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## Reassessing Qiwāmah: Gender Equity and Interfaith Marriage in Classical and Contemporary Islamic Jurisprudence

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### ABSTRACT

The concept of Qiwāmah, derived from Qur'ān 4:34, has been central to Islamic discussions on marital responsibility and family structure. Classical jurists and exegetes generally understood it as assigning men primary responsibility for financial support and protection within the household. In recent scholarship, however, Qiwāmah has been revisited, particularly in debates on gender equity and interfaith marriage in Muslim minority contexts. This study re-examines the concept through a qualitative textual analysis of Qur'ānic verses, classical exegesis, and contemporary academic literature on gender relations and Islamic family law. It also considers how modern scholars interpret Qiwāmah in changing social and legal contexts. The study finds that classical interpretations emphasized responsibility and financial obligation rather than inherent male superiority, while contemporary approaches increasingly frame Qiwāmah in terms of justice, shared responsibility, and gender equity. These discussions are especially relevant in minority settings, where interfaith marriage raises complex questions about the application of classical legal principles. The study highlights the need for context-sensitive interpretations to address contemporary challenges in Muslim family life.

**Keywords:** Qiwāmah, Islamic Family Law, Gender Equity, Interfaith Marriage, Muslim Minority Contexts, Qur'ānic Exegesis

### Introduction

The family occupies a central place in Islamic thought, serving as the primary unit for social, emotional, and moral development. According to the Qur'ān, human society began with the creation of Adam (peace be upon him), whom God appointed as His vicegerent (khalīfah) on earth (Qur'ān 2:30).<sup>1</sup> To fulfill the emotional, social, and existential needs of human life, God created for Adam a companion from his own essence, establishing the foundation of partnership, mutual support, and harmony

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<sup>1</sup> **Yusuf Ali:** Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?- whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not."



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between spouses. The Qur'ān highlights the spiritual and emotional dimensions of this relationship, describing spouses as a source of tranquility (*sukūn*), affection (*mawaddah*), and mercy (*raḥmah*) (Qur'ān 30:21).<sup>2</sup> Through this divinely instituted union, the continuity of the human race was ensured, and the family became the cornerstone of human civilization.

Islamic teachings further emphasize that human beings were not left without guidance. God sent prophets to instruct humanity in faith, ethics, and social responsibility, culminating in the final prophetic mission of Muhammad (peace be upon him), through whom the Qur'ān was revealed. The Qur'ān and the Prophetic tradition together provide a comprehensive framework for regulating human relationships, including marriage, family life, and the rights and obligations of spouses (Hallaq, 2009). Within this framework, marriage is not merely a personal bond but a moral and social institution, designed to protect individual welfare and uphold societal integrity. Classical jurists developed detailed discussions on marital rights, responsibilities, and the ethical principles that maintain family harmony (Esposito & DeLong-Bas, 2001).

One of the central Qur'ānic concepts regulating marital relations is *Qiwāmah*, mentioned in the verse:

“Men are maintainers of women because God has given some of them advantages over others and because they spend out of their wealth” (Qur'ān 4:34)<sup>3</sup>.

This verse has been interpreted by classical and modern scholars primarily as assigning responsibility rather than privilege, emphasizing men's duties of financial support, protection, and care within the household (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 2002; Al-Sha'arāwī, 1997). Scholars such as Muḥammad 'Abdu and contemporary exegetes like Asma Lamrabet argue that *Qiwāmah* represents leadership in terms of guidance and supervision (*irshād* and *murāqabah*), rather than domination, and should reflect justice, protection, and ethical responsibility towards women (Rashīd Riḍā, 1910; Lamrabet, 2016).

In addition to marital relationships, some scholars, such as Al-Sh'arāwī, expand the application of *Qiwāmah* to other family roles, including the relationship of father-daughter or brother-sister, emphasizing responsibility, care, and protection beyond the husband-wife framework (Al-Sh'arāwī, 1997). Sayyid Quṭub similarly highlights that *Qiwāmah* should not be used to suppress women but to maintain harmony and shared responsibilities within the family, portraying spouses as “two parts of the same soul” (Quṭub, 1985).

