

Empowered Maryam Bint 'Imrān: An Intertextual Study of the Qur'an and the Bible

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Abstract

Women's empowerment has been a crucial aspect of Indonesia's national development since 1978 year, yet accessibility challenges in rural areas persist. This research aims to explore the figure of Maryam as a theological model for women's empowerment through a comparative analysis of the Qur'an and the Bible. Employing a qualitative method with an intertextual approach, this study integrates classical and contemporary exegesis, including the perspectives of al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and Quraish Shihab, with selected Biblical texts. The findings indicate that both religious traditions position Maryam as a figure of high spiritual authority and moral integrity. In the Qur'an, Maryam is portrayed as a resilient woman facing social pressure with moral courage, while in the Bible (Luke 1:26-38), she is presented as an independent figure actively contributing to the prophetic mission. This study concludes that Maryam is not merely a historical-religious figure but a universal symbol of women's empowerment that transcends dogmatic boundaries. The implications of these findings contribute to contemporary discourses on gender and religion, while positioning Maryam as a strategic point of convergence in interfaith dialogue. Through her exemplary moral steadfastness and spiritual independence, Maryam offers a new paradigm for strengthening women's roles in both public and domestic spheres.

Maryam binti 'Imrān, Tafsir al-Munīr, Biblical Narratives, Intertextual Study

Abstrak

Pemberdayaan perempuan merupakan aspek krusial dalam pembangunan nasional Indonesia sejak tahun 1978, namun tantangan aksesibilitas di wilayah pedesaan masih terus bertahan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi sosok Maryam sebagai model teologis bagi pemberdayaan perempuan melalui analisis komparatif antara Al-Qur'an dan Injil. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif melalui pendekatan intertekstual, studi ini memadukan tafsir klasik dan kontemporer termasuk pemikiran al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, dan Quraish Shihab dengan teks-teks Alkitab pilihan. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kedua tradisi agama tersebut memosisikan Maryam sebagai sosok dengan otoritas spiritual dan integritas moral yang tinggi. Dalam Al-Qur'an, Maryam digambarkan sebagai perempuan tangguh yang menghadapi tekanan sosial dengan keberanian moral, sementara dalam Injil (Lukas 1:26-38), ia ditampilkan sebagai sosok mandiri yang secara aktif berkontribusi pada misi kenabian. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa Maryam bukan sekadar figur historis-religius, melainkan simbol universal pemberdayaan perempuan yang mampu melampaui batas-batas dogmatis. Implikasi dari hasil penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada diskursus kontemporer mengenai gender dan agama, sekaligus memosisikan sosok Maryam sebagai titik temu strategis dalam dialog lintas iman. Melalui teladan keteguhan moral dan kemandirian spiritualnya, Maryam menawarkan paradigma baru bagi penguatan peran perempuan di ruang publik maupun domestik.

Kata Kunci: Maryam binti 'Imrān, Tafsir al-Munīr, Injil, Studi Intertekstual

INTRODUCTION

Maryam binti Imran is a symbol of women's empowerment in both the Qur'an and the Gospel. She represents sincerity, obedience, courage, and spiritual strength, inspiring women facing modern challenges. Her story highlights the importance of resilience and patience in confronting social stigma and significant life changes. Venerated in both Islam and Christianity, she exemplifies the vital role of women in global societal development. Historically, women's roles in Islam have varied due to political, economic, and cultural contexts (Masykuroh et al., 2023). Beside that, Mary holds a highly significant place in the Qur'an. Her name appears 34 times, most often in connection with Jesus, who is consistently identified as 'Īsā ibn Maryam ("Jesus, son of Mary"). This designation emphasizes that Jesus had no earthly father and makes clear that, in the Qur'anic perspective, he is not the "Son of God" but rather the son of Mary (Haleem, 2020). These influences have facilitated women's engagement in the public domain, advocacy for policy, and competition with men in knowledge acquisition. Yet, the practical realisation of these transformations has not been uniformly experienced by women, especially regarding their intellectual and spiritual growth (A'yuniyah & Rizqoh, 2025). Recognizing women's roles in both faiths is essential, particularly through figures like Maryam binti Imran. This research aims to enhance women's empowerment within a religious framework in Indonesia.

