

<a href="https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.23.2023.254">https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.23.2023.254</a>			
Received:	21 Nov. 2022	Accepted:	5 March 2023
Revised:	06 Feb. 2022	Published:	15 June 2023
Volume & Pages	23 (June): 39-49		

## The Development of Islamic Feminism in Malaysia

INDRIATY ISMAIL<sup>1</sup>

### ABSTRACT

*This paper is produced with the aim of examining the traces of feminist thinking that is rooted in Malaysia. Feminism is a movement that fights for women's human rights from discrimination by all parties whether men, communities, or authorities until they achieve the desired emancipation and justice. Its historical background is traced among women as early as its growth after independence in 1957 until its latest development in the 2020s. The methodology used in the production of this writing is entirely armchair research. Data were mostly obtained from individual workbooks, seminar papers, research results, newspaper clippings and online data. The study found that the development of feminism in Malaysia can be categorized according to its growth period, namely after independence in the 1960s, 1970-1980s and finally, the 1990s until present. In each category of those years, feminism presented ideologies and demands in accordance with the developments of its time. This has shaped the uniqueness of Malaysian-style feminism born out of local needs and demands and should continue to evolve in a way that does not conflict with the Malaysian Islamic views and culture.*

**Keywords:** *Discrimination, Emancipation, Feminism, Ideology, Justice.*

This writing begins by explaining the meaning behind feminism as this term does not originate from the Malay world. Thus, a discussion of the root of this word is deemed appropriate to start with. Next, we talk about the history of the growth of the feminist movement and its development in the Western world and conclude with its development in Malaysia. Developments in Malaysia started from after the independence up until recently. This article also talks about the future of Feminism in Malaysia and poses a discussion revolving around the position of Islamic Feminism that exists in Malaysia today of whether to have an understanding or contradiction with the teachings of Islam.

Feminism is rooted in the word *feminine* which means 'woman' and 'femininity'. *Feminine* originates from the Latin word '*femina*' which means 'having the nature of femininity'. The word was first used by the French dramatist and writer Alexandre Dumas (1802-1870) in a pamphlet entitled *L'Homme-ferme* (1872). This movement before 1872 once existed in the form of a minority at the heart of the family system or when there were two or more women gathered (Grendon 1970: 107). The use of this word is intended to signify a movement that emerged later to defend women's rights.

In terms of the definition of the term, it can be explained that it is a widespread cultural movement aimed at maintaining a perfect balance between men and women in enjoying all human rights such as moral, religion, social, political, educational, legal, and economics (Grendon 1970: 107). It is also a trend that advocates equal rights between men and women (Hawkins

---

<sup>1</sup>**Indriaty Ismail**, Ph. D., Senior Lecturer, Research Centre for Theology and Philosophy, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Bangi, MALAYSIA. Email: indriaty@ukm.edu.my

1989: 296). In addition, it is also often associated with Women's Liberation which is a social movement that seeks to fight for equal rights for women, place them on a balanced status with men, and give them the right and freedom to choose their careers and shape their lives (The New Encyclopedia Britannica 1985: 733). Feminism and Women's Liberation have the same foundation but differ in terms of goals. The goal of Feminism is 'Advocating women's rights. Meanwhile, the goal of Women's Liberation is 'Advocating full freedom of women' (Yates 1975: 15).

### **The Development of the Western Feminism Movement**

The author has separated the factors of the emergence or growth of the Western feminist movement into two factors, namely internal factors, and external factors. Internal factors indicate the factors surrounding the life and religious appreciation of the Western society itself. Several Western feminist scholars recognize the Traditional Religious Attitude factor as a trigger to the voices of dissatisfaction among women. Early Christian teachings by the Church Fathers and St. Paul was seen as anti-feminist, which looked down on women, viewed women as filthy and were inclined towards evil as well as deceiving men. Feminists conclude the new teachings of this St. Paul contradicts and is completely contrary to the Christian message taught by Jesus which says, "that all human beings have equal dignity and right". Even more, anti-feminist attitudes were never manifested in the words and deeds of Jesus himself (Yates 1975: 69). However, feminist scholars state the contradiction between the teachings of 'moral equality' from Jesus and the social traditions of Christian theologians does not benefit women in the slightest because social traditions that acknowledge women's inferiority are more accepted and have overtaken moral traditions that recognize women's and men's equality (Grendon 1970: 108).

