

Deconstructing Religious Patriarchy in the Bidaah Series: An Analysis through Asghar Ali Engineer's Hermeneutics of Liberation

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Abstract:

This research investigates the construction of patriarchal values embedded in the religious discourse portrayed in the Malaysian television series *Bidaah* by employing Asghar Ali Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation as its analytical framework. Using a qualitative interpretive methodology, the study examines audiovisual narratives through the interconnected dimensions of text, context, and perspective to uncover the ways religious representations produce and legitimize patriarchal forms of authority. The analysis indicates that the series reinforces patriarchal ideology by depicting male characters as the primary holders of religious legitimacy, moral authority, and social dominance, while simultaneously normalizing gender inequality through charismatic leadership, polygamous practices, and hierarchical family relationships. Viewed from the perspective of Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation, these portrayals reflect socio-cultural constructions rather than authentic Islamic teachings, as they are inconsistent with the fundamental Islamic principles of justice, equality, and respect for human dignity. The findings offer valuable insights for educators, media professionals, and researchers in critically assessing religious narratives in audiovisual media and in fostering gender-responsive religious literacy based on egalitarian Islamic principles. By applying Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation to the study of a contemporary Islamic television drama, this research contributes to the existing literature by illustrating how popular media serve as an important arena for challenging religious authority, reshaping gender relations, and encouraging the development of progressive Islamic discourse.

Keywords: Bidaah series, religious discourse, patriarchal ideology, hermeneutics of liberation, Islamic feminism.

1. Introduction

Patriarchy wrapped in religion is one of the most difficult forms of power to recognize and simultaneously the most difficult to resist, because it

often disguises itself in a face considered sacred and normative. Data from Komnas Perempuan (National Commission on Violence Against Women) and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA) recorded that 7,099 women have become victims of violence, with 5,396 cases being domestic violence.¹ and one of the factors that reinforces this violence is the patriarchal culture that has taken root in everyday social life. This issue becomes increasingly alarming when the domination over women is not only perpetuated by tradition but also legitimized through narrow and exclusive interpretations of religious texts. Consequently, criticism of such injustice is often perceived as a form of insult to religion itself, causing religious patriarchy to operate latently and systemically.

Popular media, such as television series, have a strategic role in responding to this phenomenon, not as a form of legalization, but as a space for critical reflection that can dismantle and expose the mechanisms of oppression to a wider public. The series *Bidaah*² which officially aired on the Viu channel in 2025, is a work by Malaysian filmmakers, directed by Pali Yahya and written by Erma Fatima, and has become one of the relevant examples in this context.³ The series, which consists of 16 episodes, features the character Walid Mahdi Ilman (Faizal Hussein), a charismatic leader who claims to be the Imam Mahdi and establishes a religious community named Jihad Ummah. Within this community, he builds a hierarchy that places men as holders of absolute authority and women as subjects who must submit spiritually and socially. This is achieved through repetitive teachings that instill the doctrine of male superiority, the justification of polygamy as a privileged right, and the control of women's domestic behavior under the pretext of spiritual leadership. The metaphor of a "cracked glass" attached to women, for example, depicts them as fragile creatures, inherently flawed, and replaceable at any time. The main female character, Baiduri (Riena Diana), together with Hambali (Fattah Amin),

¹ Ucy Sugiarti, "Peran Budaya Patriarki dalam Memicu Kekerasan dalam Rumah Tangga - GoodStats," GoodStat, 30 September 2024, <https://goodstats.id/article/peran-budaya-patriarki-memicu-kekerasan-dalam-rumah-tangga-vbZA7>.

² Istilah *bid'ah* berasal dari bahasa Arab *بدعة* (akar *ب-د-ع*) yang bermakna dasar "menciptakan sesuatu yang baru tanpa preseden". Dalam bahasa Indonesia/Melayu, istilah ini diserap sebagai *bid'ah/bidah/bidaah*, yang oleh KBBI diartikan sebagai perbuatan dalam agama yang tidak mengikuti contoh atau sumber otoritatif. Dalam wacana Islam, *bid'ah* berfungsi sebagai kategori normatif untuk menilai praktik atau keyakinan keagamaan sebagai "baru" dan kerap kali "menyimpang".

³ Erma Fatima dan Ahmad Arri Abdullah, "Bidaah | Viu Original | Viu Indonesia," diakses 28 Agustus 2025, <https://www.viu.com/ott/id/id/vod/2593379/Bidaah>.

then attempts to dismantle these deviations from within. This series has not only become a popular phenomenon on social media but has also sparked critical public discussions regarding the religious narratives constructed within it.⁴

The themes of religious authority abuse, absolute spiritual claims, and manipulation of religious narratives contained in this series are crucial in the context of Indonesian Muslim society, which still faces the problem of gender inequality in the religious sphere.⁵ Many existing religious interpretations are exclusive and do not provide space for women's experiences as part of social construction. Women are often positioned as objects of religious teachings interpreted by men. When women's bodies and roles are entirely regulated within a patriarchal moral framework wrapped in religious evidence, what occurs is not social order, but symbolic violence legitimized in the name of religion. In the *Bidaah* series, we will see how male-dominated interpretations are used as tools to strengthen control over women, whether through domestic institutions, religious rituals, or teachings that dismiss the values of equality. Therefore, a study that unravels the issue of patriarchy in this series is not only relevant but also urgent to reopen the space for discussion about the importance of justice in religious practice, especially from feminist and hermeneutics of liberation perspectives. This is crucial so that religious interpretations always side with humanitarian values, rather than becoming tools of legitimation for unilateral power.

This article aims to deconstruct the patriarchal values contained in the *Bidaah* series, particularly those veiled by religious symbols and narratives. By using the hermeneutic approach developed by Asghar Ali Engineer, the author seeks to demonstrate that the interpretation of religious texts always emerges within specific social conditions. Therefore, religious texts must be read according to the era and social context in which they apply, especially when they no longer side with justice. Nevertheless, the author understands that hermeneutics within Asghar Ali Engineer's framework initially focuses on the interpretation of religious texts. However, in the development of humanities studies, "text" is understood more broadly. Following the hermeneutic thinker Paul Ricoeur, text is not limited to writing, but encompasses all actions and productions of meaning that can be read

⁴ "Viu Malaysia di Instagram: "Bidaah pecah rekod 2.5 Bilion tontonan di media sosial," Instagram, 9 April 2025, <https://www.instagram.com/viumalaysia/p/DINjCICz5QR/>.

⁵ Jenifer Sabella dkk., "ISU PELANGGARAN HAM TERKAIT KEKERASAN SEKSUAL OLEH TOKOH AGAMA DALAM PERSPEKTIF AGAMA ISLAM DAN KRISTEN," *Moderasi: Jurnal Kajian Islam Kontemporer* 2, no. 3 (2025), <https://doi.org/10.11111>.

interpretatively.⁶ Similarly, in the tradition of Cultural Studies, Stuart Hall demonstrates that films and television series are "cultural texts" saturated with ideology and can be read critically through oppositional reading.⁷ Thus, the *Bidaah* series can be treated as a text containing narratives, symbols, and religious claims that are open to interpretation using Engineer's framework of hermeneutics of liberation.

