamboldt 1992; Schreier 2012). For the prerequisite and successful content analysis, the data of this study reduced to concepts that describe the research phenomenon (Cavanagh 1997; Elo & Kyngäs 2008; Hsieh & Shannon 2005) by creating categories, concepts, a model, conceptual system, or conceptual map (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008; Morgan 1993; Weber 1990). While the research library in this article uses the types and sources of secondary data obtained from research results, articles and reference books that discuss topics related to the theme of the research (Creswell 2014; Iskandar & Aqbar 2019). Hence, this article proposes a conceptual framework to develop the idea as follow:

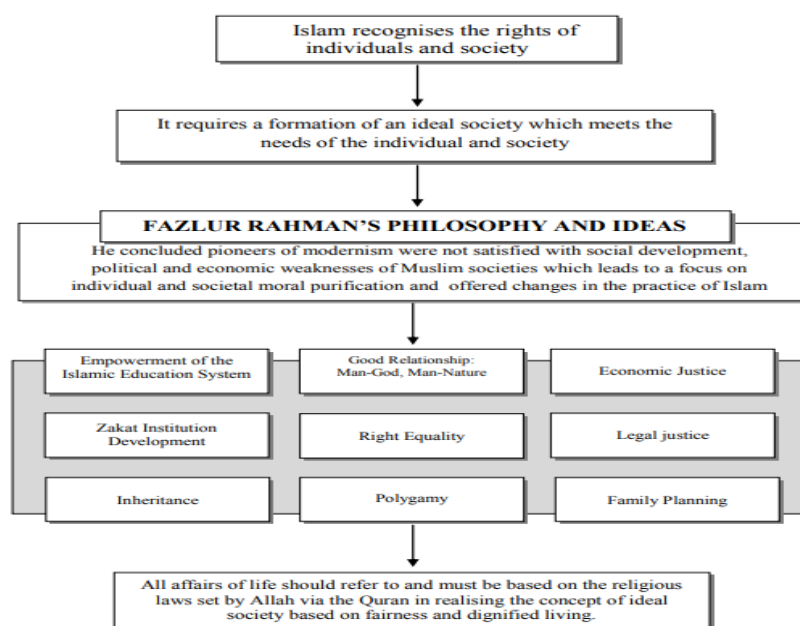


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework

Islamic Awakening: The Beginning of Development of Ideal Society

Fazlur Rahman could predict from early on the problems Muslims will encounter if they are not flexible in their practices and interactions with the world while embracing a more comprehensive and dynamic lifestyle in line with evolving civilisation. He sees the necessity for Muslims to reform their lives consistent with the spread of Islam to the West. The efforts of some leaders and Islamic figures in Western countries to reinvigorate traditional Islamic law and certain Islamic values were seen by Fazlur Rahman as complicated one (Koshul 1994). An example is the Islamic penal code in Pakistan where those found guilty of robbery have their hands chopped off as a punishment (Wasti 2009).

Fazlur Rahman found the rise and renewal of Islam is due to it encouraging its believers to follow a moral path. Contrary to the views of many traditional Muslim thinkers and leaders, Islam he asserted does not dictate to its believers on preferred theology or the creed. In fact, the resulting thrust of theology or faith is secondary. This is because the resurrection and renewal of Islam does not mean refitting theology but on reviving the moral compass of the people. Encouraged by his desire to restore the glory of Islam, Fazlur Rahman defended Muslim ideology, especially pertaining to community issues in the Arabian Peninsula, India and Africa (Rahman 2009).

