

GENDER-FRIENDLY PROGRESSIVE INTERPRETATION: THE CONCEPT OF ANGELS IN THE QUR'AN WITH THE PARADIGM OF QIRĀAH MUBĀDALAH

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Abstract

This research use the Qira' ah Mubādalah approach to offer a progressive and gender-sensitive interpretation of the concept of the bidadari (houris) in the Qur'an, particularly for verses often interpreted with a gender-bias and anthropocentric perspective (QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 22-23, QS. Ad-Dukhan: 54, and QS. Ar-Rahman: 72). Using a qualitative method and thematic analysis (maudhu'i), the study found that conventional interpretations have reduced the spiritual meaning into the physical objectification of women. Through the Qira'ah Mubādalah principles of reciprocity and substantive equality, the concept of the bidadari is reconstructed as a symbol of the ideal heavenly spouse (azwaj mutahharah) promised equally to all believers both men and women thereby ensuring eschatological justice. Female believers are guaranteed the right, equivalent to men, to receive a sanctified partner who mutually honors them. For those who were unmarried, widowed/divorced, or for women who experienced polygamy in this world, Paradise promises the perfection of exclusive and equal relationships tailored to their spiritual rank, ultimately transforming the understanding of the huri into a vision of spiritual justice.

Keyword: *Houri, Qirāah Mubādalah, Gender, Interpretation.*

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an as a guideline for the life of Muslims contains many layers of meaning that are constantly explored from time to time. One of the themes that is often discussed both in the theological and social realms is the description of the life of heaven, especially regarding the concept of angels or hur al-'ayn. This term appears in several verses, including those found in QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 22-23, QS. Ad-Dukhān: 54, and QS. Ar-Rahmān: 72. Developed interpretations as seen in many books of interpretation often describe angels in great detail physically as beautiful, virgin women, and created specifically to serve and please believing men in heaven.

This literal interpretation and tends to have a sexuality dimension gives birth to a number of problems. First, he constructs an androcentric narrative of

heaven, in which men are the central subjects of pleasure, while women (in this case angels) are reduced to objects or "gifts" (*al-jā'izah*). Second, this narrative indirectly ignores the position and happiness of believing women in the hereafter. The critical question that often arises is, "Then, what is the equal reward for believing women who have done righteous deeds in the world?"

Tafsir is essentially the product of dynamic negotiation between the text, the interpreter, and its socio-historical reality. Thus, even if an interpretation is placed in a sacred, the status of sacredness is not necessarily attached to the result of the interpretation itself. Because interpretation is relative and contextual, the process of falsification, criticism, deconstruction, and neglect of an interpretation becomes legitimate and essential, especially when the interpretation is considered no longer responsive to the demands of the times and current conditions.¹

In order to realize the Islamic theological belief that the Qur'an is "*shālihun li kulli zamān wa makān*" (relevant in every age and place), the attempt to reinterpret it becomes a necessity. This reinterpretation process is a substantive step that must be taken by the Muslim community to answer various contemporary problems faced in the dynamics of contemporary life.²

In the midst of this academic and social unrest, a fresher and more equitable approach to interpretation is needed. *Qirāah Mubādalah* (*reciprocal reading*), popularized by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, is present as a methodology of interpretation that offers a perspective of reciprocity and partnership between men and women. *Qirāah Mubādalah* does not only read the text from one point of view, but seeks to find the principle of *mutuality* that becomes the universal message of the Qur'an. This approach departs from the belief that the Qur'an is fundamentally on the side of substantive justice and equality, including in gender relations.

This study seeks to re-read the concept of angels using the lens of *Qirāah Mubādalah*. The goal is to reconstruct the interpretation of angels and build a gender-friendly progressive interpretation that not only restores women's dignity

¹ M. Arfan Muammar, *Contemporary Islamic Studies from an Insider and Outsider Perspective* (IRCiSoD, 2017), p. 86.

² Sahiron Syamsuddin, *Contemporary Qur'an Studies: New Discourses of Various Methodologies of Tafsir* (Tiara Wacana, 2002), p. ix.

but also offers a vision of ukhrawi happiness that is more inclusive, just, and spiritual for all humanity, both men and women.

This analysis is based on a typology of interpretations of angels that developed from the classical to contemporary periods. First, traditional interpretations that use *the tahlili* (analytical) approach focus on linguistic studies and tend to be influenced by the subjectivity of the mufasir. The interpretation of this model often gives birth to an understanding of angels that is full of patriarchal nuances. Second, reactive interpretations that although they bring an emancipatory spirit to women, but because they still rely on the tahlili method, produce interpretations that on the one hand follow the old narrative, but on the other hand try to offer a more neutral perspective. Included in this group is the *tafsir* of Al-Misbah by Quraish Shihab. Third, a holistic interpretation that integrates various methods and approaches including a feminist perspective comprehensively. This interpretation seeks to break free from stereotypes that are already rooted in the androcentric framework of interpretation, and actively accommodates women's experiences and imaginations as an integral part of the interpretive process.³

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research design with a critical interpretive approach to examine the concept of angels contained in the Qur'an through the lens of Qirāah Mubādalah. The research is library *research* with a focus on text analysis and contextualization of interpretation. Data collection is carried out systematically through several stages. First, the search and identification of the core verses about angels: QS. Al-Waqi'ah [56]: 22–23, QS. Ad-Dukhān [44]: 54, and QS. Ar-Rahmān [55]: 72. Second, the selection of primary sources is based on the criteria of scientific authority, representation of historical periods, and relevance to the theme of angels. The primary sources used include classical *tafsir* books (*tafsir bi al-ma'tsur* and *tafsir bi al-ra'y*) such as ath-Thabari's *Jāmi' al-*

³ Mida Hardianti and Inayah Rohmaniyah, 'Genealogi, Wacana Dominan Dan Model Penafsiran Bidadari Dalam Al-Qur', *Ushuluddin International Conference (USICON)*, 4 (2020), p. 32 <<https://conference.uin-suka.ac.id/index.php/USICON/article/view/307>> [accessed 31 October 2025].

Bayān, al-Qurthubi's Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān, and Ibn Kathir's Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm; as well as modern interpretations that are responsive to gender issues such as Tafsīr al-Manār, Fī Zhilāl al-Qur'ān by Sayyid Qutb, and Tafsīr Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab. Third, the selection of secondary sources refers to academic works that discuss *Qirāah Mubādalah*, Islamic feminism, and eschatological studies, with priority given to the work of Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, as well as indexed journal articles published in the last 10 years.