Although several Muslim feminist scholars such as Amina Wadud, Fatima Mernissi, and Fatima Seedat have offered important critiques of gender inequality in Islamic discourse, this study employs Asghar Ali Engineer's framework because of its particular emphasis on the distinction between normative and contextual dimensions of religious teachings. While Wadud focuses primarily on reconstructing Qur'anic meanings through a tawhidic and gender-inclusive reading, and Mernissi critically examines the historical formation of patriarchal authority in Islamic traditions, Engineer provides a more explicit analytical tool for identifying how historically conditioned practices are transformed into seemingly universal religious norms. This framework is particularly relevant for analyzing the *Bidaah* series, where patriarchal domination is repeatedly legitimized through religious claims detached from their socio-historical context. Therefore, Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation offers a suitable lens for uncovering the mechanisms through which religious narratives are used to justify gender hierarchy and domination in contemporary popular culture. Moreover, employing Engineer's framework in the analysis of an audiovisual text extends the application of liberation hermeneutics beyond scriptural interpretation into the realm of popular media and cultural production.

Hopefully, this study can contribute to the development of progressive Islamic studies, gender studies in Islam, and film studies. Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation, which emphasizes normative-contextual reading, will be relevant just as Engineer reads the Qur'an in the socio-historical context that gave rise to it; likewise, the *Bidaah* series is read within the social context of contemporary Muslim society that serves as the backdrop for its production and consumption. Through this research, readers are invited to see film as a critical medium capable of uncovering social injustice and inequality, as well as to develop the awareness that religious interpretation is not something rigid

⁶ M. Anzaikhan, *Hermeneutika Paul Ricoeur; Dinamika Budaya, Agama, dan Politik Modern*, 6, no. 1 (2025), *Hermeneutika Paul Ricoeur; Dinamika Budaya, Agama, ... Jurnal UINSU* <https://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/lubb/article/view>.

⁷ Azzahra Putri Maulana dan Sisca Aulia, "Analisis Semiotika Representasi Budaya dalam Film "Agak Laen"," *Koneksi* 9, no. 1 (2025): 242–51, <https://doi.org/10.24912/kn.v9i1.33499>.

and fixed, but rather always open to debate and struggle for a more just and equal life.⁸

2. Literature Review

Various studies have examined patriarchal values in media and literary representations using approaches dominated by Western feminist theory and semiotics. Karkono, Maulida, and Rahmadiyah analyzed the film *Kartini* through general feminist criticism and revealed how the heroic narrative actually reproduces patriarchal structures within the struggle for women's emancipation.⁹ Furthermore, studies on the film *Yuni* were conducted by: Rosa Yuliana,¹⁰ Luthfiah Dasmarlita,¹¹ dan Febiola¹² consistently use Roland Barthes' semiotics to dismantle the representation of patriarchal culture towards the main female character. Similar studies are found in the film *Ngeri-nger Sedap*,¹³ *Istri Orang*,¹⁴ dan *Arini*¹⁵ all of which highlight patriarchal domination in family and household dynamics. Meanwhile, in the realm of literature. *Meanwhile, in the realm of literature, Sugiarti*¹⁶ analyzed East

⁸ Irsyadunnas Irsyadunnas, "The Hermeneutic Thoughts of Ashgar Ali Engineer in The Interpretation of Feminism," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* (Yogyakarta) 25, no. 1 (2017): 1, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v25i1.2120>.

⁹ Karkono Karkono dkk., "BUDAYA PATRIARKI DALAM FILM KARTINI (2017) KARYA HANUNG BRAMANTYO," *Kawruh : Journal of Language Education, Literature and Local Culture* 2, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.32585/kawruh.v2i1.651>.

¹⁰ Rosa Yuliana, "REPERSENTASI BUDAYA PATRIARKI TOKOH WANITA DALAM FILM 'YUNI' KARYA KAMILA ANDINI" (Universitas Islam Malang, 2022), <https://repository.unisma.ac.id/bitstream/handle/123456789>.

¹¹ Luthfiah Dasmarlita, "Budaya Patriarki Dalam Film Yuni: Analisis Semiotika Roland Barthes," *MEDIALOG: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 6, no. 1 (2023): 62-72, <https://doi.org/10.35326/medialog.v6i1.3033>.

¹² Nadya Febiola dkk., "REPRESENTASI PATRIARKI DALAM FILM 'YUNI,'" *Scriptura* 12, no. 2 (2023): 100-112, <https://doi.org/10.9744/scriptura.12.2.100-112>.

¹³ Rara Yunisha dan Nesa Riska Pangesti, "REPRESENTASI BUDA PATRIARKI DALAM FILM NGERI-NGERI SEDAP KARYA BENE DION RAJAGUKGUK," *JURNAL SASINDO SASTRA INDONESIA* 12, no. 1 (2023): 56, <https://doi.org/10.24114/sasindo.v12i1.44875>.

¹⁴ Titin Setiawati, "Representasi Budaya Patriarki Dalam Film Istri Orang," *KOMUNIKA* 7, no. 2 (2020): 66-76, <https://doi.org/10.22236/komunika.v7i2.6328>.

¹⁵ Angel Purwanti dan Sri Suana, "MAKNA REPRESENTASI TOKOH ARINI SEBAGAI OBYEK PATRIARKI DALAM FILM ARINI," *Commed: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Media* 5, no. 1 (2020): 54-62, <https://doi.org/10.33884/commed.v5i1.2389>.

¹⁶ Sugiarti Sugiarti, "Budaya patriarki dalam cerita rakyat Jawa Timur," *KEMBARA Journal of Scientific Language Literature and Teaching* 7, no. 2 (2021): 424-37, <https://doi.org/10.22219/kembara.v7i2.17888>.

Javanese folklore, Maghfirah¹⁷ examined Nawal Sa'dawi's novel, and both studies show that structural patriarchal patterns have been embedded in traditional cultural narratives.

Several recent studies affirm the relevance and depth of Engineer's hermeneutical methodology. Maulidiy elaborates that in interpreting the Qur'an, Engineer consistently employs a normative-contextual distinction to demonstrate that gender inequality in classical interpretations stems from historical conditions that are no longer relevant, rather than from the spirit of the Qur'an itself.¹⁸ Melani further shows that Engineer's feminist perspective is relevant to the global agenda of gender equality (SDGs), because his views are rooted in the Qur'anic text understood normatively-contextually, rather than from an adoption of Western feminism.¹⁹ Rahman, in a comparative study, asserts that Engineer's distinctiveness compared to other thinkers lies in his approach, which goes beyond a purely fiqh perspective, but also incorporates philosophical, anthropological, sociological, and historical perspectives in reading the position of women in the Qur'an.²⁰

Previous studies also confirm Engineer's contribution to deconstructing patrilineal interpretations. Imam Herdian concludes that the reconstruction of Islamic thought in Engineer's version is a necessity because religion should not merely function as a rigid belief system, but rather as a tool to create positive and just social change.²¹ Fikri and Qorib expanded the application of Engineer's hermeneutics to the field of Islamic education, demonstrating that Engineer's normative-contextual approach can restructure educational objectives from a ritualistic orientation toward critical awareness of social injustice.²² Meanwhile,

¹⁷ Vera Sukma Maghfirah dan Alex Sobur, "Perlawanan Kaum Perempuan terhadap Dominasi Patriarki dalam Novel," *Jurnal Riset Jurnalistik dan Media Digital*, 21 Desember 2023, 105–12, <https://doi.org/10.29313/jrjmd.v3i2.2705>.