Rahman (2009) found the approach taken by religious leaders as too radical and considered it a heresy, contrary to Islamic teachings, and brought about by the teachings of

Sufism. He rejected the teachings of Ahmad al-Farūqi al-Sirhindi (1564–1624) an Indian mystic and theologian, whom he accused of misinterpreting Islamic teachings. He also criticised the Sufis for mixing Islam with practices that existed during the reign of the Moghul empire, namely Emperor Akbar. The movement of Ahmad al-Sirhindi emphasised the return to Islamic law subsequent to the reforms advocated by Shah Wali Allah al-Dihlawi (1703-1762) an Indian theologian and promulgator of modern Islamic thought, namely to bring forth Islamic revival by acting against injustices in social and political circles. He also criticised the tax burden borne by farmers and urged the Muslim community of India to forge alliances with their Muslim counterparts in other countries. This phase of Islamic revivalism was followed by movement spearheaded by Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), known as Wahhabism. This stream grew stronger when he married the descendants of King Najd who supported his teachings. Thus, Muhammad Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab made Wahhabism the official ideology of the country. The movement called for Muslims to return to pure Islamic teachings as contained in the Quran and the Sunnah on Oneness of Allah.

In Fazlur Rahman’s view when new forces of massive magnitude (socioeconomic, cultural-moral or political) occur in or to a society, the fate of that society naturally depends on how far it is able to meet the new challenges creatively. If it can avoid the two extremes of panicking and recoiling upon itself and seeking delusive shelters in the past on the one hand, and sacrificing or compromising its very ideals on the other, and can react to the new forces with self-confidence by necessary assimilation, absorption, rejection and other forms of positive creativity, it will develop a new dimension for its inner aspirations, a new meaning and scope for its ideals. Should it, however, choose, by volition or force of circumstance and succumb to the new forces, it will obviously undergo a metamorphosis; its being will no longer remain the same and, indeed, it may even perish in the process of transformation and be swallowed up by another socio-cultural organism. But more surely fatal than this mistake is the one we have mentioned as the first extreme. Should a society begin to live in the past and fail to face the realities of the present squarely (however unpleasant they be), it must become a fossil; and it is an unalterable law of God that fossils do not survive for long (*Hūd* [11]: 101; *al-Nahl* [16] 33) (Rahman 1994: 175-6).

Thereby, Rahman (1996) concluded pioneers of modernism were not satisfied with social development, political and economic weaknesses of Muslim societies. This leads to a focus on individual and societal moral purification. However, the reformist believed this will not lead to profound changes in religious beliefs, ideas and practices. In this context, the Islamic vision of a moral, ideal society must be sustained principally, if sporadically, through the major collective rituals of Islam (Eickelman 2007).

Ideal Society According to Fazlur Rahman

Fazlur Rahman emphasised the importance of Islamic intellectual environment to effect social change as shown in Fig. 2.

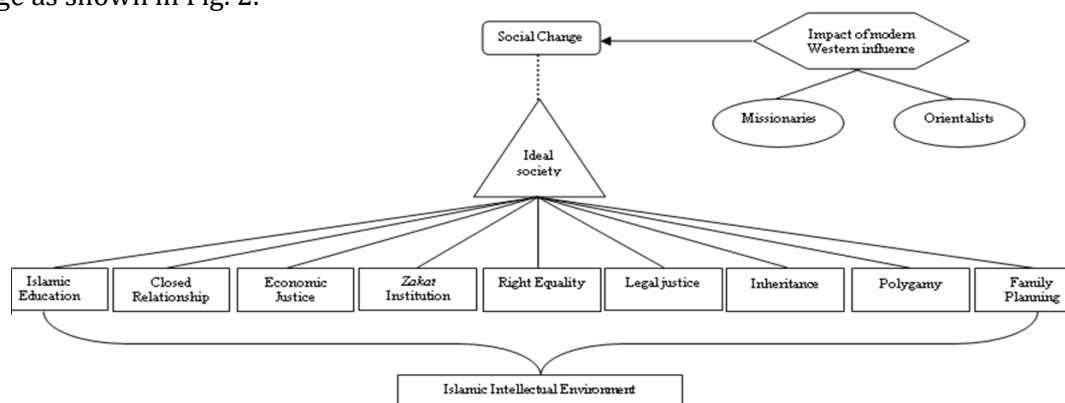


Fig. 2. The Concept of an Ideal Society by Fazlur Rahman

From here, the question of social change is an important one, especially the impact of modern Western influence on Muslim society and criticism of Muslims by the Christian Missionaries and Orientalists. Modernist figures, such as Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898), advocated Muslims to model their concept of family and democracy after the West. A Muslim politician, political agitator, and journalist, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1839-1897) saw democracy a necessity to create a stable and strong government (Salleh 2012) while Fazlur Rahman offered changes in the practice of Islam to achieve the ideal of an Islamic community discussed below.