The esteemed representation of Maryam within the two principal religious traditions of Islam and Christianity presents significant opportunities for constructive interfaith dialogue concerning women's issues. Maryam serves as a common ground that can underpin the strengthening of women's solidarity across diverse communities (Pamungkas et al., 2025). Through the symbols of purity, moral integrity, and sacrifice associated with her character, Maryam emerges as an archetypal figure that aligns with global agendas focused on women's education, mental health, protection against violence, and the pursuit of equal rights (Bajri, 2021).

In the tradition of exegetical interpretation, Maryam binti Imran is depicted as a symbol of purity, courage, and spiritual intelligence. Exegetes view her not just as a historical figure but as an ideal woman who inspires generations. Maryam is celebrated for her chastity and integrity, notably illustrated by her miraculous pregnancy without a marital union in Surah Maryam (Abdullah Hadani et al., 2024). Scholars like Imam Ibn Kaṭhīr and Imam al-Ṭabarī highlight her nurturing in the *Miḥrāb* and her intimate relationship with Allah, as she received divinely bestowed sustenance. Wahbah al-Zuhayli, in his *tafsīr Al-Munir*, uses the *Maqāṣidi* framework to highlight Maryam's status as a *ṣiddīqah* in QS. Al-Taḥrīm, affirming her significance in sacred texts. Both classical and contemporary interpretations establish her as a universal role model for facing life transitions and societal challenges.

Studies about Maryam in the Qur'an can be grouped into fifth main trends, *the first* emphasizing her psychological and intellectual personality (Yusuf et al., 2024; Safitri et al., 2025). *Second*, In Quranic narrative, Maryam (Mary) highlights her unwavering faith and perseverance during trials, serving as a model for resilience rooted in spirituality (Yusuf et al., 2025). *Third*, Maryam mentioned as Maryam's role as a prominent *Sufi* woman highlights her piety and spirituality (Firdarini & Afiyah, 2025). *Fourth*, Maryam as a moral agent and female role model, particularly from an exegetical perspective (Holifaturriskiyah & Kartiko, 2025; Amin, 2022). In

contrast, a majority of the existing literature tends to address the broader role of women in the Qur'an within both the domestic (Hidayat et al., 2025) and public spheres (Yanti & Nasrulloh, 2024). *Fijih*, the narrative story of Maryam in the Qur'an using hermeneutical analysis through Wilhelm Dilthey's socio historical and humanistic perspectives (Abdullah Hadani et al., 2024). Despite extensive scholarship on Maryam, there is a lack of intertextual research analyzing her representation in the Qur'an and the Gospel. Few studies explore her empowerment, often depicting her as passive and overlooking her qualities relevant to contemporary discussions on women's empowerment. This research aims to fill this gap by highlighting Maryam as a resilient and influential figure, emphasizing the interrelationship between the Qur'an and Gospel that positions her as a central model (Pamungkas et al., 2025).

This research explores how Maryam exemplifies spiritual, intellectual, and emotional empowerment for women in religious contexts, serving as a global inspiration. This inquiry highlights the challenges women face today, including moral degradation and identity crises (Maulana, 2025). Issues like the normalisation of shameful acts in the name of self-expression and the influence of popular culture often undermine women's empowerment. Maryam symbolises spiritual resilience and steadfast faith, providing valuable insights into contemporary challenges (Roikhatul Jannah & Erwanto, 2023). The findings suggest that overcoming identity crises requires a return to authentic spiritual values. Her life exemplifies a conception of identity that transcends societal expectations, emphasising the importance of enduring adversity and incorporating divine values into decision-making.

This article aims to delve deeper into the character of Maryam through an intertextual examination of the Qur'an and the Bible, with an emphasis on her portrayal as an empowered woman profoundly influencing her community's development. Central to this investigation are the following research questions: (1) How are empowerment and agency reflected in the depictions of Maryam within the Qur'an and the Catholic Bible? (2) In what ways does Maryam serve as a relevant role model for women seeking empowerment and grappling with their identities in contemporary society? (3) How do varying theological and cultural interpretations of Maryam shape societal perceptions of women's roles within both public and spiritual domains? These inquiries form the foundation of the ensuing discussion.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative and interpretative methodology to explore the representation of Maryam bint 'Imrān in both the Qur'an and the Gospel, framing this analysis through the lens of women's empowerment. Key texts examined include selected verses from the Qur'an, specifically Q.S. Āl 'Imrān [3]: 42, Q.S. Maryam [19]: 29, and Q.S. Al-Taḥrīm [66]: 12, alongside passages from the Gospel that recount the life of Mary. The selection of these texts is informed by their explicit narrative focus on Maryam and their thematic relevance to issues of spiritual authority, moral integrity, and resilience amidst sociocultural challenges.

