An educational opportunity for (re)-scripting gender justice as an imperative of faith and citizenship: A South African case

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Abstract

The centring of Muslim women in Islam resides in an intertwining historico-politico - theological narrative of gender reform, first promulgated in a 7th century revelation of the Qur'an. Significantly, the gains derived by the women of Islam's first community, have become lost in the dominance of contemporary androcentric-patriarchal interpretations. The argument advanced by this paper is that Muslim educational institutions have a responsibility in (re)-scripting gender justice as an imperative of the scripture; and in establishing resonance between identities of faith and citizenship. I commence by looking at the disjuncture between what Islam says about gender equality, and how it unfolds under the predominant auspices of a patriarchal gaze. As an example of this disconnection, I focus on the trajectory of the 'women in mosques' campaigns in South Africa, spanning from an apartheid to a democratic context – noting that despite, or perhaps, because of far-reaching political change, the resistance encountered by Muslim women has remained the same. Thereafter, I turn my attention to an intertwining consideration: the responsibility of Muslim education in (re)-scripting gender justice as an imperative of the scripture; and the obligation of Muslim education in establishing resonance between identities of faith and citizenship.

Keywords: gender justice; citizenship; 'Women in mosques'; religion; citizenship; South Africa

Introduction

The centrality afforded to Muslim women in Islam resides in an intersectional paradigm between a preservation of values and fundamental reforms, necessitated by a context of a deeply patriarchal 7th century Arabia. From the outset, the Qur'an addresses a specific social milieu, but with a universalist discourse (Abu Zayd 2010). On the one hand, therefore, the Qur'an sets into motion a series of political, social, and economic reform measures, which includes women's right to a contract marriage, to inherit, to control their dower and property, as well as provision and protection for widows and orphans, with a specific emphasis on the girl orphan (Qur'an, 4: 2-7). On the other hand, the centrality of Muslim women derives from conceptions of modesty and purity, and their ensuing roles as custodians of family values. Notably, gender reform is attached to notions of modesty and humility, with the Qur'an asking Muslim women to draw their veils and cover their beauty (24:31; 33:59). There are, however, contesting interpretations as to whether the veil (hijab, niqab, jilbab) is an obligatory garment. While scholars, like al-Qaradawi (1982) considers the veil as binding on

Muslim women, others like Hussain (1984) and Mernissi (1991) maintain that the Qur'an's reference to veiling does not explicitly address women's clothing and should be interpreted as a metaphorical barrier.

These debates notwithstanding, interpretations on modesty, piety and veiling are often extended into arguments for the seclusion and domesticity of Muslim women – interpreted as providing the 'core of female social righteousness' (Stowasser 1994, 98). To Ramadan (2001), however, the prioritisation of the family to Muslim women, neither implies a relegation to the privacy of the family home, nor a passive compliance about their faith. In contrast to what is practiced in some Muslim societies, states Kia (2019), there is no requirement for women to be hidden away in Islam. Conceptions of modesty and piety do not imply confinement to a private sphere; rather, these conceptions pertain as much to Muslim women's conduct in all spheres, as to their treatment. Hence, the Qur'an's uncompromising emphasis on the elevated position of women – 'O Humankind! Be conscious of your Sustainer, who has created humanity out of one living entity, and out of it created its mate, and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women. And remain conscious of God, in Whose name you demand [your rights] from one another, and [reverence] the wombs [that bore you]. Verily, God is ever watchful over you! (4:1). Regard for women is reiterated in Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) last sermon when he deliberately focuses on women and gender justice, a concern which he addresses ahead of that of racial and ethnic injustice: 'O people, it is true that you have certain rights with regard to your women, but they also have rights over you… Do treat your women well and be kind to them for they are your partners and committed helpers.'