Empowerment of the Islamic Education System

Today, Islamic education is faced with challenges and heavy opposition compared with the early period of spread of Islam (Pohl 2006). This resistance came from people who are beginning to be interested in profits than in religious values. Furthermore, Islam has yet to recover as a result of Western colonialism and the oppression worsened because some Islamic figures are only focused on the hereafter.

From this point, Al-Hayani (2005) pointed out that in the first 600 hundred years of Islamic reign, Muslims excelled in all fields of knowledge available to them with unprecedented zeal and contributed immensely to the knowledge that became the precursor of Renaissance in Europe. Al-Hayani (2005) said "The Tatar invasion in the 13th century and the total destruction of Baghdad, the Muslim capital of knowledge and science, followed by the crusades, the ensuing hostility between East and West, and Western colonialism of Muslim countries led to a distrust of all knowledge emanating from the West. Such distrust closed the doors to *ijtihad*, a dynamic method in Islamic jurisprudence for addressing change, new demands, and new acquired knowledge, as the Quran challenges Muslims to think, contemplate, understand, comprehend, and examine everything around them, tasks that bring humankind closer to God as they find methods to apply God's laws of justice and equity to the benefit of all humankind. Islam is the religion of *yusr* (ease) and not *'usr* (hardship). The creation of the world was for human benefit and use and therefore innovation for such beneficial use and application is a must." Hence, Islamic education that focuses on Islamic eschatology needs to be modified. The purpose of Islamic education should include how to live in the present material world and the hereafter. A new Islamic education system based on the Quran and Sunnah should be the outcome. Thus, Rahman (1999) combines religious sciences with general sciences for a comprehensive education system. Therefore, the co-curriculum or Islamic education syllabus must include social and religious sciences and there is a need to strike a balance between the world of science and religion. This will ensure Islamic leaders will be more knowledgeable than Western figures (Iqbal 2017; Kamali 2003).

The idea of Fazlur Rahman on reforming Islamic education is to ensure it keeps pace with Western secular education, such as Islamising modern secular education that has flourished in the West and trying to sympathise with the Islamic concepts. The purpose of Islamic education is to shape the personality of students and also to ensure they embrace good western values. If Islamic education system is not reformed, it will jeopardise student morale and they will deviate from true teachings of Islam. Students must have a passion and purpose in life and thus, the new Islamic education system will ensure that is attained. According to Rahman (1999), efforts to this effect are vital through a method that allows the Quran to be used as an inspiration. In addition, Fazlur Rahman discussed the central role of educators as being responsible for the moral development and progress of the young to ensuring their full potential is exploited. Therefore, Fazlur Rahman encouraged educators to focus on: (i) Preparing students to face the world by providing an Islamic-based moral foundation for them. (ii) Having role models of Muslim reformists who have earned a doctorate degree in Western universities and are proficient in Arabic, Persian and Islamic history. (iii) The educators should be trained in Islamic centres abroad, especially in Western countries. (iv) Appointing graduates of religious schools who have strong command of English and Arabic language and train them in modern Islamic

ways. (v) Encouraging educators to produce creative and meaningful works to achieve the purpose of an ideal society (Zuraya 2013).

Friendly Relationship between Man and God, Man and Nature

The concept of God as stated in the Quran is the one who created the universe and predestination (*al-Qada'* and *al-Qadr*) based on the will of God. Muslims are urged to be submissive and obedient to the creator (Rahman, 1999). Hence this clearly shows that for Fazlur Rahman monotheism is real. Islamic faith (*tawhid*) not only speaks of God's oneness, but also of human behaviour. With the dynamic nature of the *tawhid*, Fazlur Rahman believes that people will have more optimism in their lives. Such optimism can produce an attitude of humility in addition to developing a trait of not giving up easily. Thus, one can take the middle path and avoid extremes.

