



## Does Islam allow Wife beating ?

Written by Kevin Abdullah Kareem  
[islamic-answers.com](http://islamic-answers.com)

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In the Holy Qu'ran we read:

".....Men are "*qawwamuna*" over women, because God has given some more than others, and because they support them from their means, and the righteous women are the truly devout ones [ God fearing ] , who guard in their husbands absence the intimacy which God has ordained to be guarded. And as for those women whose "*nushuz*" you have reason to fear, remind them [ of God and His teachings ] ; [ next ] then leave them alone in bed; then [ as a last resort ] "*hit*" them; and if thereupon they pay you heed, then seek not against them means of annoyance. *Behold, God is indeed most high, great !.....*" [ Quran 4:34 ]

### 1:

The verse begins with the statement that "*men are qawwamun over women*". The root of the key word, *qawwamun* [ plural of *qawwam* ] , is *qama* which means "to stand or to make something stand or to establish something". It is often used in the Qur'an in the sense of establishing religion or prayer. A related word is *qa'im* which means "one who stands or makes something stand". *Qawwam* is an intensive form of *qa'im* and has a sense of continuity in the action involved. So it means one who is continuously standing over something or one who is continuously making something stand, i.e. is maintaining it. In the Qur'anic usage of *qawwam* and related words there is almost always present an idea of propriety. For example, *aqamah* of *salah* is not only praying but also praying properly.

".....O you who believe ! Be *qawwamin* with fairness..." [ Qur'an 4:135 ]

".....O you who believe ! Be *qawwamin* for God as witnesses to fairness..." [ Qur'an 5:8 ]

Thus to be a *qawwam* over something or someone is to guard, maintain or take care of that something or someone in a proper and fair manner. The word denotes no superiority but responsibility. Dr. Muhammad Abdel Haleem [ King Fahd Professor of Islamic Studies ] comments

In Arabic lexicography, the expression *qama 'ala* means merely "maintain her and attend to her affairs. The hadith also elucidates the meaning of *qawama* at the time of the Prophet. A companion of the Prophet explains that he chose to marry an older, experienced woman because he had young orphaned sisters and he wanted a woman "*taqumu 'alayhinna*" and to gather them and comb their hair [ Bukhari, *chapter on sales*, hadith of Jabir b Abdallah ] 1

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1: Muhammad Abdel Haleem , *Understanding The Qur'an* ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, paperback edition 2005 ) , p. 48

Muhammad Asad writes:

the expression qawwam is an intensive form of qa'im [ "one who is responsible for" or takes care of a thing or a "person" ]. Thus, "qama 'ala 'l-mar'ah" signifies "he undertook the maintenance of the woman" or "he maintained her" [ see Lane VIII, 2995 ]. The grammatical form qawwam is more comprehensive than qa'im, and combines the concepts of physical maintenance and protection as well as of moral responsibility [2](#)

Abdullah Yusuf Ali writes:

Qawwam: one who stands firm in another's business, protects his interests, and looks after his affairs; or it may be, standing firm in his own business, managing affairs, with a steady purpose [3](#)

Justice Aftab Hussain writes:

the root word of "Qawwam" is "Qawama or Qama". Qama means he stood up; he balanced himself. But when used with "ba or 'ala" it would mean maintain or manage. Qama 'ala rajul wa qama alaiha means:"the man maintained the woman, fulfilled her needs and undertook to gratify them." The words qama 'ala mean to provide with means of subsistence. Qawwam 'ala would therefore mean a provider, a supporter or furnisher for another with the means of subsistence [4](#)

A correct and accurate translation of "qawwamoona AAala alnnisa" therefor would be "Men are the protectors and maintainers of women". A husband has the responsibility of taking care of his wife, protecting her, defending her honor, and fulfilling her needs regarding her religion and her worldly life. It does not mean - as all too many people have falsely assumed - that he has the right to behave obstinately towards her, compel her, subject her to his will, suppress her individuality, and thus heinously negate her identity. His status as protector and maintainer is pure responsibility, pure liability, and not so much a position of authority. It requires from him that he uses his good sense, thinks carefully about what he does, and exercises patience. It means that he cannot be hasty and offhanded in his decisions. The qu'ran tells us that believers handle their affairs by mutual consultation [ shûra ]:

*"...Those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who [ conduct ] their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what We bestow on them for sustenanc..." [ Qur'an 42:38 ]*

Muhammad Abdel Haleem comments on this verse:

The Qur'an describes the believers as those whose affairs "are conducted by consultation" [ 42:38 ]. *This is a general and permanent description that was revealed in Mecca before political life was started in Medina.* Naturally it applies to the most basic social unit, the family [5](#)

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2: Muhammad Asad, *The Message of The Quran* ( Gibraltar, 1980 ), p. 109, Note 42

3: Yusuf Ali *The meaning of The Holy Quran* ( 11th Edition, Amana Publications 2004 ), p. 195, Note 545

4: Aftab Hussain *Status of Women in Islam* ( Law Publishing Company , 1987 ), p. 110

5: Muhammad Abdel Haleem , *Understanding The Qur'an* ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, paperback edition 2005 ), p. 49

Islam emphasizes the importance of taking counsel and mutual agreement in family decisions and affairs. The Holy Qur'an gives us an example in Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayah 33:

“.....If they both decide upon weaning the child by mutual consent and consultation, there is no blame on them. And if you desire to engage a wet-nurse for your children, there shall be no blame on you, provided you pay what you have agreed to pay in a fair manner. And fear Allah and know that Allah sees what you do.....” [ Qur’an 2:33 ]

Moreover we have seen that the function of qawwam is also understood in the Qur'an to be characterized by fairness. So a husband must be a protector and maintainer of his wife in a proper and fair manner. This fact is also strongly emphasized in the hadith of our prophet. The prophet told us that man's treatment of his wife is a measure for the perfection of his faith:

Abu Hurayra narrated that the Prophet said: The most perfect of the believers in their belief are those with the best manners, and the best of you are those who are best with their wives [6](#)

The Prophet also said: "*God detests the ja'zari al jawwaz*", that is, one who is harsh toward his family and who is arrogant. It is stated in the two Sahihs from the hadith of Jariyah b. Wahab al-Khazad and Abu Da'tid. Therefore a man must be always kind and fair to his wife, he must be "qawwam", i.e. a protector and maintainer over the family in a proper and fair manner. This is moreover confirmed by Muhammad Abdel Haleem in his commentary on the verse in question [ 4:34 ] :

“.....Islam attaches great importance to people being together in a group with a leader. Praying together led by an imam increases the reward for each individual twenty-seven times. The Prophet had a distinct desire for good management, and said: "If there are three of you on a journey, let them appoint one of them as amir [ the one in charge ] ." And when he sent a group of people away for any purpose he would see that they had an amir , though not to bully them, because he said: "The sayyid [ chief ] of a group of people is their servant." [ Al-'Ajlûnî , I. , Kash al-khafâ' , 1 , Cairo n.d. , p. 562 ]

Similarly, he advised that the pace of a travelling company should be set to suit the weakest among them, the imam in prayer should set his pace to suit the old and the mothers who need to attend to their babies. So in the family, which is the fundamental unit of society, there must be a head or a chairman. In the Qur'an, this role is assigned to the husband, who has the responsibility to maintain the family, whereas the wife is not obliged to maintain the family or even herself.