The second is the external factors that were triggered especially after the occurrence of The Industrial Age until the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789. Concerns over women's rights began to be expressed. The unrest that peaked during the French Revolution focused on human awareness of a moral principle that all men, women, and children have their own right to regulate their entire development and society is responsible for guaranteeing those rights to them (Bird 1983: 733).

Awareness of women's emancipation grew so rapidly that feminist organizations emerged which flourished through several waves as recorded by history. The emerging waves which were known as the First Wave, the Second Wave, and the Third Wave over a long period of time and have different struggle characteristics. Starting from the demands of a balanced and complete treatment in terms of education, economy, employment, politics, and legislation (Grendon 1970: 111) to the demands that are increasingly radical and socialist. This was the case from the early years until the feminist movement was influenced by Radical and Marxist figures who focused demands on opposing social class and recognizing the struggle between the sexes (Barett 1986: 29-31).

Addressing on the issues of feminist struggle can be summarized by revolving around issues such as the demand for equality rights in all areas consisting of education, social (being in society), economics (employment, wage, own financial resources), and politics (voting rights). The main focus of the struggle of Western feminism is freedom from dependence on men (Yates 1975: 238). Meanwhile, the mission of their struggle is to recreate the world created by men (and in this case they recognize that women in terms of potential are relatives) (Janeway 1973: 400).

As for methodology, Western feminism applied radical reforms by eliminating marriage, family formation, and the traditional relationship of men and women (Bird 1983: 111a). The three components became the focus of the reform because these three social practices showed that women played a passive and low role. Then, feminism arose creating more open opportunities for women in various aspects including in terms of sexuality, the concept of love, the *nature* of women, the role of religion, media, and language (Bird 1983: 111b-111d). Feminism eventually managed to widen the struggle to expand to several countries such as France, Britain, America, Germany, Russia, China, India, third world countries and Islamic countries.

## The Development of the Malaysian Feminist Movement

This discussion on the development of feminism in Malaysia can be seen by tracing its lineage according to the years after Independent Day (1957), namely: the 1960s, the 1970s-1980s, and the 1990s-contemporary.

### 1960s: Early Criticism of Women's Emancipation after Independent Day

In the 1960s, several Malay women writers were born who boldly and radically put forward the idea of the liberation of Malay women. The fundamentals of this idea are similar to the principles of the liberation of Western women. Among the main criticisms of this trend are:

1. Criticism of the religious beliefs and customs of the Malay community related to women. For example, Anis Sabirin in her book *Peranan Wanita Baru* (1969) asserts:

"Being spoiled and too dependent on the protection of men is no longer suitable for mature women. We do not want wives and mothers who are too childish who want to be caressed and adorned by men" (Anis Sabirin 1969: 7). She also criticised the Islamic beliefs that underlie the life of the Malay community by saying: "Islam with the condition of marriage and divorce being too loose, where a woman can be divorced at will by her husband at any time, will not calm the heart of a wife" (Anis Sabirin 1969: 99)

2. Suggestion to leave the role of motherhood and duties in the kitchen which was passed down. Conceptually, the struggle of modern women tries to emphasize the rejection of the 'cult of motherhood' and the 'domestic cage' which are the core of traditional society. Simultaneously, the idea of organizing women to serve in society and work hand in hand with men in all kinds of jobs is gaining ground.
3. Recommendation to play a greater role in the field of economy and national development. This positive suggestion was accompanied by protests from female activist figures who questioned the heavy work that women had to bear where their burden was increasing as workers, wives, and mothers. Nik Safiah Karim stated:

"Women's involvement in employment brings two new implications. On the one hand it symbolizes economic freedom. On the other hand, this situation has added to the existing burden of duty as a wife and mother" (Nik Safiah Karim 1984: 5).

"A woman who works hard in the office has to work hard at home as a cook and babysitter. Meanwhile her husband's duties were completed when he left his office. Is such division of roles fair?" (Indriaty 1996: 57).

