Critical Analysis of Ghazali's Thoughts About Women Based on the Historical Context of Islamic Society

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
Article type: Research Article **Article history:** Received: 05 November 2023 Received in revised form: 24 November 2023 Accepted: 26 December 2023 Published online: 20 March 2024 **Keywords:** *Islamic society, Misogyny, Mohammad Ghazali, Pre-Islam society, Status of women.*	Muhammad Ghazali is one of the most prominent thinkers and the most influential religious scholars who called for the reform and revival of religion, he is one of the leaders of the movement of returning to predecessor. The teaching of the principles and pillars of religion, the way of governance and other customs such as marriage customs have been taken into consideration in his works, in which he also mentions his opinions about women. In this research, Imam Mohammad Ghazali's view on issues related to women was explored and investigated with descriptive analytical method and critical approach, then the historical, cultural and social contexts influencing Ghazali's thinking were analyzed. In the Ghazali's works, there are thoughts about women that contradict the tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) and his practice. A closer examination of his views on women reveals the cultural view of the society in which Ghazali lived. It seems that some of Ghazali's views were influenced by Pre-Islam's culture and changes in Islamic society after the death of the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). The presence of orders such as consulting with women and acting contrary to it or women being created from crooked ribs, locking women at home and depriving them of education, placing women in the ranks of servants and slaves, and emphasizing the function of women bearing children are the topics emphasized in the thoughts of Ghazali that is against Islamic & Quranic teachings & directly related to the cultural changes of the Islamic society after the death of the Prophet (PBUH).

1. Introduction

Muhammad Ghazali is considered one of the most prominent thinkers and one of the most influential thinkers in the Islamic world. The life time of this outstanding scholar can be considered one of the most important periods of Islamic civilization. Shortly before his life, significant advances in various sciences were achieved during the Samani rule. After this brilliant era, the era of Ghaznavid and Seljuk governments began. The dominance of these rulers led to the change of political and social opinions of Iranians.When they came to work, a certain religious policy was popularized, and the religious conflicts between different sects of Islam reached a peak (Ghani, 2007: 409). To the extent that some have called this period "scientific and literary period or religious and polemical era" (Sotoudeh, 2006: 83). Appearance and stratification in religious sciences also spread during this period (Zarrinkoob, 2000: 478). Considering the social and cultural situation of this era, it is possible to understand the basic motivations of Ghazali in writing the books Ihya Ulum al-Din, Nasihat al-Muluk and Kimyaye Saadat. His social concerns and his reformist view of social issues are understandable. He wrote the book Nasihat al-Muluk with the aim of teaching the rulers of the time how to govern, he mentions the most correct ways of governing and gives examples of the actions of the great rulers of the past and the four caliphs. In the book, Ihya Ulum al-Din, he describes and explains topics of Islam that are emphasized in Islamic mysticism. In the book Kimyaye Saadat, in the marriage etiquette section, he explains marriage etiquette and its principles; While describing marriage customs, he also expresses his opinions about women.

 As an Islamic thinker, his views on women and family are expected to be in accordance with the way of the Prophet (pbuh), but among his words, there are points that contradict the tradition and the way of the Prophet (pbuh). His views on women are misogynist or patriarchal. Due to the extensive influence of Ghazali's thoughts on the scholars after him, it is impossible to pass by such thoughts of his. This wide influence has caused Ghazali's opinions to be cited by the scholars of the Islamic world and Ghazali has been introduced as a representative of ancestors 's thinking. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze his thoughts in the field of family and issues related to women, the political and social contexts of the formation of these thoughts and the critical analysis of these opinions. The prevailing political and social contexts that have imposed a misogynistic view on the thoughts of most of the thinkers of that time for many years.

In this research, we tried to explore and examine Ghazali's thoughts and ideas about women with a critical analytical approach, and then compare Ghazali's thoughts with the dominant cultural and social contexts of Pre-Islam society and Islamic society that gave rise to these thoughts in related issues adapt to women. Previously, Rahimpour (2013) published "Criticism of the position of women in Ghazali's thought". In this research, the author has expressed Ghazali's thought regarding education, rights and duties of women, and has criticized his opinions. The author has come to the conclusion that Ghazali believes in gender superiority and has a patriarchal vision. In his opinion, women are inferior. Her wisdom and thought are incomplete. She is not able to manage her life and goes to ruin. Rahimpour criticized Ghazali's anti-feminist thoughts, but did not address the political and social contexts that occurred in the Islamic society after the Prophet (PBUH) and caused the formation of these thoughts.

