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Demystification of Islamic Patriarchy in Freidoune Sahebjam's *The Stoning of Soraya*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

Kamala Paudel has accomplished her thesis entitled "Demystification of Islamic Patriarchy in Freidoune Sahebjam's *The Stoning of Soraya*" under my supervision. She carried out her research from September 2018 to August 2019. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Supervisor

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Letter of Approval

The thesis entitled “Demystification of Islamic Patriarchy in Freidoune Sahebjam's *The Stoning of Soraya*” submitted to Central Department of English, has been approved by the undersigned members of research committee.

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## Demystification of Islamic Patriarchy in Freidoune Sahebjam's *The Stoning of Soraya*

### Abstract

*This research explores how Freidoune Sahebjam's *The Stoning of Soraya* represents the way misogynist interpretation of Qur'an enhances patriarchy and suppresses women through the unjust practices existing in the Islamic patriarchal culture through the characters Soraya and Zahra. Soraya, the central character depicts the extreme forms of violence against women. Mayor, in the story reveals the abuse of authority and Mullah represents the misogynist interpretation of Qur'an that influences religion and culture and contributes to patriarchy. Ali represents the patriarchic power who misuses the religion and culture. My research shows that rules for gender are not inherent rather it is constructed religiously and culturally through the misinterpretation of Qur'an by patriarchy. This research takes the help of Islamic feminists Asma Barlas, Hiris Ali Khan, Margot Bardan, Mirim Cooke, Asma Lambart and Heidi Hartman. The purpose of this thesis is to depict the misogynist reading contributes to patriarchy and dominate women culturally and religiously. In the Islamic culture Islamic orthodox and doctrine is in the top in hierarchy to formulate rules and norms which is under the control of men. The relation of religion and patriarchy shows that; religion is the guiding framework which is on men's hand; they interpret and formulate norms and rules on behalf of man that contributes to enhance the concept that men are always right. This non-fiction discloses even the religious vigour bias and support men. The outcome of the extreme form of Islamic patriarchy caused stoning to innocent Soraya for the guilt she never did.*

Keywords: Miss-interpretation, Islamic Feminism, Patriarchy, Misogynist, Polygamy, Adultery, Misuse, Qur'an, Religion

This research entitled "Demystification of Islamic Patriarchy in Freidoune Sahebjam's *The Stoning of Soraya*" explores how Islamic patriarchy pushed Islamic women in a hellhole. Islamic patriarchy is extremely harsh. On the one hand, male religious practitioner interprets *Qur'an* on behalf of man to support the patriarchy. On the other, the practice of confining, torturing women and then subjugating them has indirect link with religious institution and practices. In Sahebjam's *The Stoning of Soraya*, all female characters, no matter how good they are, still, are in the verge of collapse, thrashed under the grinding mill of a rigorous patriarchal ideology of Islamic culture. Most of events in this non-fiction revolve around Soraya, her daughters and sons, Ali- Soraya's husband, Zahra- Soraya's aunt, Mullah- religious person, Ebrahim- Mayor and Hashem- auto mechanic.

This research depicts how the misogynist interpretation of *Qur'an* serve the purpose of man, which sets the frame to form rules and norms that ultimately developed as a tradition and culture on behalf of men. Furthermore, this research digs out the underlying truth that patriarchy which is enhanced by the religious faith and believes in the Islamic culture contributes to evil practices. Through the characters Ali and his sons, Mullah, Ebrahim (Mayor), this study reveals how the culturally framed patriarchy underestimate women, suppress them, torture them and use them as mere object. Ali's teaching to his sons' "this is man's world" (4) depicts the superiority of male and the transfer of culturally structured Islamic patriarchy from one generation to another which ultimately contributes to suppress women for a long run. Soraya represents the victim of culturally framed patriarchy who suffers a lot and finally stoned for the guilt she never did. Conversely, Zahra represents the revolution against the miss-interpretation of *Qur'an* and evil practices. By the end of the story she succeeds to reveal the evil practices that existing in the Islamic patriarchy to the

world through the help of French journalist. It forms the importance of impartial interpretation of *Qur'an* to set the equality between men and women religiously and culturally to eradicate the evil practices against women in the Islamic culture.

The story begins with an actual incident that took place in the remote Iranian village of Kuhpayeh. Stranded in the remote Iranian village of Kuhpayeh by car trouble a journalist approached by Zarah as he stopped as troubled in his car. A woman with a ghastly story to tell about her niece, Soraya, and the situation of her death, by stoning. Zahra recounts the story to Sahebjam, who records the conversation with his tape recorder. The journalist must escape from the consequences to tell the story to the rest of the world. Zahra's endeavor to tell the evil practices in her culture to outer world against such a strict patriarchic culture where it is considered sin to talk against male in the community is the challenge to culturally structured patriarchy.

In the story, Ali an abusive husband of Soraya wishes his wife Soraya to give him divorce. So that he does not need to give single penny to Soraya that he received as a dowry and need not to put extra effort to care Soraya once he got marriage with teenage girl. In the Islamic patriarchy, man is allowed to practice polygamy and can have extra marital affair. Conversely, women do not have their own decision when to get marry and whom to marry. It is considered sin and stoning if women practiced adultery or have extra marital affairs. Furthermore, when woman gives divorce to her husband she is disallowed any property from her bridegroom. Ali uses Mullah to force Soraya to give him divorce. Mullah uses religion and its interpretation as a tool to persuade Soraya regarding the superiority of husband over wife. Zahra an aunt of Soraya intervenes condemning Mullah for disgracing the holy book, she says to

Mullah "you disgrace the holy book you carry" (16). The Zahra's statements demystify the misogynist reading, misinterpretation and misuse of *Qur'an* by male.