The qawama or stewardship of the family that is assigned to the husband does not give him open or unlimited authority. It is limited by the Qur'anic principle of ma'rûf and works according to the principle of "shûra" - qawama is part of "mu'âshara" [ living together ] . Husbands are ordered: "Consort / live with them "bi'l-ma'rûf" [ in a good manner in accordance with what is honourable and commendable ] - [ 4.19 ] . Al-ma'rûf is taken for granted in the marriage contract. In the Qur'an, by virtue of the marriage contract, husbands make a strong pledge to their wives [ 4:21 ] , understood by exegetes to be "living together according to what is honourable and commendable".

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6: Musnad Ibn-Hanbal, No. 7396

As for the principle of Shura, the Qur'an describes the believers as those whose affairs "are conducted by consultation" [ 42:38 ]. This is a general and permanent description that was revealed in Mecca before political life was started in Medina. Naturally it applies to the most basic social unit, the family. It has been seen above that such expressions as mu'ashara , tashawur [mutual consultation], taradi [mutual acceptance] are frequent in Qur'anic discussions of family matters. [ for example 2:233 ]

The role of "qawama" , which involves the husband's responsibility to maintain and look after his wife, is different from merely "ruling over" the wife as is made explicit in the Book of Genesis. There, as a punishment for making Adam eat from the fruit, Eve was told that her pains would be multiplied in conception and "in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee...." [7](#)

## 2:

It's important to note that the expression "men are qawwamun over women" only describes the relationship between a husband and wife within the family. The expression does not refer to the relationship between men and women in general. Muhammad Abdel Haleem confirms this:

"...Let us consider some terms in this verse. First we have "men" and "women". They mean "husbands" and "wives" as the passage goes on to mention intimate relations between couples and arbitration that may lead to divorce. Why does the verse not say "husbands" and "wives" ? Because the word "zawj" applies in classical Arabic to both sexes. It has no feminine; it is like the English word "spouse" , and it would not have made sense to say "spouses are given more than spouses". This can also be seen in other parts of the Qu'ran where "husbands" and "wives" are mentioned; the same terminology of "men" and "women" is used. The verse is thus talking about "husbands" and "wives", not "men" and "women" in general. This distinction is important because those who misunderstand the verse take it to mean that God has given men in general more than women in general, applying that very extensively and interpolating "what they think" men are given more of .e.g. strength, intelligence, wisdom; even having a beard is listed by some ! Then they go on from this to say that women cannot be judges, heads of state, or in any position of leadership over men...." [8](#)

The verse in question discusses issues related to marriage and family life. In other words the expression "qawwamoona AAala alnnisa" is not general, but restricted to marriage [ family life ] . The expression only describes the relationship between husband and wife in marriage. The verse only mentions "care" and responsibility" within the family.

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[7](#): M. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding The Qur'an* ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, paperback edition 2005 ) , pp. 48-49

[8](#): M. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding The Qur'an* ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, paperback edition 2005 ) , p. 47

3:

Let us take a look again at the verse in question:

“.....Men are "*qawwamuna*" over women, because God has given some more than others, and because they support them from their means, and the righteous women are the truly devout ones [ God fearing ] , who guard in their husbands absence the intimacy which God has ordained to be guarded. And as for those women whose "*nushuz*" you have reason to fear, remind them [ of God and His teachings ] ; [ next ] then leave them alone in bed; then [ as a last resort ] "*hit*" them; and if thereupon they pay you heed, then seek not against them means of annoyance. *Behold, God is indeed most high, great !.....*" [ Quran 4:34 ]

What is the meaning the Arabic expression "*bima faddal Allah*" , translated above as "because Allah has given some more than others" ? Muhammad Abdel Haleem answers this question very well:

A third concept that has been misinterpreted is the Arabic expression "*bima faddal Allah*" which explains the basis of *qawama*. There is 1 translator [ Yusuf Ali ] who says: "Because God has given to one more [ strength ] than the other" Others say: "Because God has preferred in bounty one of them over another" [ Arberry ] ; "Because God made the one of them to excel the other" [ Pickthall ] and " Because God has made the one superior to the other" [ Dawood ]. The root of the concept "*fadl*" in Arabic means "to give more". Lexically "*fadl*" is "*ziyada*" i.e. more. That is why some exegetes understood it to be the extra share of inheritance, thinking that this is corroborated by 4:32, while others thought it was strength, intelligence and so on, or the beard. However this is all based on a hasty, incorrect reading of the text which assumes that "*ma*" [ in "*ma faddala*" ] has the same grammatical function in 4:32 and 4:34. It does not. In the former, it is a relative pronoun meaning "that which God has given more of to some than the others". As such it requires an additional preposition and a pronoun "*bihi*". In 4:34, on the other hands, "*ma*" is "*masdariyya*". It merely turns the verse into a verbal noun [ "*bi tafdil Allah*" - "by the appointment of God" ]. Thus in 4:32 men have something extra given to them [ the share of the inheritance ] while in 4:34 there is only the assignment of the role of "*qawama*", assignment of the chairmanship of the family to the husband. The verse thus means "Men maintain and attend to their wives because God has assigned this extra role to them and because of what they spend of their money on the family." Qur'an 2:228 mentions the rights and obligations of wives: "They have rights similar to the rights men have over them according to what is "*ma'ruf*" , but men have a "*daraja*" [ degree ] over them". Like the above "more / extra" , this word "*daraja*" [ degree ] has been interpreted by some as referring to the extra share of the inheritance. However, since within the marriage of two living people the question of inheritance does not arise, the degree clearly refers to the role of *qawama* circumscribed in the way described above. It is interesting to note that that the Qur'an does not say, 'Because God has given men more than women' but 'God has given some more than others'. This expression occurs a number of times to refer to the nature of things, namely that in this world some have been given more wealth [ 16:71 ] and some more of other things. **In our verse, for husbands this "more than others" is the stewardship of the family.** each will be judged according to how they conducted themselves with what they have been given [ 6:165 ]. [9](#)

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9: M. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding The Qur'an* ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd,paperback edition 2005 ) , pp. 49-50

Imam Fakhr al-Din al-Razi in his commentary on the expression [ "...because Allah has given some more than others..." ], confirms that this "more" only refers to the state of division in the family:

"...Know that Allah Most High has said [ two verses previously ], "... and not to long for that with which Allah has preferred some of you above others" [ Qur'an 4:32 ], a verse that we said was revealed because some women made remarks about Allah's favoring men over them in estate division inheritance [ by certain male heirs receiving twice the share of their female counterparts ]. So Allah mentions in this verse that He **"only" favored men over women in "estate division" because men are the caretakers of women**. For although both spouses enjoy the usufruct of each others person, Allah has ordered men to pay women their marriage portion, and to daily provide them with their support, so that the increase on one side is met with an increase on the other--and so it is as though there is no favoring at all. This clarifies the verses arrangement and order....." [10](#)