Data analysis is carried out through thematic analysis (*maudhu'i*) which is carried out in three systematic phases: The first Descriptive-Explanatory Phase: Identifying and mapping various interpretations about angels from primary sources, followed by analyzing the epistemological assumptions and gender biases that underlie them. Second, the Reinterpretative-Constructive Phase: Applying the principles of *Qirāah Mubādalah* to re-read the verses of the angels. This stage involves *reciprocal reading* between texts about angels and other verses that speak of heavenly pairs (*azwāj mutahharah*) in order to build an inclusive interpretation. The last is the Comparative-Reflective Phase: Comparing the results of the reinterpretation with conventional interpretations to identify paradigm shifts and test the consistency of arguments built on Islamic universal principles (such as justice, benefit).

Methodological triangulation is implemented to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis by using the theoretical-philosophical Triangulation perspective, to Confront the findings of textual analysis with the philosophical framework of Islamic feminism and the theory of gender justice in Islam to test the coherence of argumentation. Triangulation between sources is carried out by using various types of sources (classical interpretations, modern interpretations, contemporary scientific works) and comparing views within them to avoid bias and enrich the perspective of analysis. This multi-layered approach is designed to maintain fidelity to the tradition of interpretation while opening up space for progressive interpretations that are relevant to the contemporary context and uphold the principles of justice in Islam.

DISCUSSION

1. Gender

The term "gender" is etymologically derived from English which literally means 'gender'. This term was then adopted and developed critically in the study of the social sciences to become an analytical concept. In contrast to the common understanding that often equates it with biological sex (sex), social scientists deliberately introduce "gender" as a theoretical tool. The main purpose of its use is to provide a framework capable of dissecting and understanding the complexity of the differences between men and women, particularly in identifying which are natural traits (God's biological and innate creation) and which are social forms.

According to Musdah Mulia, gender is a social construct that distinguishes or in the sense of separating functions and roles between men and women. This distinction does not originate from biological differences or natural nature, but is the result of placement, assignment, and taking roles of each in various realms of life and development processes. Thus, gender is essentially a product of social relations that can change and transform according to the context of the times and the needs of society.⁴ Meanwhile, Mansour Fakih defines gender as a socially constructed behavioral difference between men and women. This concept emphasizes that these differences are not essentially divine nature or God's fixed provisions, but the result of human construction, both male and female, through a socio-cultural process that lasts for a long period of time and continues to develop.⁵ In essence, the concept of gender refers to a set of roles, functions, responsibilities, rights, and behavior patterns that are socially and culturally constructed, and then attached to a person based on society's perception of their gender. In other words, gender is not something that is given or determined absolutely by nature, but the result of the process of socialization, education, and internalization of values in a society at a certain time. Things like the notion that women "should" be meek or

⁴ Musdah Mulia, *Module of Missionary Empowerment Towards Civil Society* (The Asia Foundation, 1999), pp. 126–27.

⁵ Mansour Fakih, *Gender Analysis and Social Transformation* (Pustaka Siswa, 2013), p. 18.

that men "should" be strong and assertive, are examples of gender constructs, rather than the inevitable biological nature.

Thus, the main function of the concept of gender is as a distinguishing tool that clearly separates biological-natural characteristics (such as menstruation, childbirth, and breastfeeding ability in women, or sperm production in men) and socio-cultural characteristics (such as roles as the main breadwinner, childminder, or decision-maker in the family). Biological characteristics are universal and relatively fixed, while socio-cultural characteristics are particular, changeable, and vary between societies and times.

This sorting has very important implications, especially in the study of social justice and the analysis of power relations. By understanding that many of the social roles and expectations attached to men and women are constructs (not destiny or divine nature), the space to criticize, evaluate, and transform unequal or unfair constructions becomes wide open. The concept of gender, therefore, is not just a term, but a critical lens that empowers us to dissect inequality and build more equal relationships.

The concept of gender is used to distinguish men and women based on non-biological aspects, making it different from the term sex which specifically refers to the identification of anatomical and biological differences. While sex focuses on the chemical composition and biological development between male (*maleness*) and female (*femaleness*), gender is more concentrated on social, cultural, and psychological dimensions. Therefore, gender studies specifically highlight the development of a person's *masculinity* (*masculinity/rajuliyah*) and femininity (*femininity/nisa'iyyah*), which are non-biological constructions.

In its use, the term gender is preferred to describe the process of growth and socialization of a man or woman, as it includes roles and identities shaped by the environment. In contrast, the term sex is generally limited to referring to reproductive issues and sexual activity. Thus, gender serves as a broader and dominant framework for discussing socially and culturally constructed differences between the two sexes.

In the contemporary era, the social structure is no longer dominated by the assumption of male superiority alone. Women now have equal access and opportunities to demonstrate their capacity and role in various areas of life. This reality proves that many women are able to occupy positions and carry out functions that are on par with men. Thus, the narrative of male gender superiority as something absolute and permanent is increasingly losing its relevance, along with the increasing reality of women's contributions and achievements in the public and domestic spheres.⁶ In the effort to interpret the verses of the Quran, it is often not balanced with the mainstreaming of gender aspects when understanding them. This then gives birth to the assumption that there is gender bias.

The occurrence of gender-biased interpretations in religious texts can be caused by several main factors. One of them is a mistake in understanding and distinguishing gender and sex terminology when determining social roles. In addition, the dominant interpretive methodology is still based on a textual rather than contextual approach. This is a consequence of the rules of ushul fiqh that are often held by the majority of tafsir scholars, namely "*al-ibrah bi umum al-lafḍzi, lā bi khuṣūṣ as-sabab*" (the legal benchmark is on the generality of the pronunciation, not on the specificity of the reason for the passage of the verse). This situation is exacerbated by the fact that the majority of mufasir (interpreters) of the Qur'an are men, which can indirectly affect the perspective in interpretation.