Once Ali and Mullah failed to convince Soraya, they web plot to get rid from Soraya. At the course of time, a friend of Soaya died and she is asked to help her friend's husband- Hashem for his household chores. She is convinced that in return she will get paid against her service. After few days of her service, Ali accused her for practicing adultery with Hashem. Finally, with support of Mullah, he threatens Hashem and approved the so called guilt of Soraya which she never did. In the story, Zahra mentions to Soraya after Soraya's supposed guilt in the light that "This is the law of men, the law that men make and say it is the law of God. They have sentenced you whereas you are innocent, but no one can prove it, not you, not me, not the good women in the next room" (Sahebjam 91). This shows exercise of power by men over women in the Islamic culture which is the outcome of the deeply rooted cultural patriarchy. Finally, they tainther character and stone her mercilessly. They even do not follow all the necessary procedures and produced a sufficient amount of pieces of evidence, she got stoning without it was strongly proved.

In the Islamic culture adultery deserves stoning to women considering to the interpretation of *Qur'an* by Mullah. But in fact it is for both sides when the guilt is proved still it is not stoning. NH Ammar and HR Kusha in Women in the Islamic Republic of Iran quotes from the *Qur'an* that "The woman and man who are guilty of sexual intercourse (alzaniyahwaazani), for each of them with hundred lashes (jildah). Let not compassion move you in their case if you truly believe in God and the hereafter. And let a party of believers witness their punishment" (*Qur'an*. 24:2). There is no trace of stoning and killing it just talks about the harsh punishment. In the *Stoning of Soraya* only Soraya got stoned and Hashem walks free because it was not



the guilt, it was just a plot to quench the male ego for not obeying her husband and the religious person.

This study reveals how the misogynist interpretation of holy *Qur'an* acts as a platform for the manipulation of religious doctrine; consequently, laws and moral expectations are framed with the idea that best suit the patriarchy. Patriarchy use misinterpreted holy *Qur'an* as a tool to generate power, formed law to treat women as the second sex, abuse them and exploit just to serve their purpose. Religious preachers like Mullah are put in the height of the structural hierarchy in Islamic culture and they have the power to govern the social structure, and governing body as well that supports the Ali like devils.

Women in the Islamic culture, traditionally are held to a different moral code in comparison to men. Men uphold the laws and procure the decisions, while women sustain the ideals of moral code and family matters. Zahra an aunt finds herself at a loss of power when normally she wields it; as women, she breaks stereotypes by using her independence and ability throughout the community. This dynamic occurs because men maintain the role of figureheads in society. That is they can write and interpret God's word in a way that is beneficial to them. Due to this, Soraya must accept her fate of being stoned accordingly.

This non-fiction was written by French-Iranian journalist Freidoune Sahebjam in 1990, who was born in 1933. It is later shaped in the Persian American drama film released on September 7, 2008 (TIFF) and 26 June 2009 (United States). The total running time of the movie is 116 minutes. The movie was directed by Cyrus Nowrasteh an Iranian descent American screenwriter and director. Freidoune Sahebjam was a French-Iranian TV journalist for French TV channel LCI and French newspapers such as *Le Monde* and *Le Telegramme*. He was a war

correspondent and novelist who resided in Neuilly-sur-Seine in France. He published 10 renounced books. Before his death on March 26, 2008, he wrote a biography of his mother, entitled *UnePrincessePersane*.

The book *The Stoning of Soraya* became the basis for the screenplay of the movie *The Stoning of Soraya* that was released in 2008 and directed by Cyrus Nowarsteh. Sahebjam got international recognition through *The Stoning of Soraya*. *The Stoning of Soraya* is the translation version of *Femme Lapidee*. Mr. Richard Seaver, translated text into the English language. The book has been banned in Iran.

Freidoune Sahebjam's non-fiction *The Stoning of Soraya* is one of the famous and well-known texts at that time. It has received numerous criticism and appreciation from different critics and scholars, different critics analyze this text differently like as a history, culture, power dynamics, abuse of authority, corrupt patriarchal system, women rights and misguiding and miss-understanding. None of them sees the text through the eyes of Islamic patriarchy. And main concern of my research is that Islamic patriarchy is not God's ordain but it is the outcome of the misreading of God's word by men to use religion to enhance patriarchy and to confine women in limited boundary.

In the book review, *Publisher Weekly*, Jan reviews the book from the side of Islamic culture. Reviewer views that incidents that took place in *The Stoning of Soraya* are just a mob that are originated due to blind faith on their religion and culture. It says that "This resonant book portrays the ugliness of fundamentalist Islamic mob justice in Khomeini-era Iran". Sahebjam, an Iranian journalist based in France who has written critically of the regime, returned to his homeland under cover in 1986" (80). The *Publisher Weekly* defines incidents that took place in this non-fiction are just a mob. Mob represents the people who blindly follow what is being

asked. The non-fiction portrays the belief in the Islamic culture and people's obedience, blind support to their culture. Characters in this non-fiction are not seem eager to know the truth but they follow what Ali, Mullah and Mayor asks them to do. They pelt stone to Soraya to death without being judgmental on truth.