#### 4:

Now that we correctly understand the meaning of the quranic expressions "men are qawwamoona over women" and "bima faddal Allah" we can answer the next question: "...Why did Allah assign to men the role of "qawama" over the family ?..." First it's important to understand that Allah has created human beings as males and females, following the "dual" role which is central to the system of creation. He has given the woman the great tasks of child-bearing, breast-feeding and looking after her children. These are certainly not tasks of the type which may be fulfilled without careful preparation, physically, psychologically and mentally. She could not be given all those tasks and be still required to work in order to earn her living and to look after her children at the same time. We should realize that mothers raise generations. Women moreover build families with their love and care. It is only just , therefor, that the other part, i.e. man, should be assigned the task of providing the essential needs and the protection required for the woman to fulfill her highly important duties, described in:

Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet said: "*A woman acts for the people*" [11](#)

Men and women are different emotionally as well as in physical characteristics and endurance. Allah has blessed each gender in creation with a different nature. Men, by nature, are more hot-blooded, tending more towards strength and severity. Women on the other hand are by nature more emotional. The emotional character of women, their motherly instinct, and their basically tender, compassionate nature qualify them for their vital roles as careful mothers and affectionate wives. Such roles are essential to form happy households, to raise healthy generations, and to create a closely-knit society. Therefor Islam goes with the nature of men and women. Let men, with their stronger physiques, face the troubles / hardships of life and the bread-winning role. And let women, with their stronger affections and emotions, face the troubles of bringing up children and managing the house. Men and women have different, but complementary roles.

Another indication is that the woman prefers that man assumes his role of being in charge of the family, by taking care of all their needs and the financial responsibilities. Many women experience feelings of worry, stress, panic, dissatisfaction and unhappiness when they live with men who relinquish their role of being in charge for any reason. Islam recognizes this fact and goes along with the nature of men and women.

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[10](#): Tafsir al-Fakhr al-Razi. 32 vols. *Beirut* 1401/1981. Reprint ( 32 vols. in 16 ). *Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1405/1985*, 10,90

[11](#): Hadith - Al-Tirmidhi, Nr. 3978

5:

Let us take a look at the second part of the verse [ 4:34 ], which describes the righteous women:

“.....And the righteous women are the truly devout ones [ God fearing ] , who guard in their husbands absence *the intimacy which God has ordained to be guarded....*” [ Qur’an 4:34 ]

Righteous women are: "qanitat" [ translated above as: "truly devout ones" ] and "hafithat li' l-gaib bima God hafith" [ translated above as: "who guard in their husbands absence the intimacy which God has ordained to be guarded" ]. What do these two Arabic expressions mean or indicate here ?

The noun 'Qunut', from which the adjective 'qanitat' is derived, refers to the act of being devoutly obedient to Allah Almighty. So 'qanitat' means "women who exhibit qunut", that is 'women who are devoutly obedient to God'. This significance of the word is made clear by a comparison with Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayah 116, Surah An-Nahl, Ayah 120 and Surah Ar Rum, Ayah 26. The Qur'an classifies Maryam as one of the 'qanitin' in Surah At-Tahrim Ayah 12, using the masculine plural form of the word 'qanitat' that indicates one devout to Allah Almighty. This moreover proves that the Arabic word 'qanitat' in Surah An-Nisa Ayah 34 refers to the spirit of humility before Allah Almighty. In other words these women are God fearing. The Arabic word 'hafithat' in the expression 'hafithat li' l-gaib bima God hafith' is a feminine plural noun, from the triliteral word 'h.f.th', pronounced hafitha'. Like many Arabic words, *the root word and its variants are rich with meanings*. They have connotations of keeping, protecting or guarding. In this ayah, righteous women are described by the phrase 'hafithat li'l-gaib bima God hafitha'. The Arabic word 'li'l-gaib' means: 'in his absence'. Righteous women guard in their husband's absence what God has ordained to be guarded. [12](#)

Dr. Muhammad Abdel Haleem writes:

Having established for the husband the role of qawama, or maintenance and stewardship of the family, the Qur'an goes on to divide wives into two classes: the good ones who are described as "salihat" [ righteous ] and bad ones who are not. The salihat does not simply mean good as wives: "salah" is a general term to describe men or women who are righteous in observing the tenets of religion. These good wives are described in two ways, as:

1: "qanitat", which translators render as obedient - this is misleading because it gives the impression that they are obedient to their husbands whereas the term is used in the Qur'an **solely as being "devoutly obedient to God"**. [ 33:35, 39: ];

2: "hafizat", a term used in the Qur'an for women who guard their private parts, so equivalent to "chaste" [ 23:5, 33:4 ]. This includes guarding their private parts from approaching of being approached by anyone other than the spouse. "Li'l-ghayb" means that the wife is chaste "in his absence" [when he is away from her] . She is expected to guard her chastity because "God has ordered these things to be guarded". In the Qur'an, God's order in this respect is for men and woman alike [ 24:30-31 ]. Thus, being obedient to God and being chaste are the only two qualities by which a good wife is described, and we can see that they are not an excessive requirement. They are required of either sex. [13](#)

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[12](#): Muhammad Murtadha Al-Zabidi, " *Taj Al-Arous Min Jawahiri Al-Qamus* " , vol. 5, p. 250

[13](#): M. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding The Qur'an* ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, paperback edition 2005 ) , p. 50

6:

So far we have cleared up all the misconceptions about the expressions: "men are qawwamuna over women" and "because God has given some more than others". Moreover we have proven that the righteous women are the ones who are devoutly obedient to God and chaste [ their guard their private parts and honor , even in the absence of their husbands ]. However we haven't explained the last part of this verse [ 4:34 ] . Let us take a close look at this commonly misunderstood and misinterpreted part:

“.....And as for those women whose "nushuz" you have reason to fear, remind them [ of God and His teachings ] ; [ next step ] then leave them alone in bed ; then [ as a last resort ] "hit" them; and if thereupon they pay you heed, then seek not against them means of annoyance....." [ Qur'an 4:34 ]

After having described the righteous women, The Qur'an now refers to the opposite of these women, women whose "nushuz" is very serious [ women whose "nushuz" you have reason to fear ]. Now what does the Arabic word "nushuz" mean in this context ? How do we determine the correct meaning of this word ? Muhammad Abdel Haleem answers this question very well:

The proper meaning should be derived on the basis of the three criteria, namely: linguistic analysis of the text of the Qu'ran; what the Prophet said and did; and what the Qur'an says elsewhere about dealing with wives in difficult situations. [14](#)

Let us first take a look at how the Prophet himself explained and interpreted this verse [ by which we can determine the correct meaning of the word nushuz in this Ayah ]. The hadith in Muslim's Sahih states that the Prophet at the Farewell Pilgrimage said:

My last recommendation to you is that you should treat women well. Truly they are your helpmates, and you have no right over them beyond that - "**except if they commit a manifest indecency**" [ fahisha mubina ]. If they do, then refuse to share their beds and hit them "**without indecent violence**"[ fadribuhunna darban ghayra mubarrih ]. Then, if they desist, do not show them hostility any longer. Lo! you have a right over your women and they have a right over you. Your right over your women is that they not allow whom you hate to enter your bed nor your house. While their right over you is that you treat them excellently in their garb and provision. [15](#)

Our Prophet uses the expression "*fahisa mubina*" as the equivalent of "nushuz" . The word *nushuz* in this verse [ 4:34 ] therefor refers to "fahisa mubina", which refers to manifest obscenity. The word *nushuz* used in reference to the wife therefor doesn't mean disobedience or a case of simple disagreement. It means lewd acts, immoral behaviour that could lead to adultery :