Again, according to Rahman (1999), man is God's best creation to govern this earth. As a result, men have to be accountable for his actions and behaviour especially in his interaction with fellow human beings and nature as per the rules and laws that have been established by Allah. Hence, an ideal society can be realised when there is justice, well-being, peace and behavior of society with high moral values and guided by the concept of *tawhid*. As such, all members of society regardless of race, colour, rank and status, race, language and culture should uphold the noble values of humanity based on the concept of justice, goodness, equality, honesty and integrity among others. Furthermore, Allah has stated that if a society wants to change for the better, first its citizenry must improve and show superior values that will lead to a good environment.

In order to create an ideal society, the role of educators is vital and cannot be underestimated. Muslims must learn, understand and appreciate the teachings of the Quran, and practise it. Due to the Quran is regarded as both the spiritual and behavioral guidance for all Muslims. It is a part of life for every individual, the law for political rule and the guidance in preaching to God (Aboul-Enein 2016; Usman & Kadir, 2020). Islamic teachings guide humans to live well on earth as being an earthly caliph of Allah. Through community education, people will realise the importance of doing things or making decisions together (Zuraya 2013).

According to Rahman (1999), education can be obtained through the Quran and Sunnah. Individuals who are able to appreciate and understand the essence of the verses of the Quran will realise the importance of establishing a fraternity of ascetics for the sake of harmony and prosperity without creating hostility and pose threats to people's lives. The Prophet Muhammad has managed to develop and build an ideal society through mosques that establish and foster ties between all Muslims. Additionally, the Prophet managed to unite two rival groups - the Muhajirin and the Ansar, via an agreement of peace known as the Medina Charter (Yildirim, 2009).

Further, Rahman (1999) opined God has appointed man as a trustee to administer earth and this relationship with nature demands that human beings manage the world efficiently and humanely by obeying all the laws set by Allah. Fazlur Rahman called it the Lord's command to be carried out by man with conscience and fairness to all fellow humans. According to him, God has provided humans with guidelines and laws to administer the universe and that man was created to be inheritors of earth. Hence, human beings are forbidden from doing evil and engage in destruction with impunity against nature that is self-serving.

Rahman (1999) further explained humans and nature are closely related to each other. Therefore, all human deeds and actions need to be accompanied by guidelines and the laws of Allah in order to balance the demands of the world and the hereafter. In other words, people need to act in accordance with Islamic law, which has been outlined in the Quran and Sunnah. Therefore, an ideal society meets the need of humans living on earth and as well as the hereafter by subscribing to the laws of Allah.

Economic Justice

Islamic economics claim it would achieve a greater degree of economic justice than the existing capitalist and socialist systems. An Islamic-based system would ensure less exploitation of the masses while addressing severe inequalities that characterise capitalism as well as the class struggles and intolerable restrictions that are the hallmarks of socialism (Kuran 1989).

In achieving an ideal society, Fazlur Rahman emphasises on economic justice. According to him, individuals who are free from all forms of fraudulent transactions will contribute to economic growth. In this context, he supported the ban on usury, as prescribed by the Quran, which has led to the economic collapse of the family institution, society and nation. *Riba'* (interest and usury) is a form of oppression by the rich towards the poor and Fazlur Rahman added if the capital injection contributed to creating wealth for the poor, then usury can be allowed but economic exploitation should be prohibited (Rahman 1964 & 1969).

Hence, Fazlur Rahman through his propagation of concept of ideal community, encouraged the spirit of cooperation and the implementation of socio-economic justice in line with the provision of the Quran which suggested the Muslim community enhance their spirit of cooperation and enforce socio-economic justice as suggested by the Quran. This can be done by eliminating extreme usury.