While classical interpretations focus on men's household authority, modern scholarship critically examines *Qiwāmah* in light of gender equity and human rights, especially in contexts of interfaith marriage. Classical Islamic law permits Muslim men to marry with the People of the Book (Christians & Jews), but restricts Muslim women from marrying non-Muslims, a prohibition justified historically by the assumption of male household

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<sup>2</sup> **Pickthall:** And of His signs is this: He created for you helpmeets from yourselves that ye might find rest in them, and He ordained between you love and mercy. Lo! herein indeed are portents for folk who reflect.

<sup>3</sup> **Yusuf Ali:** Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard. As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (Next), refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them Means (of annoyance): For Allah is Most High, great (above you all).



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responsibility (Qur'ān 2:221; 5:5; 60:10).<sup>456</sup> Contemporary scholars, particularly in Muslim minority contexts, argue that both spouses now actively contribute to religious identity, family decisions, and economic responsibilities, necessitating a context-sensitive reinterpretation of *Qiwāmah* (Abou El Fadl, 2001; Al-Sharmani, 2017; An-Na'im, 2008).

Despite extensive scholarship on gender and Islamic family law, the relationship between *Qiwāmah*, gender equity, and interfaith marriage remains underexplored. Most studies discuss *Qiwāmah* in general family contexts, but few systematically examine how its reinterpretation could influence contemporary debates on interfaith marriage and women's agency. This research seeks to address this gap by reassessing *Qiwāmah* through both classical and modern perspectives, with a focus on gender equity and the implications for Muslim women in interfaith unions.

This study therefore aims to critically reassess the concept of *Qiwāmah* in Islamic law and examine its implications for gender equity in interfaith marriage, particularly within Muslim minority contexts. It is guided by the central research question: how can *Qiwāmah* be interpreted and applied in a manner that supports gender equity in contemporary interfaith marriages? To address this question, the study analyzes classical and modern interpretations of *Qiwāmah*, evaluates their implications for gender justice, and examines how Muslim minority contexts shape its understanding and application.

### Definitions

#### *Qiwāmah*

*Qiwāmah* is a central Qur'ānic concept that regulates responsibilities within the family. Linguistically, the term derives from *qāma*, meaning "to stand, uphold, or maintain." In Qur'ān 4:34, men are described as *qawwāmūn 'alā al-nisā'*, often translated as "maintainers of women." Classical scholars primarily interpreted this in terms of men's financial support, protection, and household management, rather than as a claim to inherent superiority (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 2002).

Medieval commentators, including Ibn Kathīr, expand the meaning to encompass multiple responsibilities: a man is a leader, caretaker, disciplinarian, and decision-maker for the family (Ibn Kathīr, 2002). Al-Qurṭubī similarly highlights the man's duty to strive

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<sup>4</sup> 2:221 - **Yusuf Ali:** Do not marry unbelieving women (idolaters), until they believe: A slave woman who believes is better than an unbelieving woman, even though she allures you. Nor marry (your girls) to unbelievers until they believe: A man slave who believes is better than an unbeliever, even though he allures you. Unbelievers do (but) beckon you to the Fire. But Allah beckons by His Grace to the Garden (of bliss) and forgiveness, and makes His Signs clear to mankind: That they may celebrate His praise.

<sup>5</sup> 5:5 - **Shakir:** This day (all) the good things are allowed to you; and the food of those who have been given the Book is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them; and the chaste from among the believing women and the chaste from among those who have been given the Book before you (are lawful for you); when you have given them their dowries, taking (them) in marriage, not fornicating nor taking them for paramours in secret; and whoever denies faith, his work indeed is of no account, and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers.

<sup>6</sup> 60-10 - **Shakir:** O you who believe! when believing women come to you flying, then examine them; Allah knows best their faith; then if you find them to be believing women, do not send them back to the unbelievers, neither are these (women) lawful for them, nor are those (men) lawful for them, and give them what they have spent; and no blame attaches to you in marrying them when you give them their dowries; and hold not to the ties of marriage of unbelieving women, and ask for what you have spent, and let them ask for what they have spent. That is Allah's judgment; He judges between you, and Allah is Knowing, Wise.



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for the sustenance and protection of women, defending them from hardships (Al-Qurtubī, 1960). Modern commentators, such as Muḥammad ʿAbdu and Wahbah al-Zuḥailī, describe Qiwāmah as ethical leadership (*riāsa*), emphasizing guidance and supervision rather than oppression (Rashīd Riḍā, 1910; Al-Zuḥailī, 2009).