On the other side comes the other class of women, whose "nushuz" is feared by the husband. It is with these that the husbands are instructed to go through three stages. Here again, we have a misinterpretation of the concept of "nushuz" and misinterpretation and mistranslation of the three stages recommended in dealing with a wife in "nushuz". The

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[14](#): M. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding The Qur'an* ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, paperback edition 2005 ) , p. 51

[15](#): Sahih Muslim, see also Jam'a al-Fawa'id, *kitab al-Iman, akham al-Li'an* , ( Meerut, n.d. ) , vol. 1 , p. 14

proper meaning should be derived on the basis of the three criteria listed above, namely: linguistic analysis of the text of the Qur'an; what the Prophet said and did; and what the Qur'an says elsewhere about dealing with wives in difficult situations. Let us briefly consider nushuz in the light of these considerations:

1:

It is clear that the contrast in this passage between the first and second type of women cannot be disregarded. If we say now, "Good students attend regularly and submit their essays on time; as for others, they may be warned and barred from entering the exam," the others must be understood in contrast with those who are said to attend and submit essays. Similarly, the second class of wives here is the opposite of those who are devoutly obedient to God and guarding their private parts, which God has ordered to be guarded. So what we have here is a woman whose husband fears her unfaithfulness and disregard for the commands of God.

2:

This linguistic understanding is corroborated by the interpretation of the prophet in his Farewell Speech, heard by thousands of people: "You have rights over your wives and they have rights over you: you have the right that they should not defile your bed, and that they should not commit flagrant lewdness" .....

3:

In at least six suras the Qur'an mentions difficulties in marriage, divorce and even the aftermath of divorce. Even when husbands dislike their wives they are instructed: "Consort with them in a good manner [ bi'l-maruf ], for if you dislike them it may happen that you dislike something in which God places much goodness." ( 4:19 ). Even if they have experienced hostility from their wives and children men are warned merely to be aware of it, but advised that to pardon, overlook and forgive is better because God is forgiving and merciful ( 64:14 ). Even in divorce proceedings, with all the attendant bitterness, husbands are forbidden to harass their wives or make their lives difficult ( 65:1, 6 ; 4:19 ). It should be done "with kindness" ( 2:229 ), "bi'l-maruf" ( 67:1 ). However there is one significant exception from this magnanimity ( 4:19, 65:1 also 4:15, 25 ) : "Except when they commit a flagrant lewdness" ( 4:19 ;65:1 ). This again corroborates our understanding that the "nushuz" in our present verse means "*a serious offence of infidelity*". [16](#)

Many jurists living in patriarchal cultures broadened the definition of "*fahishah mubayyana*" significantly. By broadening this definition, they broadened the scope of instances in which the husband may resort to "hitting." This is against the letter and spirit of the Qur'an which states that husbands should live with their wives in kindness or leave them charitably [ Surah 2:229 ]. Shayk G.F.Haddad moreover confirms that the word "nushuz" refers to lewd acts in the verse in question:

Nushuz or "recalcitrance" **is here an euphemism for immorality that may lead to adultery.** The wife's primary marital duty is spelled out in the mass-transmitted hadith of the Farewell Pilgrimage [ in Sahih Muslim ] as "not allowing whom you hate to enter your bed nor your house." Al-Maziri also said that another interpretation of the words in that hadith said it referred to a woman sitting in seclusion with a stranger inside her husband's house. [ In al-Nawawi, Sharh Sahih Muslim ]. [17](#)

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[16:](#) M. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding The Qur'an* ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, paperback edition 2005 ), pp. 51-52

[17:](#) Livingislam.org, comment by Shayk G.F. Haddad in his article: "*comment on: the place of women in pure islam*"

7:

Let us take a look again at the last part of this verse:

“.....And as for those women whose "nushuz" you have reason to fear, remind them [ of God and His teachings ] ; [ next step ] then leave them alone in bed ; then [ as a last resort ] "hit" them; and if thereupon they pay you heed, then seek not against them means of annoyance....." [ Qur'an 4:34 ]

In dealing with a wife in "nushuz", the qu'ran mentions / suggests three steps to solve the family crisis . One, to remind them of God and his teachings. If that works, the matter is settled. If not, then the second step is to avoid sharing beds with such wives. In most cases that proves effective and the third step is not required. In rare cases however, the two said methods fail. Then the last step suggested is to "hit". We can see that in many English translations of the Qur'an the word lightly is used within brackets after the word "hit". This is because the Prophet Muhammad, himself made that qualification. We shall proof this later on in our booklet.

First let us take look again in detail at the first two options / steps mentioned in the verse. The first one in Arabic is: "Izuhanna" translated above as "remind them" [ of God and His teachings ]. Some translators however render this word as "admonish them". Is this translation accurate and does it convey the true meaning of the word ? Dr. Abdel Haleem explains the menaings of this Arabic word very well in his excellent book "Understanding The Qur'an" :

stages that are permitted are: "Izuhunna" which translators render as 'admonish them' but this is not correct. "Wa'z" in Arabic is "reminding of God and His teachings". This meaning of the word is used in the Qur'an and this "reminding" is the core of the lexical meaning in Arabic, so that the person who is reminded may take heed of the message. [18](#)

The second option mentioned is "*Wahjuruhunna fi'l- madaiji*", translated above as "leave them alone in bed". Dr. Abdel Haleem clarifies some misconceptions about this Arabic expression in his work :

*Wahjuruhunna fi'l- madaiji* , which translators render variouly as: "Send them to beds apart." [ Dawood ] ; "Banish them to beds apart." [ Pickthall ] ; "Banish them to their couches.." [ Arberry ] ; "Refuse tos hare their beds." [ Yusuf Ali ] ; "leave them alone in bed." [ Asad ]. Those who say "send them" or "banish them" *have a basic misunderstanding of the verb. Even if it is understood as "leaving" , it is men who are asked to leave, not women. It is mysterious how translators understood the verb to mean "sending" or "banishing" women. Misunderstandings also arises from the term "hajr" which people seem to relate to hijra [ emigration ] but "hajr" also means a "verbal boycott". As the Prophet said, "It is not lawful for a Muslim to have 'hajr' with his brother for more than three days. They meet each other; one turns his face one way, the second to the other way. The best of them is the one who first greets the other". These are people who meet and the term "hajr" still applies to them because the one does not speak to the other, and "this is what it implies in our verse." This sulking or boycott is suggested **only in bed** "fi'l -madaji' not in front of the children or others. [19](#)*

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[18:](#) M. Abdel Haleem, *Understanding The Qur'an* ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, paperback edition 2005 ), p. 52

[19:](#) Ibid.

The words of the Prophet at the Farewell Pilgrimage also indicate that the husband himself should leave the bed of his wife and sleep alone in a separate room or other place in the house [ for example the couch ] . So again we repeat: "it is men who are asked to leave, not women."