Zakat Institution

Islamic modernism, the hallmark of Fazlur Rahman, through his concept of the ideal community was aimed at helping the Muslim community to escape from greed. Rahman (1966) called upon the modern Muslim community to rethink and modify the *zakat* structure set by the Prophet (pbuh) according to the needs of the society in line with changing social and economic conditions. The needs of modern society have grown so rapidly that education and good communication is needed to make modifications to the level of *zakat* according to the needs of modern times.

The word *zakat* means purification and growth. The wealth of the earth, held by human beings in trust, is purified by setting aside a proportion for those in need (Rassool, 2000). Fazlur Rahman suggested *zakat* is a mandatory tax in order to safeguard the welfare of society, especially the poor. In addition, in achieving an ideal community, *zakat* can be used to help people who are really oppressed and plagued by debts (Rahman 1966). Therefore, the ideal concept of society demands government's intervention in implementing the laws of *zakat* and ensuring assistance to those who really need it.

Right Equality

Rahman (1999) saw a form of persecution and neglect of Muslim women in some Muslim countries and he lamented the loss of their potential to develop the Islamic community further. He believed some of the restrictions imposed on women's rights were aimed at discriminating and exploiting them. He believed, as a reformer, that this was not because of teaching of the Quran but due to the conduct and societal attitude towards women. Current social conditions that underestimated and subjugated women were also due to seepage and influence of various cultural traditions into the Muslim community (Rahman, 1983). The essence of the Quranic teaching emphasises, among other things, to strengthen and restore some of the weaknesses in the structure of the Arab community and helped the suppressed sections of society, such as the orphans, the slaves, the poor and the women.

Rahman (1999) promoted respect for women. The Quran has outlined guidelines on the use of jewellery by women. However, some Islamic scholars have misinterpreted the meaning of the Quranic verses, by imposing strictures on women to wear *hijab* and *purdah*. He emphasised Islam encouraged women to preach and allowed them freedom to go out at night to get rid of evil elements. Therefore, *purdah* is practised as a symbol of honour and status. The *hijab* also confirmed the identity of the *Muslimah* and allowed them a chance to take control of their lives,

and offering them the status of “respectable person”. Nonetheless the meaning of the hijab is not limited to attire (Ruby 2006). Hence, based on the Fazlur Rahman’s concept of ideal community, the dignity of women is elevated and they should not be subjected to discrimination within and without the home while maintaining their honour and self-esteem in line with the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah.

Legal Justice

The concept of the ideal community also incorporates the principle of justice in the legal system. For example, every civil case handled in court should have a witness consisting of two males and two women as instructed in *sura al-Baqarah* [2] verse 282. Rahman (1999) questioned the imposition of general law on all circumstances and for all purposes and in which the female testimony was deemed lower than her male counterpart. He questioned why the existing laws were not altered when social conditions had undergone changes whereby women were exposed to educational opportunities, business dealings and financial transactions. This indicates the hadith in the development of the legislation after the time of the Messenger of Allah can be questioned. Gender inequality among Muslim women is a result of rigid laws that prevailed during the time of the Prophet. Rahman (1999) further referred to *sura al-Nisa'* [4] verse 34 which privileged men over women only in terms of their function and not essentially. He argued the verse does not highlight the differences between men and women, but affirms that men are the breadwinner who is responsible for the full expenses of the family and to spend on the wife. As a result of these efforts, more men acquire life skills and practical wisdom than women to determine women’s affairs.

According to Rahman (1999), the differences between men and women is due to socio-economic factors and not gender. Therefore, women should be given time and opportunity to acquire the same experience and wisdom as men. Through the concept of ideal society, Fazlur Rahman argued that women should be allowed to work and contribute to the economy. Furthermore, in the changing times, the income of the husband alone is insufficient for the needs of the family. The ideal society can only be achieved by the formation of an ideal family and family system and harmonious living where husbands and wives help each other to ease their family burden.