With the same line the screenwriter and the director of the movie Cyrus Nowrasteh, *The Stoning of Soraya* sees the text as representation of tale of village. He mentions that it is the “tale of a village’s persecution of an innocent woman becomes both a daring act of witness and a compelling parable about mob rule”(26). The reviewer mentions the act of torturing women and stoning as the mob rule in the village. The reviewer here tries to show that this is not only the story of Sorya, but it is the representation of many incidents that happen in the Islamic culture. Suffering of Soraya represents the suffering of women by the barbaric cultural practice in the Islamic culture that enhanced by patriarchy through the miss-interpretation of religion.

Considering to the incidents that took place in *The Stoning of Soraya*; it does not matter what is right and what is wrong but it matters what their culture says and their religious belief. It is important for them what their seniors asked them to do. In the story, Ali asks to his sons that this is the world of men and the vision stimulates their blood and let them turn against their own mother. Furthermore, stoning to Soraya represents the cultural impact to women in the Islamic culture.

The book reviewer Wolf Showlin in the *Opinion of Wolf* reviews *The Stoning of Soraya* as deviation of truth when the power is limited in the few people and that can cause huge deviation. The reviewer says that “Things can easily go awry when the powers of justice are held in the hands of a select few. A lot rests on whether or not those few are good people. This book tells that tale, and it tells it movingly,

regardless of whether or not all the facts of the story are precisely correct. The biggest facts are accurate, and that is what matters” (3). This shows that power with limited few corrupt leader taints the entire community. In the Stoning of Soraya, Mullah misinterprets *Qur'an* and influence to Mayor and community people; that finally enhance summon stoning to Soraya to death without accumulating adequate evidences.

Nhiranjana Velavanin *Youth Ki Aawaz* sees the context as the abuse of authority. Reviewer says that:

A convict-turned-mullah, whose unwanted advances were turned down by Soraya, aides Ali in hatching a plan that ends in her paying dearly with her life. The wicked duo manages to convince their fickle-minded mayor that Soraya is guilty of adultery with Hashem, the local mechanic. A lack of sufficient evidence doesn't stop anyone from sentencing her to be buried till the waist and stoned to death. (3)

The reviewer in the in the *Youth ki Aawaz* tries to demonstrate the abuse of authority in *The Stoning of Soraya*. In the story, Mullah is a powerful in terms of religion and has huge influence over mayor and all the community people. Same as, mayor has power to summon justice. Though, Soraya was not wrong, still she got stoning. Mullah abuse his authority by miss-interpreting the *Qur'an* and Mayor abuse his authority by summoning stoning to death without producing adequate evidences due to male ego.

The reviewer Alistair Dickinson in the *Pop Matters* sees the incident in *The Stoning of Soraya* as mistakes of human civilization, where victims are mostly women due to patriarchal system. The reviewer says that:

For the many historians who view human civilization as an endless cycle of repeated mistakes and injustices, nothing can be more frustrating than seeing the way women continue to be one of the most easily-targeted victims of corrupt patriarchal systems. In the centuries since the Salem Witch trials and the first publication of *The Scarlet Letter*, the drive to ensure women are perceived as equal members of human society and can define themselves on their own terms has made great strides. Yet it is still possible, even today, to hear a story as sad as that of Soraya and know it is not just an aberration in our current world. (1)

The review concerns that *The Stoning of Soraya* shows the extreme violence with the beating of a woman several times and eventually the stoning of the same woman seen in great painful detail. There is a huge flock witnessing the conviction of stoning to Soraya where men are pelting stone mercilessly in the name of salvation which is the most pitiful moment where an innocent woman accused of practicing adultery and convicted which is the outcome of the system of corrupt patriarchy.

Reviewer Kristine Kruszelnicki in *Pro-life Humanists* views the text as women's right under attack in the patriarchal system. She says that:

Stories like hers are taking place throughout the world, largely where Islam and Sharia's law are the rules of the land. Soraya was abused by her husband without recourse, backed into a situation where she would've been powerless and penniless if she'd consented to the divorce he wanted, and when her husband accused her of adultery in order to be rid of her immediately without having to return her dowry, she had absolutely no opportunity to defend herself. One day she was accused, convicted on the word of her husband and a lying witness, and sentenced to death by stoning. That is oppression. (2)

The reviewer tries to show how the misinformed religion bounded culture enhances brutal practices and how the unjust cultural practices attack liberty and human rights around the globe. Due to the enhanced existence of corrupt practices minority around the world are dominated, abused and exploited frequently. Soraya in the story is the representative person who represents the victim of evil culture like Sharia law. Even the women rights are limited and their human rights have been attacked. Most often, when women gives divorce to their husband in the Islamic culture, they are disallowed any property from spouse. If women stand against their men they are penalized using different tools, accusation and false claim. Stoning is widely practice in Islamic country and that is what happened to Soraya here in the story.

Reviewer Fredric and Mary Ann Brusstin the *Spirituality and Practices* sees The Stoning of Soraya as an example of misused of religion to serve the purpose of few limited powerful people. They say that:

The Stoning of Soraya is a stark and painful example of what happens when evil is justified by a distortion of what is good, in this case, Islam. This, too, must be confronted. Millions of Muslims suffer every day as they see how their religion is misused by a misinformed faction and thus is misunderstood by other peoples around the world. Soraya's story is even more painful and disturbing to them, and our hearts go out to them in empathy. (11)

The interpretation of Islamic law by interpreter is misinformed, misused by power holder. The consequences of stoning in *The Stoning of Soraya* are all stimulated by the misinterpretation and misinformed of religion by Mullah in favor of Ali and Ali represent the patriarchy. Ali misuses the interpretation and force Mayor to summons stoning to innocent Soraya.