The last option mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is in Arabic called "wadribuhunna" , translated above as "hit them". The Arabic word "*wadribuhunna*" is derived from "*daraba*". The word in Arabic means to "strike" or "hit". It includes everything from a tap with a tooth-stick to what in English we call beating. If it is stated that so-and-so "hit" so-and-so without further description, it would be assumed to be a single blow and it could be of any magnitude. When the Prophet took a tiny stick and tapped one of the Muslims on the stomach to straighten the ranks in preparation for war, he "hit" him with this meaning. Contrast this to the English phrase: "beat them". The meaning is totally different. If you took a shoe lace and hit someone on the hand with it, you could properly say "dharabtahu" in Arabic but in English you could never say that you had "beaten" that person. So in what sense has the verb "dharaba" been used in verse 4:34 ? To answer this important question, we will turn to the fundamental rule of Qur'anic exegesis, which is that the exegesis of the Qur'an is carried by the Qur'an itself, or "al-Qur'an yufassiru bacduhu bacdan" [ different parts of the Qur'an explain one another ] and "yuhmal al-mutlaq cala-muqayyad" [ unqualified statements should be interpreted in the light of qualified ones ]. Since the implied intensity of the strike mentioned in 4:34 has not been qualified there explicitly, we will interpret it in the light of the qualified statement made at the only other verse in the Holy Qur'an that categorically refers to what some people wanne label as "wife beating". The verse in question refers to the Story of Prophet Job. When Job was being tested, his wife lost her faith and blasphemed. As a result, he took an oath to hit her as punishment. A dilemma was thus created: a prophet / example for the believers should not engage in "violent" and "unworthy" behavior towards his wife. On the other hand, a prophet may not violate his oath. The divine solution to this dilemma is expressed in a Qur'anic verse. It instructs Job to satisfy his oath to hit his wife by "hitting" her with a handful of fragrant grass [ or basil ]. The intent was to satisfy the promise without "harming" the wife. In this way, Prophet Job resolved his dilemma.

[ To Job ] : And take in your hand "**a bundle of thin grass**" [ "dighth" ] and strike therewith [ your wife ], and break not your oath [ Qur'an 38:44 ]

As one can see Prophet Job was informed on "how" to "hit" his wife in this particular instance, in a way such that he would not harm her, yet still fulfill his misguided oath. God ordered prophet Job to use what in Arabic is called "dighth" . The Arabic word "dighth" means a handfull of grass, basil or soft palm leaves. The above Ayah therefor proofs to us that the expression "hit your wives" [ wadribuhunna ] in verse 4:34 refers to strikes with something relatively soft such as a bundle of thin grass. Imam Razi in his tafseer [ commentary on this verse ] mentions that certain of the Shafi'i jurists said "a coiled scarf". This hitting is therefor clearly not violent or painfull. Unfortunate some people still misinterpretate and distort [ some on purpose ] the meaning of the Arabic word wadribuhunna in the context of the Holy Qu'ran and authentic Sunnah of our beloved Prophet. These people argue that the word refers to physical abuse and a violent beating. There is really no excuse for such "*extreme errors*" when the Prophet himself defined the permissible form of hitting at the Farewell Pilgrimage:

My last recommendation to you is that you should treat women well. Truly they are your helpmates, and you have no right over them beyond that - "**except if they commit a manifest indecency**" [ fahisha mubina ]. If they do, then refuse to share their beds and hit them "**without indecent violence**"[ fadribuhunna darban ghayra mubarrih ]. Then, if they desist, do not show them hostility any longer. Lo! you have a right over your women and they have a right over you. Your right over your women is that they not allow whom you hate to enter your bed nor your house. While their right over you is that you treat them excellently in their garb and provision.....Then he took the covenant from them and from

us that they and we all heard and understood this from him, respectively, directly and indirectly, with his forefinger raised, and said: "O Allah! bear witness." [20](#)

Here we can see that the Prophet himself clearly stated that a husband in no way can hit / tap his wife in a way that would be violent / painful or harmful. The Prophet describes the "only" permissible form of discipline in this case as "*ghayr mubarrih*" which means "non" violent , brutal or painful [ the story of prophet Job in the Holy Qur'an also confirms / proves that this hitting should never be painful or violent ]. Shayk G.F. Haddad says in his excellent fatwa on this issue:

the word "mubarrih" is defined in al-Mawrid as "violent, intense, severe, acute, sharp, excruciating, tormenting, agonizing." Qatada said as narrated by al-Tabari in his tafsir: "Ghayr mubarrih" means ghayr sha'in = **not** disgraceful /outrageous / obscene indecent [ hitting ]." `Ata' said: "I asked Ibn `Abbas: 'What is the hitting that is ghayr al-mubarrih?' He replied: '[ With ] the siwak [ toothbrush ] and the like". Narrated by al-Tabari in his Tafsir [ Dar al-Fikr reprint 5:68 ] The hadith of the Farewell Pilgrimage continues, "Then he [ the Prophet ] took the covenant from them and from us that they and we all heard and understood this from him, respectively, directly and indirectly, with his forefinger raised, and said: 'O Allah! bear witness.'" After this, whatever Muslim man derogates to the recommendation of the Prophet has violated his covenant with the Prophet and shall be called to account for it; and whoever of the non-Muslim men or women claims - even if it should be the Archbishop of Canterbury and his wife - that beating women is an acceptable practice in Islam, has belied the Divine witness invoked by the Prophet and shall be called to account for it in the Divine Court . [21](#)

Moreover we should remember that a husband is "*only*" allowed to resort to this option [ which certainly cannot be called or labeled as physical abuse or wife beating ] in case his wife is guilty of some manifest indecency [ nushuz ]. In dealing with a wife in "nushuz" , a husband should first try his best to rectify her attitude by kind words, gentle persuasion, and reasoning with her [ reminding her of God and His teachings ]. If this is not helpful, he should sleep apart from her, trying to awaken her agreeable feminine nature so that serenity may be restored and she may respond to him in a harmonious fashion. If this approach fails, it is permissible for him to hit/tap her lightly, avoiding her face and other sensitive areas. This rule is based on Prophet's statement in the Farewell Pilgrimage hadith, which describes the "only" permissible form of discipline in this case as "*ghayr mubarrih*" which means: "non" violent , brutal or painful [ see: authentic traditions in Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Da'ud, Nasa'i and Ibn Majah ]. Therefor it's clear that this light hit / tap, if resorted to at all, is more symbolic by which the husband as a last resort expresses his strong disapproval [ of his his wife's immoral behaviour ] in the hope to bring back his wife to consiousness; i.e. to make her realize that her marriage is on the edge of a divorce [ in order to make her stop her lewd behaviour and / or immoral conduct ]. And finally again we should remember that any form of abuse [ physical and verbal ] is forbidden [ haram ] in islam. This is clearly stated by our beloved Prophet Muhammad in the next famous authentic hadith:

The Prophet said: "There shall be no infliction of harm on oneself or others". [22](#)

Physical abuse is clearly a form of harm, which has been forbidden in the above hadith. In order to understand the strenght of the above narration one has to take a look at the definition of "Harm" :

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[20](#): Sahih Muslim, see also Jam'a al-Fawa'id, *kitab al-Iman, akham al-Li'an* , ( Meerut, n.d. ) , vol. 1 , p. 14

[21](#): Livingislam.org, Fatwa by Shayk G.F. Haddad, see - [http://www.livingislam.org/fiqhi/fiqha\\_e32.html](http://www.livingislam.org/fiqhi/fiqha_e32.html) -

[22](#): Ibn Maaajah 2340 and classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Irwa' al-Ghaleel 896