Inheritance

Islamic jurisprudence portrays Islamic law as a manifestation of the revealed word of God. The sharia is a divinely ordained system that controls Muslim society. Islamic law did not evolve as a historical phenomenon closely linked with the evolution of society and legal history, and in the Western sense, it does not exist (Powers 1993). Although in Islam inheritance laws are based on the assumption the man is the family provider, and he is responsible for its female and other members who need help (Salleh 1972). Rahman (1999) stressed that economic inequality occurs when the ratio of inheritance to women is determined based on what was earned by the men. If the dead leaves only the son, then he will inherit all the property but if the deceased just leaves a daughter then she will inherit only two-thirds (2/3) of the estate. He showed an example of economic inequality in the division of the estate with reference to the verse, *sura al-Nisa'* [4] verse 11.

In his concept of ideal society, and in the context of inheritance, Rahman (1999) suggested changes in the proportion of estate allocation should be made in line with the social change that has taken place. In the tribal society, the financial burden is shared equally. When social change occurs, changes in the ratio of inheritance should also be made. In his opinion when justice is a priority, then the changes is supported and justified by Islam. The problem most Muslim countries face is the unequal distribution for women in estate matters as most of them practise a common family system which denies the girls their rightful inheritance.

Polygamy

Islam-based polygamy demands justice be exercised for all wives. However, Quran stresses justice in polygamy is inaccessible to humans as revealed in *sura al-Rūm* [30] verse 21. This

verse explains that the proper relationship between husband and wife is love and affection, and marriage bonds cannot be defined as mere (external) relationship because what is considered as a relationship (external) will be followed by inner affection (love). It is therefore very difficult to love more than one woman at the same time. Therefore, through the ideal concept of society, the formation of one's personality is derived from a harmonious life in a household. Failure to be fair to their respective spouses will produce individuals who are problematically socially as they are burdened with family problems. Therefore, Rahman (1999) stressed polygamy is only temporary and the purpose of the Quran is to abolish it to ensure social justice to all men and women.

The Quran allowed polygamy under certain circumstances only as per *sura al-Nisa'* [4] verse 3. According to Fazlur Rahman, the Quran also stresses that if a man cannot be fair to all his co wives, he should just have one wife as per *sura al-Nisa'* [4] verse 4. Fazlur Rahman firmly believed that unhappy individuals will lead to unhealthy and problematic communities. Therefore, to achieve an ideal society, an individual need to understand and practise the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah so that a happy family can be created. As for leaders and practitioners of Islamic law, a clear understanding of the laws and the rules of the Quran should prevail in order for justice to be enforced between husband and wife (wives) and to prevent the other from being persecuted. According to Fazlur Rahman, households must practise fairness and justice to produce righteous individuals because it is the essence of building an ideal society (Rahman 1999).

Family Planning

The family is the basic social unit of an Islamic society. Even without compelling population pressures, there has been concern with spacing and family planning (Omran 2012). Family planning is an important health and development issue as well as a human rights issue. Muslim countries and societies are no different than the rest of the world; they aspire to reach their development goals by improving the health of their women and children. Therefore, Islam should not be considered a barrier in this endeavour. Governments and nongovernmental organisations in the Islamic countries as well as the international development community can support the use of contraception. Such efforts would help prevent unplanned pregnancies as well as help families achieve their desired family size by providing financial and political support for culturally sensitive reproductive health programmes that meet the needs of Muslim couples (Roudi-Fahimi 2004).

The concept of the ideal community as per Fazlur Rahman suggests a family life that is based on the principle of running a family in the context of their own abilities and needs. An ideal society can only be formed by first improving the quality of society. Only then individuals become more ethical. In short, the idea of strengthening the Islamic community today is stunted by the uncontrolled increase in population and this must be addressed via family planning (Rahman 1976).