¹⁸ Fahmidiya Khilda Maulidiy dkk., "LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND GENDER (ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER'S THOUGHTS)," *Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Sharia Economics (IJSE)* 7, no. 1 (2024): 1621–35, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31538/ijse.v7i1.4650>.

¹⁹ Melani Novita Sari, "The Relevance of Gender Equality from Asghar Ali Engineer's Feminist Perspective on the SDGs," *BELIEF: Sociology of Religion Journal* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.30983/belief.v2i1.8527>.

²⁰ Rifqi Aulia Rahman dkk., "Contextual Interpretation Of Asghar Ali Engineer : Efforts To Reconstruct Nash On The Women Position In Primordial Society," *Muwazah: Jurnal Kajian Gender* 16, no. 1 (2024): 1–18, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.28918/muwazah.v16i1.6846>.

²¹ Imam Herdian, "Menelusik Pemikiran Asghar Ali Engineer dan Upaya Rekonstruksi Pemikiran Islam," *Sumbula: Jurnal Studi Keagamaan, Sosial dan Budaya* 10, no. 1 (2025): 74–95, <https://doi.org/10.32492/sumbula.v10i1.10106>.

²² Ziad Fikri dan Muhammad Qorib, "Ali Asghar Engineer's Thoughts on

Yola Fadila affirmed that Engineer's liberation theology is in harmony with the Qur'an and hadith, with three key concepts (jihad, tawhid, and faith) all leading to the liberation of the weak, including women, from all forms of oppression.²³

Collectively, the studies above indicate two important points: First, Asghar Ali Engineer's hermeneutics has been recognized as a mature and operational methodology in contemporary Islamic studies. Second, most of these studies remain focused on its application to normative religious texts without extending to cultural products such as audiovisual media, which in practice also reproduce patriarchal religious narratives in a more massive and publicly consumable manner. Furthermore, studies on patriarchy in Indonesian cinema largely employ Western secular feminist frameworks that have not fully addressed the theological dimension of patriarchy's legitimation (namely, religious interpretations influenced by specific authorial conditions) that has become a source of justifying oppression. Thus, there are two intertwined gaps: the limited application of liberation hermeneutics to written texts, and the absence of Islamic hermeneutical approaches in the analysis of film as a medium that produces religious meaning.

To the best of the author's search, no study has specifically used Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation to read religious patriarchal narratives in audiovisual media. Yet, as a popular medium, film has a wide reach in shaping and reproducing collective religious consciousness in society. Therefore, this article comes to fill that gap by taking the Bidaah series as the object of study and Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation as its analytical tool. This also represents an effort to bring together progressive Islamic interpretive methodology and popular media studies, positioning film as a cultural text that can be read hermeneutically. Thus, this article not only contributes to progressive Islamic studies and gender studies in Islam, but also opens up the possibility of developing a cross-media hermeneutical methodology from written texts to audiovisual texts.

Liberation Theology and Its Implications for Islamic Education," *Journal of English Language and Education* 10, no. 6 (2021): 440–53, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v10i6.1642>.

²³ Yola Fadila, "Islam dan Pembelaan Terhadap Perempuan: Studi Pemikiran Asghar Ali Engineer Teologi Pembebasan," *Jurnal Ilmu Agama: Mengkaji Doktrin, Pemikiran, dan Fenomena Agama* 24, no. 1 (1970): 98–117, <https://doi.org/10.19109/jia.v24i1.16519>.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a hermeneutic-conceptual text analysis research type.²⁴ The primary data source is the Bidaah series, which aired on the Viu channel in 2025 and consists of 16 episodes, including dialogues between characters, religiously charged visual symbols, character construction, and plotlines that represent male-female relations within the Jihad Ummah community.²⁵ Secondary data sources include the works of Asghar Ali Engineer, particularly *The Rights of Women in Islam*.²⁶ dan Islam and Liberation Theology, ...as well as academic literature on his hermeneutics of liberation. The unit of analysis is the ideological-religious propositions contained in four narrative elements: symbols, characters, plot, and religious narratives, particularly those related to three main themes: the doctrine of male superiority through repetitive teaching, the normalization of polygamy as a privileged right, and the control of women's domestic behavior under the pretext of spiritual leadership.

Data were collected through systematic audiovisual text observation of all episodes using a narrative analysis sheet containing columns for episode, timestamp, narrative element, data description, and preliminary interpretive notes. The analysis was conducted through four sequential steps: textual reading, by denotatively reading what is explicitly shown; contextual reading, by placing the data within the socio-historical context of contemporary Muslim society that serves as the backdrop for the series' production; perspectival reading, by reading from the viewpoint of women as the most affected subjects; and normative-contextual differentiation, by examining each religious claim in the series to distinguish whether it represents the Qur'anic universal principles of justice and equality (normative) or situational practices that lack valid normative foundations (contextual).²⁷

The analytical procedure followed a four-stage coding process. First, all episodes were repeatedly viewed to identify scenes containing religious claims

²⁴ John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4. ed (SAGE, 2014).

²⁵ Fatima dan Abdullah, "Bidaah | Viu Original | Viu Indonesia."

²⁶ Asghar Ali Engineer, *The Rights of Woman in Islam*, 2 ed. (New Dawn Press, 2004).

²⁷ Cindy Aulia Putri dkk., "Kontruksi Citra Muslim Moderat dalam Film Religi Indonesia: Analisis Naratif Pesan Dakwah," *Intellektika : Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa* 3, no. 1 (2025): 331-41, <https://doi.org/10.59841/intellektika.v3i1.2243>.

related to gender relations, authority, obedience, marriage, and women's social position. Second, these scenes were categorized into three major themes: the doctrine of male superiority, the normalization of polygamy, and the regulation of women's domestic roles. Third, the selected scenes were interpreted through Engineer's normative-contextual distinction in order to identify whether the religious claims represented universal Islamic values or historically conditioned practices. Finally, the findings were synthesized to reveal broader patterns of patriarchal meaning production and religious legitimation operating throughout the narrative structure of the series.

To ensure the validity of the analysis, this study applies four validity criteria: credibility, namely that interpretations are confirmed back to the primary text and supported by secondary references from Engineer's works; conceptual consistency, namely that the entire analysis is conducted consistently within Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation framework without mixing other incompatible theoretical frameworks; transferability, namely that the findings are presented in a sufficiently thick descriptive-analytical account so that their relevance can be assessed in similar contexts; and reflexivity, namely that the researcher consciously acknowledges their interpretive position as a reader who sides with the value of gender justice.²⁸

4. Result and Discussion

4.1.1. Hermeneutics of Liberation as Asghar Ali Engineer's Methodological Construct

The tension between the liberating normative spirit of Islam and the oppressive practice of interpretation is the starting point of Asghar Ali Engineer's entire thought. Islam normatively places all human beings as equal before God, regardless of gender, race, or social status. However, this normative spirit often fails to materialize in the practice of religious interpretation that has been passed down through generations. Religious texts are static, while social reality is dynamic, constantly moving and changing. Therefore, the meaning of texts must always be contextualized with the spirit of justice and equality so that Islamic teachings remain relevant in responding to the dynamics of the age. At this point, a hermeneutic approach is expected to bridge the two by formulating a reading framework that is not only text-oriented but

²⁸ S. P. S. Senanayake dan Dr. N. N. J. Nawaratne Dean, "Factors Influencing Trustworthiness of Qualitative Research: A Systematic Literature Review," *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation* 12, no. 12 (2025): 297-319, <https://doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2025.12120028>.

also sensitive to social context and committed to the values of justice, an approach that in contemporary scholarship has been formulated as hermeneutics of liberation.