Harm: The action or result of inflicting loss or pain: damage...Harm is physical or psychological / emotional damage or injury to a person, animal or other entity....The noun harm has 3 meanings: 1: "any" physical damage to the body **caused by violence** or accident or fracture etc. Synonyms: "injury", "hurt", "trauma" 2: the occurrence of a change for the worse. Synonyms: "damage", "impairment" 3: the act of damaging something or someone.....In brief: "Causing hurt to something or someone". [23](#)

The narration in question proves that Muslim men are never allowed to abuse their wives, nor are they allowed to hurt their wives, or cause them pain or emotional damage [ by beating them violently, or by striking them at sensitive areas of the body, these are all forbidden acts because they clearly "harm" a person ]. Shayk Muhammad al-Jibaly confirms this in his commentary on the verse

hitting has restrictions: **it should not be painful**, should not leave Marks on the body, and should avoid the face, head, and abdomen. [24](#)

Besides physical abuse it is strictly forbidden for a Muslim to hit or slap a human being or animal on the face. This is confirmed in many authentic hadeeth of our beloved Prophet Muhammad:

Mu'awiyah asked: Apostle of Allah, what is the right of the wife of one of us over him ? He replied: That you should give her food when you eat, clothe her when you clothe yourself, **do not strike her on the face**, do not revile [ abuse ] her or separate yourself from her except in the house. [25](#)

Jabir said, "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, passed by an animal which had been branded and its nostrils were smoking. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Allah curses any person who does this. **No one should mark the face nor strike it.**" [26](#)

Shu'ba said, "Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir said to me, 'What is your name ?' I replied, Shu'ba.' He said, 'Abu Shu'ba related to me that when Suwayd ibn Muqarrin al-Muzani saw a man strike his slave, he said. "**Do you not know that the face is forbidden ?**" In the time of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, we were seven brothers and we only had one servant. Then one of us slapped him and the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, commanded that we set him free." [27](#)

The Prophet said, "If somebody fights then **he should avoid the face.**" [28](#)

As one can see from the Prophet's statements: "it is strict forbidden for a Muslim man to beat his wife violently, nor is he allowed to physical abuse her or to strike her face, for any reason." As we said before the Prophet himself defined the "only" permissible form of hitting in the Farewell Pilgrimage as "ghayr mubarrih" which means: "non" violent , brutal or painfull [ which is another reason why husbands are not allowed to hit their wives at sensitive areas of the body or the face ].

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[23: See: - http://www.answers.com/topic/harm -](http://www.answers.com/topic/harm)

[24: Shayk Muhammad al-Jibaly, \*The Fragile Vessels\*, p. 55 \[ Al-Kitaab & as-Sunnah Publishing 2005 \]](#)

[25: Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 11, Number 2137:](#)

[26: Al-Adab al-Mufrad Al-Bukhari, \[ chapter \] Being a master, nr. 175.](#)

[27: Al-Adab al-Mufrad Al-Bukhari, \[ chapter \] Being a master, nr. 179.](#)

[28: Sahih al-Bukhari Vol III Hadith 734](#)

And again we repeat: a husband is "only" allowed to resort to this option [ which certainly cannot be called or labeled as physical abuse or wife beating ] in case his wife is guilty of some manifest indecency [ nushuz ]. In all other cases a husband is not even allowed to resort to this option, this because the prophet forbade all forms of hitting in general, see:

Narrated by Mu'awiyah al-Qushayri: I went to the Apostle of Allah [ saaws ] and asked him: What do you say [ command ] about our wives ? He replied: Give them food what you have for yourself, and clothe them by which you clothe yourself, **and do "not" beat them**, and do not revile them. [29](#)

Any man who violates these devine laws and harms or abuses his wife physicaly and/or verbally shall be called to account for it on the Day of Judgement. Besides this it's important to point that wife who has become a victim of abuse by her husband, has the right to bring her case to the [ islamic ] judge and let her marriage end/nullify without his permission; this is confirmed in the famous figh book of the Maliki mah'dab "*The Guiding Helper*" :

the abused woman should take her case to the local Muslim judge. If she can prove that physical or verbal abuse took place ( e.g. , she can show marks on the body or bring witnesses who saw or heard the abuse ) **the judge can enact and finalize a divorce without the husand's permission.** [30](#)

8:

And finally we shall discuss the last issue mentioned in this verse [ 4:34 ] which reads:

"...and if thereupon they pay you heed, then seek not against them means of annoyance. Behold, God is indeed most high, great ! ..." [ Qur'an 4:34 ]

After having cleared up all the misconceptions about the previous parts of this ayah, we can now discuss and analyze the last part of it. The last part of this verse is often translated as: "but if they obey you, seek not against them means [ of annoyance ] ". The exact Arabic wording here is:

".....when then they ( fem.pl. ) { aTa: } ( with ) you ( masc.pl. ) , then seek not against them ( fem.pl ) means of annoyance.." [ Qur'an 4:34 ]

The verb { aTa: } ( alif taa alif ayn ) has several meanings, such as: "obey", but also: "comply [ or ] comply with, accommodate, give in to". Consequently, the verse [ in it's proper context ] can be understood to mean: "when then they are committed to the marriage again", or: "when then they give in to / comply with the efforts of the husband to save the marriage", or "when they no longer cause marriage problems". The speech of the Prophet at the farewell pilgrimage moreover proofs that this is the intended meaning here, as pointed out by Muhammad Abdel Haleem in his work:

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[29:](#) Sunan Abu Dawud, Book 11, Number 2139

[30:](#) Abu Qanit al-Sharif al-Hasani, *The Guiding Helper*, note 2329, p. 308 ( *Double Tee Literature 2001, 1st Edition* )

the verse ends by saying, "If they obey you, you have no way against them" - obey at any stage - and "obey" , coming in its place here, means "refrain" from the act which caused this problem, as in the Qur'anic verse: "listen and obey" [ 64:16 ] - [ that is, obey what you have heard in that context ] . The Prophet himself, in his Farewell Speech, explained the Qur'anic phrase "fa-in ata'nakum" [ if they obey you ] by using a different word, "fa-in intahayna" [ if they desist ] , in its place. Thus "obedience" here does not mean being submissive to the husband, but refraining from a serious offence. To refrain in this way is an obligation on every believing person. [31](#)

9:

The next hadith is often misquoted and misinterpreted by polemics against Islam:

Iyas ibn 'Abdullah ibn Abi Dhubab reported that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Do not beat the female slaves of Allah." Then 'Umar came to the Prophet and said, "The women are rebelling [ dha'irna ] against their husbands," and so he made an allowance to hit them. Then many women surrounded the family of the Messenger of Allah to complain about their husbands. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The people of the household of Muhammad have surrounded by many women who are complaining about their husbands. Those men are not among the best of you. [32](#)