All these aforementioned critics have studied *The Stoning of Soraya* from various perspectives. Some critics have taken this the issue of cultural studies, some take it as history, some take issue as misinformed and misunderstanding, some take it as women right, a tale of village, abuse of authority and power dynamic since the publication in 1990. But my study is vary from them because I have analyzed this non-fiction from the perspective for Islamic feminism. This research follow the idea of AsmaBarlas, Hiris Ali Khan, Margot Bardon, Mirim Cooke, AsmaLambrabet and Hartman.

Islamic feminism is a combination of Islam and feminism that has been advocated as "a feminist discourse and practice articulated within an Islamic paradigm" considering to Margot Badran in 2002 in *Feminism in Islam*. Islamic feminists ground their arguments in Islam and its teachings, seek the full equality of women and men in the personal and public sphere, and can include non-Muslims in the discourse and debate. Islamic feminism is defined as being more radical than secular feminism, Islamic scholars and as being anchored within the discourse of Islam with the *Qur'an* as its central text. Fatima Mernissi, a Moroccan sociologist and secular feminist scholar, produced by 1987 what would be hailed as the first major work of Islamic feminism. Fatima mentions in the journal *Islam, Feminism, and Islamic Feminism: Between Inadequacy and Inevitability* "Islamic feminism is not an identity but rather one of many possible speaking" (xxvi). Margot Badran, however, rejects this picture. If by feminism one understands (as Badran herself does) the belief that women are/were somehow being marginalized as a consequence of their sex, and therefore that one supports advocacy and activism in favor of having women deciding "for themselves how to conduct their lives in society" (Badran, 141), then we can safely arm that feminism in the Muslim world exists and that it exists under various

guises. However, not all types of feminism that exist in Muslim lands are easy to understand, so long as one considers this phenomenon in terms of purely European parameters. As per Badran, "Muslims' secular and Islamic feminisms should not be seen as oppositional forces, as some are inclined to do, seemingly influenced by hostility between Islamist and secular forces in societies at large from the final decades of the twentieth century with the spread of political Islam and which Islamists indeed frequently take pains to promote."

It is one of the latest perspectives that emerged in the world by different Muslim and non-Muslim writers. First, some Muslim women demanding gender equality and social justice in their community basing on religious rules began it. Margot Badran believes that Islamic Feminism should go through the history to understand the context, she states:

Engaging with Islamic Feminism as a historian, I would like to do what historians do: look at what has come before and at how, in complicated ways, past and present intersect. In early 1990 when Muslim secular feminists-scholars, journalists, and writers-from various countries in Africa and Asia observed the process begun by some Muslim women to explicate gender equality and social justice grounded in re-readings of the *Qur'an* and other religious texts, they immediately recognized this as a new form of feminism and called it "Islamic Feminism". (28)

The formulation of this new feminism emerges through not debate but Muslim women for explication gender equality and social justice based on re-reading of *Qur'an* that was inspected by Muslim secular feminist scholars, journalist, and writers from various countries in world in early 1990. Thus, they recognized it as a new form of feminism and labeled it as Islamic Feminism. Miriam Cooke in *Women Claim*



*Islam Creating Islam* mentions that "Islamic feminism is not an identity but rather one of many possible speaking positions" (xxvi). Therefore, the Islamic Feminism is germinated with the view of gender equality, especially in Islamic community. It offers the re-reading of *Qur'an* and other religious texts. The social norms are considered to be based on the religious texts.

Now the global environment is also supportive for them men's participation in Islamic rework has increased. Their combined efforts in studying Islamic sciences and analyzing it in female ways are admirable. All sorts of motives of Muslim women for the establishment of their rights engendered the seeds of Islamic Feminism. In the *Evolution of Pure Idylls* Moazami states, it essential to acquire profound knowledge on Islamic religion to understand historical context that enables interpretation the grass root level to enhance Islamic feminism as a combined effort. She says that:

In principle, it is obvious that acquiring profound religious knowledge, especially of the classical Islamic sciences, might enable women to produce and disseminate especially feminized Islamic thought. We witness today that in different countries around the globe, in Muslim majority countries as much as in the Muslim Diaspora, where women's participation in Islamic networks, their combined efforts in studying Islamic sciences and conducting grass-roots work with other women, has engendered a trend that has been called "Islamic Feminism. (76)

Mostly Muslims are orthodox to their religion. After acquiring a profound knowledge of classical Islamic sciences, they become conscious of their rights. It enables them to be united and take part in Islamic networks. All sorts of right seeking motives of Muslim women in their community germinate the seeds of a new trend "Islamic Feminism." The religious rules are not biased like tradition.