This analysis is underpinned by an intertextual theoretical framework. In reframing the Gospel not merely as the 'original text' and the Qur'an as a derivative response, this study approaches both scriptures as texts engaging in dialogue within the broader Abrahamic tradition. Such a dialogical analysis elucidates the resonances and divergences in the representations of

Maryam in both traditions, fostering a more nuanced comprehension of her role and significance. The intertextual approach draws upon Julia Kristeva's foundational concept of text-as-mosaic, further informed by theorists such as Roland Barthes, and adapts it to the context of comparative scripture studies.

The study analyzes the portrayals of Maryam in the Qur'an and the Bible, focusing on characterization, voice, and theological significance. It uses insights from Qur'an, particularly *Al-Munir* by Wahbah al-Zuhayli, and examines the *Gospels of Luke and Matthew* to clarify her role in Isa's mission. This analysis fosters understanding of the theological frameworks in Christianity and promotes interfaith dialogue regarding Maryam's esteemed status. Ultimately, it presents her as an empowered figure, relevant to contemporary discussions on women's roles in society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three Key Aspects of Maryam Bint Imran as an Empowered Female Figure

Maryam occupies a significant position within two major religious traditions: Islam and Christianity. In both the Qur'an and the Gospel, she is portrayed as a revered and obedient figure, embodying miracles and spiritual authority (Pamungkas et al., 2025). Furthermore, Maryam can be viewed as a symbol of a woman empowered to make pivotal choices in her life, resist societal pressures, and exhibit unwavering faith when confronted with extraordinary challenges.

In a socio-religious context that often marginalises women, the figure of Maryam provides opportunities for new interpretations of women's roles in spirituality and society. Analysing her narrative in both the Qur'an and the Gospel reveals a consistent example of exemplary behaviour that can foster discussions on women's empowerment within various religious frameworks. Maryam's story offers theological, sociological, and feminist perspectives relevant to contemporary discourses. This discussion will explore interpretations from both classical and contemporary commentators (*mufassir*) using a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating insights from *Sufism* and gender studies to enhance understanding of her representation and significance.

Subsequently, we will explore the perspectives of exegetes (*mufassir*) from both classical and modern viewpoints, who interpret the figure of Maryam through a multidisciplinary lens that encompasses *Sufism* and gender studies. Notably, Wahbah al-Zuhayli, in his work *Tafsir al-Munir*, delineates Maryam as a dignified woman belonging to a noble lineage, as epitomised in Surah 'Imrān, particularly in verses 33-34:

ذُرِّيَّةً بَعْضُهَا مِنْ بَعْضٍ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ إِذْ قَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ عِمْرَانَ رَبِّ إِنِّي نَذَرْتُ لَكَ مَا فِي بَطْنِي مُحَرَّرًا فَتَقَبَّلْ مِنِّي إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

"They are descendants of one another. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. (Remember) When the wife of Imran said, "My Lord! I dedicate what is in my womb entirely to your service, so accept it from me. You (alone) are truly the All-Hearing, All-Knowing."

Al-Zuhayli highlights the honor of 'Imrān's family through their prophetic lineage and faith, while Imam al-Ṭabarī emphasizes their distinction from intentions, actions, sincerity, and devotion to Allah (al-Tabari, 2001). In tracing the genealogy of the family of 'Imrān, it is noted that Maryam is considered a descendant of Prophet David. Ibn Kathīr outlines the commonly recognised

lineage, stating that Maryam is identified as Maryam bint 'Imrān bin Yasim bin Misha bin Hizkiya bin Yawish bin Isha bin Yahusyafat bin Sulayman bin David (Katsir, 1431). While her mother's name is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, it is acknowledged within Islamic tradition that her mother was Hannah bint Faquz (Wahbah al-Zuhaili, 1991).