### 1970s-1980s: Criticism of the Emancipation of Women in the Dakwah Stream

The history of this women's liberation struggle was later shaken by the Islamic revival movement of the 1970s and 1980s. This movement, which is also known as the rise of the Islamic dakwah movement, has been fully supported by Malay youths, especially those who received non-religious education from within and outside the country. However, the initial initiators of this movement were graduates of Arabic and religious education from the Middle East. There are several key features that are the essence of the struggle for the emancipation of women in this group of missionaries. The features are:

1. *Opposition to the Western-style modernization based on secularism:* The essence of their struggle is the resistance to the wickedness practiced in Malay society as a result of the rapidly growing process of modernization. The factor that motivates this movement is the identity crisis due to modernization, especially urban society as a result of unbalanced

economic development and widespread westernization efforts. There is a clash of cultures, customs, and religions. Muhammad Abu Bakar in his writing in 1987, entitled *Penghayatan Sebuah Ideal*, (Indriaty 1996: 59) explains: "The 1970s saw Malay women's dakwah groups in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia, distancing themselves from dance and disco events, as well as gathering activities that were contrary to Islamic values".

2. *The struggle to appreciate Islam as a way of life*: This dakwah movement has considered Islam as *al-Din* or 'a way of life' which covers all aspects of life and is not limited to specific matters of worship alone. They revived some of the traditional values and revealed the Islamic values that were popularized by the preachers at the time. The core of the change is a return to the true Muslimah personality as a pious wife, a responsible mother, and a moral woman according to Islamic *tasawwur*. Significant changes can be seen in the trend of clothing covering the *aurat* and involvement with spiritual programs (Indriaty 1996: 59).
3. *Opposition to the idea of equal rights between men and women is the belief of Women's Liberation in the West*: This dakwah movement emphasizes the return of women to the status and place set by Allah in the Quran and Sunnah. This includes the acceptance of their roles as wives and mothers, and the acceptance of the differences of different physical forms and traits of men as His provisions.
4. *Recognition of humanitarian status to women*: For centuries, Islam has been a victim of the twists and turns of Western writers, especially in the matter of women. This dakwah movement seeks to explain the status of women before and after the advent of Islam. Before Islam, women were looked down upon, not independent, had no rights and had no status as human beings, and were even considered animals to satisfy men's lust. After the advent of Islam, the position of women was elevated where Muslim women were given the legal right to own property, inherit wealth, demand justice, marry a man of her choice and the right to seek divorce (WAMY n.d.). This movement also strengthens the explanation that the aspect of Islam has recognized women as equal to men, as shown in the Qur'an, in Surah Āli Imran 3: 195 and Surah al-Nisa 4: 1. Emphasis on the verses of the Qur'an shows the guarantee of Islamic justice and equality given to men and women in accordance with the nature of their creation.
5. *The emancipation of women should be seen in a positive way, which is to recognize and expand the role of women in accordance with the tenets that coincide with Islam*: This movement is of the view that the struggle of women should not diminish their function as members of society. Islamic history itself has recorded the types of social work that Muslim women have engaged in. Islam teaches that women's self-development must be based on Islamic faith and morals. The Islamic personality that has been formed will support traditional functions such as wife and mother and her participation in social life can be done more effectively based on religious demands (Sharifah Hayati 1993: 205-206).

#### 1990s-Contemporary: Criticism of Sisters in Islam

Around the early 1990s, a non-governmental organization (NGO) known as Sisters in Islam (SIS) was born. SIS began in late 1988 among friends who gathered, discussed, held knowledge

councils, held debates on legal reform and organized discussions on relief for victims of family crises. SIS officially became a non-governmental body in 1993. The single most prominent feminist movement in Malaysia in the 1990s era until now is this SIS group which is very much in need of study as it often causes controversy in its struggle. According to SIS itself, their struggle is to study, promote and fight for human rights according to the Islamic perspective. SIS sees their group as a savior and problem solver of women and the religious authorities are guilty and troubled. SIS fully adopts the trends of Western Liberalism and Secularism. Most SIS members received Western Liberal education and extensive exposure from Western research sources, particularly those involving feminism issues (Indriaty & Ahmad Muhyuddin 2021: 1).