Several other factors also reinforce gender bias in interpretation. One of them is the perception that the Qur'an is considered to be more in favor of men and reinforces the patriarchal system, an assumption that is often sharply criticized by feminist thinkers because it is seen as detrimental and discrediting to women. In addition, the infiltration of israiliyyāt stories, which are narratives derived from Jewish and Christian traditions that are widespread in the Middle East, has also played a role in shaping and spreading religious interpretations that are full of

⁶ KH Husein Muhammad, *Women's Fiqh: Kiai Reflections on Religious and Gender Discourse* (LKIS, 2001), p. xiv.

gender prejudice in the treasures of Islamic literature.⁷

2. *Qirāah Mubādalah*

The term *Mubādalah* is etymologically derived from an Arabic word that has the root word ba'-dal-lam and means to replace, to change, to exchange, to rotate, to exchange, and the meaning around reciprocity⁸. This word reflects a two-way interaction that is active and reciprocal. Terminologically, *Mubādalah* is understood as an approach to interpreting Islamic texts and contexts that prioritize the principle of *reciprocity* between men and women.⁹

This study was developed by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir. He is a Muslim scholar born in Cirebon on December 31, 1971, to H. Abdul Kodir and Hj. Kuriyah. After completing his elementary education at SDN Kedongdong, Susukan, Cirebon, he continued his secondary studies at MTsN Arjawanangun and MA Nusantara Arjawanangun. From a young age, he has studied at the Dar al-Tauhid Islamic Boarding School in the Arjawanangun area, under the guidance of KH Ibnu Ubadillah Syathori and KH Husein Muhammad, who is known as a pesantren figure with progressive views on Islamic and social issues.¹⁰

He pursued higher education starting from the S1 level in Syria, where he studied at two institutions: the Faculty of Da'wah at Abu Nur University and the Faculty of Sharia at the University of Damascus. He then continued his master's studies in the field of Ushul Fiqh at the International Islamic University, Malaysia. Her education culminated in 2009 through a doctoral program at the International Center for Religious Studies (ICRS), Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, with a focus on contemporary religious studies, especially gender justice in Islam. In addition to actively teaching as a lecturer at the Faculty of Sharia UIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon and at the Fahmina Institute of Islamic Studies (ISIF), he also

⁷ Zaitunah Subhan, 'GENDER DALAM TINJAUAN TAFSIR', *Kafa'ah: Journal of Gender Studies*, 2.1 (2012), pp. 1–10 (p. 2), doi:10.15548/jk.v2i1.34.

⁸ A.W Munawwir, *Kamus Al-Munawwir Arab Indonesia* (Pustaka Progressif, 1997), pp. 65–66.

⁹ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubādalah Progressive Tafsir for Gender Justice in Islam* (IRCiSoD, 2019), p. 59.

¹⁰ Iqro' Katsir, Romlah Abubakar Askar, and Abdul Ghofur, 'Mubadalah and Gender Hadith: A Study of the Thought of Faqihuddin Abdul Qadir', *TADHKIRAH: Journal of Applied Islamic Law and Sharia Philosophy Studies*, 2.2 (2025), pp. 129–43 (p. 132), doi:10.59841/tadhkirah.v2i2.142.

holds the position of Deputy Director of Ma'had Aly Kebon Jambu, Babakan, Ciwaringin, Cirebon.¹¹

Faqihuddin is a key figure and the main initiator of the establishment of the Indonesian Women's Ulema Congress (KUPI), which consistently voices the importance of an inclusive, fair religious understanding, and realizing *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. Her commitment to spreading a friendly Islamic view towards women, children, and other vulnerable groups is realized through the establishment of the da'wah media platform *Mubādalah.id*. Faqihuddin's scientific contributions are also reflected in various important works, including *Qirāah Mubādalah: Progressive Tafsir for Gender Justice in Islam, 60 Hadiths on Women's Rights in Islam, Sunnah Monogamy, and Women Not a Source of Slander*.

The method of *Qirāah Mubādalah* aims to synergize the gender differences between men and women by placing the relationship between the two as a partnership based on the principle of complementarity and accompaniment. This approach adheres to the moral message of the Qur'an regarding the importance of being fair, both in the interaction between fellow Muslims and between fellow human beings in general. However, this message of justice is often hampered by traditional interpretations of Qur'anic texts that tend to place one gender, usually male, in a more superior or dominant position.

Such gaps in interpretation are often closely related to the characteristics of Arabic as the language of the Qur'an, which inherently distinguishes words based on gender (masculine and feminine). This linguistic characteristic has implications for many Qur'anic texts that literally place men as the main subjects (perpetrators or intended ones), while women are often represented only as objects (the subject or as complements), which in turn reinforces gender-biased interpretations.

Arabic has the unique characteristics of being a gendered language, which means it structurally distinguishes between the sexes (masculine and feminine) in

¹¹ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah Tafsir Progresif Untuk Keadilan Gender Dalam Islam*, p. 614.

almost all categories of words, including nouns, verbs, and pronouns. Since the Qur'an and Hadith were revealed and documented in the Arabic medium, these two sacred texts inherently carry with them linguistic characteristics. This attachment to this masculine-feminine language structure is often one of the factors that indirectly contributes to the birth of various religious interpretations that are considered less gender-fair, especially when universal texts are understood literally.

To overcome this challenge of gender-biased interpretation, the concept of *Mafhūm Mubādalah* was introduced, which literally means a reciprocal or reciprocal perspective. This approach exists to complement and improve two already common methods of interpretation. The first method is *tanshīsh*, which is an interpretation that limits the law to only certain genders explicitly mentioned in the text. The second method is *taghlīb*, which is the practice of inserting or generalizing women into the form of words or sentences that are grammatically masculine, but often still maintain masculine supremacy in their understanding.¹² As a theological and sociological perspective, *Mubādalah* fundamentally believes in an equal reciprocal relationship between men and women. This concept rejects the hierarchical view in which one gender is superior to the other.¹³

Furthermore, as a method of reading religious texts, *Mubādalah* establishes the rule that the core message contained in the text must be considered applicable to both genders, whether the text is grammatically formulated in masculine or feminine form. The main condition for the application of this rule is as long as the values contained in the text are universal and cross-gender, namely the values of goodness, justice, or welfare that are not limited by biology.

In understanding the text of the Qur'an, *Qirāah Mubādalah* classifies it into three categories. First, *Mabadi'*, which is a text that contains fundamental and

¹² Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 'Mafhūm Mubādalah: Efforts to Understand the Qur'an and Hadith to Affirm Islamic Reciprocal Justice in Gender Issues', *Indonesian Islamic Journal*, 6.02 (2016) <<https://jurnalislamindonesia.isif.ac.id/index.php/Jurnal-Islam-Indonesia/article/view/28>> [accessed 12 October 2025].