It should be emphasized that the term "hermeneutics of liberation," which has been repeatedly attributed to Asghar Ali Engineer's thought, is not a terminology explicitly formulated or used by Engineer himself in his works. In many of his writings, Engineer more consistently uses the framework of "liberation theology" to describe his orientation of thought. Nevertheless, in the development of academic studies, several researchers have begun to use the term "hermeneutics of liberation" to summarize the methodological character of his interpretation. For example, Muhammad Walid explicitly refers to Engineer's approach as a form of hermeneutics of liberation in reading the Qur'an.²⁹ A thesis at UIN Sunan Kalijaga even formulated the existence of an "epistemology of hermeneutics of liberation" in Engineer's thought.³⁰ A recent study by Fikri and Qorib also affirms the existence of Engineer's distinctive hermeneutical approach in distinguishing the normative and contextual dimensions of religious texts.³¹ Thus, the term "hermeneutics of liberation" can be understood as an academic construct that has been used within scholarly tradition to conceptualize Engineer's method of interpretation. Therefore, the term is not meant to claim Engineer's conceptual authority, but rather to reflectively read his interpretative patterns within a more systematic and critical framework.

The main epistemological foundation in Asghar Ali Engineer's thought is the belief that the interpretation of religious texts is never born in a vacuum. Every interpretation is always shaped by the socio-historical background, life experiences, social position, and worldview of the interpreter, so that no interpretation is truly neutral and value-free.³² Within this framework, understanding the divine intent is not a simple and direct process, but rather always involves the capacity, intellectual horizon, and limitations of the interpreting human being.³³ Classical exegetes, for example, lived within a patriarchal social structure, and this condition helped shape their perspective on women, even though we know that this is not merely a reflection of the

²⁹ Muhammad Walid, "Penerapan Hermeneutika Dalam Tafsir Pembebasan Asghar Ali Engineer," *ULUL ALBAB Jurnal Studi Islam* 5, no. 1 (2018): 193-209, <https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v5i1.6153>.

³⁰ Lub Liyna Nabilata, "HERMENEUTIKA PEMBEBASAN: EPISTEMOLOGI TAFSIR AYAT-AYAT PEMBEBASAN ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER" (Thesis (Master), Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2019), <http://digilib.uin-suka.ac.id/id/eprint/37160>.

³¹ Fikri dan Qorib, "Ali Asghar Engineer's Thoughts on Liberation Theology and Its Implications for Islamic Education."

³² Engineer, *The Rights of Woman in Islam*.

³³ Asghar Ali Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology: Essays on Liberative Elements in Islam* (1990; Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd, t.t.). h.130

normative spirit of the Qur'an itself. Therefore, interpretation cannot be treated as a frozen final product, but rather as the result of a reading that is always open to being revisited. Changes in social context demand re-reading, because the meaning captured by a scholar in a particular period can differ significantly from the understanding that emerges in other social conditions.³⁴

Based on this framework, Engineer developed a systematic critique of patriarchal interpretations within the Islamic tradition. He shows that many classical interpretations generalize provisions that are actually contextual into universal norms that apply across space and time. To avoid this error, Engineer makes a clear distinction between the normative and contextual aspects of the Qur'an.³⁵ The normative aspect includes universal values such as justice (*'adl*), equality (*musawah*), and respect for human dignity (*karamah insaniyah*), while the contextual aspect refers to specific provisions that emerged as responses to particular social situations. In this regard, the verse on polygamy (Q.S. al-Nisa' [4]:3), for example, is understood as a response to post-war conditions to protect women and orphans, not as a universal legitimation for the practice of polygamy. Similarly, the interpretation of the *qiwamah* verse (Q.S. al-Nisa' [4]:3), which is often used as a basis for male domination, is criticized for ignoring the social context that underlies it. Furthermore, Engineer also highlights the practice of instrumentalizing religion, namely the selective use of religious evidence to legitimize male control over women. These patterns of distortion are the main targets of his critique of patriarchal interpretations.³⁶

Building from this critique, Engineer proposes a hermeneutic approach that places social consciousness as the starting point of interpretation. He rejects the assumption that this approach is identical to *bi al-ra'yi* interpretation in its negative sense, because the main distinguishing factor is the moral orientation of the interpreter. Reading the Qur'an in the context of social experience does not mean reducing revelation to subjective interests, but rather reactualizing its ethical spirit so that it remains alive in contemporary reality. In this context, Engineer emphasizes the importance of linking interpretation to modern human consciousness, including the values of human rights and human dignity. The hermeneutics of liberation he offers is thus not merely a deconstructive effort, but also a reconstructive project aimed at representing Islamic teachings as a liberating force, not an oppressive one.

³⁴ Engineer, *The Rights of Woman in Islam*.

³⁵ Engineer, *The Rights of Woman in Islam*.

³⁶ Engineer, *Islam and Liberation Theology: Essays on Liberative Elements in Islam*. h. 62-63

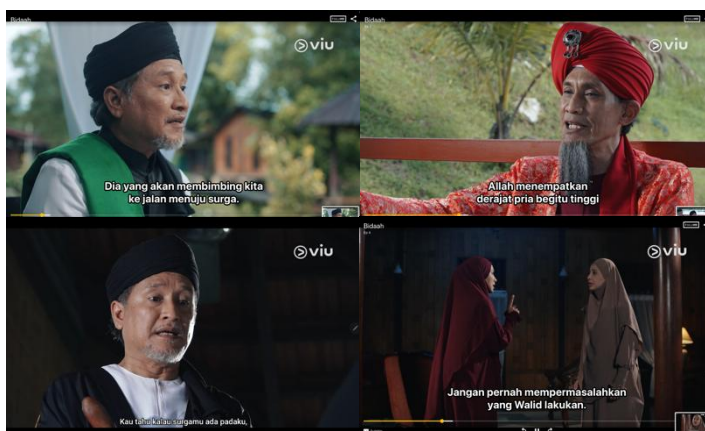
Table 1: Asghar Ali Engineer's Framework of Hermeneutics of Liberation