### Analysis of SIS Thoughts

A specific and detailed discussion of the SIS feminist struggle agenda can be seen from four dimensions, namely: *tasawwur*, ontology, epistemology, and methodology.

#### Tasawwur

SIS *tasawwur* (worldview) strongly adheres to the Western worldview that promotes human rights. This view is suitably applied to all societies and cultures. Arab and Islamic traditions that tend to be biased towards patriarchal culture were the main targets of the study. SIS evaluates Malay-Islamic history and sociology according to the Western worldview. They stated that there was discrimination, oppression, and marginalization against women in the Malay-Islamic cultural system.

In fact, it should be understood that sociology of the Malay-Muslim family is different from the reality of the West and the Middle East. What is the Malay worldview and its relevance to girls' education? The sociology of Malay family education towards daughters is intended to protect them from becoming victims of outsider oppression. The more important thing is that the sociology of Malay family education prioritizes the teachings of Islam as the basis for the formation of children's morals and emotions. This is the impact of the Malay community's understanding of the true Islamic worldview which is then applied in the community life (Rahimin and Nor Adina 2021: 90). The construction of Malay Muslim identity is based on principles derived from divine revelation (Hashim 2001). Clearly, social traditions in Malay family life are overshadowed by strong Islamic traditions.

#### Ontology

Ontology is a branch from the concept of metaphysics that studies the origin of existence, occurrence, and nature of life. One of the oldest questions in ontology is that it involves the existence of God or the highest element (University of Warwick n.d.). For the author, SIS pays less consideration to the ontological aspects and the end of life's journey to the afterlife. SIS seems to deny the existence of an afterlife that will punish human error while in the living world. SIS is also openly involved in extreme religious pluralism activities and at the same time denies the truth of the teachings of Islam itself. The SIS activities that oppose this ontology can be seen in the following evidence:

1. *Supporting the Claims of the Inter Faith Commission (IFC)*: The goal of the IFC is to amend some basic teachings of Islam and side with the interests of followers of other religions. There are 14 IFC demands in all and among them: a) A child born to Muslim parents should not directly become a Muslim, b) Non-Muslims who have converted to Islam should be given the freedom to return to their original religion (apostasy) and not subject to legal action, c) Any case of conversion from Islam to non-Muslim should not be handled by a civil court, d) It is not necessary to record in the identity card of a Muslim that he is a Muslim. Next, the other demands are all in prioritizing other religions from Islam itself (Anis Shakila 2006).

2. *Anti-Moral Control Campaign:* Early in 2005, SIS along with non-Muslim NGOs had sought to fight for the spread of a culture of hedonism directly when they launched anti-moral control campaigns by religious authorities and local governments. The campaign was launched following the action of the Department of Federal Territory Islamic Affairs (JAWI) to detain more than 100 visitors to the Zouk nightclub in Kuala Lumpur. They were arrested for various offenses such as drinking alcohol and dressing immodestly. For SIS, JAWI's actions are considered contrary to the concept of Western liberalism which gives individuals the right to do whatever they want. According to them: "how a person dresses and where, how and with whom they want to hang out is up to the individual's own choice."
3. *Case of Article 11 Group:* The Article 11 Group was established in May 2004. The group is a coalition of 13 NGOs that strive to uphold the supremacy of the constitution and promote religious freedom in Malaysia. The Article 11 Group rejects discrimination of individuals based on religion, race, place of birth or gender. They called for the freedom of thought, religion, and conscience of every individual to be respected, guaranteed, and protected. In an open letter to the government, they expressed a strong commitment to the Malaysian constitution as a secular State and the right to freedom of religion (Rahimin Affandi & Nor Adina 2021: 94).
4. *Case of Ayah Pin's Kingdom of Heaven and Case of Kamariah Ali:* SIS boldly defended Ayah Pin's freedom to practise his own religion and slammed the authority of the Terengganu State Fatwa Committee and the actions of the Department of Terengganu Islamic Affairs which declared Ayah Pin's teachings of the heavenly kingdom as heretical and contrary to Islamic teachings. SIS and Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM) described the actions of these religious authorities as oppression of minority religious groups and a violation of the right to freedom of religion. SUARAM has filed a complaint with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief alleging that the government has perpetrated repression against Ayah Pin and his followers. The same thing was done in the *Case of Kamariah Ali & Ors V. Government of Kelantan & Anor*. In this case Daud Mamat, Kamariah Ali, her husband Mohamad Ya and Md Yaacob Ismail had committed an offense of openly admitting to having apostatized as a means of escaping Syariah Court punishment, as a result of their involvement with heretical groups (Rahimin Affandi & Nor Adina 2021: 94).
5. *Case of Azlina Jailani (Lina Joy):* SIS and non-Muslim NGOs such as the Article 11 group boldly defended the demands of the apostate Azlina Jailani (Lina Joy) to change the status of Islam to Christianity in her Identity Card. Although this claim has been rejected by the Supreme Court in Malaysia, SIS and NGOs are still citing the case as a violation of religious freedom, suppressing the right of individuals to apostatize or convert and contrary to individual freedom brought by Western liberalism (Rahimin Affandi & Nor Adina 2021: 95).