Heidi Hartman in the text *Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex* believes that patriarchy reinforces the oppression of women, material base and patriarchy set the rules and dominate women. Hartman argues that “Set of the social relation between men, which have material base and which through hierarchal, establish or create interdependence or solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women” (69). In the Islamic culture males show solidarity against female. Unity between them boosts their strength. Males are superior in the hierarchic power and that stimulates male ego. In the *Stoning of Soraya*, one male shows their solidarity among other males even there is a vivid picture of ploy. It is clear that all male characters stand in on one side against Soraya from the very beginning to till the end. In the beginning of the story, Mullah meets Soraya and asks her to give Ali divorce so that Ali can marry a 14-year-old girl without losing a single penny. Mayor argues with Zahra against Soraya. Furthermore, Soraya's sons and father show their solidarity with Ali, Mullah and Mayor while delivering verdict against Soraya. And all male members in the community pelt stones at Soraya. Mullah says to Soraya that “Men's authority has been absolute. For some time now, they alone made all the decisions. He is your husband..... he has the rights you know very well, all the rights. He is a good husband, a good provider who brings money home, a man who loves his children” (15). The statement above is the clear stance of solidarity among men. He says men have absolute power to govern wife and are solely responsible to make decisions in the Islamic culture. Though Mullah is well known about Ali's character; as an abusive husband who rarely stays at home, is biased towards his sons and daughters and has an affair with a 14-year-old girl, still considered as a good father and honest husband. Furthermore, at the time of accumulating evidences to prove so-called guilt, Zahra puts her query about the discussion between Ali, Mullah and Mayor. Mayor answers to

her that "This is not your business, what do you understand, women?" (52). Women are even prohibited to know the truth in the Islamic culture.

In the story, despite of Zahra's warning that Soraya is innocent and Ali is crooked, Mayor summon the stoning supporting to Ali and Mullah, none of male members stand on the side of Soraya. Hashem a local mechanic keep mum while delivering verdict though he knows the truth. He does not defend Soraya and keep watching the stoning to death shows the solidarity among male.

While defending the concept of misreading and misinterpretation of *Qur'an* by patriarchy, Dr. Asma Lamrabet took the reference of *Qur'an* in the book *Are Men and Women Unequal in Islam* and mentions that "The believers' men and women, are allies (awliya) of one another. They enjoin the 'common good' (al ma'ruf) and forbid the bad alms (zakat) and obey God and his prophet" (*Qur'an* 9:71). The *Qur'an* lays the ground for the concept of equality between men and women: Considering to the statement from *Qur'an*, it is clear that men and women are an alliance to each other and have mutual relation, they share spiritual equality for common good. In reality, *Qur'an* has not discriminated between man and women. It is the misogynist reading by male that deviated the meaning of the *Qur'an* and enhance patriarchy from the religious ground. Considering to the statement from *Qur'an*, it is clear that men and women are an alliance to each other and have mutual relation, they share spiritual equality for common good. Asma Barlas in *Believing Women in Islam* views that though men and women are all equal, it is the men who portrayed women images as defective and interpreted women as evil, she mentions that:

Thus, it was the Ahadith that introduced into Islam images of women as "morally and religiously defective," "evil temptresses, the greatest Fitna [temptation] for men," "unclean over and above menstruation," "the larger part

of the inhabitants of Hell, because of their unfaithfulness and ingratitude toward their husbands," and as having "weaker intellectual powers," therefore being unfit for political rule. (45)

The interpretation of *Qur'an* contradicts with the interpretation of Mullah, *Qur'an* never discriminates male and female. But it is the misogynist reading by people like Mullah that shows females are impure, dishonest and having no logical power to rule, inhabitants from hell and unfaithful creature. The interpretation stimulates the culturally embedded patriarchy. Conversely, to the interpretation a husband of Soraya is found dishonest, impure, and evil maker with crooked mind. In the story, Ali has an affair with a fourteen-year-old girl. Zahra in her narration mentions that "Ali wanted to remarry a young girl from city whom no one had ever seen. Soraya had not have relations with her husband for years now" (54). Soraya, though did not have relation with her husband. She keep cooking food for him but in return Ali wishes divorce from Soraya without giving her single penny and without any guilt. Since Soraya rejects Mullah's proposal about divorce and being a temporary wife for him. Ali, sets on fire and blames her saying "shamed him at his own home to a man of God! made him a joke, a laughingstock" (17). He did not see any loss of his dignity with Mullah's offers to his wife to be Mullah's temporary wife. He accuses her being dishonest and unfaithful women and make him a joke. He sets on fire when he heard the information about rejection. This is the outcome of the culturally inhabited patriarchy and male ego. This shows the vulnerability of women in the Islamic culture.

Considering to the interpretation, Schirin Amir-Moazami in *Knowledge, Empowerment and Religious Authority* states that ". . . it is through their capacity to distinguish between "tradition" and "religion" that the women claimed Islam as a source for reinterpreting certain elements within the family tradition, which they

perceived and experience as being too strict. The defense of Islam is then situated on a critique of custom or as the women put it, of tradition” (70). The statement shows that the existence of misreading of *Qur'an* is preceding culture and need revision the text because there is difference between the tradition and religion. Zahra in the story has a sound understanding on the content of the *Qur'an*, she fights to save Soraya from evil patriarchal culture. She argues with Mullah for misinterpreting and miss-using holy book he carries. At the end of the story again Zahra helps the journalist to escape from the village and she says "The world will know" (126). Her statement tries to clarify the suppression, domination and exploitation to women through the patriarchic culture in Islam by miss-using the holy book.

Asma Barlas in *Believing Women in Islam* states that sexual inequality privileged and women are dominated due to misinterpretation of holy book by patriarchy. She says that:

More to the point, such an exegesis reads into the Ayah claims about sexual inequality and male privilege based on misinterpreting three words in it: qawwamun, which is read as managers; qanitat, read as wifely obedience, and nushiz, read as wife's disobedience to the husband. However, all three interpretations are misleading as a number of *Qur'an* scholars have shown. (186)

Statement above shows that the meaning of the *Qur'an* which is misinterpreted later by male religious scholars on their favor. In *The Stoning of Soraya* Mullah is an interpreter of holy *Qur'an* and influence to the community people and governance structure to support patriarchy through the religious ground. While producing false evidence against Soraya, Mullah blackmail to Hashem an innocent, illiterate and meek man to approve so called guilt of Soraya. In the story Mullah says to Hashem

that "Ali has seen Soraya coming in and out of your home. He's suspicious and mistrusts his wife. However...as you know...I am beholden to your Ayatollah to enforce all standards of virtue...as required by Sharia law. Islam demands it. Of course, a judge from Teheran could be called in read hear!" (53).Mullah blackmails to Hashem to accept the false claim to turn it as so called true.