First it's important to know that the prophet clearly forbade men to hit their wives in general, he said "Do not beat the female slaves of Allah." Moreover it's interesting to note that this incident from the hadith took place after the revelation of surah 4:34. So why did Umar specifically ask the prophet for permission to discipline his rebellious wife ? If soerah 4:34 according to christian missionaries allows muslim men to hit disobedient wives, then why did the prophet's famous companion Umar Ibn Khattab ask the prophet for permission ? This fact proofs that the companions knew how strongly the prophet disliked this option. Moreover they must have known that this [ discouraged ] option was only allowed in certain specific circumstances / situations of serious problematic nature [ and not for other cases ]. Due to this law of the sharia Muslim men became aware of the fact that they could not "discipline" their wives anymore for reasons they wanted, nor could they discipline their wives anymore "in the way" they wanted. The Muslim women suddenly abused this position in such a way that they rebelled against their husbands , so Umar who was aware of the prophet's statement that men should never strike the handmaidens of Allah went to the Prophet and said [ by way of exaggeration , cf. 'Awn al-Ma `bud ] : "The wome are rebelling [ dha'irna ] against their husbands !" The prophet then gave "a dispensation [ rakhkhasa ] to hit them" . Umar apparently went off satisfied with this given permission. However, this was not the end of the episode. The upshot was that the following morning the Prophet was confronted by no less than 70 female Companions who had organized themselves into a deputation and turned up outside his house, all of whom had been ill-treated by their supposedly pious husbands [ Abu Dawud 880, see also: "Women of Madina" , Aisha Bewley's translation of Ibn Sa'd vol 8, p.144, recorded by Abu Bakr's daughter Umm Kulthum ] . In other words a lot of husbands had clearly abused and misinterpreted the prophet's permission by violating the islamic values [ not to abuse or harm others etc. ] and the sunnah [ not to be harsh / rude ]. The Prophet was so outraged on the women's behalf that he came out and summoned the Companions to hear a public sermon telling of the many women who had informed his family of the behaviour of their

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[31:](#) M. Abdel Haleem, "Understanding The Qur'an" ( I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, paperback edition 2005 ) , p. 54

[32:](#) Sunan Abu Dawud: Book 11, Number 2141

husbands, berating the men who had behaved thus, shaming them. "They are hardly the best of you!" he cried. [ Abu Dawud 880 ]. Another authentic version [ of this hadith ] in "Sahih Ibn Hibban 9:491" **adds that the Prophet then revoked the dispensation.** Ibn Sa'd narrates that the prophet also said during this speech: "I cannot bear the thought of a man with the veins of his neck swelling with anger against his wife, fighting her!" [ see: "Women of Madina" , Aisha Bewley's translation of Ibn Sa'd vol 8, p.144, recorded by Umm Kulthum ].

Aishah moreover recorded his famous statement by which he pointed out that men's treatment of his wife is a measure for the perfection of his faith:"Among the believers who show most perfect faith are those who have the best disposition, and are kindest to their families" [ Tirmidhi 961, Abu Dawud 880 ]. Devout Muslim men took the Prophet's words and orders very seriously. They felt the urge to be "the best of men", in that they followed his teachings as closely as they possibly could. Many a companion then did feel ashamed and took his words to heart, and learned to behave with more gentleness. After this incident and others, the Prophet stipulated in his final speech, at the farewell Hajj, that a husband is only allowed "to hit" if the wife "has become guilty, in an obvious manner, of immoral conduct", and that it should be done "in such a way as not to cause pain [ ghayr mubarrih ]". This is the correct, final, and binding explanation / interpretation / exegesis of the verse in question. The sermon made therefor once and for all clear [ in front of thousands of people ] that Muslim men may never harm or abuse their wives. On the contrary they should "treat women well" as stipulated by the prophet [ see also Qur'ah 4:19 ]. And like we said before: devout Muslim men took the Prophet's words and orders very seriously. They felt the urge to be "the best of men", in that they followed his teachings as closely as they possibly could. Many a companion then did feel ashamed and took his words to heart, and changed their attitude and behaviour towards women completely. They became gentle, respectfull, loving and caretaking muslim husbands for their wives, they followed the Prophet. Perhaps the best of this is Umar Ibn Khattab [ the same Umar who is mentioned in the hadith under discussion ]. He completely changed his attitude towards women. Afzular Rahman in his book "Role of Muslim Women in Society" narrates us the next incident from his life:

Umar ibn al-Khattab said that a man came to his house to complain about his wife. On reaching the door of his house, he hears Umar's wife shouting at him and reviling him. Seeing this, he was about to go back, thinking that Umar himself was in the same position and, therefore, could hardly suggest any solution for his problem. Umar saw the man turn back, so he called him and enquired about the purpose of his visit. He said that he had come with a complaint against his wife, but turned back on seeing the Caliph in the same position. Umar told him that he tolerated the excesses of his wife for she had certain rights against him. He said, "Is it not true that she prepares food for me, washes clothes for me and suckles my children, thus saving me the expense of employing a cook, a washerman and a nurse, though she is not legally obliged in any way to do any of these things ? Besides, I enjoy peace of mind because of her and am kept away from indecent acts on account of her. I therefore tolerate all her excesses on account of these benefits. It is right that you should also adopt the same attitude. [33](#)

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[33](#): Afzular Rahman, "Role of Muslim Women in Society", p. 149

10:

The next hadith is also often misinterpreted by polemics against Islam:

Muhammad b. Qais said (to the people): Should I not narrate to you on my authority and on the authority of my mother? We thought that he meant the mother who had given him birth. He ( Muhammad b. Qais ) then reported that it was A'isha who had narrated this: Should I not narrate to you about myself and about the Messenger of Allah ( may peace be upon him )? We said: Yes. She said: When it was my turn for Allah's Messenger ( may peace be upon him ) to spend the night with me, he turned his side, put on his mantle and took off his shoes and placed them near his feet, and spread the corner of his shawl on his bed and then lay down till he thought that I had gone to sleep. He took hold of his mantle slowly and put on the shoes slowly, and opened the door and went out and then closed it lightly. I covered my head, put on my veil and tightened my waist wrapper, and then went out following his steps till he reached Baqi'. He stood there and he stood for a long time. He then lifted his hands three times, and then returned and I also returned. He hastened his steps and I also hastened my steps. He ran and I too ran. He came ( to the house ) and I also came ( to the house ). I, however, preceded him and I entered ( the house ) , and as I lay down in the bed, he ( the Holy Prophet ) entered the ( house ) , and said: Why is it, O 'A'isha, that you are out of breath? I said: There is nothing. He said: Tell me or the Subtle and the Aware would inform me. I said: Messenger of Allah, may my father and mother be ransom for you, and then I told him ( the whole story ). He said: Was it the darkness [ of your shadow ] that I saw in front of me? I said: Yes. "**He struck me on the chest which caused me pain**" , and then said: Did you think that Allah and His Apostle would deal unjustly with you? She said: Whatsoever the people conceal, Allah will know it. He said: Gabriel came to me when you saw me. He called me and he concealed it from you. I responded to his call, but I too concealed it from you ( for he did not come to you ) , as you were not fully dressed. I thought that you had gone to sleep, and I did not like to awaken you, fearing that you may be frightened. He ( Gabriel ) said: Your Lord has commanded you to go to the inhabitants of Baqi' ( to those lying in the graves ) and beg pardon for them. I said: Messenger of Allah, how should I pray for them ( How should I beg forgiveness for them )? He said: Say, Peace be upon the inhabitants of this city ( graveyard ) from among the Believers and the Muslims, and may Allah have mercy on those who have gone ahead of us, and those who come later on, and we shall, God willing , join you. [34](#)