### Epistemology

Epistemology is synonymous with the Arabic *Masdar al-Ma'rifah*, i.e., the source of knowledge. According to Britannica.com, epistemology is the philosophical study of the nature, origins, and limitations of human knowledge. Often this term is referred to as the theory of knowledge (Martinich n.d.). There are three forms of SIS epistemology that have been identified, namely:

1. *SIS Source of Knowledge from Western Science (Without Tawhid):* Western science is based on logical, empirical and positivist paradigms which assume that authentic knowledge can only be produced through scientific research methods that are systematic, thorough, and objective. Revelation-based studies are considered unscientific and cannot be empirically proven. Finally, Western science stipulates that

all things can be dealt with externally and sensually (Abdul Rahman 2000). The root of this Western approach is the attitude of those who reject religion and supernatural things that cannot be seen and dealt with by the senses. Starting from the epistemological framework of Western Secular-Liberalism, SIS has challenged a number of inappropriate matters: Challenging the legacy of the past *turath* (classic) religious books; Using a vague method and contrary to the traditional methods of past Islamic scholars in making interpretations; Elements of tradition are perceived negatively, and Refusing to accept the basic conditions of Islamic knowledge set by past Islamic scholars (Rahimin 2006).

2. *Insulting the Attributes of the Prophet and Past Scholars:* The Malay-Muslim community in Malaysia is indeed relatively sensitive to the issue of the apostleship of Rasulullah PBUH. However, recently, there have been a few individuals with the status of scholars who have given misleading interpretations of Islam. It is even more upsetting when there are some ideas that challenge the sanctity of the Prophet and Islamic scholars. Among the views that can be classified to be a form of insulting Rasulullah are:
  - a. The act of blatantly insulting the personality of Rasulullah who is described as an ordinary and lustful man by having many wives and concubines (Farish 2000).
  - b. The struggle of the Prophet is not in the form of a Prophetic Treatise as in the previous prophetic series, but more in the form of a humanitarian struggle like other figures, namely the struggle based on Arabism (*tribal leaders*) which aims to elevate the dignity of the Arabs compared to non-Arabs (Farish 2001).
  - c. The nature of having equal status between the personalities of Rasulullah PBUH with other figures, without having to accept the authority and details of His teachings contained in the Sunnah of the Prophet. Whereas Muslims only need to adhere to the source of the Quran alone.
  - d. Actions that spread Western-style indecent attitudes and approaches which consider it as an acceptable gesture to insult the Prophet and religious figures. It is supposedly in line with the concept of freedom of speech and expression which is highly emphasized by modern democratic thinking.
3. *All Western Knowledge Sources are Used as the Basic Balance Sheet for Designing Women's Rights Programs:* Based on the deification of Western sciences as the basis of epistemology, they then made the source of Islam only as mere patches and a tool of justification of Western idealism alone. They practise extreme cynicism towards the source of Islamic *turath*, as they already possess a prior negative connotation towards the unfavourable source of Islamic *turath* where it is supposedly made under the influence of a patriarchal culture that is biased towards women.