Furthermore, Ali and Mullah says to Hashem that"Such a man could also be charged and punished. In some case stoned along with the women" (56).They force Hashem to say 'yes' for what they want to hear 'yes' so that they can gather false evidence to stand against Soraya and stoning her to death. In the Islamic culture religion and the religious belief is in the higher position. People follow blindly what religion says and the meaning of the religious ordains are limited in the hand of Mullah like evil man who signifies meaning ontheir behalf. Through the deviation of meaning by Mullah like interprets, religious ideology strengthen patriarchy.Due to the miss-interpretation, men areconsideringthemselves as manager and wife to be obedience to her husband.In the story, Ali asks Sorayato obey his order and give him divorce, so that he can marry a 14 years old girl. He orders her like a manager and Soraya had to obey his offer.But she rejects his offering that boils the male ego and the ego finally leads to the disaster.Patriarchy use interpretation of *Qur'an* that suit to their purpose in Islam. While convincing to Soraya to give divorce to Ali, Mullah asks her:

What I proposing, What I really want to say is that I would be happy to provide both for you and your charming children. You are so deserving. This would be done with the utmost propriety, of course, completely honorably! I would come to you a visit from to time to time; we would talk; we would get

to know each other better...in time. You know the word, sigheh...a temporary wife...authorized fully by Islam. (17)

Mullah takes the vulnerability of Soraya as granted, proposing her to be his temporary wife, once she left her husband. He offers her to be their survivor. In the Islamic culture men are survivor for women. He claims that his purpose is also permitted by religion. Though, he says that temporary wife is permitted by religion he doesn't show any evidence. This shows power of male in the Muslim culture that is generated from the miss-interpretation of *Qur'an*. Mullah, though, a religious person, is not trustworthy. He is the product of patriarchy and supporting Ali (man) using religion as a tool, though, he knows that Ali is crook. This is the evil side of Islamic patriarchy which says that Temporary wife (sigheh) is authorized.

AsmaBarlas in *Believing Women in Islam* sees that defining women roles and enhanced patriarchy is the outcome of misogynistic reading of the *Qur'an* by patriarchy. In the text she mentions that "Women's status and the roles in Muslim societies as well as patriarchal structures and gender relationships, are a function of multiple factors, most of which have nothing to do with religion" (2). The statement shows that it is not the religion which disaggregates gender, roles and relation but it is due to function of other factors like misinformed, misunderstanding and misguidance. In the Story, Mullah claims to Soraya that "SorayaKhanum, we are here alone, just the two of us. I am a man of God; I am like a prophet; you can confide in me. What do you have to say?" (16). Mullah while convincing to Soraya to leave her husband, claims himself as a man of God, however, he already had tainted and corrupt image at the time of the Shah regime. He claims as a prophet who can tell the future by holding the holy book in his hand but he could not foresee the future that one day the illusion and evil practices existing in their culture will be reveal to the world. At the end of

story, Zahra let journalist escape with all records to let the world know about the evil culture how that destroy Soraya without any guilt. Mayor and community people believe on what Mullah and Ali say, believing on the teaching that male and religious person are never wrong.

It is vivid that *The Stoning of Soraya* is written after the Shah's regime in Iran. At the time of revolution, patriarchy turned more rigid towards their religion and forced women to use veil as unique dress to fight against the western influence. Mirim Cooke in the *Women Claim Muslim* also sees how the adopted practice to revolt against the western influence contributed to enhance patriarchy and dominate women culturally. She enhances that:

They had adopted the veil, which confounded political and religious symbolism, to demonstrate their anti-West nationalist convictions. They were eager to veil because they believed that to wear this symbol of nationalist mobilization against the westernized shah would demonstrate their commitment and importance to the nationalist movement and speed the advent of a new pro-women era. They were not, however, prepared for its legal imposition. When the revolutionary clerics came to power, the veil became a compulsory uniform representing women's piety, but also, importantly, the country's religiosity. The nationalist choice thus became a religious mandate." generated more power for men. (x)

The paragraph above shows that though the power of patriarchy has already mainstreamed in Islamic cultures, it is enhanced after the Shah regime. At the period of revolution in Iran, veil was used to protest against the western culture and their freedom but later that turned as culture and enhanced the power of patriarchy. It is mentioned in the text *The Stoning of Soraya* that "but since the revolution, men had



become all powerful" (33). The revolution generated more power to men, contrarily; women's world is concise in veil. Mullah likes stereotypical crook minded personalities are turned as man of God, prophet and are deliverer of God's message and authorized person to interpret *Qur'an*. The new rules redefined family code in Iran misreading the *Qur'an*.

Yusuf al-Qardawi in *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase* castigates men because "they are always trying to control women's actions, never giving them a chance to express themselves and reveal talents which would enable them to assume positions of leadership, independent of men's control" (Qardawi 70). In the Story Ali, Mullah, Mayor and other male character do not allow female character to express their right, express their freedom of speech, and express the truth. Rather they confined them in boundary and falsify women's image culturally and dominate them. Bardan adds that women in the Islam are interpreted as devil and having obscenities that to be hidden, however, the concept of veil was drawn just to protest against the western influence.