Some scholars, like Al-Shʿarāwī, further extend Qiwāmah beyond spouses, applying it to father-daughter and brother-sister relationships, highlighting the broader principle of responsibility and care within the family (Al-Shʿarāwī, 1997). Sayyid Quṭub frames Qiwāmah as a dual system of responsibilities, where spouses function as “two parts of the same soul,” promoting reciprocity and ethical care rather than hierarchical domination (Quṭub, 1985).

In contemporary debates, scholars such as Khaled Abou El Fadl and Asma Lamrabet argue that Qiwāmah should be understood as contextual and ethically grounded responsibility, adaptable to modern social norms and gender equity principles, particularly in minority contexts and interfaith marriages (Abou El Fadl, 2001; Lamrabet, 2016; Al-Sharmani, 2017).

### **Gender Equity in Islamic Jurisprudence**

Gender equity refers to the fair and just treatment of both men and women in accordance with their rights and responsibilities, without discrimination. Classical interpretations of Qiwāmah were largely shaped by the socio-economic conditions of early Muslim societies, where men commonly held primary financial and social authority. Contemporary scholarship, however, increasingly emphasizes that the ethical framework of the Qurʾān promotes justice, dignity, and moral equality between men and women (Wadud, 1999; Barlas, 2002).

Within debates on interfaith marriage and Muslim minority contexts, some scholars argue that classical legal restrictions particularly the prohibition of Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men should be revisited in light of contemporary social realities and broader ethical principles of Islamic law (An-Naʿim, 2008; Al-Sharmani, 2017).

### **Interfaith Marriage**

Interfaith marriage refers to unions between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. Classical jurisprudence generally permits Muslim men to marry women from the People of the Book, while prohibiting Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men (Qurʾān 2:221; 5:5; 60:10). These rules were historically justified by men’s assumed household authority under Qiwāmah. Contemporary scholarship highlights challenges for Muslim women living in minority contexts, where both spouses may equally shape family and religious identity. Scholars increasingly advocate for context-sensitive interpretations of classical rulings to balance gender equity with ethical and legal responsibilities (Abou El Fadl, 2001; Al-Sharmani, 2017; An-Naʿim, 2008).

### **Minority Contexts**

Muslim minorities often navigate family law within secular legal frameworks. This context requires reinterpretation of traditional Qiwāmah-based assumptions about authority and gender roles, particularly in interfaith marriages. Contemporary scholars emphasize that Islamic principles should be applied ethically and flexibly, ensuring both spouses participate equally in family, social, and religious decision-making (Lamrabet, 2016; Al-Sharmani, 2017).



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## Literature Review

### Classical Interpretations of Qiwāmah

The Qur'anic verse *al-rijāl qawwāmūn 'alā al-nisā'* (Qur'an 4:34) has long been central to debates on marital authority and gender roles in Islamic law. Classical exegetes generally understood Qiwāmah as men's responsibility for financial provision, protection, and household management, rather than an assertion of inherent superiority (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 2002).

Ibn Kathīr explains that a man acts as *qayyim* or supervisor of a woman, encompassing leadership, disciplinary guidance, and decision-making responsibilities while maintaining her well-being (Ibn Kathīr, 2002). Similarly, al-Zuhailī (2009) affirms this understanding, defining Qiwāmah as practical leadership rather than hierarchical dominance. Muhammad 'Abduh emphasizes that Qiwāmah entails guidance (*irshād*) and oversight (*murāqabah*), not oppression or deprivation of women's rights (Rashīd Riḍā, 1910). Al-Qurṭubī (1960) and Ibn 'Ashūr (2000) extend the concept, highlighting men's duties in providing sustenance, defending, and supporting women as fundamental responsibilities. Muhammad Asad (1980) similarly translates the Qur'anic phrase as "Men shall take full care of women," reflecting a functional, ethical understanding of Qiwāmah.

Sayyid Quṭub (1985) reinforces the reciprocal nature of marital responsibilities, presenting Qiwāmah as a dual institution in which husband and wife share complementary roles while respecting each other's dignity. Al-Shā'rāwī (1997) expands this responsibility beyond spouses, applying Qiwāmah also to the relationships of fathers and daughters, and brothers and sisters, emphasizing ethical responsibility rather than personal dominance.

### Modern Reformist Interpretations

Modern scholars have reassessed classical interpretations in light of social change. Muhammad Abduh (1967) argues that the Qur'anic principles prioritize justice and moral responsibility over hierarchical dominance. Fazlur Rahman (1982) stresses that classical jurisprudence is historically contingent and must be reinterpreted contextually.