### Methodology

The SIS, as like other groups of liberal reformers or contemporary feminist thinkers, has applied the method of hermeneutic interpretation to the Qur'an. This methodology is taken as an alternative in introducing openness to interpret the verses of the Qur'an according to the development of the times. Hermeneutics initially appeared for use in the field of philology, then stepped into the field of theology. This method was brought about by its pioneer Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834).

Hermeneutics originates from the Greek word *hermeneuin* meaning *to interpret* or *to translate* which is to interpret or translate something. Hermeneutic interpretations show that the interpretation is not fixed and varies according to the current situation. Hermeneutic interpretations can also open room for refining and renewing laws that are no longer deemed appropriate for current use. For example, interfaith marriages that see the law set by Islam as a

setting that is not in line with the development of the times (Adiani & Abdurrahman 2007: 23). Hermeneutics offered by this group of Muslim feminists is a very foreign subject and varies from what the famous Islamic scholars performed in the earlier days of *tabi` al-Tabi`in* (predecessors).

### **The Future of Feminism in Malaysia**

The author is of the view that the feminist movement is something that must necessarily exist. Its existence must be recognized because feminism is a women's struggle movement that has great significance to the women's community. However, the struggle to increase the dignity of women or cleanse women from any discrimination must have its own identity, which is to stand on the path of Islam and not have a conflict with the teachings of Islam. The question that is raised here is, can feminism with these mentioned criteria exist or be formed because in general society recognizes feminism as a Western agenda that disputes authority and opposes religion? The author observes that there are two aspects that need to be taken into account, namely the preparation of the Muslim community and Islamic feminism itself requires an appropriate understanding.

#### Islamic Society

The author sees that there are several dimensions that need to be acquired by society, especially in Malaysia, as a preparation when dealing with feminist groups, namely in terms of knowledge, understanding and awareness:

1. *Knowledge*: The author is of the view that society must have sufficient knowledge about the teachings of Islam so that they are able to then distinguish between Islam and the culture and social perception of society. For example, the Islamic teachings on the education of children are the same between boys and girls. Islam has long recognized equal rights between men and women as early as the birth of Islam itself. The culture of the local community and the social perspectives that were formed taught the community to prefer sons over daughters and daughters were made to remain in the kitchen as well as the space of their involvement in society was diminished. With a deep knowledge of the teachings of Islam, society will certainly not continue to discriminate against women, which will stop the birth of feminism that will eventually resist them again.

2. *Understanding*: With the knowledge of Islam acquired by the society, it will trigger the best possible understanding of women. Understanding will make feminism no longer be seen with a biased view or cynically ridiculed. This is because society will understand that the stream of feminism will not be born if the surrounding situation is pleasant and fair. The birth of feminism must have had some reason to provoke criticism and dissatisfaction among women and still need to be resolved and rectified.

3. *Awareness*: Knowledge and understanding will spark awareness among the society to accept women as a gift of God's creation on this earth alongside men. Women do in fact receive protection in Islam. The rank of women was elevated, and their dignity was elevated from a low and humble status in the *Jahiliyah* (ignorance) period. Islam through Rasulullah has outlined the best legal rights for human beings and the practice of equality between men and women has been prescribed in Islam. Awareness of this perspective has put Rasulullah as the foremost feminist figure in the history of Islam.

If these three dimensions are successfully nurtured in society, the author is confident that society will have a new vista towards feminism. They will also be more open and willing to accept and support the struggle of feminism. Next, ideally this perception would create a positive atmosphere and harmony between feminism and society. It is this external preparation that is seen as the most robust that will be resilient to feminism if the aspired feminism has been successfully formed.



## Islamic Feminism

Feminism in a new perspective is something that is very ideal to be formed. By accepting the fact that women are highly valued in Islam and feminism is a significant *counter check* body for women in society, then the feminist model that needs to exist is a new look, based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, be Islamic shariah-friendly and firm. This firmness indicates being robust or not easily influenced by Western or non-Muslim ideology so that feminists tend to take that foreign thinking and think or believe it is better and beneficial to women than the teachings of Islam itself.

