

the filter of harmony and cooperation, it is a non-issue. **Also an obedient wife commands her husband.**

Looking at the second part of the verse. If a woman is disloyal to her husband or shows bad conduct, men are asked to warn them first, then to separate their beds, & lastly, to separate from them. These are drastic disciplinary measures, but these are done gradually in three steps. Why such measures? The behaviours referred to border on delinquency. Delinquent behaviour cannot be corrected by sweet communications! Disciplinary measures need to be taken.

Why has this privilege only been given to men & not to women? The wisdom of this is in the unseen knowledge of creation. This faddal or benevolence given to man also demands that in taking this authority, he is accountable to God. All we can see is that having a consistent authority figure, only brings order & harmony in the family. Of course, not all men & women are following these teachings of the Quran in their relationships. Rather than looking at the verses holistically, they only focus on the ones to their advantage & exploit them. **Men exploit & women rebel.**

Where men have done so, and women have remained ignorant, injustices have taken place even to the point of physical abuse. And women in their ignorance have taken this as their “Islamic” plight. For their own benefit, women need to acquire knowledge from the Quran, become more aware, rally around it, and assert themselves for fairness & justice. Men must understand the Quran with a fair & just mind **without** cultural filters & communicate with each other about these so that they can strive together for betterment in their spiritual path.

Women of all religions & all cultures criticize their husbands to the point of torment. “But my husband is a jellyfish. He makes Charlie Brown look like the Rock of Gibraltar. How can I submit to him & lean on him?”

We should learn that words like “submission” & “obedience” are **not** dirty words. We do exactly these same things in a work environment for money. In the home where we are paid with something far more valuable, “love,” we show gross disrespect. Express some confidence in his abilities instead of running him down, ridiculing, belittling, or comparing him with other men. He will be able to bear a great deal more hardship in the world if he knows that he has a wife at home who admires, trusts & stands by him, whatever happens.

If he gets the same sort of treatment at home that he gets in the working world, he will be tempted to try some form of escape which will lead to unhappiness for all concerned. But the **thought of a smile coupled with a**

**little encouragement will draw him to his home like a magnet.** Do not dominate him. You would lose him.

At the conclusion of this dialogue, the Western woman says: “I can now see from whence you get your clarity, consistency, confidence & self-worth as a woman. Whereas I feel so confused about my identity – Am I a woman or a man in my sexuality? Should I be responsible for my sexuality or indulge in it inconsequentially? Do I think of the rights of my body, before the inception of my baby, or after the inception? Is the role of care taking of my children to be given to society or to myself? Do I really need to compare my intellectual competencies & wisdom used in mothering as inferior to those in a career or are they contextually & equally relevant? Do the norms of this society dictate the fads of my behaviour, or a code of ethics concerned with the welfare of humanity? Those biased movies “Not without my Daughter,” “Obsession,” & films ranging from Hollywood blockbusters to children’s cartoons are depicting “crude & exaggerated” stereotypes of Muslims & perpetuating Islamophobia. For there is a direct correlation between media portrayal & the social experiences of exclusion, hatred & violence. Suppose there were Muslim blockbusters depicting our Western, “free” unmarried pregnant daughters; our adulterous Presidents; our actors/actresses and their many affairs – how would it feel? We certainly are in no position to lecture Muslims, especially Muslim women, on morality. We have deformed images of ourselves in our hypersexualized pop culture. Imagine a poster promoting abstinence: “Virgin: it’s not a dirty word”. You won’t have such posters in Muslim communities, would you?”

The Muslimah, whose modesty helped her to shine & whose humility helped her to triumph, smiled: “The Quran puts it this way; ‘Come **not** near to unlawful sex. **Verily, it is a sin & an evil way.**’ (17:32) With a voice that portrayed guilt & disappointment, the Western woman said: “Why didn’t they tell us that when we were 13?” The nervous laughter that followed this remark quickly degenerated into a pensive silence & a marked note of frustration.

The Muslimah final remarks: “Western woman has been systematically educated to spend her conversational ability upon the most frivolous topics. This has the effect to belittle her range of thought so that she can comprehend only superficialities.”

“Look, take this Quran & read it.” The woman took it with a promise to do just that.

**Young bodies abused by lust leads to souls wracked with regret! Your natural-born modesty is your wealth. Destroy that & you become poorer than a beggar.**

# THE PREFERENCE

MEN ARE THE PROTECTORS & MAINTAINERS OF WOMEN  
BECAUSE GOD HAS GIVEN ONE MORE PREFERENCE...

Women shall have rights **similar** to the rights against them according to what is equitable. But men have a **degree of advantage** over them. **God is Exalted in Power, Wise.” (2:228)**

An **Unrestricted** value is attached to this concept of **Advantage** & men **generalize** it to all aspects of life claiming **superiority** over women

**NO SUPERIORITY...EQUALITY**

Verily, Muslim men & women believers, **obedient** men & women, **truthful** men & women, **patient** men & women, **humble** men & women, **charitable** men & women, **fasting** men & women, **chaste** men & women – those who mention & remember God, men & women, for **ALL** those God has prepared forgiveness & a great reward. Quran 33:35

**“Whoever works righteousness, man or woman & has faith, verily to him/her will We give a new life, a life that is good & pure. We will bestow on such their rewards, according to their actions.”**

## AN OBEYANT

WIFE COMMANDS HER HUSBAND

**A** Muslim woman is walking in a library. A non-Muslim comes to the same aisle. She gives a “look,” “a smirk” to the Muslimah. Questions arise. She begins, “When I see you in hijab, my mind sculpts an image of you. An image created by the filter of Western perception. The mystery behind the hijab takes form, and the picture I get is of one who is medieval, fossilized, repressed, discriminated, victimized, a slave of man, illiterate...”