Furthermore, it is significant that Maryam's name has been immortalised within the Qur'an, a testament to her esteemed spiritual excellence, a notion firmly supported by Allah's declaration in Surah Āli 'Imrān verse 42:

وَإِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَلَأِئِكَةُ يُمَرِّمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ اصْطَفَاكِ وَطَهَّرَكِ وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ

“And ‘remember’ when the angels said, “O Mary!” Surely Allah has selected you, purified you, and chosen you over all women of the world.”

In examining the interpretation of the verse (QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]:42), al-Zuhaylī presents a nuanced understanding of the angels' communication with Maryam, specifically identifying Jibril as the celestial messenger. The term يُمَرِّمُ is posited to mean *al-'Abidah*, signifying a woman of devotion, aligning with the hope that Maryam would embody the virtues inherent in her name. The phrase (اصْطَفَاكِ) denotes a divine selection, while وَطَهَّرَكِ speaks to her purification from menstruation, post-natal bleeding, and the influences of men, as well as from base morals. The subsequent assertion (وَاصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ), acknowledges her elevation above the women of her time.

Al-Zuhaylī's exploration of the concept of *Al-istifā'* (selection) elucidates two dimensions of Maryam's selection. The first dimension highlights her acceptance as a woman dedicated to worship and service within *Bayt al-Maqdis*, an honour commonly reserved for men. The second dimension underscores her unique role as the mother of a prophet, Isa (a.s.), conceived without sexual intercourse, thereby affirming her preparedness for this exceptional mandate. This interpretation also serves as a testament to her innocence against the accusations made by the Jews (Wahbah al-Zuhaili, 1991).

Al-Zuhaylī posits that the verse (QS. Āli 'Imrān [3]:42) indicates that the angels informed Maryam (peace be upon her) of her divine selection as a chosen woman due to her unwavering devotion, asceticism, and noble character. Her purity is defined by the absence of doubts and undesirable traits. Allah SWT's choice of Maryam also highlights her being untouched by typical feminine aspects, such as menstruation and childbirth through conventional means, granting her a position of honour above other women. This is similarly seen in Sayyidah Fatima az Zahra, who did not experience menstruation, earning her the title “*az-Zahrā*” (Wahbah al-Zuhaili, 1991). This interpretation is supported by Imam Ibn Kathīr, who emphasized Maryam's selection based on her charity and purity (Katsir, 1431a).

In addition, Imam al-Qurṭubi reinforces al-Zuhaylī's interpretation, emphasising two meanings of *al-istifā'* in the same verse: the first as Maryam's selection for worship and the second as her appointment as the mother of Isa (a.s.). In his analysis of the term (وَطَهَّرَكِ), al-Qurṭubi presents two viewpoints: one from Mujāhid and Ḥasan, interpreting it as purification from disbelief, and another from az-Zujāj, aligning with al-Zuhaylī's perspective on her purification

from maternal impurities (Wahbah al-Zuhaili, 1991). Furthermore, al-Qurṭubi elucidates the phrase (وَأَصْطَفَاكِ عَلَى نِسَاءِ الْعَالَمِينَ) through two interpretations: the first refers to the contemporary women of Maryam (*Nisā' al-'Ālamin*). The second interpretation extends her honour to include women from all eras, highlighting her esteemed position as one of the most revered women in human history, recognised for her piety and deep connection to Allah. The subsequent discussions reflect al-Qurṭubi's insights presented in his Tafsir (al-Qurṭubi, 1384).

كَمْ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ كَثِيرٌ وَلَمْ يَكْمُلْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ غَيْرُ مَرْيَمَ بِنْتِ عِمْرَانَ وَآسِيَةَ امْرَأَةِ فِرْعَوْنَ وَإِنَّ فِضْلَ عَائِشَةَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ كَفِضْلِ الثَّرِيدِ عَلَى سَائِرِ الطَّعَامِ

“Many men are perfect (to the extent of becoming prophets or saints), but not many women are perfect (except for a few), among them Maryam bint Imrān and Asiah, the wife of Pharaoh. And indeed, the excellence of Aishah (the Prophet's wife) is like the excellence of tsarid (meat bread) over other foods.” (HR. Muslim)(Muslim, 1915).