Bardan in *Women, Qasim, and the Rise of a Feminist Discourse* says patriarchy devilish the women's image, they embodied all evil in women. She says that: "The devil who has no power but who is made to shoulder responsibility for all evil is embodied in women. Therefore, their bodies are obscenities to be hidden. Having linked women with the devil men then persecute them" (59). The misogynistic reading shows women are responsible to shoulder evil, so their bodies should be hidden. The patriarchy define women as evil and their body incorporates vulgarity and women is responsible to devilish the culture. So if the women have relation with the other good man they should be persecuted. In the non-fiction male characters are considered a man of God and representative of God but women are defined as devil. Ali in *The*

*Stoning of Soraya* teaches the patriarchal value and normsto his sons but even does not speak a single word with his own daughters. He shoulders the responsibility to boys but not to daughters.

*On the Idea of Islamic Feminism* Raja Bhalul cited from Al Ghazali's *The Question of Women* where he demonstrates "The act of beating must not be severe, nor is it permissible for it to reach the area of the face" (Ghazali 175). It shows that act of beating to women is not guided by Islamic religion which is misinterpretation of *Qur'an* by preacher to serve the purpose of patriarchy or to control women. In the story Ali and Mullah web plot against Soraya, accuses her being dishonest wife and practicing adultery, collects false evidences and spread rumor by saying "My wife is a whore! bitch! you whore! why? She left me no dignity! She disgraced me in my own house!" (67) and beats her in public. Ali in the story beats his wife and accuses her being whore, he stimulates people gather around him to force to persecute so that he can get rid from her. Ali with Mullah accumulates false evidences and misinterprets what Hashem says.

Anita Kynsilethtoin the text *Islamic Feminism: Current Perspectives* says that Islamic patriarchy formulate rules and regulation. They develop family code to legitimize the domination and dominate women for a long run. She says that:

The pre-2003/4 gender-discriminating Family Code and the previous absence of any state programs for the elevation of women's status had been justified by a sense of the sacred and private status of "women issues" and the "political incorrectness" within the public debate on the "women's question." This construction of religious specificity in opposition to gender equality had for decades been used as legitimization for maintaining misogynist laws. (41)

The paragraph says that; it is the misogynist reading of the *Qur'an* that formed the law and family code using misinterpretation of *Qur'an* to dominate women. In *The Stoning of Soraya*, Ali accuses Soraya of practicing adultery with Hashem, saying "They were standing close, whispering. I saw them touch hands, another day.... again they were whispering and they were smiling" (71). It is very clear that the misogynist laws in Iran prohibit women to stand close, smiling and touch other men. Though it was just a plot by Ali to get rid of Soraya but the blame was based on the reference to rules that smiling with other men and touching them are considered as sin. They misinterpret the word smiling and whispering just to serve their purpose. It is a vivid picture of the rigid Islamic patriarchic culture that set rules through the misogynist reading of *Qur'an* to subjugate women and confine and limit them in the four wall boundary and use them as per their choice. Even women do not have their own choice to live their life in Islam.

In the story, Soraya could have left her abusive husband early but due to fear of destruction of the future girl child and due to not having property in her hand she kept tolerating the domination by her husband until she was killed. Her innocence was left unheard. Even her own father and sons turned against her and showed their solidarity to men. Soraya says when she learns that her father went with Mayor, Ali, Mullah and other men "he will go along with whatever they decide" (73). On the one hand, the statement indicates solidarity among men to stand against women and on the other, the cultural practices where women are found always wrong.

Considering to the entrance of patriarchy in the *Qur'an* by misogynist reading and misinterpretation Hirs Ali Khan *In the Islam, Immigration, and Identity* mentions: "the Koranic treatment of women and the innate violence embedded in the doctrine of Islam" (87). The way women are dominated and treated and the way

they are subjugated has direct link with the *Qur'an* and it is in the teaching of *Qur'an* and culture by the patriarchic norms and values. In the story, Soraya asks Ali about his dignity when Mullah asks her to be his temporary wife and treat her like a whore, her eight years son burst and says "don't talk to father like that" (17). In the Islamic culture raising voice against man is a crime which is embedded in the teaching of *Qur'an* and culture to their children and in practice.

She mentions *Qur'an* has not ascribed the stoning, it is just ascribed by prophet. In the non-fiction *The Stoning of Soraya*, stoning to Soraya is not fact based in the *Qur'an*, to conduct stoning there needs to be fact and proved evidences. Ali and Mullah influenced and forced Ebhrim (Mayor) to run stoning accumulating false claim and that is not adequate to prove the guilt of Soraya. There is no direct witness for misconduct in the one hand, nor Soraya accept the guilt nor they do pregnancy test. Ali blames her being pregnant and that is rumor in the town. While defending her innocence Soraya says "Wait nine months and you'll know I am not" (67). In *The Stoning of Soraya*, even the rules are found different for men and women. Though she refuses the accusation and asks them to prove with strong evidences. They do not listen to her rather Mayor says to her that:

Soraya, two men present in this room are accusing you of conduct unworthy of a wife and mother... He assumed speaking: you seem to be unaware of laws of our society such as they were promulgated by our revered you must prove your innocence. When a man accuses his wife, she has to prove her innocence. If a woman makes an accusation against her husband, she has to produce proof. (73)

This is the bitter truth in the Islamic world that rules are formulated on the ground of religion. The practice of religion is based on the interpretation of *Qur'an*, which is

already deviated the meaning to support the patriarchy. A man in the Islamic culture can accuse women where she has to prove her innocence, but women cannot complain against the men without evidence but man can do. This is the vivid picture of discrimination in the Islamic patriarchy. In this non-fiction, Ali has a relation with a teenage girl in the city but no one dare to complain against. Conversely, Soraya had no physical relation with Hashem and she has been accused but she has to prove her innocence. Though Soraya was innocent without collecting adequate evidences, finally the verdict is delivered. Soraya gets killed by stoning.