2. Methodology

This research has analyzed Ghazali's views about women using the qualitative content analysis method. The research data has been collected by document and library study and analyzed by semantic analysis. For this purpose, two works of Ghazali (Ihya Ulum al-Din and Kimyaye Saadat) were examined, which contain Ghazali's views on the issue of family and women. Then the general views of Ghazali in this field were extracted. In the next step, the cultural and social issues of the Pre-Islam society, the Islamic era, and the state of the Islamic society after the Prophet (PBUH) were analyzed by referring to historical sources (Vafayat Al-Aayan, Tabaqat-Al-Kabri, Oyun-Al-Akhbar, Eqdol-Al-

Farid and Moruj-Al-Zahab). After collecting the data, their analysis was done in a comparative method. The current research uses a comparative approach to compare Ghazali's perspective with the cultural foundations of Islamic society. In order to make this comparison, first, Ghazali's opinions about women are mentioned, then the historical contexts and dominant thoughts of the Pre-Islam period or the period after the Prophet (PBUH) were examined. Finally, the findings were analyzed in a comparative way.

3. Findings

The current research has examined the historical and political contexts that caused the intellectual deviation of the Islamic society in the issue of women and influenced Ghazali's thoughts. The contexts created by cultural changes have shaped anti-feminist thoughts in the Islamic society and the thoughts of thinkers such as Ghazali. The historical and social contexts affecting the views of a thinker like Ghazali on the issue of women have not been researched, and despite a lot of searching, no research was found. In this research, an attempt has been made to investigate and analyze Ghazali's thoughts about women, considering the social and political developments of the Islamic society after the Prophet (PBUH). Ghazali's thoughts on women's issues are not only influenced by Quran and Sonnat but also the policies of the caliphs after the Prophet (pbuh), such as the second caliph, and the conditions of the Islamic society after the Prophet (pbuh), have played a significant role in the formation of his thoughts.

In the matter of marriage, Ghazali emphasizes on having children and considers the main reason for marriage to be the birth of children. This is despite the fact that various verses of the Qur'an introduce the reason for marriage to achieve the peace of man and woman, to achieve spirituality and the survival of the generation. Ghazali's emphasis on childbearing is similar to the thoughts of the Arab society, which paid attention to women's childbearing and the continuity of the generation. The behavior of the second caliph in marriage is an example of the general thinking of the Arab society in the matter of marrying women. In Ghazali's view, the daughter's consent in marriage is not necessary if the father is alive. This issue is in accordance with the Pre-Islam customs that in the marriage of a girl (virgin) the decision was the responsibility of her guardian (father of older brother). Ghazali considers ability to recognize a woman as weak, so he believes in opposition to women's opinion. This is clearly influenced by the Pre-Islam's Arab culture in which the women were considered to be defective and incomplete. In Ghazali's remarks, there are sentences about the creation of women who remember the idea of women's creation from the left rib of men. These thoughts have become commonplace in the custom of Islamic society Influenced by the Jewish religion after the death of the Prophet (PBUH). Ghazali's ideas about the absence of women in the community and keeping of women in the home are influenced by the ideas of the second caliph about women's. The second caliph restricted the education of women and their presence in religious communities. These restrictions appear to have been directly linked to the expansion of conquests, the increase in slaves in Islamic society and the corruption of society. Ghazali in expressing the rights of spouses considers the right of man to be much greater; Because he considers the woman in the position of the wife, the slaves and servants of the male, and this is related to the obvious intellectual decline in Islamic society after the death of the Prophet (PBUH).

4. Conclusion

The study of al -Ghazali's ideas on women reflects the cultural and intellectual status of Islamic society at the time of Ghazali's life. After the death of the Prophet (PBUH), the return of Pre-Islam's traditions to Islamic society and caliph policies led to widespread cultural and social changes in Islamic society, targeting these changes in the family and society. The influence and depth of these changes were so much that even thinkers considered these thoughts to be Islamic thought and regarded the emerging innovations as divine thinking.

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