DIMENSION	MAIN IDEAS	IMPLICATIONS	SOURCES
EPISTEMOLOGY: INTERPRETATION AS A SOCIAL PRODUCT	No interpretation is neutral; every interpretation is shaped by socio-historical background, social position, intellectual horizon, and the interests of the interpreter's group	Classical interpretations of women reflect medieval patriarchal structures, not the spirit of the Qur'an	<i>The Rights of Women in Islam</i> , pp. 4–5; <i>Islam and Liberation Theology</i> , p. 130
NORMATIVE ASPECT	Universal Qur'anic principles that transcend time: justice (' <i>adl</i>), equality (<i>musawah</i>), human dignity (<i>karamah insaniyah</i>)	Serves as the foundation to assess whether an interpretation or religious practice aligns with the spirit of the Qur'an	<i>The Rights of Women in Islam</i> , pp. 49–50
CONTEXTUAL ASPECT	Specific provisions that emerged as responses to particular social situations; situational and can be abandoned when context is no longer relevant	Q.S. al-Nisa' [4]:3 (polygamy) as a response to post-war conditions; Q.S. al-Nisa' [4]:34 (<i>qiwamah</i>) in the context of economic dependence	<i>The Rights of Women in Islam</i> , pp. 49–50; <i>Islam and Liberation Theology</i> , p. 173
PATRIARCHAL DISTORTION	Three patterns: (1) generalization of contextual provisions into eternal norms; (2) absolutization	Polygamy becomes a permanent right of men; <i>qiwamah</i> becomes the basis for absolute domination; verses on obedience are used to	<i>Islam and Liberation Theology</i> , pp. 171–173; <i>The</i>

	of <i>qiwamah</i> as ontological superiority; (3) instrumentalization of religious evidence to control women	restrict women's autonomy	<i>Rights of Women in Islam</i> , pp. 62–63
RECONSTRUCTIVE PRINCIPLE	Hermeneutics of liberation is not merely deconstruction but a reconstructive project	Interpretation must lead to liberation and reactuate the ethical spirit of the Qur'an in line with human rights and humanitarian values	<i>The Rights of Women in Islam</i> , p. 4; <i>Islam and Liberation Theology</i> , p. 130

4.1.2. Construction and Reproduction of Religious Patriarchy in the Bidaah Series

The representation of religious patriarchy in the Bidaah series is not only present in the individual figure of Walid but operates as a collective system continuously reproduced within the Jihad Ummah community. One of the main strategies used is the repetitive teaching by Walid as the ustadz and leader of Jihad Ummah, which positions men as the center of authority, truth, and glory. From the early episodes, Walid uses the verse of Surah an-Nisa' verse 59 to mandate absolute obedience to the leader (Episode 1, 04.00–05.14; see also Episode 8, 10.49–13.25). He even claims to be an intermediary between Allah and the Prophet, so that "Walid's command is Allah's command" (Episode 3, 00.13–02.00). This strategy appears in various teachings that consistently assert male superiority as the determinant of social and religious order, which is then absorbed by the congregation as a shared framework of thought. This narrative does not stop as a personal claim but is circulated and internalized by the congregation through various media such as religious study sessions, rituals (pledge of allegiance (*baiat*) by kissing Walid's feet in Episode 3, 20.57–23.25), and daily social interactions, gradually settling into a 'truth' that is no longer questioned. This repetition makes patriarchal ideology not appear as a construct that can be criticized, but rather as a normative reality considered natural and normal.



(Figure 1: A collection of scenes showing dialogues between Walid and his followers that assert claims of male superiority and absolute truth, source: author's screenshot)

Furthermore, the power of patriarchal ideology in the *Bidaah* series lies not only in what is said but in how it is conveyed through religious language saturated with legitimation. Religious language in this context does not appear as a neutral medium but as a symbolic device that authorizes unequal power relations. In the rhetoric constructed by the figure of Walid, men are systematically positioned as "leaders," "protectors," and even "intermediaries between Allah and the Prophet," so that their authority is not merely social but also receives theological justification. Conversely, women are reduced to weak, incomplete entities in need of guidance and control. Abi Saifullah, for instance, emphatically states that a woman becoming a leader is "against *fitrah*" (Episode 2, 04.18–04.30). The metaphor of the "cracked glass" is explicitly uttered by Walid: "Women are like glass, easily cracked and broken, difficult to mend once cracked," meaning that women's position is easily replaceable if they do not conform to the expectations and will set by male authority in the community. In a study session with some male members, Walid also says, "Allah has placed men's status much higher than women" (Episode 2, 08.31–08.50). Additionally, there is the designation of female congregation members as "slaves" when Abi Saifullah says that Mia's pregnancy by Walid is natural because Mia has not yet attained moral and intellectual freedom; she came to Jihad Ummah and received protection from Walid, therefore, according to Abi Saifullah, "She is like a slave, her value is like a commodity, and her owner is Walid" (Episode 14, 02.59–04.00).

From the perspective of Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation, the metaphor of the "cracked glass" represents more than a rhetorical expression of female vulnerability. It functions as a discursive mechanism that transforms historically constructed gender assumptions into seemingly natural truths. By portraying women as inherently fragile and replaceable, the narrative removes women's moral agency and reduces their social value to their conformity with male expectations. Such a representation exemplifies what Engineer criticizes as the absolutization of social conditions into normative religious assumptions. Consequently, the metaphor does not merely describe women; it actively produces and legitimizes a hierarchical gender order. These metaphors are not merely descriptive but performative. Women are not only depicted as vulnerable but also as something replaceable when they no longer meet the established standards. Within this framework, women's identity is reduced to an object whose value is determined by their obedience and conformity to the norms constructed by male authority. This kind of religious language works subtly and effectively because it wraps domination in terms that sound noble and normative. When power relations are framed as a form of leadership, protection, or moral responsibility, the practice of subordination is no longer recognized as oppression but as something natural, even regarded as a virtue. In this situation, patriarchal ideology is no longer imposed from the outside but is internalized by community members as part of their own beliefs. Consequently, men in this community do not see themselves as agents of domination, but as those carrying out a correct and legitimate religious role. This is where ideology works most effectively when injustice no longer appears as a problem, but as a truth accepted without criticism.





(Figure 2: A collection of scenes showing dialogues between Walid and the members of Jihad Ummah, source: author's screenshot)

The most evident manifestation of patriarchal construction can be seen in how the Jihad Ummah community understands and practices polygamy. In this series, polygamy is not positioned as a practice with strict conditions and ethical considerations, but rather as an almost unquestionable privilege of men. Abi Saifullah asks Walid for an additional wife because he feels capable of practicing polygamy, both economically and personally, thus viewing adding a wife as something natural and justifiable (Episode 7, 04.00–06.00). When granted permission, he describes his prospective wife as "small, young, white" (Episode 7, 09.40–11.10). The male congregation members legitimize polygamy as "relieving stress" and "filling the emptiness in the number of wives" (Episode 8, 16.00–16.30). The constructed narrative even shifts the meaning of polygamy from a social instrument intended in certain contexts for protection and justice into a symbol of piety and a form of spiritual devotion. Walid refers to polygamy as "a test for women concerning matters of the heart and sincerity" (Episode 11, around minute 16.05). In Islamic tradition, the practice of polygamy originally included specific social responsibilities, such as protecting women and orphans in vulnerable situations, and was bound by a very strict principle of justice. However, in Jihad Ummah, these ethical and contextual dimensions are ignored, reducing polygamy to a legitimation of male desire and authority. Even for congregation members who have not yet reached maximum capacity, access to having up to four wives is easily granted without considering other more crucial aspects (Episode 2, 24.40–27.20).