Islamic patriarchy is comparatively more harsh and rigid against women. They treat women as subject to be dominated due to the rigid value system in Islam and doctrinal inflexibility is pungently and straightforwardly are subject called into question. Patriarchy limited women in the household chores and child bearing. Bardan says that “Power. . . [it] does not rest solely on child bearing in the family, but on all the social structures which enable men to control women’s labor” “Control is maintained by denying women access to necessary economically productive resources and by restricting women’s sexuality” (7). Women in the Islamic culture are treated as a machine to give birth to the child after that, even they do not have their own choice to rear their children. Soraya in the story could leave her husband too early, but due to fear of the devastating future of her daughters as Ali take cares of only of his son, she could not leave Ali and keep tolerating troubles. If she had an income source, she could be independent to move with her daughters. Furthermore, the participation of women in social activity has been restricted in the *The Stoning of Soraya*. None of the women characters are involved while delivering the final verdict of stoning to Soraya. Though Zahra's presence seems bit stronger still her endeavor turns fruitless when time comes to save Soraya from stoning.

AsmaBarlas in *Believing Women in Islam* views that *Qur'an* is a God's speech and that never be biased but the patriarchy or human mediator who misinterpreted the message of *Qur'an* differently to dominate women.

For Muslim *Qur'an* is God's speech and not the work of human authors and God is beyond sex/gender. (It could well be, of course, that men and women tend to interpret the *Qur'an* message differently. Also since access to Divine Discourse is mediated by humans and in gendered languages and since the humans who have interpreted the *Qur'an* historically have been men, we can certainly hear male voices and masculinities biases in Exegesis). (21)

The statement above shows that male signifies the meaning of *Qur'an* to support them. At the time of stoning to Soraya Mullah claims "Each of you, in turn, will have a chance to cleanse the offense by throwing a stone at her, but it must be an orderly process, as laid down by the law. At each stone thrown your honor will be restored to you in the same degree" (100). It shows how bias is the Islamic patriarchy and the way patriarchy misinterprets the *Qur'an* and forms the religious theory that works as the basic foundation to develop rules and regulation and that is completely misogynist. In *The Stoning of Soraya*, Soraya is accused with the false claim for dishonor to the culture and each pelted stone aiming restore their honor as per Mullah. It is vivid that Soraya was innocent, she is got stoned due to male ego and Ali's wish to marry another girl. But contrarily, Ali enjoys the extramarital affair with 14 years old girl but no one question about him. This is the evil side of Islamic Patriarchy.

In the Islamic culture, polygamy is allowed for male but not to female. Females are not supposed to speak against their male counterpart. Male are considered as man of god and females are to serve them as instructed through their religion. Female characters in this non-fiction represent the victim of suppression,

domination, abused, exploitation through barbaric Islamic patriarchy. And male characters dominate female to quench their ego using misogynist reading and misreading the *Qur'an*, misinformed to community. Male are dominating female backed by religious foundation and which is the outcome of the misogynist reading of *Qur'an*. Through the misogynist reading by male they have enhanced the patriarchy which ultimately sets rules and dominate females. So it is quite essential to understand the patriarchy and how that affected in Muslim culture.

Patriarchy is the state, where only men are right and they have the power to control women and defines the role of gender except physical features. Women rights are under attack in the Islamic patriarchy. Women are subject to be dominated, they do not have freedom of expression, decision making and speaking against the domination by a male member in the family and community.

In conclusion, presentation of characters like Soraya and her daughters, Zahra, Hashem and other community women; the non-fiction tries to demystify the way women are victimized in the Islamic patriarchic culture. At the same time, presentation of characters like Mullah, Ali and his sons, Mayor (Ebrahim) and her father clarify the way Islamic patriarchy dominates and suppress women.

The analysis of the text *The Stoning of Soraya* concludes that the domination and suppress to women in the Islam is the outcome of the deeply rooted patriarchy which is back supported by the theory of the religion. The theory of the religion interpreted by man like Mullah a religious preacher who is influenced by materialistic power. Ali represents the materialist power and Mayor represents the authority who implements the rules in the community. The rule comes from the interpretation of *Qur'an* to serve the purpose of men.

In the Islamic culture women are treated as mere object and subject to be dominated and are living with their identity crisis. They do not have freedom of choice and do not have decision making power. They are restricted in the name of religion, honesty, honor and faithfulness. Contrarily men are enjoying the handful of power that comes from the religion and the culture which is the product of misogynist reading of holy book. They interpret the text as per their convenience to serve their purpose. From the beginning to the end of the text, male are superior and male superiority is represented through Ali.

Mullah represents the influence of patriarchy and also contributor to patriarchy through misreading the Islamic law or *Qur'an* and contributes to turn false claim against the women and dominate them. The text, *Stoning to Soraya* is the representation of the male ego or the Islamic Patriarchy.



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