Against such a profound historical mingling of the sacred (the Qur'an) being made visible in the social and political realm of the Sunnah (life of Prophet Muhammad PBUH), it is disconcerting to note, whether in Muslim-majority or Muslim-minority countries, the treatment of Muslim women as unequal citizens of their faith. It is not just that Muslim women's historical activism and contributions have been excluded from mainstream interpretations; it is also that this exclusion has allowed a male interpretive privilege to dominate the governance of personal and private Muslim affairs (Wadud 2006). The ensuing absence of women's voices from these interpretations, contends To Wadud (1999, 2), is mistaken 'with voicelessness in the text', and it is this silence that both explains and allows the striking consensus on women's issues among Muslims despite interpretive differences between them. The neglect in understanding the Qur'an as a historical text, has contributed to the failure not only of reading the Qur'an as a complex hermeneutic totality, but the failure of Muslims to engage with its content (Barlas 2001). Consequently, Muslim women might find themselves confronting oppression on two fronts: marriage, divorce and inheritance in the private sphere (Badran 2009), and restriction or prohibition when trying to access the public spaces of education and worship (Auda 2017).

Although the Islamic teachings in many Muslim-majority countries may not be gender discriminatory, the discourses that have been produced and legitimised in the name of religion are often gendered (Shah and Iqbal 2011). For example, in comparison to students at non-religious schools, students at Islamic-based schools in Bangladesh, revealed stereotypical gender attitudes, including unfavourable attitudes about women and their abilities (Asadullah et al 2018). The prevalence of conservative interpretations of Islam in Muslim-majority

countries means that women are often subjected to a politics of exclusion, derived from a denial of women's rights (Abusharaf 2006). Conservative views dictate the social discourse, and in fact mobilise the communities' control over women's choice of economic activities, such as a woman's right to work without the consent of her husband, or the right to travel unaccompanied by a male guardian (Abusharaf 2006). In turn, for various reasons, Muslim women might choose not to exercise their formal legal rights; are unaware of their citizenship rights; perceive the state as un-lslamic; or see their roles as limited to maintaining family stability, which normalises and reproduces discriminatory practices (Abusharaf 2006).

There is a growing critique of Muslim education in western societies and the extent to which they succeed in preparing Muslim students for pluralist democracies (Saada and Gross 2017). Sahin (2018) reports that the pedagogic practice in diverse Muslim formal and informal educational settings, does not show much variation and mostly re-inscribes the existing power relations shaping the society. To him, the juxtaposition of inherited Islamic and borrowed or enforced western secular educational cultures appears to be largely forming mutually exclusive, and often rigid minds within contemporary Muslim societies (Sahin 2018). Muslim communities have continued in reproducing institutions set up by the states of their countries of origin or transnational Islamic revival movements, to maintain the cultural, ethnic and religious ties with home countries (Sahin 2018). Similar trends are evident in the US, where many Muslim-based schools apply Islamic curricula, which are borrowed from Muslim-majority countries, rather than developing ones that are relevant to the multicultural, diverse, and democratic societies in which they live (Ali and Bagley 2013). Recognition of gender, culture and religious difference shaping the human condition, argues Sahin (2018) requires nurturing values of mutual trust, respect, tolerance, justice and dignity through a reflective and open educational process. Absence of such an inclusive, critical and educational awareness, he maintains, may foster the formation of negative attitudes and values that create a culture of suspicion, fear, hatred and rejection of difference and diversity (Sahin 2018).

The primary argument advanced by this paper is that Muslim educational institutions in South Africa have a responsibility in (re)-scripting gender justice as an imperative of the scripture; and in establishing resonance between identities of faith and citizenship. I commence by looking at the disjuncture between what Islam says about gender equality, and how it unfolds under the predominant auspices of a patriarchal gaze. As an example of this inward disconnection, I focus on the trajectory of the 'women in mosques' campaigns in South Africa, spanning from an apartheid to a democratic context – noting that despite, or perhaps, because of far-reaching political change, the resistance encountered by Muslim women has remained the same. As a communal centre of identity, worship, sanctity and belonging, mosques ought to be spaces, unfettered by marginalisation and exclusion. That mosques are exploited into gendered spaces, raises critical questions not only about the dyadic relationship between patriarchy and the treatment of women, but about the interplay between religion and citizenship in a democracy.