Feminist scholars, such as Amina Wadud (1999) and Asma Barlas (2002), challenge patriarchal readings, asserting that the Qur'an promotes ethical equality between men and women. They contend that historical male-dominated interpretations reflect social norms rather than divine mandate. Similarly, contemporary commentators like Khaled Abou El Fadl (2001) and Asma Lamrabet (2016) stress that Qiwāmah should be understood as a system of responsibility and protection, grounded in justice, ethics, and social welfare.

### Contemporary Gender Equity Debates

In recent decades, scholarship has further interrogated the ethical and practical implications of Qiwāmah in modern societies. Ziba Mir-Hosseini (2003) and Kecia Ali (2010) highlight that classical doctrines were shaped by specific socio-economic contexts of 7th-century Arabia. Their work emphasizes that applying Qiwāmah uncritically today risks reproducing gender inequalities that Islam itself seeks to prevent.

The debate now often frames Qiwāmah as contextual and flexible, focusing on shared responsibilities and ethical care rather than male dominance. These discussions form the foundation for reassessing Qiwāmah in minority Muslim and interfaith marriage contexts, where traditional social assumptions may no longer hold.



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## **Muslim Minority Contexts and Interfaith Marriages**

In Muslim minority communities, classical legal doctrines are frequently adapted to align with secular laws and gender-equitable norms. Mulki Al-Sharmani (2017) notes that European Muslim communities reinterpret *Qiwāmah* to balance religious obligations with secular legal frameworks, particularly in interfaith marriages. Abdullahi An-Na'im (2008) similarly advocates context-sensitive interpretations, emphasizing gender equity and family cohesion in minority contexts.

Imam Hargey of Oxford stresses that in interfaith marriages, *Qiwāmah* should be approached as mutual responsibility, recognizing the active participation of women in religious, social, and economic life. Dr. Khalil Mohammed (2020) supports this view, noting that rigid prohibitions, especially against Muslim women marrying non-Muslims, require ethical and contextual reassessment to reflect contemporary realities while remaining faithful to Qur'anic principles.

These perspectives illustrate how classical prohibitions historically justified through male household authority must be reconsidered in minority contexts where both spouses contribute actively to family and religious life. Such reinterpretations demonstrate the potential of *Qiwāmah* to support gender-equitable interfaith marriage frameworks.

## **Research Gap**

While classical, modern, and contemporary scholarship on *Qiwāmah* is extensive, its specific relevance to interfaith marriage remains underexplored. Most classical discussions focus on household authority and financial responsibility (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Al-Sarakhsi, 1993), whereas modern work emphasizes gender equity (Wadud, 1999; Lamrabet, 2016). There is limited research systematically connecting *Qiwāmah* to interfaith marriage in minority contexts, where gender norms and social realities differ from historical settings. This study addresses that gap by analyzing *Qiwāmah* across classical and contemporary jurisprudence and assessing its implications for gender equity and interfaith marriage.

## **Research Problem**

Interfaith marriage remains a complex and sensitive issue within Islamic law, particularly when it involves Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men. Classical Islamic jurisprudence has consistently prohibited such unions, often justified through the concept of *Qiwāmah*, which historically assigns men primary responsibility for family protection, financial provision, and household oversight (Al-Ṭabarī, 2001; Ibn Kathīr, 2002; Al-Sarakhsi, 1993). While men are granted conditional flexibility to marry non-Muslim women from the People of the Book (Christians and Jews), Muslim women's participation in interfaith marriages has been strictly restricted through scholarly consensus (*Ijmā'*) (Al-Qurṭubī, 1960; Al-Shā'rawī, 1997).

Contemporary scholarship, however, increasingly challenges the rigid classical interpretations of *Qiwāmah* and marital authority, arguing for contextual and ethical readings that prioritize justice, reciprocity, and gender equity (Wadud, 1999; Lamrabet, 2016; Abou El Fadl, 2001). This debate has gained particular significance in Muslim minority contexts, such as Europe and North America, where social realities, legal frameworks, and gender roles differ markedly from the historical settings in which classical jurisprudence developed (Al-Sharmani, 2017; Hargey, 2018; Khalil Mohammed, 2020).