In Tafsir Al-Mishbah, Quraish Shihab discusses the empowerment of Maryam (Mary) as presented in the Qur'an, focusing on her significance beyond QS. Āli 'Imrān (3:42). QS. Maryam (19:25) highlights her resilience and diligent nature, establishing her as a paragon of purity and faith among the prophets (Shihab, 2001).

This is in accordance with the words of Allah Swt. in Surah Maryam [19] verse 25:

وَهَزِيءَ إِلَيْكَ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسْقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رَطْبًا جَنِيًّا

“Shake the trunk of that date palm towards you, and it will surely drop ripe dates for you.”

In this verse, there is a divine miracle in which, despite being physically weak after giving birth, Maryam was commanded by Allah to shake the date palm tree as a source of food: ‘Shake the trunk of the palm tree towards you, and it will drop ripe dates upon you.’ (Mubarak, 2021). He highlights her effort as a metaphor for human initiative, encouraging individuals to strive for their needs instead of being passive, which aligns with Hamka's views in Tafsir Al Azhar on the importance of effort, as exemplified by Maryam (Amrullah, 1967).

Furthermore, another dimension of Maryam's empowerment is her adept communication skills, which reveal her courage and resolve within the social context. In QS. Maryam (19:29), Maryam responds to the accusations against her through gestures, illustrating an alternative mode of communication, particularly as she was fasting at that time, a gesture of devotion and protection from Allah. This aspect of her character reflects not only her strength but also the significant role of non-verbal communication in conveying messages in challenging circumstances:

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا

“She (Maryam) pointed to her (baby) (so that they would ask her). They said, ‘How can we speak to a child who is still in the cradle?’”

According to al-Zuhaylī, the term فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ (*ishbarah*) in the verse signifies a “sign” that Maryam employed to communicate with her people regarding Isa, whom she held in her arms. This act of gesturing became a crucial medium of communication between Maryam and her community, particularly in response to their observations of her situation. At that moment, Isa

served as a testament to Allah's power; he was born to fulfil the divine mandate of obedience and to deliver the prophetic message (Wahbah al-Zuhaili, 1991). His proclamation also functioned to counter the allegations levied against Maryam, thereby shielding her from the ignorance of those around her.

Furthermore, al-Zuhaylī posits that gestures possess a similar communicative function as words, often facilitating understanding more effectively. In numerous discussions within the realm of fiqh, gestures can be perceived as more compelling than verbal expression (Wahbah al-Zuhaili, 1991). This perspective is echoed by the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), who, as reported by Ahmad, Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi through the narration of Anas, emphasised the significance of non-verbal communication.

بعثت أنا والساعة كهاتين.

"The distance between my being sent and the Day of Judgement is like the distance between these two fingers." (HR Bukhari, Muslim and Tirmidhi)

In the discourse surrounding the Hadith, both classical and contemporary scholars of tafsir have engaged in rigorous debate regarding the validity of sign language as a means of communication. Zuhayli references various fiqh scholars who argue that direct observation of an event is more authoritative than relying on hearsay. This argument serves as a basis for positing that, in certain contexts, sign language may be regarded as more effective than spoken language. Consequently, the Maliki and Shafi'i scholars have concluded that the testimony of a mute individual is acceptable if their gestures can be comprehended, which serves as a substitute for verbal testimony; however, if the individual possesses the ability to speak, verbal communication is deemed necessary (Wahbah al-Zuhaili, 1991).

Imam al-Qurṭubī and Imam Ibn Kathīr concur with the interpretation that Maryam used gestures to communicate her circumstances with her community. When confronted and criticised, Maryam, observing her fast, gestured towards Isa. Maimun bin Mehran noted this gesture led her people to conclude, "Due to his cleverness, he has instructed us to speak to Isa," who was still in the cradle (Katsir, 1431). Imam Al-Ṭabarī in *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'an* views this as Maryam's submission to Allah's will, marking the miraculous speaking ability of Prophet Isa and affirming his prophethood from infancy (al-Tabari, 2001). Overall, exegetes agree that Maryam's use of sign language did not limit her communicative abilities; she effectively employed it to convey the truth of her circumstances in a challenging situation.