Gender inequality as misread

The Qur'an consistently emphasises the interrelationship between acts of justice and righteousness or God consciousness: 'Be just; that is nearer to righteousness' (5: 8; also see 4: 135; 57: 25; 16: 90). Exegetically, explains al-Attas (2005, 23), the concept of justice refers to 'the relational situations of harmony and equilibrium existing between one person and another' – whether in private or public engagements. As such, the Qur'an sets out to provide a universal message, while simultaneously offering a foundational framework for individual conduct by, 'explaining all things' (16: 89). This includes a predominant focus on women, with Wadud (2002) asserting that there are more passages in the Qur'an that address issues pertaining to women, as individuals, as part of a family and, as members of a community, than all the other issues combined.

Hence, we find an unequivocal affirmation of gender equality, coupled with equal responsibility: 'For Muslim men and women – for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant …' (Quran 33: 35); 'And for women are rights over men similar to those of men over women' (2: 226). This sentiment of equality is echoed in a hadith: 'Women are the twin halves of men' (Narrated by Abu Dawood, 204; al-Tirmidhi, 105, from the hadeeth of 'Aa'ishah).[1] The Qur'an clarifies that men are the 'protectors and maintainers of women, because God has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means' (4: 34). Yet elsewhere it also states: 'The Believers, men and women, are protectors one of another' (9: 71); They (your wives) are your garment and you are a garment for them' (2: 187). As Kia (2019) explains, the responsibility of protection or maintenance, as implied in a male's physical strength, does not mean that men have the right to control women's personal, private, and public rights. Women have complete control over their own personal and individual activities; they are considered as autonomous beings – intellectually and spiritually – ultimately accountable for their own actions. The differences, as enunciated in: 'And the male is not like the female' (3:36), pertain to specific rights and responsibilities, and do not infer any hierarchical constructions of superiority or inequality.

Women's autonomy and participation are abundantly evident in the prophetic traditions (Ahmed 1992; Barlas 2002; Wadud 2006). They were not docile followers, says Ahmed (1992, 72), but 'active interlocutors in the domain of faith as they were in other matters.' Historical records show Muslim women attending *halaqas* (study circles) and institutions of learning, studying with both women and men, bringing into contestation constructions of sexually segregated spaces that are commonly presumed to be a defining feature of medieval Muslim society (Makdisi 1981; Afsaruddin 2005; Auda 2017). Esposito (2003) reports that women prayed in mosques unsegregated from men, were involved in hadith transmission, engaged in commercial transactions, and were encouraged to seek and share knowledge. apparent from these accounts is the importance of the masjid (mosque), not only as a communal and formal place of worship, but as an educational site.

Concomitantly, the Qur'an is replete with verses, inviting believers to 'establish prayer' (2: 3; 2:45; 4:103; 5:12; 20:14; 22:41). So, too, it exemplifies the importance of performance of prayers in mosques (20:11). The Qur'an makes no mention of women in the

[1] Hadith (pl. ahadith): Reported statements and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

mosques; it also does not contain a single verse, which prohibits women from participating in the mosque. In light of the comprehensive attention devoted to women in the Qur'an, any prohibition in this regard would have been stipulated.

As a complementary foundational source to the Qur'an, Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said: 'Do not forbid the mosques of Allah to the women of Allah' (Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 900, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 442). The obligation placed on men to attend the Friday congregational prayer (Jumuah), does not extend to women, as expressed in a hadith, 'Jumu`ah prayer is a duty upon every Muslim in congregation, save four: a slave, a woman, a child, or a person who is ill' (Sunan Abu Dawood, 1067). The reason for this is contextually bound to a 7th century Arabia in which, traditionally, women were not obligated to participate in communal gatherings or seek employment, given their primary responsibility of child-rearing. Notably, there is only one hadith, which is often used in justification of the prohibition of women from the mosque – 'It is more excellent for a woman to pray in her house than in her courtyard, and more excellent for her to pray in her private chamber than in her house' (Sunan Abu Dawood, 570). This hadith has a specific context: After Prophet Muhammad stated that praying in the mosque holds more blessings than praying at home, some women complained that their child-rearing responsibilities prevented them from attending mosque, and that men would have a greater advantage than women for receiving such blessings. This hadith, therefore, must be considered within its own context as well as in the context other ahadith. These ahadith confirm the attendance of women in mosques during the prophetic era, but they are also reveal differences in how women accessed and participated in these mosques (see Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 162; 869; 899; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, 445; Sunan Abu Dawood 462; 678).