“And yet, when I look at you over time I get glimpses of you as stable, calm, unwavering, full of undaunted convictions, ready to fight for your beliefs. Who are you? Curiosity possesses me. Let me see if my projections match your reality. Before the delusions of my superiority possess me, let me check the real you.”

So the woman asks a controversial question of the Muslimah, and this is the answer she gets:

**Q.** Do men have an ascribed advantage over women? Western reports from Muslim countries have indicated that men have a definite advantage over women and additionally they have the authority to demand obedience from their wives. And that **men are also permitted to beat women**. Is this true?

**A.** To answer this question it is important to separate practices in Muslim countries from Quranic beliefs. First beliefs. It is important that both men and women have their beliefs straight. Undue generalizations by men have made them subjugate their wives, and simultaneously, ignorance by women has made them either unhappy victims of unfair treatment or totally rebellious toward all of Islam – thereby unjustly turning away from it.

A careful scrutiny of these two most cited verses that give this advantage to men over women are the verses from Sura 2:22 and from Sura 4:34.

The first verse refers to the concept of “darajat” meaning step, degree or level. The second verse refers to “faddala” meaning **preference as a benevolence of God**. We need to understand these concepts before we interpret these verses.

“Darajat,” (step, degree, or level) is something that is earned (43:32). “Darajat also exists between the Hereafter & Earth, and between various levels of Heaven & Hell. When darajah are given to male or female on the basis of their good deeds or piety, there is no discrimination as demonstrated by the following Quranic excerpts:

**“Unto men a fortune from what they have earned, unto women a fortune from what they have earned.”** (4:32)

**“Whosoever does good, male or female, and is a believer, will enter Heaven and not the least injustice will be done to them.”** (4:124)

So when it comes to who has greater advantage with God in terms of deeds, **there is no level or degree given to the male or female**. The darajat for men over women occurs in the Quranic verse thus **“...And women shall have rights similar to the rights against them according to what is equitable. But men have a degree of advantage over them. God is Exalted in Power, Wise.”** (2:228)

This verse is the last verse in a series of verses referring to the required period of separation before claiming a divorce. The degree of advantage refers to man’s being able to individually initiate divorce, whereas a woman can seek divorce only after intervention of an authority. **So, importantly, the advantage is limited to the circumstances of divorce only**. Why this advantage? Most likely it is because it is he, who supports the wife and the unborn baby, and the previous verses, mentioned earlier, are referring to the possibility that during separation the woman may be expecting, and if so, the man needs to give due consideration to taking her back because of his responsibilities towards the unborn child. Hence, he has the responsibility/decision about validating the divorce or taking his wife back.

Yet, in Muslim cultures, an **unrestricted** value is attached to this concept of advantage and men generalize it to all aspects of life claiming superiority over women. This form of **unrestricted** value for all circumstances contradicts

the equity established in the Quran, that each “nafs” (man or woman) is responsible for what it earns. (4:32)

Now the concept of “faddal.” The verse reads: **“Men are the protectors & maintainers of women because God has given one more preference (faddal) over the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient & guard what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty & ill-conduct, admonish them first, then refuse to share their beds & lastly separate from them. But if they return to obedience, seek not against them means of annoyance. God is Most High, Above you.”** (4:34)

This is an often quoted verse for exemplifying the ruthless dominance of patriarchal males demanding obedience from their wives – to the point of disciplining them through physical punishment!

Many translations of the Quran instead of “separate from” use “beat”. However, the choice of “beat/strike” in this example creates a bizarre meaning as the verse is dealing with the issue of resolving a husband/wife dispute, and that if the final step were to ‘beat’ one’s wife then that is **a sure guarantee for ending the marriage rather than fixing it!**

The word ‘Daraba’ has at least 6 meanings in Arabic & are all used within the Quran. Attack (Darabtum); striking (Yadriboona); sealed (Darabna); take-away (Na’drib); cites (Daraba); leave (Darban). The only meaning that fits the verse is “leave”.

But let us analyze it with Quranic wisdom. Firstly, the faddal or preference is related to responsibility. So there is reciprocity between this privilege & responsibility. The fact that it is through God’s benevolence that he gets this faddal, should make a man God-conscious. So, if he is given this authority, it must attach a heavy mandate & responsibility. He **cannot abuse** the faddal. The purpose of this faddal could be attributed to the fact that a family functions harmoniously when there is leadership & authority in it. Can you imagine a family where everyone goes their own way – including children? It would be chaos.

This subtle sense of authority is always constant in the entire family when it is attributed to one person. So, if you see it from the filter of a power struggle – obedience would be a bad word. But if perceived through

**MEN HAVE A DEGREE OF ADVANTAGE OVER WOMEN** (QURAN 2:228)

THIS VERSE IS NOT TO BE GENERALIZED... APPLIES ONLY IN A SPECIFIC CONDITION

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