Maryam is widely regarded as an exemplar of morality and integrity, qualities that have garnered acknowledgement from various exegetes. These scholars describe her as an individual of both worldly and spiritual nobility, indicating a profound depth of character that transcends mere physical attributes. Her embodiment of moral virtue is evident in both her actions and her spiritual demeanour. This is further underscored by the assertion found in Surah Al-Taḥrīm, verse 12, which highlights her esteemed standing:

وَمَرْيَمَ ابْنَتَ عِمْرَانَ الَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِنَا وَصَدَّقَتْ بِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّهَا وَكُتِبَ عَلَيْهَا مِنَ الْقُنُوتِ

“(There is) also (the example of) Mary, the daughter of Imrān, who guarded her chastity, so We breathed into her (womb) through Our anger (Gabriel). She testified to the words of her Lord and His Scriptures, and was one of the (sincerely) devout.”

In the analysis provided by Al-Zuhayli, the phrase *الَّتِي أَحْصَتْ فَرْجَهَا* highlights the exemplary status of Maryam bint Imrān as a paragon of faith and virtue. Al-Zuhayli posits that she embodies a dual honour: that of the earthly realm and the afterlife. Furthermore, she is recognised as the preeminent woman of her era, chosen by Allah among all others. Despite residing in a society characterised by rebellion, Maryam exemplified chastity and purity, steadfastly guarding her modesty against immoral influences.

Imam al-Qurṭubī discusses verse QS. Al-Taḥrīm [66]: 12, where Maryam is presented as a notable figure alongside Asiyah, the wife of Pharaoh, reinforcing a lineage of virtuous women. He emphasises that Maryam’s patience in the face of harassment from her contemporaries, particularly the Jews, reflects her commitment to dignity. Her efforts to uphold her honour against acts that could compromise her integrity demonstrate her steadfastness in the pursuit of virtue. This perspective is echoed by both Imam al-Qurṭubī and Imam Ibn Kathīr, who agree on Maryam’s significance in this verse (Katsir, 1431). In the same words, Imam al-Ṭabarī offers a notable perspective on the description of Maryam in the relevant verse, positing that the term “*farj*” encompasses more than the physical female reproductive organ. He interprets it as embodying a broader linguistic significance, indicating any gap or hole, akin to expressions on openings in walls or roofs (al-Tabari, 2001).

The interpretations of classical exegetes regarding Maryam bint Imran in QS. Al-Taḥrīm [66]: 12, QS. Āli ‘Imrān [3]: 42, and QS. Maryam [19]: 25, 29 portrays her as a symbol of piety, purity, and courage. Imam al-Qurṭubī emphasises her resilience in facing societal challenges, while Ibn Kathīr highlights her self-preservation. Al-Tabari notes the dual meaning of “*farj*” as both a reproductive organ and a space to safeguard. Wahbah Al-Zuhayli and Quraish Shihab further advocate for her as a model of self-reliance and empowerment for women.

Maryam’s Role As An Empowered Woman In The Gospel Narrative

The Qur’an and Gospel narratives consistently underscore the extraordinary faith of Maryam (Mary), particularly in her response to the angelic announcement regarding her forthcoming pregnancy (Luke 1:26-31). Upon receiving this miraculous news, Mary articulated her bewilderment with the query, “*How can this be, since I am a virgin?*” (Luke 1:34). This hesitation can be attributed to her vow of celibacy and her commitment to devout worship within the Temple. Mary consciously chose to protect her virginity, perceiving it as a vital component of her devotion to God (Hamidah & Md Yunus, 2022). When approached with a marriage proposal from a man of high standing, she resolutely declined, asserting, “*Since childhood, I have dedicated myself to the Temple of God, believing that my virginity is sufficient to obtain God’s love. Therefore, since I can only offer what pleases God, I have decided in my heart never to know a man.*”

The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew corroborates Mary’s devotion in worship, paralleling her narrative with that found in QS. Āli Imrān [3:43] (Prabowo, 2023). Due to her steadfast commitment and perseverance in obedience, those surrounding her recognised Mary as a holy

woman devoted to religious practice, ultimately leading to her selection for the profound honour of conceiving through the Holy Spirit. Her revered status as both a holy woman and the mother of the Holy Spirit continues to be celebrated within Christian traditions (Prabowo, 2023).