The significance of this representation lies not merely in the existence of polygamy itself, but in the transformation of polygamy into a marker of religious prestige and masculine privilege. Engineer argues that Qur'anic discussions of polygamy emerged within a specific social context characterized by the need to protect vulnerable women and orphans. In the Bidaah series, however, this contextual dimension disappears and is replaced by a narrative

that presents polygamy as an unquestionable spiritual entitlement. The result is a shift from social responsibility to personal privilege, revealing how religious discourse can be selectively mobilized to reinforce unequal gender relations. This shift becomes even more apparent in the practice called "inner marriage" (*nikah batin*), a relationship claimed to be spiritually valid under the pretext that every woman possesses a *khodam* (spiritual attendant) embodying the traits of a royal princess useful for the sake of *da'wah* (proselytizing). Walid offers inner marriage to Baiduri on the grounds of "Allah's decree" and that she will only become "a wife in the unseen realm" (Episode 13, 00.19–02.00). Umi Rabiatul explains that the inner marriage is intended "to subdue Baiduri's *khodam*, namely the arrogant Princess of Mount Ledang" (Episode 13, 10.25–11.43). The same practice was also done to Mia (Episode 11, 10.25–11.15) and other female congregation members (Episode 13, 13.38–16.53; Episode 14, 08.33–10.00). This inner marriage has no clear consequences or responsibilities because it legitimizes sexual relations claimed to be correct by Walid in the name of religion, yet avoids the obligation to account for the actions, decisions, and consequences that arise within the institution of marriage. When undesired consequences emerge, such as Mia's pregnancy (Episode 13, 20.30), the relationship is easily negated. Walid orders Mia to abort her pregnancy under the pretext that "the child from an inner marriage cannot be made apparent; what is inner remains inner" (Episode 14, 06.09–07.00). Abi Saifullah even refers to Mia as "a slave whose value is like a commodity" (Episode 14, 02.59–04.00). Thus, "inner marriage" functions as a mechanism that systematically benefits men while placing women in a socially and existentially vulnerable position. Women in this series are depicted not only as objects in biological relations but also within the spiritual construction built by the community. Women's bodies become the field where men's claims of religiosity are practiced, while women's own voices and experiences receive almost no space. The response of female congregation members, who tend to remain silent, accept, and obey the provisions set by the authority figure, is often interpreted as a sign of high faith. Yet this condition more reflects the limited space for women to refuse or criticize, rather than a choice truly born of free will.

More deeply, the *Bidaah* series shows how power relations not only operate at a structural level but also permeate the domestic and emotional realm. The relationships between Walid and his wives are not built on sincerity but are functional and transactional. The figure of Umi Rabiiah, for example, is positioned as the second wife who appears to be valued, yet in reality her role

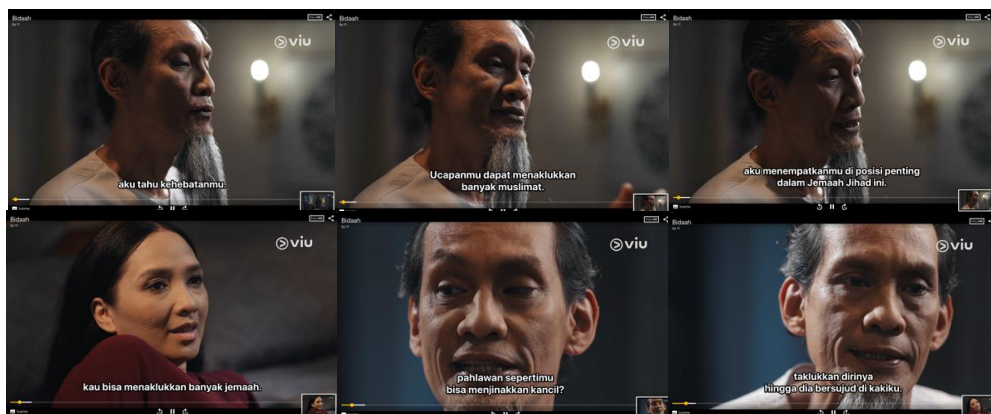
is merely a tool to strengthen social and spiritual legitimacy, to gain the trust of the female congregation (*muslimat*), and to manage the system that sustains Walid's power (Episode 3, 00.13–02.00; Episode 8, 05.00–06.10; Episode 11, 00.13–01.30). The closeness established does not arise from genuine affective relations but from the need for obedience and power stability. When potential resistance or protest emerges from one of his wives, Walid easily replaces her with another figure more suited to the needs of domination. Habibah, Walid's fourth wife, is divorced simply because she was jealous. She was married through *mut'ah* (temporary marriage, unregistered), received no wealth, and was forbidden to see her children (Episode 10, 02.46–05.33; Episode 9, 00.20–00.38). The presence of the character Baiduri shows how women are reduced to objects of power fantasy: a young, attractive, and challenging figure becomes uniquely appealing within patriarchal logic. Abi Saifullah suggests that Baiduri be married "to subdue her" (Episode 10, 20.37–21.34), and Walid himself desires Baiduri "to prostrate beneath Walid's feet" (Episode 11, 00.13–01.30). In this structure, the ideal woman is not an equal but one who can be subdued. Consequently, relations within this community are never truly dialogical or participatory, but always exist within a hierarchical framework that places men as subjects and women as objects.





(Figure 3: Scenes of Walid with followers and members of Jihad Ummah related to polygamy and inner marriage (nikah batin), source: author's screenshot)

More deeply, the *Bidaah* series shows how power relations not only operate at a structural level but also permeate the domestic and emotional realm. The relationships between Walid and his wives are not built on sincerity but are functional and transactional. The figure of Umi Rabiah, for example, is positioned as the second wife who appears to be valued, yet in reality her role is merely a tool to strengthen social and spiritual legitimacy, to gain the trust of the female congregation (*muslimat*), and to manage the system that sustains Walid's power. The closeness established does not arise from genuine affective relations but from the need for obedience and power stability.



(Figure 4: Scene of conversation between Walid and Umi Rabiah, source: author's screenshot)

When potential resistance or protest arises from one of his wives, Walid easily replaces her with another figure more suited to the needs of domination. The presence of a character like Baiduri shows how women are reduced to objects of power fantasy: how a young, attractive, and challenging figure becomes uniquely appealing within patriarchal logic. In this structure, the ideal woman is not an equal but one who can be subdued. Consequently, relations within this community are never truly dialogical or participatory, but always exist within a hierarchical framework that places men as subjects and women as objects.

4.1.3. Normative-Contextual Distortions of Religious Narratives in the Bidaah Series

After mapping how religious patriarchy is constructed and reproduced in the Jihad Ummah community as described in the previous section, the next analytical step is to systematically examine the religious claims represented through dialogue, practices, and symbols in the narrative of the Bidaah series. This examination is conducted using Asghar Ali Engineer's framework of hermeneutics of liberation, particularly through the distinction between the normative and contextual dimensions of Islamic teachings. Within this framework, normative principles such as justice, equality, and respect for human dignity are positioned as the main benchmarks, while provisions that emerged from specific socio-historical contexts are understood as contextual and cannot be absolutized universally. Thus, various religious claims in the Bidaah series cannot be accepted as absolute truths, but must be read critically to see whether they are rooted in the normative spirit of the Qur'an or are rather a form of absolutization of contextual practices that have undergone distortion.