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Despite extensive scholarship on gender equity and family law, there remains a gap in systematically analyzing the intersection between *Qiwāmah*, gender rights, and interfaith marriage, especially concerning Muslim women in minority societies. Existing studies either examine *Qiwāmah* in isolation or discuss interfaith marriages without critically engaging with the Qur'anic, jurisprudential, and ethical dimensions that underpin gendered restrictions (Abou El Fadl, 2001; Mir-Hosseini, 2003; Wadud, 1999).

This research problem, therefore, centers on the need to reconcile classical legal principles with contemporary ethical imperatives. Specifically, it seeks to investigate how *Qiwāmah* can be interpreted in a manner that ensures gender equity, respects the rights of Muslim women, and provides guidance for interfaith marriages in modern, pluralistic societies, without contravening Islamic jurisprudence (Al-Sharmani, 2017; Hargey, 2018; Khalil Mohammed, 2020).

### Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine the concept of *Qiwāmah* and its implications for gender equity, particularly in the context of interfaith marriages. The research is based on a textual and analytical approach, drawing on both classical Islamic sources and contemporary scholarship.

### Data Sources

**Primary sources:** Qur'anic verses and classical tafsirs that discuss *Qiwāmah* and marital responsibilities.

**Secondary sources:** Modern scholarly works on gender equity, Islamic family law, and the experiences of Muslim minorities (e.g., Wadud, Barlas, Abou El Fadl, Lamrabet, Al-Sharmani, Imam Hargey of Oxford, Dr. Khalil Muhammad).

### Analysis

The study uses content and thematic analysis to examine how classical and contemporary scholars interpret *Qiwāmah*. Special attention is given to the application of *Qiwāmah* in minority contexts and its relevance to interfaith marriage. The analysis compares historical understandings with modern ethical and social perspectives, highlighting areas where reinterpretation can promote gender equity.

### Rationale

A qualitative textual approach is suitable because the research deals with interpretations, ethical principles, and jurisprudential reasoning, which are best understood through detailed analysis rather than quantitative measurement. This method allows a comprehensive examination of classical sources, modern scholarship, and minority-context applications.

**Analytical Discussion: Reassessing *Qiwāmah* in Classical and Contemporary Scholarship**

The concept of *Qiwāmah* has long been understood as a foundational principle in Islamic discussions of marital organization and family responsibility. Classical exegetes generally interpreted the Qur'anic description of men as *qawwāmūn 'alā al-nisā'* (Qur'an 4:34) as establishing a framework in which men bear primary responsibility for the economic maintenance and protection of the household. In this classical formulation,



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Qiwāmah was closely linked to nafaqah (financial responsibility) and the broader obligation of safeguarding the stability of family life.

However, a closer examination of the classical tradition reveals that Qiwāmah was not understood as an unrestricted form of male dominance. Rather, it was typically framed as a functional responsibility tied to specific social roles. Classical jurists emphasized that the husband's authority within the family was inseparable from his duty to provide financial support and ensure the welfare of his dependents. In this sense, authority was not treated as an independent privilege but as a responsibility grounded in the ethical obligations of marriage.

This understanding becomes particularly important when evaluating contemporary debates surrounding gender equality and Islamic family law. Modern scholars increasingly argue that many traditional interpretations of Qiwāmah emerged within historical societies where men were the primary economic providers. As social and economic structures evolve, some scholars question whether the traditional application of Qiwāmah should remain unchanged in contexts where women also participate fully in economic and social life.

Contemporary Muslim thinkers therefore attempt to reinterpret Qiwāmah through the broader ethical framework of the Qur'ān, emphasizing principles such as justice, reciprocity, and mutual responsibility within marriage. From this perspective, Qiwāmah is not viewed as a permanent hierarchical structure but rather as a mechanism intended to ensure family stability and responsibility. When understood in this way, the concept may allow for more flexible interpretations that reflect changing social realities while remaining faithful to Qur'ānic ethical principles.

Some contemporary exegetes also emphasize the dimension of responsibility within the concept of *qiwāmah*. For example, Muhammad Mutawalli al-Sha'rāwī interprets *qiwāmah* primarily as a responsibility placed upon men to ensure protection and economic support for the family (Al-Sha'rāwī, 1997). This perspective supports the view that *qiwāmah* in the Qur'ānic framework is closely connected with accountability and obligation rather than absolute authority.

These questions become even more complex in Muslim minority contexts, where Muslims live within pluralistic societies shaped by secular legal systems and modern norms of gender equality. In such environments, Muslim families often navigate multiple legal and cultural frameworks simultaneously. As a result, scholars examining Muslim communities in Europe and North America have observed increasing debates regarding how classical Islamic family law should be interpreted and applied in contemporary minority settings.