Mary's determination and consistency exemplify self-empowerment through commitment to spiritual and personal goals. Her unwavering faith in God enabled her to achieve a distinguished position, remaining unaffected by worldly temptations. This highlights that true female empowerment is linked to spiritual commitment, moral integrity, and higher objectives. Contemporary challenges can lead women to measure success by societal trends and public approval, obscuring the essence of empowerment (Salsabila & Listyani, 2023). This indicates a shift from self-actualization and sustainable benefits. The perseverance and spiritual focus embodied by Mary provide a framework for women facing modern challenges. Empowerment must transcend material achievements and seek a deeper purpose, aiming for dignity and a meaningful mission that serves both God and society.

Furthermore, the Qur'anic narrative presents Maryam (Mary) as a figure who not only defends herself but also conveys divine knowledge through the pronouncements of the Prophet Isa (a.s.). In contrast, the Gospel narrative portrays Mary as engaging in a defence of her morality and integrity before a Jewish judge amid suspicions and controversies regarding her pregnancy. At that time, Maryam was betrothed to a young man named Yusuf (Joseph). According to the Gospel of Luke, "*The birth of Jesus Christ took place as follows: When Maryam, his mother, was engaged to Yusuf, she conceived by the Holy Spirit before they became husband and wife. And Joseph, her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to disgrace his wife publicly, intended to divorce her quietly*" (Luke 2:18-19).

In an extensive examination of Mary's role within the biblical narrative, the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, which explores the origins of Mary and Jesus, depicts a scenario in which Mary defends herself before a Jewish judge during her trial with Joseph. She exclaims, "*By the living God, the God of men before whom I stand, I have never known a man; but I am known by Him to whom I have surrendered myself since childhood. And this oath I took to my Lord since childhood, that I would remain pure from the touch of men for Him who created me, and that I would live only for Him, surrendering myself completely to Him; and as long as I live, I will keep myself pure.*"

To conclude, these narrative not only reveals Mary's spiritual fortitude but also highlights her resolute commitment to maintaining her moral integrity. Her intellectual acumen is evident in her capacity to articulate a compelling defence, while her actions epitomise moral courage and steadfastness in upholding her principles. Mary emerges as a symbol of female empowerment, embodying independence, unwavering dedication to personal integrity and ethical standards.

The Quran and the Bible: A Comparative Analysis of the Role of Mary in Prophetic Tradition

In the scholarly discourse surrounding the interpretation of Qur'anic verses, a portion of Islamic scholars posits that Maryam (مَرْيَمُ) should be regarded as a prophetess. This perspective draws parallels with Catholic tradition, where Mary is also viewed as a prophet, albeit with a distinct interpretation of the term 'prophet.' In Catholicism, a prophet is understood as an individual who proclaims future events and disseminates divine truths. This understanding is corroborated by John 2:5 in the Christian tradition, which records Mary instructing the servants to heed Jesus' words: "*Do whatever He tells you.*" The characterisation of Mary as a prophetess is further reinforced

by the account in Luke 1:27-38, which details her interaction with the Angel Gabriel during the Annunciation, wherein she learns of Jesus' forthcoming birth (Prabowo, 2023).

A minority of Islamic scholars assert that Maryam is regarded as a prophetess. In Islamic theology, she is recognized by this name, which appears in the Qur'an, including Surah Maryam, emphasizing her purity and piety as the mother of the Prophet 'Isa (Jesus). In Christianity, she is called Mary, derived from the Latin Maria and Hebrew Miryam. Each tradition assigns her name distinct theological significance: Christianity highlights her as the Mother of God (Theotokos), while Islam focuses on her as a pious figure without divinity (Putri, 2022). Additionally, Maryam is compared to prominent female figures like Eve and Asiyah, suggesting the Qur'anic text does not confine prophethood to males. The verse stating, "We did not send any messenger before you (Mubammad) except as a male to whom We revealed" (Al-Anbiya 21:7) is interpreted in a broader sense, arguing that anyone receiving divine revelation could be classified as a prophet (Prabowo, 2023).