The first distortion appears in the doctrine of ontological male superiority which is consistently reproduced through Walid's rhetoric, positioning men as leaders, protectors, and even intermediaries between Allah and the Prophet. This claim is often associated with the concept of qawwam, which refers to men as maintainers or protectors of women in Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]:34. However, a contextual reading shows that this verse cannot be separated from the social situation of Arab society at the time of revelation, where economic relations and family structure shaped men's role as breadwinners. Thus, the leadership in question is functional and conditional, not a universal statement of male superiority.³⁷ When the narrative in the

³⁷ Muhammad Syafirin, "Pembacaan Progresif Ayat Feminis: Telaah Penafsiran

Bidaah series tears this verse from its context and uses it as legitimation for absolute domination, what occurs is not contextual interpretation, but a freezing of meaning that turns something historical into what appears to be an unquestionable divine decree.³⁸ A similar distortion, even with greater complexity, appears in the construction of polygamy and domestic relations as forms of worship. Within the framework of hermeneutics of liberation, the verse on polygamy is not understood as a command or recommendation, but rather as a response to specific social conditions demanding the protection of women and orphans, with justice as the primary principle that is extremely difficult to realize perfectly.³⁹ The awareness of human limitations in fulfilling the demands of justice actually directs the normative spirit of Islamic teachings toward more equal relations.⁴⁰ However, in the Bidaah series, polygamy is reduced to a one-sidedly legitimized spiritual right of men, even expanded through practices such as "inner marriage" (nikah batin), which is claimed to be spiritually valid but has no clear consequences or responsibilities. This practice not only ignores the principle of justice but also inverts the purpose of the institution of marriage, which in Islam is designed to guarantee protection, certainty, and dignity for both parties. In this condition, domestic relations no longer rest on the principle of *mu'āsyarah bil ma'rūf* (living together in kindness),⁴¹ and rather on a logic of domination that wraps inequality in the guise of religious devotion.

Overall, the various forms of distortion operating within the Jihad Ummah narrative show a similar pattern: contextual provisions are uprooted from their social and ethical roots, then presented again as unquestionable

Sahiron Syamsuddin dan Asghar Ali Engineer atas QS. An-Nisā' [4]: 34," *Journal of Islamic Scriptures in Non-Arabic Societies* 1, no. 3 (2024): 168–90, <https://doi.org/10.51214/jisnas.v1i3.1027>.

³⁸ Maulidiy dkk., "LIBERATION THEOLOGY AND GENDER (ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER'S THOUGHTS)."

³⁹ Engineer, *The Rights of Woman in Islam*.

⁴⁰ Nadia Rizky Fauziah dan Siti Rizqiyyah, "WOMEN'S LIBERATION THEOLOGY: A STUDY OF ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER'S THOUGHTS ON GENDER ISSUES," *Al Hakam: The Indonesian Journal of Islamic Family Law and Gender Issues* 3, no. 2 (2023): 126–40, <https://doi.org/10.35896/alhakam.v3i2.628>.

⁴¹ Dalam konteks Q.S. An-Nisa' 19, para mufasir menjelaskan *Mu'asyarah bil ma'ruf* sebagai kewajiban memperlakukan pasangan dengan ucapan yang lembut, perilaku yang baik, keadilan dalam nafkah dan pembagian waktu (bila beristri lebih dari satu), serta saling musyawarah dan saling meridai. Lihat selengkapnya: Farkhan Muhammad, "Konsep Mu'asyarah bil Ma'rūf Perspektif Al-Qur'an Surat An-Nisa' Ayat 19," *Al-Inṣāf - Journal Program Studi Ahwal Al Syakhshiyah* 1, no. 2 (2022): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.61610/ash.v1i2.12>.

universal norms. This pattern includes claims of male superiority, legitimation of polygamy as a spiritual right, and the construction of female subordination as a form of worship. From the perspective of Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation, such practices represent a freezing of interpretation that not only obscures the normative message of the Qur'an but also opens up space for the reproduction of injustice legitimized through religion.⁴² Thus, this analysis does not stop at the dismantling of distortions, but also reaffirms the importance of reading religious texts contextually and orienting them toward the values of justice as the core of Islamic teachings.

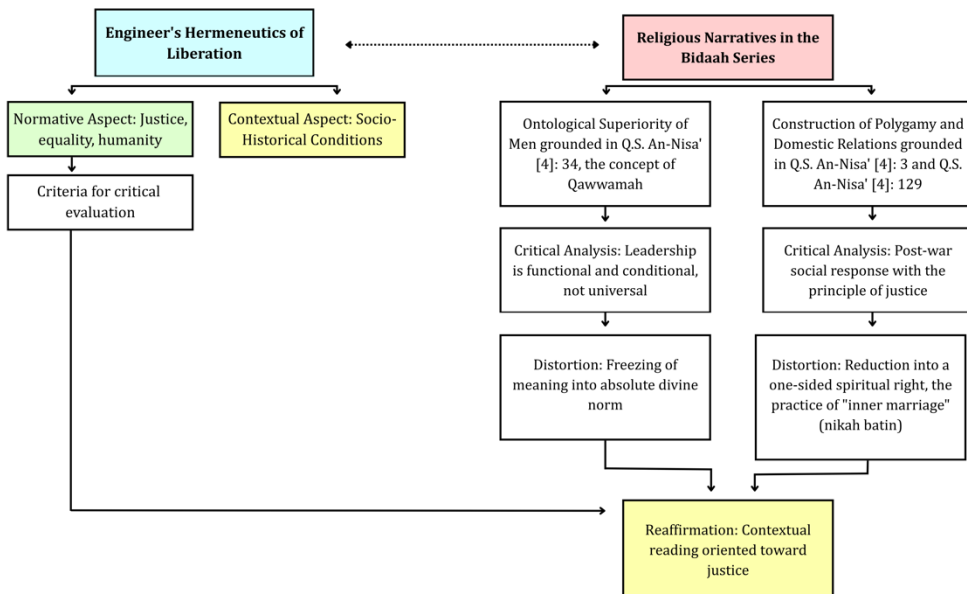


Figure 5: Analytical map of Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation on patriarchal narratives in the *Bidaah* series

Nevertheless, the series does not portray all male characters as agents of patriarchy. Characters such as Hambali function as important counter-narratives that challenge religious manipulation and authoritarian leadership from within the community itself. Their presence indicates that the critique offered by the series is directed not toward men as a social category, but toward specific structures of power that exploit religious discourse for domination. This distinction is important because it prevents the analysis from

⁴² Haidar Masyhur Fadhil, "Cultivating Feminist Hermeneutics As The Interpretation Of Al-Qur'an: A Comparative Study Between Asghar Ali Engineer And Muhammad Al-Ghazali," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (2023): 75–90, <https://doi.org/10.18592/jiiu.v22i1.10587>.

reducing complex gender relations into a simple binary opposition between male oppressors and female victims.