¹³ Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, 'The Issue of Domestic Violence (KDRT) in Texts and Studies of Hadith Interpretation', *Indonesian Islamic Journal*, 2.01 (2010), pp. 1–34.

universal Islamic values, such as monotheism, maqāṣid syarī'ah, equality, humanity, and justice. Second, *Qawā'id*, which is a text that contains basic principles applied in specific areas, such as honesty and mutual benefit in economic transactions, or the value of sakinah in the marriage relationship, as well as respect for the dignity of the spouse. Third, *Juz'ī*, which is a text that regulates detailed and specific provisions, such as rules regarding family maintenance or the fulfillment of sexual needs in a husband and wife relationship.¹⁴

The three levels of text, namely *Mabadi'* (universal value), *Qawā'id* (applied value of field), and *Juz'ī* (specific rule) must be understood sequentially and must not be interpreted in contradiction with each other. Through this hierarchical understanding, the *Qirāah Mubādalah* method became very effective in enabling the texts of the Qur'an to be interpreted in the spirit of monotheism, which placed men and women in an equal and equal position. This principle becomes crucial, especially in the face of texts that literally or traditionally tend to reflect gender bias. *Qirāah Mubādalah* plays a role in transforming a negative dichotomous point of view into a positive synergy in responding to differences between humans. This approach is very important to transform relationships that were initially unequal into just and equal relationships.¹⁵

The application of the interpretation approach of *Qirāah Mubādalah* is carried out through a series of systematic steps¹⁶. The first stage is an attempt to seek and explore the universal principles of Islam that underlie and transcend gender differences. These principles must be understood through the lens of the values of mutual benefit (good or benefit) for men and women, which are determined based on the standards of religious sharia while taking into account the prevailing traditions or cultures (*urf*). Its main focus is to find an ethical and theological foundation that applies to all people without gender exceptions.¹⁷

¹⁴ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mublah Progressive Tafsir for Gender Justice in Islam*, p. 34.

¹⁵ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubadalah Tafsir Progresif Untuk Keadilan Gender Dalam Islam*, p. 35.

¹⁶ Anisah Dwi Lastri P, 'QIRĀAH MUBADALAH AND THE DIRECTION OF PROGRESS OF GENDER JUSTICE INTERPRETATION: THE APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF RECIPROCITY TO Q. S. ALI IMRAN: 14', *Muā'şarah: Journal of Contemporary Islamic Studies*, 2.1 (2020), pp. 53–57 (p. 55), doi:10.18592/msr.v2i1.3655.

¹⁷ Kodir, *Qira'ah Mubis Progressive Interpretation for Gender Justice in Islam*, p. 200.

The second stage involves an attempt to find the main idea of the verse without being tied to the gender of the object explicitly mentioned in the text. This method assumes that the verses of the Qur'an that mention the specific role of men or women are mostly examples of implementations tied to a specific (contextual) space and time when revelation was revealed. Therefore, in different contexts, interpreters are obliged to delve into and consider the contemporary realities that exist between men and women. Interpretation can no longer be seen only textually, but must be contextual.

The third step that is the culmination of this method is to give the main idea that has been obtained from the previous stage to the sex that is not mentioned in the verse. If a verse is literally addressed to men, then the principle of reciprocity (*Mubādalah*) demands interpretation to see how the teachings also apply and bring benefits to women. Conversely, if the verse is addressed to women, then it is sought for the benefit of men.¹⁸

3. The Verses of the Angels

The concept of angels or *hūr al-‘ayn* is explicitly mentioned in the three suras of the Qur'an which are classified as Makkiyah, which descended during the period of da'wah in Mecca where the main focus of the verses was the affirmation of the oneness of Allah, the Day of Resurrection, and the reward in the hereafter. These three verses are the pillars of the Qur'an's description of the heavenly pleasures promised to the pious.

First, QS. Al-Waqi'ah [56]:22-23 states, "Wa *hūrun* ‘īn. *Ka-amthāli al-lu'lū'i al-maknūn*" ("And (there are) angels who are observant, like pearls that are well kept"). This verse is located in a long series of descriptions of the blessings of heaven received by *ash-hāb al-yamīn* (the right). The word *hūr* is the plural form of *hawrā'*, which linguistically means a woman who has dark black eyes on her pupils and very clean white on the other part, signifying clarity and beauty. According to al-Rāzi in his commentary, the definition of a woman as *al-haurā'*

¹⁸ Muslih, 'Menilik Pendekatan Tafsir Ala Qiraah Mubadalah', Personal, *Keadilan dan Kesetaraan Gender - Mubadalah*, 30 November 2023 <<https://mubadalah.id/menilik-pendekatan-tafsir-ala-qiraah-mubadalah/>> [accessed 12 October 2025].

does not only refer to the beauty of the eyes, but must also be accompanied by skin that is as white as her beautiful eyes. According to him, *al-hūr* basically refers to the nature of the skin being white (*al-baidā'*) and clean.¹⁹ The inherent *nature of 'īn* strengthens the meaning of clarity and greatness of the eye. The parable of the "hidden pearl" (*al-lu'lu'i al-maknūn*) emphasizes the metaphor of their purity, beauty, and preservation from all stains.

Second, QS. Ad-Dukhān [44]:54 reads, "*Ka-dzālika wa zawaqīnāhum bi-hūrin 'īn*" ("Thus, and We marry them with observant-eyed angels"). The context of this verse is the conclusion of the description of the retribution for the righteous (QS. Ad-Dukhān: 51-54). The key word in this verse is *zawaqīnāhum* ("We marry them"). In Arabic grammar, this form of the verb uses the dhamir (pronoun) *hum* which refers to a man. This then becomes the root of the problem of androcentric interpretation, because it seems as if the subject who is married to an angel is a mere believing male.

Third, QS. Ar-Rahmān [55]:72 reveals, "*Hūrun maqṣūrātun fī al-khiyām*" ("Angels who are pinned in tents"). This verse is one of a series of verses that end with the rhetorical question, "Which of your Lord's favors do you deny?" that repeatedly reminds people of His gifts. The phrase *maqṣūrātun fī al-khiyām* becomes very crucial. The word *maqṣūrāt* comes from the root *qaṣara* which means to restrict or fence, often interpreted as "to be pinched" or "protected". While *al-khiyām* means magnificent tents. This picture depicts a situation in which the angels are in a place of protection and glory.