Impact of Fazlur Rahman's Envisioned Ideal Community on Indonesian Islamic Socio-Cultural Milieu

The role of American Muslim scholars, particularly Fazlur Rahman, in Islamic reformism in Indonesia in the latter part of the 20th century, though significant, was often neglected by scholars. This is partly due to his original contribution to a re-thinking of Islamic tradition and classical theological concerns. For example, Bektovic (2016) pointed out that Fazlur Rahman initiated a new hermeneutic interpretation of the Quran and a critical analytical study of the Sunnah which has come to inspire a number of modern and contemporary intellectuals (including for instance Nurcholish Majid, Amina Wadud, Mohammad Talbi, Ebrahim Moosa and Abdullah Saeed). His reformist ideas, primarily known and discussed within many prominent Muslim figures, became the subject of widespread interest in countries such as Indonesia. In Indonesia, Fazlur Rahman's idea of ideal society was adopted by Muslim intellectual circles

including Ahmad Syafii Maarif (b. 1935), the leader of Muhammadiyah, one of the two biggest Muslim organisations in Indonesia. The emphasis here is on how Maarif, as a prominent Indonesian intellectual, inspired by Fazlur Rahman's methodology and perspective, revealed the meaning and significance of the ethics of the Quran in dealing with injustice, corruption and exploitation, religious discrimination, and religious radicalism in Indonesia (Burhani 2013).

Thus, Fazlur Rahman's thoughts have influenced Islamic law and the socio-cultural scenario in Indonesia. This was clear during the reign of Soeharto. The president appointed Mukti Ali (1923-2004) a Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, who adapted the idea of Fazlur Rahman into the concept of religious modernisation in Indonesia. Mukti Ali proposed three strategies: (i) to maintain religious harmony among the different religions form of interfaith dialogue is crucial. (ii) in order to make religion the foundation of national development, the state has to streamline and strengthen its education system in schools and Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia through application of religious laws. (iii) good and fair leadership is vital to achieving harmony. This led Soeharto to appoint Mukti Ali as the head of Islamic affairs in Indonesia. As Mukti Ali was impressed by Fazlur Rahman's theory of human relationships with God, man and nature he was very careful in maintaining these three principles as the founder of the Indonesian Ulama Council (Dja'far 2006).

Another scholar whose contextualist project was inspired by Fazlur Rahman was Nurcholish Madjid (1939-2005), an Indonesian scholar who went on to become a leading Indonesian intellectual and played a major role in broadening Islamic studies and developing Islamic liberalism and democracy in Indonesia (Akbar 2020). Nurcholish Majid's thesis in the University of Chicago in 1978 regarding the interpretation of the Quran is highly similar to that of Fazlur Rahman. Inspired by the latter, Nurcholish developed a contextual approach to interpreting the Quran and its socio-legal passages based on their specific social and historical contexts. Influenced by Fazlur Rahman's idea about ratio legis, Nurcholish Majid argued that the application of a law is determined by the reason for which it was prescribed. If this reason changes, then the application of the law changes (Johns & Saeed 2004). Indeed, the legal precepts of the Quran cannot be fully understood in isolation from the purposes for which they were revealed. Nurcholish Majid maintains that Quranic rulings should be applied in the present context only on the basis of their *'ilal al-hukm* (the efficient causes of the ruling). Therefore, like Fazlur Rahman, Nurcholish Majid rejected the implementation of the traditional fiqh in today's world (Akbar 2020; Majid 1998). In general, Fazlur Rahman's influence in Indonesia, where he has been a trailblazer in what is called the liberal Islamic revival. The foremost leader of this school of thought is Nurcholish Majid. In his writings and speeches, Nurcholish Majid has been a strong advocate of secularization (which he distinguishes from secularism) and intellectual freedom, the two elements he sees necessary if Muslims are to distinguish between transcendental values and temporal values (Panjwani 2012).

To conclude, Fazlur Rahman brought forward innovative ideas in realising the concept of ideal society by putting religion at a high and noble level. Although he supported Western ideology in modernising and advancing society, he firmly believed all affairs of life should refer to and must be based on the religious laws set by Allah via the Quran. The ideal society is one based on fairness and dignified living where an important part of the Quran's purpose is revealed. Therefore, Islam is a religion whose teachings are universal, integral to society, comprehensive and balanced. In point of his contributions it can be concluded Rahman's works include on Islamic law, education, economics, theology, ethics, and philosophy which many of them were translated in several languages.

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