One of the most sensitive issues within these discussions is the question of interfaith marriage, particularly the traditional prohibition on Muslim women marrying non-Muslim men. Classical jurists generally justified this prohibition by emphasizing concerns about religious authority within the household and the preservation of Islamic identity within the family. In the traditional framework of Qiwāmah, the husband's role as the head of the household was seen as potentially affecting the religious upbringing of children and the religious autonomy of the wife.

However, modern scholars question whether the historical assumptions underlying this reasoning remain applicable in contemporary societies where legal systems guarantee religious freedom and gender equality. In many Western contexts, marriage no longer implies religious authority of one spouse over another, and both partners are legally recognized as equal individuals with independent religious rights. These changing



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realities have prompted some scholars to reconsider how classical rulings should be interpreted in minority environments.

Nevertheless, other scholars maintain that the classical juristic consensus regarding interfaith marriage cannot be easily dismissed. From their perspective, reinterpretation must remain firmly grounded in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence and should not disregard the historical continuity of the scholarly tradition. As a result, contemporary debates on *Qiwamah* and interfaith marriage often reflect a tension between maintaining fidelity to classical legal interpretations and responding to evolving social contexts.

The reassessment of *Qiwamah* therefore requires careful scholarly engagement that avoids both extremes: uncritical acceptance of historical interpretations and complete detachment from the classical tradition. A balanced analytical approach recognizes that the Qur'anic concept of *Qiwamah* originally emphasized responsibility, protection, and economic accountability rather than domination or inequality.

Understanding *Qiwamah* in this ethical and responsibility-centered framework may open space for renewed discussions about gender relations in Muslim family life. At the same time, such discussions must remain attentive to the broader objectives of Islamic law, including justice, social stability, and the protection of religious identity. Reassessing *Qiwamah* within this framework therefore provides an important foundation for addressing contemporary questions about gender equity and interfaith marriage in Muslim societies.

### Conclusion

This study examined the concept of *Qiwamah* within Islamic thought and explored how its classical and contemporary interpretations shape discussions on gender relations and interfaith marriage. The analysis focused on understanding how Muslim scholars have historically interpreted the Qur'anic description of men as *qawwāmūn* over women and how this concept continues to influence debates on marital responsibility and gender equity in modern Muslim societies.

The study found that classical Qur'anic exegetes and jurists generally interpreted *Qiwamah* as a form of responsibility rather than absolute authority. In the classical legal tradition, the concept was closely connected to the husband's obligation to provide financial maintenance (*nafaqah*) and ensure the protection and welfare of the family. Authority within the household was therefore understood as being conditional upon economic responsibility and social accountability rather than reflecting an inherent superiority of men over women.

At the same time, contemporary scholarship has increasingly revisited these interpretations in light of changing social realities. Modern Muslim scholars emphasize that Qur'anic teachings on family relations must be understood within the broader ethical framework of justice, compassion, and mutual responsibility. As social and economic roles evolve, discussions surrounding *Qiwamah* have shifted toward exploring how the concept can be interpreted in ways that preserve family stability while also acknowledging contemporary concerns about gender equity.

These debates have become particularly significant in Muslim minority contexts, where Muslims live within pluralistic societies shaped by secular legal systems and modern norms of gender equality. In such settings, questions surrounding marital authority and religious identity often intersect with broader discussions about interfaith marriage. While classical Islamic jurisprudence permitted Muslim men to marry women from the People of the Book and generally prohibited Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men, contemporary scholars continue to examine how these rulings should be understood



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within modern social environments characterized by legal equality and religious freedom.

Reassessing *Qiwāmah* within both classical and contemporary frameworks therefore provides an important opportunity to revisit long-standing assumptions about marital authority in Islamic law. Rather than interpreting the concept solely as a hierarchical structure, a closer examination of the classical sources suggests that *Qiwāmah* was primarily intended to ensure responsibility, protection, and stability within the family unit.

Ultimately, a balanced engagement with both the classical scholarly tradition and contemporary ethical discussions can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of gender relations in Islam. Such an approach allows scholars and communities to remain faithful to the foundational principles of the *Qurʾān* while thoughtfully addressing the social realities faced by Muslims in the modern world, including the complex questions raised by interfaith marriage and gender equity.

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