The classical interpretation of the above three verses tends to describe angels in very physical and detailed narratives, often focusing on sensory gratification for believing men. Imam al-Qurthubi (d. 671 H) in interpreting QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 22-24, describes angels as beautiful women whose skin is very white and their eyes are very black. Al-Qurtubi quotes a hadith which means:

... *Allah created the Angel (al-Hūr al-'Īn) in such a way that from the toes to the knees it was made of za'farān (kuma-kuma), from the knee to the breast*

¹⁹ Fakhr al-Dīn Al-Rāzī, *Mafātīh Al-Ghayb* (Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2000), pp. xxvii, 254.

it was made of very fragrant musk oil (misk al-adhfar), from the breast to the neck it was made of grayish-white ambergris (al-'anbar al-asyhab), and from the neck to the head it was made of white camphor. This angel wears seventy thousand jewels (hullah) that resemble the flowers of syaqā'iq an-Nu'mān...

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This kind of quantitative narrative is very strong in some of the classical books of commentary. However, it is important to know that this kind of narration by hadith scholars and researchers is often considered weak (*dha'if*), very weak, and some even call it false (*maudhu'*), because of its excessive detail and the chain of narration. This narration is more part of *the isrā'iiliyyāt* or *mau'izhah* (advice/motivation) literature than the sahih hadith of the Prophet.

Similarly, Al-Thabari in his *Tafsīr*, when explaining QS. Ad-Dukhān: 54, emphasizes that angels are "their wives" (believing men). He emphasized that angels are specially created, not of the human type, and they will be companions who always love and never hate. Al-Thabri says what it means:

... As We bestowed upon these righteous people in the Hereafter honor by Entering them into the Paradises and We clothed them in them with thin silk cloth (sundus) and thick silk (istabraq), so We glorified them by marrying them in them with angels (hūr) of women who had beautiful eyes and very white skin.... ²¹

This interpretation, of course, is within the framework of *male-centered* relationships. Angels are depicted as entities that exist to fulfill male fantasies and emotional-spiritual needs. Beautiful-eyed, fair-skinned, wearing thin clothes on the inside and thick on the outside. Especially when the verses about angels are compiled, it will further add to the androcentric impression.

The first characteristic of the Hurun 'Ain focuses on the origins of creation and their virginity condition. They were created directly by Allah without going through the process of birth, as stated in QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 35. This creation produced them in a virgin state (*abkār*), as affirmed in QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 36. Their peculiarity and purity are further demonstrated by the fact that they have never been touched by humans or jinn, as described in the Qur'an. Ar-Rahmān: 56 and 74, made them holy and pure beings. Furthermore, the Qur'an describes their

²⁰ Al-Qurtubī, *Al-Jāmi‘ Li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān* (Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964).

²¹ al-Thabari, *Jami‘ al-Bayan Fi Ta‘wil al-Qur’ān* (Dar al-Ma‘arif, 1969).

beauty and appeal. They are described as very beautiful, with beautiful faces and ethics (QS. Ar-Rahmān: 70 and QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 23). The beauty of their eyes is particularly emphasized, characterized as beautiful eyes (*'īn*), a concept found in QS. Ad-Dukhān: 54, QS. At-Tūr: 20, QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 22, and QS. Ar-Rahmān: 72. In addition, their skin is said to be very white and clear, as stated in the QS. Ar-Rahmān: 58 and QS. Aṣ-Ṣāffāt: 49, affirms the perfection of their heavenly appearance. Another important characteristic is related to their residence and loyalty. They inhabit the tents of Paradise (*maqṣūrātun fī al-khiyām*) (QS. Ar-Rahmān: 72), which implies protection and honor. Their loyal nature is manifested in the ability to keep their eyes (*qāṣirāt al-ṭarf*), meaning that their eyes are only fixed on their mates, never glancing at the other. This trait is mentioned in QS. Aṣ-Ṣāffāt: 48, QS. Ṣād: 52, and QS. Ar-Rahmān: 55. They were created of the same age (*atrāb*) as their spouses in heaven (Qur'an. Ṣād: 52, Qur'an. Al-Waqi'ah: 37, and QS. An-Naba' : 33), guarantees perfect harmony and compatibility. The pinnacle of their glory is their status as holy couples (*azwājum muṭahharah*), which is alluded to in the Qur'an. Al-Baqarah: 25, QS. Ali 'Imrān: 15, dan QS. An-Nisā': 57 which shows the purity of all impurities, menstruation, and worldly shortcomings, making them a source of eternal happiness and serenity.²²

Modern interpretation, although it has begun to simplify, often does not completely come out of the same paradigm. The Tafsir of Al-Azhar also describes angels by referring to physical beauty. Although Hamka emphasizes that the highest pleasure in heaven is the pleasure of Allah, and physical pleasure is a metaphor for spiritual pleasures that cannot be expressed in the language of the world, the description of angels as "very beautiful women" to "righteous men" remains dominant. He included a rhyme for bidaari in his commentary²³:

*Butterflies fly in the hamlet,
Rivets playing glass
Not a dead slave being poisoned
Stabbed to death in the corner of the eye*

²² Klawing Arjuna, 'Hurun 'Ain Dalam Al Quran Dan Implikasinya Pada Kesetaraan Gender' (unpublished, UIN Saizu, 2022), p. 31.

²³ Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* (Yayasan Nurul Islam, 1965), Juz 5, p. 6074.

More contextual things can be found in Tafsir Al-Misbah, When giving Tafsir QS al-Dukhan, Quraish Shihab revealed that the word *hur* is the plural form of the word *haura'* which at the same time has two designations of meaning, namely the first refers to the feminine type and the second to the masculine type. This means that *the word hur* is a gender-neutral word, it can mean a man, but it can also mean a woman. This is what makes Al-Misbah's tafsir can be classified as a gender-friendly Tafsir.²⁴

The word *hur* as referred to refers to female heavenly beings who were created especially for the male inhabitants of heaven, not to refer to their wives who also entered heaven. Regarding whether the women who dwell in heaven get similar partners, it seems that they are not, because by nature women tend to be monogamous. Further, there is no need to worry that wives who have lived with their husbands on earth will feel jealous or envious, for in the last day, God will remove all forms of malice and jealousy from the hearts of all the inhabitants of heaven. (read QS. al-A'raf [7]: 43).²⁵

Quraish Shihab emphasized that angels are not only interpreted as objects of desire fulfillment, but also as symbols of beauty and goodness inherent in heaven. The emphasis in this case is essentially an attempt to balance traditional understandings by directing a focus on the spirituality dimension and away from interpretations that are sexual in nature.²⁶

Nadirsyah Hosen gives the perspective that the Qur'an offers the promise of angels and all its beauty to men who are seen as "inferior" beings because in the world they (in the pre-Islamic context) were accustomed to marry many women, while Islam came to limit it to four wives. On the other hand, women are also seen as creatures who are inherently "honorable", so they do not need similar lures,

²⁴ Mamluatun Nafisah, 'Narasi Bias Gender Dalam Tafsir Nusantara':, *Al-Fanar : Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir*, 5.2 (2022), pp. 149–65 (p. 164), doi:10.33511/alfanar.v5n2.149-165.