According to the author's analysis, there are four necessary characteristics to reconstruct a pure Islamic feminism. The author sees this as an internal strength that needs to exist for the strengthening of feminism itself. The features are:

1. *Dispute or Conflict with Western Feminism:* The most important feature is that the content in the struggle of feminism is Islamic in nature which evidently is in dispute or contradicts predominantly with the content of the struggle of Western feminism. In general, society recognizes the background of Western feminism with a liberal and humanistic profile as well as turning its back on Tawhid and religious teachings. Thus, this ideal feminism from an Islamic point of view cannot be underpinned by any Western ideology.
2. *National Experience:* The second feature is to possess susceptibility that this claim of Islamic feminism must be based on the experience of localities that vary according to the experience of the respective countries. It needs to be native or 'indigenous' in the sense that it is not nurtured from an external environment that has foreign perceptions, diverse problems, different solutions and has different goals. It must grow natively from the demands of local feminism itself. Nor can it make the experience of individuals or a single person as an issue of struggle and demands.
3. *Fundamentals of the Malaysian Model:* Malaysia generally appreciates the understanding of Ahli Sunnah Waljamaah (ASWJ) as a mainstream tenet. Malaysian Malay Muslims are not allowed to profess and adhere to other streams that are different from the beliefs of ASWJ. The ban on Liberal Islam was gazetted by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) at the 74th Muzakarah on 24-25 July 2006 for violating aspects of the Islamic Faith and Syariah (Muhd Najib et. al 2007: 101). Liberal thinking is also therefore not allowed to be practiced in Malaysia.

## Characteristics of Islamic Feminism

Al-Faruqi (2019) has discussed the characteristics that must be present in an Islamic feminism. She stressed that the Muslim women's movement must primarily see religion as its best companion and supporter, unlike Western Feminism which sees religion as an enemy to its development and survival. She inserted the view that every narration of women in the Qur'an and the names of female figures around the life of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH is an *ideal* example that should be the aspiration of contemporary Muslim women.

She further reminded that all the difficulties faced by women today are not due to Islam and its traditions, but rather are due to foreign ideological encroachment in society, ignorance, distortion of true Islamic teachings, or exploitation of individuals in society. Feminism that desires success in Islam must not be 'chauvinistic' to its interests alone. Islamic tradition teaches that one's success is measured from the virtue benefited to society (Al-Faruqi 2019).

Her last view is the understanding that Islam is an ideology that influences more than just the daily life and rituals of a person and society, as it in fact encompasses social, political, economic, psychological, aesthetic, and other aspects. Thus, Islam and the Islamic tradition are seen as a cohesive source (cohesiveness) to nurture (nurturing) the identity and stability of society to resist all kinds of external influences. Failure to understand this fact or failure to appreciate the importance and common role among male-female Muslims will lead to the failure

of any movement to advocate or empower women in the 'name' of Islam. Only through this recognition (identity and stability) can 'self-respect' be achieved and a healthier climate (healthy climate) for Muslim men and women will emerge (Al-Faruqi 2019).

To conclude, this article has discussed the meaning, growth and development of Western feminism and Malaysian feminism from after independence up until the present. The current Malaysian Islamic feminism is a model of Western feminism which is confrontational with Islam and is always looking for room to record Islamic mistakes in serving women. Thus, this article proposes a new awareness to look at feminism from a positive perspective by looking at some of the criteria it needs to have. A fresh and healthy Islamic feminism turns out to have the foundation of the Quran and Sunnah as its tenet and which recognizes the balanced togetherness of men as human beings and servants to the Creator. The future of Islamic feminism should have the feature of not opposing religion and not being hostile to men as competitors.