While fiqh scholars generally agree that Maryam was not a prophet, this conclusion appears to have developed after initial debates. One argument is based on the term *shiddiqatun* in QS. Al-Maidah 5:75, meaning 'a very pious woman,' suggesting that a higher title would have been used if she were considered a prophet. Additionally, there are no explicit references in the Qur'an or hadith identifying any female figure as a prophet (Prabowo, 2023). However, this viewpoint has faced dissent, with many scholars arguing that Maryam's spiritual, intellectual, and moral strength empowers her narrative. An in-depth examination of varied interpretations of the Qur'an alongside Gospel accounts offers insights into Maryam's story, particularly regarding empowerment, which enhances the discourse on women's roles in contemporary Islamic thought.

To provide a clearer analysis of the spiritual consistency, moral courage, and personal integrity of Maryam binti Imran as depicted in both the Qur'anic and Gospel narratives, the following table outlines the key similarities and differences between these sacred texts. This structured presentation facilitates a more insightful examination of how Maryam is portrayed as an empowered female archetype. By employing this comparative approach, the values of empowerment inherent in Maryam's story offer a meaningful reflection for women facing contemporary social and spiritual challenges.

Table 1. Analysis of comparative interpretation both Quranic and Bible's narrative

Empowerment Aspect of Maryam binti Imran	Qur'anic Narrative	Gospel/Biblical Narrative
Response to the Annunciation	QS. Ali Imrān: Acceptance through faith and total submission (tashdiq).	Luke 1:34: Maryam questions her own agency, asking, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?"
Spiritual Commitment	Depicted as a purified woman, chosen by Allah, who meticulously guards her chastity.	Tradition of rejecting proposals to maintain her virginity and dedicating her life to the Temple.

Self-Defense	QS. Maryam: Employs non-verbal cues by pointing to Jesus (Isa) to let him speak for her.	Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew: Maryam swears her purity before the Jewish judges to maintain her honor.
Form of Empowerment	Steadfastness of faith, strategic communication, and courage in facing social scrutiny.	Bravery in resisting social pressure and consistency in maintaining moral integrity.

The comparison Table 1 above highlights that Maryam is not only a significant spiritual figure in two monotheistic traditions but also embodies moral courage and a resilient female identity. The similarities and differences between the Qur'anic and Gospel narratives illustrate how religious texts can facilitate reflection on gender and spirituality. Consequently, this analysis provides a foundation for the upcoming discussion on the relevance of Maryam's figure in today's socio-religious context. Fayumi (2024) mentioned that Maryam's unwavering commitment to ethical principles reflects qualities that can facilitate women's empowerment, symbolises an empowered woman who, while confronting societal disparagement, remains devoted to her faith and principles. Historical accounts of her remarkable pregnancy, divinely ordained without marital union, reveal the complex societal responses she encountered.

CONCLUSION

An intertextual analysis of Maryam bint Imrān in the Qur'an and the Gospel reveals her as a powerful woman of integrity and spiritual authority. Islamic exegesis, especially Wahbah al-Zuhayli's *tafsir al-Munir*, portrays her as divinely chosen, pure, and communicative under societal pressure, demonstrating steadfast faith and moral strength. Similarly, the Gospel presents Mary as a figure of divine will and high moral standards who engages actively in Isa's prophetic mission. This study underscores Maryam as a symbol of women's empowerment, transcending her historical context to resonate across diverse cultures and eras.

The representation of Maryam in these texts encourages reflections on women's roles in both public and spiritual spheres. She exemplifies an ideal model for contemporary women's empowerment initiatives, addressing social challenges like identity crises and moral decay. This study highlights Maryam's active role, challenging her portrayal as a passive symbol of purity. The findings underscore her universal significance in enhancing women's societal roles and foster constructive interfaith dialogue.

DECLARATION OF USING AI

During the preparation of this research, the authors employed (Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT) to help improve the text's clarity, structure and also readability. After utilizing this tool, the authors extensively read, modified, and also checked the entire of this content of the research to ensure that the research accurately reflected their own views and interpretations. In that so, the authors take full responsibility for the integrity and originality of the published work.

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