²⁵ Quraish Shihab, *Tafsir Al-Mishbah: Pesan, Kesan Dan Keserasian al-Qur'an* (Lentera Hati, 2002), p. Jilid 13 hal 25.

²⁶ Ririn Muktamiroh, 'Reinterpretasi Bidadari Perspektif Quraish Shihab Dalam Tafsir Al-Misbah Dan Implikasinya Terhadap Isu Bias Gender', *Mashahif: Journal of Qur'an and Hadits Studies*, 3.3 (2023), p. 12 <<https://urj.uin-malang.ac.id/index.php/mashahif/article/view/7554>> [accessed 31 October 2025].

even without the promise of a nun, women are considered to have been willing to accept the teachings of Islam.²⁷

From the search for the conventional interpretation above, at least three main gender problems and biases were identified. First, Objectification and Reduction of Women. Angels are reduced to mere objects of physical pleasure (*al-ladzzah al-jismiyyah*). Highly detailed descriptions of their physical beauty such as white skin, beautiful eyes, and sexual purity (virginity) without being balanced with descriptions of their spiritual qualities, intelligence, or personality, reflect the way women are viewed primarily by their physical and sexual values. This has the potential to reinforce stereotypes that are detrimental to women in the world.

Second, the Androcentric Construction of Heaven. The narrative built is a narrative "for men, by angels". The pronoun *hum* in *zawwajnāhum* is consistently read as male, while the question of who is the mate for believing women in heaven is often answered with the simplistic that their husbands on earth will accompany them, or that they will be "beautified" for their husbands. This answer is not equal, because it does not create a narrative of a new couple that is specifically created as a "gift" for women, as angels are for men. This creates an inequality in the eschatological imagination.

Third, the abandonment of the principles of justice and reciprocity (*Mubādalah*). Existing interpretations do not reciprocate these verses with other verses that speak of couples in heaven. For example, QS. At-Taubah [9]: 72 and QS. Yāsīn [36]:56 mentions the term *azwāj mutahharah* (purified couples) for all the inhabitants of paradise, without gender specification. With an excessive focus on angels for men, the old interpretation ignores the possibility that this concept of the "sanctified couple" is universal and reciprocal, which also includes the ideal partner for the believing woman. Even Quraish Shihab when giving an interpretation of the meaning of angels as in QS. Waqi'ah [56]: 22-24, he asked for QS. ad-Dukhan [44]: 54 or ar-Rahman [55]: 72. This problem then requires a

²⁷ Nadhirsyah Hosen, 'Adakah Bidadara Di Surga Untuk Perempuan?', n.d. <<https://islam.nu.or.id/ilmu-tauhid/adakah-bidadara-di-surga-untuk-perempuan-iIiPS>> [accessed 13 October 2025].

fresher and more just approach to interpretation, such as *Qirāah Mubādalah*.

4. Redefinition of the term "*hurun 'byn*"

Conventional readings of the term *al-hur al-'ayn* have standardized understandings that tend to be both literal and physical. *Qirāah Mubādalah* offers a deconstructive approach to unravelling this literal meaning and delving into the universal values contained in it. This deconstruction is not to reject the text, but to free it from the shackles of a single reading that has obscured the spiritual and just message it contains.

First, deconstruction of the meaning of the word *hur*. The dominant interpretation defines *hur* narrowly as an "angel" who is a special non-human created being. However, linguistically, the root word *ha-ra-ra* also contains the meaning of freedom and purity. The word *hur* refers to everything that is pure and free from defects²⁸. Thus, the reading of *Mubādalah* invites us to see *hur* not merely as a physical entity, but as a metaphor for a pure spiritual state free from all impurity of heart and sin. Within this framework, every inhabitant of heaven, both male and female, will attain the condition of becoming *a hur* in the sense of a pure and liberated soul.

Second, the deconstruction of the nature of '*ain*'. The overemphasis on the beauty of the physical eye has obscured the deeper symbolic meaning. The word '*ain*' in Arabic not only means eye, but also represents the essence, source, and substance of something. In *Qirāah Mubādalah*, '*ain*' can be read as a symbol of clear spiritual insight, sincerity, and depth of soul. The nature of '*ain*' indicates the quality of inner vision that is able to penetrate the essence of truth. Thus, *hur al-'ayn* can be understood as heavenly couples who have spiritual depth and purity of heart, who look at each other with deep affection and understanding.

Sayyid Quṭb adds the caption by stating that the phrase "there are angels with observant eyes like well-preserved pearls" is a metaphor for psychological and spiritual meaning.²⁹ The angel, as an entity in the eschatological narrative of

²⁸ Al-Asfahānī, *Mu'jam Mufradāt Alfāz al-Qur'ān* (Dar Al-Fikri, 1996), p. 352.

²⁹ Sayyid Quthub, *Tafsir Fi Zhilaalil Qur'an*, Terj. *Fi Zhilalil Qur'an* (Daar el-Surq, 1972), p. 380.

Islam, is not only a symbolic figure, but has spiritual characteristics that are deeply integrated with the concepts of morality and psychology in the Islamic tradition. They represent the noble moral and ethical values that are the foundation of Islamic teachings, as well as the personification of a positive and healthy psychological condition.

As the embodiment of spiritual goodness, Angels can be understood as an ideal model of karimah morality in an Islamic perspective. They are known by their sincere and selfless love for their heavenly spouse, as well as by their unwavering commitment to maintaining eternal fidelity in a sacred bond. Through this lens, Angels are not only seen as part of the promise of ukhrawi enjoyment, but also as an embodiment of the noble values of human relations that are idealized in Islam.³⁰

Third, the deconstruction of the status of angels as "gifts". The narrative that declares angels as *jā'izah* (gifts) for believing men needs to be reviewed through the principle of reciprocity. *Qirāah Mubādalah* offers the reading that if a believing man is entitled to an ideal heavenly partner, then in a fair and reciprocal manner, the believing woman is entitled to the same. The verses about *azwaj mutahharah* (purified couples) in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 25 and QS. Ali Imran [3]: 15 actually reinforces this view, because it uses language that is inclusive and gender-incomprehensible. The principle of *Mubādalah* rejects all forms of one-way and non-reciprocal relations, including the concept of ukhrawi enjoyment.