Polemics against Islam try to mislead people by citing the words "He struck me on the chest which caused me pain" as a proof for their claim that the prophet was guilty of beating his wife Aisha. However the translation of the text in question [ "*He struck me on the chest which caused me pain*" ] is not very accurate. The Arabic word used in the hadith is "*lahada*". The word "*lahada*" according to the lexicographers means, "to push" [ dafa'a ]. The usage of the word "*struck*" is not a accurate. Rather, the phrase should be translated as:

*"He pushed my chest with a push that made me sore."* [ translation by Shayk G.F. Haddad ] [35](#)

This moreover calls to an important matter that is related to the Hand imposition of the Prophet, because it is a gesture associated with driving away evil influence and conferring blessing as the following reports show [ taken from G.F. Haddad, "*The imposition of hands in the Sunna*" ] :

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[34:](#) Sahih Muslim, Book 004, Number 2127

[35:](#) G.F. Haddad, "*The imposition of hands in the Sunna*" , see - [http://mac.abc.se/~onesr/d/kxih\\_e.pdf](http://mac.abc.se/~onesr/d/kxih_e.pdf) -

1:

The Prophet said to Wabisa “Consult yourself, consult your heart , Wabisa ! “ , three times while **poking Wabisa’s chest with his [ First ] three fingers**, adding: “ Virtue is what sets the soul and heart at rest while vice is what pricks the conscience and nags the breast, no matter what people keep recommending to you. [36](#)

2:

Jarir ibn Abd’ Allah al-Bajali narrates us the next incident: “I went along with an hundred and fifty horsemen but I could not sit steadily on horse. I mentioned it to the Messenger of Allāh [ peace and blessings be upon him ] ! who then struck his hand on my chest so hard **that I could see the trace of his fingers on it**, saying “ O Allah ! Grant him steadfastness and make him a guide of righteousness and a rightly - guided one ! “ [37](#)

3:

Shayba ibn Uthman ibn Talha narrated: “The year of the Conquest the Messenger of Allah entered Makka by force. I said to myself, let me join up with the Quraysh and the Hawazin in Hunayn. Perhaps, in the fray of battle, I shall be able to fall upon Muhammad unguarded and I shall be the one who obtains Quraysh’s revenge. I also used to say, even if no one [ non-Muslim ] is left among the Arabs and ‘Ajam, I shall still not follow Muhammad ! I shall never follow him ! I was, therefore, very determined against him when I rode out and my determination only increased in intensity. When the people entered the fray, the fighting caused the Messenger of Allah ! to dismount his mule. I unsheathed my sword and approached to carry out my intent against him. I raised my sword and was almost standing over him when he put up, in front of me, a blaze of fire like a lightning bolt that almost charred me ! I put up my hand before my eyes, fearing to lose my sight, then I turned towards the Messenger of Allāh [ saaws ] ! At that time he called me: “ *Shayba, come here !* “ **I went near him and he wiped my breast then said:** “ O Allāh, protect him from the devil. “ I swear it by Allah ! - at that very moment, he became more beloved to me than my hearing, my sight, and my own life ! Allah took away everything that was in me.....Then he said: “Shayba, what Allah desired for you is better than what you desired for yourself. Then he revealed to me all that I had harbored in my heart - things I had never mentioned to anyone whatsoever. I said, “ I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah. Then I said, “Ask forgiveness for me, O Messenger of Allah ! He replied, “Allah forgive you”. [38](#)

4:

A report states that as Yusuf [ peace be upon him ] approached the King’s wife, his father Yaqub [ peace be upon him ] appeared and **slapped him in the chest**, whereupon Yusuf’s lust exited through **his fingertips**. [39](#)

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[36:](#) Abu Yala [ 3:160-162 ] , and Abu Nu’aym in the *Hilya* [ 1985 ed. 2:24 and 6:255 ]

[37:](#) Narrated by al-Bukhari and Muslim

[38:](#) Narrated through al-Waqidi by Ibn Asakir [ 23:255-256 ] and Ibn al-Jawzi in *Sifat al-Safwa* [ 1:727-728 ]

[39:](#) Narrated by al-Tabari [ 12:187 ] , al-Qurtubi [ 9:170 ] , Ibn Kathir [ 2:475 ] , al-Jalalayn, and others.

From the above reports we can conclude that this “push” or “slap” was done with the fingers [ not with the fist as some argued ] and clearly cannot be labeled as a form of “beating” or “physical abuse”. A push or slap with the fingers [ in order to drive away evil thoughts and to invoke blessings on a person ] can never be labeled as a form of “beating” or “physical abuse”. In other words the prophet [ saaws ] did never beat his wife Aisha, he only pushed her on her chest with his fingers [ in order to drive away evil influences, and to invoke blessings ]. Moreover Aisha herself tells us in an authentic hadith that the Prophet [ saaws ] never beated any of his wives:

Abdur Razzaq has narrated to us from Ma'mar who narrates from Az-Zuhri who narrates from Urwah who narrates this saying of Ayesha: "The Messenger never hit any of his servants with his hands, **nor did he ever hit any of his wives**, nor did he hit anything except while making Jihad in the path of Allah. [40](#)

If Aisha herself viewed the incident [ narrated by herself in sahih muslim ] as an act of wife-beating, she would have never said that the prophet [ saaws ] did never hit any of his wives. The above hadith therefor confirms that Aisha herself did not view the push of the prophet [ with his fingers ] on her chest as a form of beating or anything violent, contrary she clearly tells us by her own self that the prophet [ saaws ] did never hit any of his wives. The prophet [ saaws ] only used to beat others during war [ jihad ] , i.e. when he was fighting Allah’s enemies at the battlefield.

## Conclusion:

Having cleared up the issue of wife-beating as far as Islam is concerned, we may well question: Why do our antagonists make such a fuss about the verse in question when it is clear that no crime is being committed and the moral high ground, as set out by the beautiful method of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, is to never beat one's wife ? This is an important question, for it underscores a number of points regarding the psychodynamics of the Islamophobe. You will notice from any Islamophobic article on the Islamic viewpoint of wife-beating that the writer is hell-bent on proving that Islam enjoins or allows violent wife-beating. To that effect, he is ready to use any device through which he can achieve his required aim. He certainly does not believe in the first two fundamental rules of Qur'anic exegesis outlined above. Therefore, he will use meanings and interpretations of words and phrases that are in keeping with his diabolical agenda, rather than use those meanings and interpretations that are in keeping with the rule, "The Qur'an is its own exegesis." He will also tend to ignore the prophetic Sunnah as a practical exegesis of the Qur'an. Instead of viewing the Qur'an and Sunnah as complementary, he will view them as independent entities and will even seek to prove a contradiction where all that is meant is supplementation. He might even use a hadith with weak authenticity and pit it against a Qur'anic injunction, totally ignoring of course several authentic hadiths which prove the contrary. Such a methodology is entirely understandable since he doesn't quite love the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him. His final aim is to demonize Islam as a misogynist religion and ultimately prevent women from entering the fold of Islam *because, ironically, more women than men are entering Islam.* [41](#)

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40: Bukhari and Muslim; Ash-Shifa, p. 56

41: conclusion taken from - <http://isre.blogspot.com/2005/12/wife-beating-misogyny-and-all-that.html> -