### References

- Abdullah Muhammad Basmeih & Muhammad Noor Haji Ibrahim. 1968. *Tafsir Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian al-Qur'an 30 Juz*. Kuala Lumpur: Bahagian Hal Ehwal Islam, Jabatan Perdana Menteri.
- Abdul Rahman Abdullah. 2000. *Wacana Falsafah Sejarah: Perspektif Barat dan Timur*. Kuala Lumpur: Utusan Publication.
- Adiani Husaini & Abdurrahman Al-Baghdadi. 2007. *Hermeneutika dan Tafsir al-Quran*. Jakarta: Gema Insani.
- Anis Sabirin. 1969. *Peranan Wanita Baru*. Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Utusan Melayu.
- Anis Shakila Ismail. 2006. *Pemikiran Islam Liberal di Malaysia: Kajian Terhadap Isu Yang Ditimbulkan oleh Farish Noor dan Syed Akhbar Ali*. Kertas Projek Sarjana Muda Usuluddin. Kuala Lumpur: Akademi Pengajian Islam, Universiti Malaya.
- Bird, Caroline. 1983. Women's liberation. In, *The Encyclopedia Americana*. Volume 29: (111a-111d) International Edition. United State of America: Grolier Incorporated.
- Barett, Michele. 1986. *Women's Oppression Today, Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis*. London: Verso.
- Farish A. Noor. 2000. Let Islam lead the way with its progressive view on sexuality. *New Strait Times*. 4 November. [Retrieved: 9 October 2021].
- Farish A. Noor. 2001. The myth surrounding the Islamic State. *New Strait Times*. 1 December. Retrieved: 9 October 2021.
- Al-Faruqi, Louis Lamy'. 2019. *Islamic Traditions and the Feminist Movement: Confrontation or Cooperation?* <http://www.salaam.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/islamic-traditions-feminist-movement.pdf> [Retrieved: 10 October 2021].
- Grendon, Felix. 1970. Feminism. In, *The Encyclopedia Americana*. Volume 11: (107-112a). United State of America: Americana Corporation.
- Hawkins, Joyce M. (Ed.). 1989. *Oxford Reference Dictionary*. Great Britain: Oxford University Press.
- Hashim Musa. 2001. *Merekonstruksi Tamadun Melayu Islam: Ke Arah Pembinaan Sebuah Tamadun Dunia Alaf Baru*. Kuala Lumpur: Akademi Pengajian Islam, Universiti Malaya.
- Indriaty Ismail. 1996. *Kritikan Feminisme Terhadap Agama: Penyelidikan Teoritikal Terhadap Agama Kristian dan Perbandingannya dengan Agama Islam*. Laporan Penyelidikan KOD P/7/95. Unpublished report. Bangi: Jabatan Usuluddin dan Falsafah, Fakulti Pengajian Islam, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Indriaty Ismail & Ahmad Muhyuddin Haji Hassan. 2021. *Pemikiran Sisters in Islam dan hak asasi manusia*. *Akademika: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 91(1):151-164.
- Janeway, Elizabeth (Ed.). 1973. *Woman: Their Changing Roles*. New York: The New York Times Company.
- Martinich, A.P. n.d. *Britannica.com*. Epistemology. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/epistemology>. [Retrieved: 8 October 2021].

- Muhd. Najib Abdul Kadir, Muhibudin Hassan & Mazlan Ibrahim. 2007. Tafsiran Quran dalam perspektif Jaringan Islam Liberal. *Jurnal Islamiyyat: Jurnal Antarabangsa Pengajian Islam* 29: 93-122.
- Nik Safiah Karim. 1984. *Women in Malaysia*. Selangor: Pelanduk Publications.
- Paulsen, Monrad G. 1983. Women, Legal Rights of. In, *The Encyclopedia Americana*. Vol. 29: (108-110) International Edition. United State of America: Grolier Incorporated.
- Rahimin Afandi Abdul Rahim & Nor Adina Abdul Kadir. 2021. Wacana bias gender dalam masyarakat Melayu di Malaysia: Analisis Kritikal. *The Malaysian Journal of Social Administration* 9 (1): (107-128).
- Sharifah Hayati Syed Ismail. 1993. Penglibatan wanita di dalam politik dari kacamata hukum. *Jurnal Syariah* 1(2): 199-208.
- The New Encyclopedia Britannica*. 1985. "Women's Liberation Movement". United Kingdom: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc. Volume 12: (733). 15th Edition.
- University of Warwick. n.d. Education Studies. "Ontology". <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/ces/research/current/socialtheory/maps/ology/> [Retrieved: 8 October 2021].
- World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY). n.d. *Gender Equity in Islam*. <https://www.iium.edu.my/deed/articles/genderequityinislam.html> [Retrieved: 11 October 2021].
- Yates, Graham Gayle. 1975. *What Women Want*. United State of America: Harvard University Press.