For Muslims, the mosque is a public expression of Islamic religiosity, communal identity and worship, and serves as a junction for social, intellectual, and cultural services. It is described as belonging to, and for the worship of God alone (72: 18). It is as much a sanctuary for individual reflection and introspection, as it is a haven for the traveler and the destitute. Moreover, in a world of increasing antagonism in Muslim-minority contexts, mosques provide a sense of inclusion and belonging. Various scholars and activists in different settings, however, report mosques as gendered spaces (Lewicki and O'Toole 2017; Nyhagen 2019; Nas 2021). Attempts by women to access and participate in mosques in several Muslim -majority and Muslim-minority countries are viewed as a physical intrusion or condemned as sacrilegious (Hoel 2013; Nyhagen 2019). Social media campaigns and projects in Scotland, the UK and Turkey, reveal that mosque committees (predominantly controlled by men) do not adequately provide for women in terms of ablution facilities and prayer space (Sherwood 2018; Aly 2018; Alyanak 2019). In India, the exclusion of women is so entrenched, that many believe that they are not allowed to pray in the mosque (Johari 2020).

The particularity of South Africa's history lends itself to an inimitable depiction of Muslim women in contexts of oppositional ideologies. Despite the placement of racial injustice as analogous to gender injustice by several Muslim movements during apartheid, advances made in the instalment of a democracy are seemingly not reflected in the right of Muslim women to access a number of mosques. This incongruency raises critical questions

about the role of education in undoing the unequal treatment of Muslim women, and in reconciling identities between faith and citizenship.

Apartheid: a struggle against racial and gender injustice

Muslim women, their concerns as women, as well as members of a specific faith community, are deeply embedded in the struggle against apartheid. The extent of their involvement in various resistance fronts transcended racial, class and religious divides; it also placed them at odds within their own faith community. In mobilising against apartheid, they internalised and foregrounded female oppression as a converging injustice with that of racial subjugation. Their voices were evident in the Muslim Youth Movement (MYM), which, between the period of 1970-1984, positioned itself as the most progressive Muslim organisation in the country in the advancement of women's rights issues (Jeenah 2006). In 1990, the MYM adopted a 'Women's Rights Campaign' as one of its three national campaigns. Among the issues identified by the campaign were: women in mosques; Muslim personal law; and women's leadership (Jeenah 2006). Mobilised by a decision to adopt a more confrontational, approach, several women embarked on nightly efforts to participate in the *tarawih* prayers during the month of Ramadan at a mosque in Johannesburg, in 1994 (same year as South Africa's first democratic elections. Shaikh (1994) provides the following account:

> On the first night we were shouted at, intimidated, and some women's salah [prayers] was broken, after which they left to perform salah at another mosque over five kilometres from here. We did not expect such behaviour from a trustee of a mosque …

The ensuing controversy between the women and mosque committee led to the formation of the MYM Gender Desk. It also gave rise to a change in language: from calling 'for space in mosques', to demanding 'equal access to mosques' (Jeenah 2006, 34).