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study show that Asghar Ali Engineer's framework of hermeneutics of liberation is effective in dismantling the interpretive distortions that support religious patriarchy in the Bidaah series. However, when placed in a broader conversation with other thinkers, it appears that Engineer's approach shares common ground as well as differences with Amina Wadud's feminist hermeneutics. Amina Wadud, for instance, specifically interprets key terms such as *qawwam*, *qanitat*, and *nusyuz* in Q.S. An-Nisa' [4]:34 in a more egalitarian manner. She rejects textual readings that legitimize male superiority. The main difference lies in their focus: Engineer emphasizes the socio-historical workings of the context in which the verse emerged, while Wadud places stronger emphasis on reconstructing the internal meaning of the text through the lens of *tawhid* and gender equality. In the context of analyzing the Bidaah series, Engineer's approach is more appropriately used because this series explicitly depicts how the character Walid exploits social conditions (for example, claims of protecting women in crisis situations) to legitimize polygamy and inner marriage. Engineer helps us see that these verses were not born in a vacuum, and their misuse occurs when the contextual aspect is removed. Meanwhile, Wadud's approach would be more useful for criticizing how the female congregation members read the religious texts taught by Walid themselves, and how they can carry out alternative, more just readings. Thus, the two approaches complement rather than contradict each other.

Similar concerns can also be found in the works of Asma Barlas, who argues that patriarchal domination is not rooted in the Qur'an itself but rather in androcentric interpretive traditions that have historically monopolized religious authority. While Engineer emphasizes the distinction between normative and contextual dimensions of revelation, Barlas focuses on exposing how patriarchal readings selectively privilege male authority while ignoring the Qur'an's broader ethical commitment to justice and human dignity. The findings of this study resonate with both perspectives. The religious claims articulated by Walid derive their authority not from the Qur'an's normative message, but from interpretive practices that elevate male interests into religious truths. This convergence suggests that the patriarchal narratives depicted in the Bidaah series are better understood as products of interpretation rather than direct expressions of Islamic teachings.

Theoretically, the findings of this study carry important consequences: if the religious patriarchal narratives in Bidaah are read as representations of interpretive patterns that also exist in social life, then allowing such interpretations to continue circulating means allowing symbolic and structural violence against women to remain normalized. The depiction of Walid using theological metaphors to demean women and manipulate polygamy as 'worship' shows how religious discourse can become a highly effective instrument for locking female subjects into a submissive position without always having to rely on physical violence. Within a Foucauldian framework, this is a form of 'gentle discipline' where women's bodies and wills are tamed through the production of religious truth that appears legitimate and undeniable. Consequently, gender-biased interpretation is not merely an epistemological error but also gives rise to a regime of practice that has concrete impacts on the distribution of rights, access to religious institutions, and women's opportunities to interpret sacred texts independently.

This series simultaneously opens and strains the reception space among Indonesian-Malaysian Muslim audiences because it has the potential to become a critical educational medium that exposes the dangers of religious manipulation by charismatic figures. On the other hand, it also risks being misunderstood as merely a critique of a deviant sect, while the more subtle basic patterns of religious patriarchy in mainstream spaces remain untouched. The logical consequence of the hermeneutics of liberation reading here is a demand to expand the critique, not only to fringe groups like Jihad Ummah, but also to interpretive practices that appear moderate yet still affirm gender hierarchy wrapped in the language of obedience. If the normative spirit of the Qur'an is justice and equality, then every religious practice that produces gender inequality needs to have its theological validity re-examined with a similar analytical lens. In other words, the farthest-reaching impact of this study's findings is a demand that educational institutions, religious authorities, and popular cultural works engage in a project of revising interpretation toward a more emancipatory horizon, not stopping at merely condemning groups considered deviant.

The Bidaah series, born from the Malaysian context (and subsequently widely received in Indonesia), also recognizes the practice of religious authoritarianism in more subtle forms, such as individual cults of ustadz, exclusive religious study institutions, and the rhetoric of returning to the sunnah that sometimes conceals an agenda of strengthening male control over women's bodies and lives. By placing both within a single frame, this study shows that the cases depicted in Jihad Ummah are not mere fiction, but a real

manifestation of a broader structural problem in the tradition of interpretation and religious authority. Another no less important context is the dynamics of contemporary Islamic feminist discourse, which is increasingly strengthening in the Muslim world, including South and Southeast Asia. Other Muslim feminist figures are helping shape a landscape of thought that systematically challenges the claim that patriarchy is an inseparable part of Islamic teachings, by demonstrating that what all parties seek to achieve are the values of justice, while the concrete forms of gender relations are historical and therefore can (and must) be renegotiated. Within this framework, *Bidaah* can be understood as a cultural text operating at the intersection of two currents: a sharp portrait of how patriarchal interpretation operates as an instrument of power and the urgent necessity for a reading of the Qur'an that sides with victims, not with the perpetrators of violence who hide behind religious authority. This intellectual and sociological background confirms that the use of Engineer's hermeneutics of liberation in reading the series is not a coincidental methodological choice, but a conscious response to the current situation, in which religious interpretation is contested between those who wish to maintain patriarchal structures and those who struggle to return the sacred text to the spirit of justice that is its essence.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that the *Bidaah* series represents religious patriarchal values not merely through the figure of Walid, but as a system and practice collectively reproduced within the Jihad Ummah community. Repetitive teaching that places men as the center of authority, the normalization of polygamy as a spiritual right, the practice of inner marriage (*nikah batin*), and functional and transactional domestic relations all demonstrate how religious language, rituals, and social structures work together to shape patriarchy as an unquestionable 'truth'. By using Asghar Ali Engineer's framework of hermeneutics of liberation, this study reveals a normative-contextual distortion, in which historically protective provisions are uprooted from their context and then frozen into permanent legitimation for male domination over women. More importantly, the findings suggest that religious patriarchy persists not because of the normative teachings of Islam itself, but because of interpretive practices that detach religious claims from their socio-historical context and ethical objectives.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic and media studies by demonstrating that hermeneutics of liberation can be used to read audiovisual texts, treating the series as a cultural text containing religious

claims that can be critically examined. This approach enriches the study of Islamic-themed films, which have tended to use general representation theories without connecting them to a Qur'anic hermeneutical methodology based on gender justice. Furthermore, this study also expands the discourse of Islamic feminism in Southeast Asia by showing that popular cultural products can become an important space for renegotiating the relationship between sacred texts, patriarchal interpretations, and the concrete experiences of women in contemporary religious communities.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. As a purely textual analysis study, it was not designed to measure the reception or impact of the series on audiences. Therefore, this study cannot yet explain how audiences, particularly female viewers in Indonesia and Malaysia, actually respond to, negotiate, or even reject the representations of religious patriarchy in the *Bidaah* series. Additionally, the use of a single hermeneutic framework (Engineer) does not yet allow for systematic comparison with other Islamic feminist approaches, nor has a comparative study been conducted with similar series or films from other countries. Therefore, further research is recommended to develop audience reception studies (for example, through focus group discussions), conduct comparative analyses using different theoretical frameworks, and expand the object of study across media in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the representation of religious patriarchy in contemporary popular culture.

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