This deconstruction leads us to a more progressive understanding of *al-hur al-'ayn* not as an object of sexual pleasure, but as a symbol of the perfection of spiritual relations in the afterlife. They represent the conditions in which every human being, male or female, will find a partner who reflects his or her own spiritual purity and depth, in a mutually enriching and reassuring relationship.

³⁰ Ahmad Zulfa Ridhaka and Malia Anisa Fitri, 'Analysis of the Spiritual Character of Angels in the Context of Islamic Morals and Psychology', *Exact Journal: Student Studies*, 1.2 (2023), pp. 1–18 (p. 14).

5. Reading the verses of angels with the paradigm of *Qirāah Mubādalah*

The reading of the *Mubādalah* of the angelic verses is carried out through a systematic methodological stage, with the aim of finding a paradigm transformation. The strategic steps can be described in three stages as in the previous section, namely the aspects of *Mabadi'* (universal values), *Qawā'id* (applied values of the field), and *Juz'ī* (specific rules).

The first stage is to explore the principle of Islamic universality. The first and most fundamental step in the *reading of the Qirāah Mubādalah* of the angelic verses is to place the texts consciously and critically within the framework of the principle of Islamic universality. This approach departs from the belief that the Qur'an, as a guide for all mankind (QS. Al-Baqarah: 185), contains core messages that are eternal and applicable across the ages. Universal principles such as justice ('*adl*), benefit (*maslahah*), and recognition of equal human dignity (*karamah insaniyah*) should not be set aside, but should be used as the main lens to assess and understand every narrative contained in it, including the narrative about the afterlife.

Adhering to this framework, any description of heaven and all the eschatological promises in it, including the concept of angels, must be read in a spirit that is in harmony with those universal values. The implication is that it is impossible for an interpretation that is contrary to justice, let alone one that creates or justifies gender inequality, to be considered an authentic understanding. Because, it is impossible for Allah the Most Just to promise a situation in the hereafter that actually confirms the injustice that is often criticized in the world. The eschatological understanding must reflect the perfection of divine justice in its entirety.

The methodological consequence of this step is the rejection of the reading of angelic verses in isolation and literal. Instead, these verses must be contextualized in the overall message of the Qur'an about justice and equality. If there is a tension between a certain description of an angel and the principle of universal justice, then the universal principle must take precedence. This does not mean ignoring the text, but rather doing a deeper interpretation to find a meaning

that is in harmony with the attributes of Allah the Most Just and the Most Wise.

This stage of exploring the principle of Islamic universality serves as a solid ethical and theological foundation. She ensures that the next interpreting process is not stuck on justifying patriarchal cultural bias or affirming unequal gender stereotypes. Rather, it is this foundation that paves the way for a more progressive and just reading, in which the heavenly promise is understood as the ultimate manifestation of inclusive divine justice, reserved for all His faithful servants, without discrimination on the basis of sex.

Next, the second stage in this reading is to break free from the shackles of gender assumptions that have settled in conventional interpretations. At this stage, the three verses about angels (QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 22-23, QS. Ad-Dukhan: 54, and QS. Ar-Rahman: 72) is not necessarily read as an exclusive promise to men, but rather as a universal description of the qualities and essence of the heavenly couple. This liberation from gender prejudice allows the text to be read in its purity of message, before being given a relational context. This step is important to avoid the androcentric bias that has unwittingly shaped the interpreter's point of view for centuries.

This reading free from gender assumptions first reveals that the main focus of the verse is not on physical attributes, but on sublime spiritual qualities. The nature of *'in*, which is often translated as "observant," is shifted from the mere beauty of the organs of sight to a deeper mental capacity. The term is read as a metaphor for spiritual acumen (*basirah*), clarity of heart, and intuitive ability to recognize and witness the divine essence. In this framework, the "observant eye" becomes a symbol of perfect spiritual insight, a quality that every believing soul, regardless of gender, desires.

Furthermore, the parable "like a pearl that is well stored" (QS. Al-Waqi'ah: 23) and the image of "being pinned down in tents" (QS. Ar-Rahman: 72) has gained new emphasis. These two metaphors are no longer seen merely as depictions of physical safety or isolation, but rather as symbols of the purity, glory, and high maintenance of all forms of worldly deficiencies and stains. A preserved pearl symbolizes priceless and protected value, while a tent symbolizes honor and

a sacred space of privacy. Both describe the ideal condition of a promised entity in heaven.

Furthermore, the key phrase *zawwajnāhum* ("We marry them") in QS. Ad-Dukhan: 54 read in a new light. The pronoun -hum (they) is no longer assumed a priori to refer only to believing men, but is left open as a common pronoun that can include all believers. This reading allows the verse to be understood as a universal promise of the perfection of relationships in the hereafter, where each soul will be paired (*zawwaja*) with a spiritually worthy partner. This shifts the focus from "who gets what" to "the promised nature of heavenly relations".

Thus, this stage succeeds in isolating the intrinsic values contained in the angel's description: spiritual acumen, holiness, glory, and perfection of relationships. These values are universal and desired by every believer, both male and female. The concept of a heavenly partner who is observant, holy as pearls, and in a place of honor then emerges not as a gender-biased image, but as an ideal quality standard for a relationship in the realm of eternity.

Finally, this stage of liberation from gender assumptions serves as a solid foundation for the next step of interpretation. By first agreeing that the heavenly qualities described are universal values, the next step applying the principle of reciprocity becomes smoother and more logical. If these noble qualities are promised, then they must be read within the framework of a comprehensive justice, which will ultimately lead to inclusivity and reciprocity in interpretation.

In the third stage, find the main idea of the angel verses. After releasing the reading from gender bias, the third stage is to deduce the universal main idea of the three verses. Through thematic analysis, the main idea of the perfection of spiritual relationships in the hereafter is found. These three verses collectively describe the perfection of relationships in the afterlife. It is not just physical pleasure, but rather the realization of a perfect spiritual relationship between fellow inhabitants of heaven. Every believer, regardless of gender, will get a partner who has the highest spiritual qualities, namely observant (has spiritual insight), holy as a stored pearl, and preserved in glory.