Jardim (2015) clarifies that except for a few, the majority of the *ulamā* adopted a 'socio-political quietism in the 1950's and 60's, emphasizing religious matters without articulating socially relevant ideas or inspiring greater political activism.'[2] The conservatism among the *ulamā* presented itself in two distinct tropes. On the one hand, the implicit understanding among most of the *ulamā* was that if 'the government allowed Muslims the religious liberty to pray, build mosques and go for pilgrimage they could not engage in *jihad* (struggle) against such an authority' (Moosa 1989, 76).[3] On the other hand, protesting against apartheid, which involved co-operating with non-Muslims and engaging with women 'was not religiously acceptable' (Moosa 1989, 76). The *ulamā's* conservatism and passivism with regards to the prevailing socio-political context reside in understanding their role as limited to maintaining the traditions and spiritual needs of the

[2] Ulamā', singular ʿālim, ʿulamāʾ also spelled ulema refer to those who possess the quality of *ʿilm,* "learning," in its widest sense. In a broad sense, the ulamāʾ include theologians, canon lawyers (muftis), judges (qadis), as well as scholars

[3] At the time, the main Muslim organisations, who articulated a conservative political discourse are the *'u/ama-groups,* chiefly represented by the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC), the *Jamiatul 'Ulamā* (Council of Theologians) of Transvaal, the *Jamiatul 'Ulamā* of Natal and the *Majlisul 'Ulamā* (Council of Theologians) of South Africa (Moosa, 1989).

Muslim community (Moosa 1989). From the perspective of the *ulamā*, this approach ensured not only the preservation of Islamic traditions but allowed Muslim communities to practice their faith without political interference.

A democracy without gender justice

In addition to signaling an ideological end to white supremacy and black oppression, South Africa's democracy beckoned renewed adoptions of citizenship. For some Muslim communities, the idea of expanding their Islamic identity to include that of a South African citizenship presented a negative tension (Omar 2002). The liberalism of South Africa's new constitution, which included the legalisation of abortion, gambling, and pornography, and later, same-sex marriages, are seen as contradictory to an Islamic worldview – a position which, of course, is not limited to Muslim communities. Many Muslim communities began to turn inward, separating themselves from the dominant political discourse, and instead, chose to focus on their own piety and morality (Vawda 2017).

Given the abundance of rights - including a right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion (Constitution of the RSA 1996) - it stands to reason, however, that Muslim communities, have a responsibility in maintaining the contractual relationship implied through citizenship. Preventing Muslim women from accessing and participating in mosques, presents a violation of equality and a right to be treated with respect and human dignity. More importantly, it portrays a misrepresentation of the foundational sources of Islam. Of course, there are certain allowances within a South African democracy, that are incompatible with Islamic values. Similarly, there are certain norms within Islam, that are out of sync with liberal democracies, even considered 'backward', as in Muslim women wearing a hijab. This does not negate the possibility of reconcilability on other fronts. Muslims can remain loyal to their religious identity, while both participating in and critiquing the socio-political identities of their citizenship.

Significantly, Muslim women continue to experience the same kind of barriers in participating in mosques in democratic South Africa, as they did during apartheid. The sprouting of organisations, such as 'Taking Islam to the People' (TIP), and the 'Women Of Waqf' (established in 2018), are a continuation of the struggle for gender equality, expressed during apartheid. The 'Women Of Waqf' emerged as a consequence of being refused entry and accommodation at a local mosque. The woman's section had no speaker connected, which meant that they could not hear the imam and could not participate in congregational prayers. After arranging their own radio speaker, the women succeeded in participating in the congregational prayers, but then the lights were switched off. Next, they were forced out of the small classroom and decided to perform *salah* (prayers) in the cold courtyard of the mosque. Amid all of this, a disturbing video recording shows an enraged, elderly man calling the women 'morons' (Ebrahim 2018).

The incident was widely reported in the media, including a Muslim publication, which referred to the women as 'prostitutes and lesbians' (Patel 2018). In response, the Muslim Judicial Council (MJC) issued a statement that it was 'deeply disturbed at the degrading and vile statements … It is indeed a travesty when women are verbally violated and silence reigns from the male counterparts in our communities' (Patel 2018). In response to the debacle, the

chief theologian and general secretary of the Council of Muslim theologians stated that ‘Women are not forbidden to go to a mosque. However, there are logistical arrangements that have to be in place in order to avoid intermingling the sexes and a compromise of Islamic rules that govern modesty. For these reasons, it has been a position of some Islamic scholars, for generations, to encourage women to offer prayers at home’ (Patel 2018). It is at this juncture that the paradigms between public/private, and between secular/sacred converge into a perplexing paradox of competing interests. Apparent from the chief theologian’s statement is that to retain the sanctity of the mosque, women must be excluded. Concomitantly, the inclusion of women is seen as a diametric undermining of patriarchal hegemony. But the theological centrality of women is not embedded in a male imperative. The challenge, therefore, is that unless, Muslim education willfully disrupts the predominance of skewed androcentric and patriarchal interpretation of the rights of Muslim women in Islam, women will not gain access to an equal and full citizenship within their faith.

Muslim education and a (re)-scripting of gender justice

The relationship between organised religion and citizenship can be a contentious one – as was the case in the misuse of Christianity in the propagation of apartheid. It can be an acrimonious one, where particular religious interpretations can serve as a dissention, tearing people apart, rather than bringing cohesion and peaceful co-existence. The relationship can also be a mutually exclusive one, as demonstrated in secularism’s doctrinal separation between the state and religion. But, for the interest of this paper, the relationship between religion and citizenship can also be mutually beneficial, directed at ensuring belonging and participation. In many ways religious faith is related to citizenship: it is a way into citizenship practice in that religious believers participate in organized faith communities and in the broader societies in which they live, and faith can also provide guidance about what constitutes a good citizen (Nyhagen and Halsaa 2016)

Apparent from the various ‘women in mosques’ campaigns in South Africa – from apartheid to a democracy – is that unless the religious education of Muslims change, the dissemination of patriarchal interpretations will not be questioned, and gender injustice will persist. Muslim education provides one recourse. Gender equality and justice, as enunciated in the paradigmatic foundations of Islam, necessarily finds its conception and articulation within the interrelated epistemological practices of Muslim education – namely, *tarbiyyah* (socialization), *ta’līm* (critical engagement), and *ta’dīb* (just action). It is not only that the Qur’an propagated gender reform; it is that the entire message and objective of Islam is to cultivate a socially just individual and society. If Muslim education is to re-script gender justice as an imperative of the scripture, and as such, establish resonance between identities of faith and citizenship, then the following steps are necessary.

Firstly, Muslim-based schools have to reconsider its curricula. Often, these curricula are limited to the inclusion of Arabic, Qur’anic studies, and Fiqh (Tayob 2015). There is seemingly no content-based evidence of subjects, programmes or initiatives, directed at contemporary issues pertaining to Muslims, either within their faith communities, or as part of a global community (Author and Waghid 2021). There is also no indication that matters pertaining to gender equality and justice is afforded any attention, other than for the purposes of segregation, or gender-based activities. It is necessary, therefore, to re-consider how

gender is presented and taught in the curricula by ensuring a more authentic alliance with the source codes of Islam. Here it is necessary to highlight the centrality of justice not only in relation to gender equality, but in relation to all human engagements, whether private or public. Much can be gained from showing the intersectionality with other forms injustices, such as race, class, nationality, culture, ethnicity and religion.

Secondly, it is useful to discard notions of irreconcilability between religion and democratic citizenship education. In line with historical structures and systems of Muslim missionary schools, established during apartheid, the predominant focus at Muslim institutions continues to be on Qur'anic recitation, jurisprudence, and history, largely through memorisation and rote learning (Waghid 2018). Inadequate attention has been given to possible negative pedagogic and educational implications of memorisation in shaping submissive, foreclosed mindsets and reproducing authoritarian structures within Muslim religious life (Sahin, 2018). Moreover, scant attention is given to critical thinking and consciousness, or promoting the types of values, necessary for the cultivation of democratic citizenship in Muslim-based institutions (Waghid, 2009; Author 2019). Following these concerns, it is necessary to expose students to the liberatory aspects of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, not only as formations of Muslim identities and responsibilities, but as preparation for mutual regard in pluralist societies. The preservation of the foundational tenets resides in critical engagement and deliberation, not in being closed off to the political and social injustices. There are tensions – as made evident in the ongoing mosque campaigns – when Muslims are faced with a disjuncture between what they know about Islam, and what they encounter. Educational sites must cultivate spaces where competing interpretations and perspectives can be deliberated upon. The purpose of education is not limited to a transmission of knowledge. Rather, it is a matter of critically engaging with what is known and what is being taught, as well as open to renewed thinking.