The next idea is the concept of an equal heavenly pair. The second main idea is the concept of equality in ukhrawi enjoyment. If in QS. Ad-Dukhan: 54 *Zawwajnāhum is mentioned*, so according to *Mubādalah*, a believing woman is also entitled to a similar promise. This is reinforced by QS. Yasin: 56 who states "they and their partners" in gender-neutral language. the imbalance in the heavenly imagination is precisely contrary to the principle of Divine justice.

In addition, the idea of supreme spiritual fulfillment was found as the right of all believers. The description of angels with all their noble qualities is a metaphor for the spiritual satisfaction that every human being will experience in the hereafter. Both believing men and women will experience spiritual refinement where they will be paired with spiritual entities that correspond to their degree of faith.

By going through these three stages, the reading of *the Mubādalah* succeeds in transforming the understanding of angels from a gender-biased concept to a universal and just spiritual vision. The verses about angels are no longer understood as sexual promises to men, but rather as a description of the perfection of spiritual relationships that will be enjoyed by all believers in the hereafter.

Dengan demikian, Penelitian ini mengungkap enam transformasi paradigma dalam pemahaman konsep bidadari melalui penerapan *Qirāah Mubādalah*.

First, in terms of the status of angels, conventional interpretations consistently position angels as objects of physical pleasure (*ja'izah*) which is the exclusive right of believing men. This position reduces their existence solely to fulfill sensory desires. In contrast, *Qirāah Mubādalah* makes a paradigmatic leap by placing angels as autonomous subjects in an equal spiritual relationship. This radical transformation shifts the discourse from degrading objectification to recognition of the subjectivity and spiritual dignity of each entity.

Second, regarding the meaning of *al-hur al-'ayn*, conventional understanding tends to be stuck in a literal reading of the term *al-hur al-'ayn*, so it

focuses on detailed descriptions of physical beauty that are worldly. *Qirāah Mubādalah* frees interpretation from this literal shackle by reading it as a metaphor rich in spiritual meaning. The beauty of the eyes is a symbol of clarity of heart (*bashirah*), purity of soul, and human depth. This shift opens up space for a more substantive and transcendent understanding of the essence of ukhrawi perfection.

Third, in the aspect of the heavenly promise-recipient subject, conventional interpretations limit the subject of the heavenly spouse to only believing males, creating an androcentric heavenly image. *Qirāah Mubādalah* emphatically rejects this discriminatory restriction by extending the promise inclusively to all believers, regardless of gender. This paradigm shift corrected the inequality of the eschatological imagination and established a vision of heaven that upheld the universal and impartial principle of divine justice.

Fourth, regarding women's rights in ukhrawi life, women's rights in the context of the afterlife often do not get clarity or even ignore, as if ukhrawi happiness is a male monopoly. *Qirāah Mubādalah* is here to rectify this inequality by expressly affirming the equal right of believing women to obtain an ideal heavenly partner (*azwaj mutahharah*). This paradigm evolution is a leap from the zone of ambiguity and inequality to the affirmation of the principle of substantive equality that comes from God's justice.

Fifth, in terms of heavenly relations, conventional interpretations describe eschatological relations with hierarchical nuances and centered on the fulfillment of sexual desires, reflecting earthly power relations. *Qirāah Mubādalah* deconstructed this relational model and replaced it with the concept of *mutual partnership* that glorifies each other. The relationship is no longer seen as an exchange between the giver of pleasure and the receiver, but rather as a spiritual synergy between two equal subjects, who perfect each other in the bond of sacred affection (*mawaddah wa rahmah*).

Sixth, regarding the concept of heavenly happiness, conventional interpretations emphasize sensory and material pleasures, and risk reducing eternal happiness to mere continuations of temporal pleasures of a temporary nature. *Qirāah Mubādalah* shifts this focus towards the concept of happiness as the

highest spiritual perfection and the attainment of a complete human degree (*insan kamil*). This paradigm shift represents the maturity of understanding that the peak of ukhrawi pleasure lies in the approach to the Creator and the perfection of spiritual potential, far beyond all forms of mortal pleasure.

To make it easier to understand the six paradigm transformations, it can be seen in the following graph:



Figure 1 : Paradigm transformation resulting from the reading of angel verses

Through the image above, we see that there are at least six different paradigms in looking at the verses of angels through the *Qirāah Mubādalah approach*.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that *the Qirāah Mubādalah approach* has succeeded in offering a progressive and gender-friendly perspective of interpretation in examining the concept of angels in the Qur'an. In contrast to previous research that was generally defensive-apologetic or only criticized gender bias in conventional interpretations without offering a systematic methodological alternative, this research makes an original contribution in three main aspects.

First, in terms of methodology, this study explicitly and operationally applies the framework of *Qirāah Mubādalah* as an analytical knife for reading eschatological verses. This enriches the treasure of thematic interpretation methods (*maudhu'i*) with a consistent approach that places men and women as equal subjects in the process of interpretation, while answering the scarcity of studies that specifically apply this methodology to the realm of eschatology.

Second, substantively, this research succeeded in transforming the meaning of angels from an androcentric and physical-sensual concept to a universal and inclusive spiritual vision. Through the reading of mublah, angels are no longer interpreted as creatures specially created to satisfy male desires, but as symbols of the ideal heavenly partner (*azwāj mutahharah*) who represent spiritual perfection, sincerity, and the glory of relationships. A new contribution here lies in the integration of reciprocal readings into QS. Al-Wāqi'ah: 22-23, QS. Ad-Dukhān: 54, and QS. Ar-Rahmān: 72 with other verses about the heavenly couple (as in QS. Yāsīn: 56), thus giving birth to a coherent and just narrative of paradise for all believers, without gender discrimination.

Third, this research provides applicable theological implications by answering the critical questions that have been raised. The findings of the study confirm that believing women are guaranteed an equal right to obtain an ideal heavenly partner. Meanwhile, individuals who are unmarried or have lost a partner in the world will experience the perfection of relationships according to their spiritual degree.

Thus, this article enriches the discourse of progressive interpretation not only by deconstructing patriarchal narratives, but also by reconstructing a vision of

ukhrawi that is just, relevant to the contemporary context of gender consciousness, and remains rooted in the universal Islamic principles of justice ('*adl*), compassion (*rahmah*), and life partnership (*zawjiyyah*). These findings open up opportunities for the development of *Qirāah Mubādalah* on other themes of interpretation that still remain gender biased, while affirming that a commitment to substantive justice is an integral part of a complete understanding of the message of the Qur'an.

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