The third consideration involves recognizing the significance of how learners are socialized into gender relations and stereotypes. While curricula and pedagogy have a role to play in cultivating responsible and socially just citizens, more attention, says Biesta (2010, 10), needs to be given to the ways in which citizenship is learned in and through the processes and practices, which make up the everyday lives of young people. The concern for Biesta (2010), therefore, is not only about what young people are subjected to through citizenship education, but how they are socialised into the idea of what it means to be a citizen. While education is concerned with 'wider questions about the formation of human beings and the ways in which they find their place in the world' (Biesta 2007, 26), socialisation has to do with all activities that aim to provide 'newcomers' with the social and cultural tools that allow them to participate effectively in particular forms of life (Biesta 2007). Socialisation, therefore, is as important in terms of contributing to social and cultural continuity, as it is to countering existing hegemonic structures and inequalities. Practical points include the commonly encountered imbalance between a female-dominant teaching staff and a male leadership; affording equal opportunities to all young people; ensuring the recognition of the role of women in Islam's history, and hence, its scholarship.

In concluding, the Qur'anic and prophetic foregrounding of gender equality and justice, reveals a radical break with the milieu and climate of an Arabian society. It reveals a bold rupture, which sought to dismantle a deeply entrenched patriarchy. The matter of gender

injustice, as manifest in the ‘women in mosques’ campaigns, is one which reflects a broader (mis)interpretation of the source codes. Muslim education has a responsibility to itself and Muslims to critique interpretations, which propagate patriarchal and oppressive interpretations. It also has an obligation to (re)-insert women into their rightful historical and contemporary role and position in Islam and Muslim communities; and to respond to any form of injustice, from a purely ethical standpoint. In other words, even in the absence of knowledge of the Qur’an or the *ahadith*, the ethical framework, which dictates the lives and conduct of Muslims, should bring into disrepute any unjust practice. Muslim education undoes itself; it renders itself superfluous if it is unable to assert the responsibility of its voice into social, political and economic dilemmas.

The issue of gender injustice remains one of society’s greatest blights. Its intersectionality across religions, cultures, traditions, and class offers a gripping commentary on the unboundedness and fluidity of patriarchal misogyny. As such, it is firmly located into a crisis of citizenship. It is no coincidence that gender justice was an accompanying discourse to that of racial justice in protesting movements against apartheid. Both perpetuate a harm, which erodes the dignity of what it means to be human, and certainly not only for the victims. In addressing the textual interpretations and socialisations, which inform and shape gender injustice, Muslim education can begin to restore the harm against Muslim women. As recognition of its ethical, social and political responsibility, Muslim education cannot detach itself from the concerns of citizenship.

In summary, this paper has drawn attention to the concern of gender inequality, as enacted in the exclusion of Muslim women from mosques. Despite the foregrounding of gender injustice alongside that of racial injustice, and despite immense political reform in terms of a shift to a democracy, Muslim women continue to occupy positions of unequal membership within their communities of faith. Their ongoing struggle to gain access to their places of worship, brings into stark focus not only the predominance of an unrelenting androcentric-patriarchal (mis)interpretation, but it reveals a tension between the limitations of a faith community and the freedoms of a democracy. In response, I turned my attention to the criticality of a Muslim education, which advocates for a renewed engagement with the foundational texts of Islam, so that women are (re)-inserted into the paradigms of Islam, and the male privilege is subverted. In being unafraid of tackling gender injustice, Muslim education re-claims its accountability to all Muslims, while simultaneously contributing to a just and dignified citizenship.

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