

**“PAPERS OF EXPERTS ON MUSLIM
WOMEN AND THEIR
CONTRIBUTION IN SOCIETY”**

by

**Department of Sociology
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi**

Sponsored by

National Commission for Women, New Delhi

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FOREWORD

National Commission for Women (NCW) is a statutory body constituted in 1992 by the National Commission for Women Act 1990 with the objective of protecting and promoting the interests of women. The Commission is mandated to review the constitutional and legal safeguards for women and recommend remedial legislative measures and facilitate the redressal of grievances which are meant for all the women cutting across the barriers of class, caste, creed and religion including the Muslim women.

The National Commission for Women is committed to empowerment of all women in the country including Muslim women. The present booklet has papers presented during two days, National Seminar held at Jamia Millia Islamia in collaboration with the National Commission for Women. It consists of papers which highlight the contribution of women in the historical and social context, and enumerate their talents which overcame the constraints of their environment. The objective of the Seminar was to highlight the veiled contribution of Muslim women in Indian society.

Some papers presented during the Seminar also highlight how social forces have shaped the contents of their contributions and to what extent their religious identity has been a significant factor in their lives and work. The report will provide a better understanding to the readers to know more about Muslim women's contribution in Indian society and their issues and constraints.

This booklet is an attempt to consolidate the views of women and the experts working in the field of the rights of Muslim women. I hope it will be useful for researchers, students and policy makers to gain insights and perspective into various ways in which Muslim women have contributed, and the vast untapped potential of these women that can be unlocked by efficacious empowerment schemes and programmes.

(Ms. Lalitha Kumaramangalam)
Chairperson
National Commission for Women

PREFACE

The discussion of Muslim Women and their roles is an important one for everyone, firstly because it is an area in which there are many misconceptions by Non-Muslims which need to be corrected and secondly because some Muslims treat women unjustly in the name of Islam when in actual facts their actions are often a result of cultural or tribal customs and not Islam.

Indian Muslim Women have distinguished themselves in various spheres of life as politicians, orators, lawyers, doctors, administrators and diplomats. There is hardly any sphere of life in which Indian Muslim Women have not taken part and shown their worth. They have been able to establish several successful models in the area of social development also.

The nurturing role of women in Indian Muslim Society is critical; they are the conscious of the society, to pinpoint what plagues the community and help in providing effective solutions. This role should be encouraged and cultivated to help cleanse the society of its corruption and drive it towards peace and purity.

I am happy to mention that the papers published are an outcome of a Two-day National Seminar on “Muslim Women and their contribution in the Indian Society”, sponsored by National Commission for women. The contributions are richly diverse ranging from Politics, Medicine, Trade and Commerce, Writers, Cinema, Islamic Culture, Print and Electronic Media, Islamic Theology, Personal Law, Art and Literature, Education, Agriculture and Urdu Literature. These papers will give a thoughtful insight as to how Muslim Women have negotiated with and resisted against patriarchal understanding of Women’s right and empowerment of Muslim Women in Contemporary Society.

(Ms. Shamina Shafiq)
Ex-Member, National Commission for Women

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

National Commission for Women in collaboration with Jamia Millia Islamia had organised two day seminar “Muslim Women and their Contribution in Society “on the occasion of International Women’s Day on 8th and 9th March, 2011.

The underlying objective of the Seminar was to initiate, discuss and deliberate on the issue of Muslim women and their identity in the contemporary society. The Seminar provided a platform for the scholars, policy makers, academicians, clerics, experts, leaders to express their views through their researches on the contributions of Muslim women.

The discussions through various sessions focused on the Muslim women’s contribution in the field of theology, religion, literature, politics, sociology, culture, trade and business. The papers presented during the Seminar endeavored to highlight contribution of Muslim women in various fields as a testimony and acknowledged the success stories of Muslim women and their participation in the welfare of human race, through their talent and expertise, despite of resistance they faced and are still facing.

The Commission approved to print various papers presented during the Seminar in order to chronicle and create a reference booklet on contribution of Muslim Women to generate quality material for public usage and information.

I acknowledge the contribution of scholars, experts who have contributed their research and papers for publication especially Dr. Azra Abidi, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia for collaborating with NCW to convene the Seminar, compiling the papers and pursuing the publication of the same.

I also express my gratitude towards Chairperson and Ex-Member Smt. Shamina Shafiq for their valuable guidance and support for printing the booklet.

(Smt. Sunita H. Khurana)
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Muslim women and their Third Space: Politics of Agency, Resistance and Empowerment in Islamic Culture

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Abstract: It is generally argued that women hardly have a chance to exercise their agency within this patriarchal set up. The politics of being Muslim place women in a dilemma. While demanding for educational rights, employment opportunities and other rights, Muslim women have to enter a political space which is determined by their Muslim identity. Within this space they are not only confronted by the regulatory discourses of Islam, self-legislating community but also conservatism, ingrained backwardness of the community. This kind of discourse tends to overlook the subversive ways through which women try to create their own definitions of power and autonomy. So apart from accepting a reductionist construction of Muslim women's passivity, it is also important to search for an alternative space which will be considered as a locus of contestation for Muslim women's subjectivity, experience as well as identity. This paper tries to highlight how Muslim women's activism in this alternative space enables them to fight for their rights and justice. At the same time the paper will also discuss the dynamics of culture, agency and the creation of a space of their own in modern times.

KeyWords: Muslim Women, Agency, Third Space, Identity and Resistance

Introduction-

Women's acts of resistance, self-affirmation as social actors in their different historical, political as well as cultural contexts are already in themselves subversive because they can circumvent and deny the various, distinct and multi-layered verses in which their subjugation is inscribed and replace them with their own verses. Although when it comes to deal with women's agency in society, there has been a tendency to locate and define "women" in the South Asia in terms of the underdevelopment, high illiteracy, oppressive traditional structures, patriarchal institutions and community victimization. Such stereotyping of women has been dominated by their supposed passivity in the face of victimhood. These analyses freeze women in time, space and history. In every culture and society, women are part of historically constituted relationship of domination and subordination. But in spite of subjugation at different levels in society, women's resistance to this shows that they are not fully subdued by their situations. Women in various ways can provide a critique of their subordination and resist control over them.

So women have the capacity for agency which can be understood as conscious goal-driven activities by women that embrace the possibility of change but the important question is, what sorts of agents women can be despite their subordination in this patriarchal society.

So in spite of being an integral part of normative order, women are capable to create their own third space within the culture which enables them to articulate their voices and subject positions which are more complex and ambivalent than their stereotype representations. In words of Homi Bhaba, third space which enables other positions to emerge and set up new structures of authority, new political initiatives which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. It is a space which presents a permanent threat to the fixity of meaning and to the binary structures of power and knowledge in culture.

The dominant discourse on Muslim women tends to equate their status with the backwardness of the community. No doubt, personal laws, purdah, triple talaq form the part of the discourse. So Muslim women's attempt to fight for their rights and justice shows that they are not symbol of the backwardness of the community as a whole, and practices such as purdah but they can also voice their own concerns, feelings and emotions from within the site and form spaces for themselves. Muslim women's resistance to their subjugation and patriarchal structures provides an alternative meaning of power developed by women from within the community.

So this paper will try to address questions like 1) how have these women negotiated with and resisted against patriarchal understanding of women's rights and empowerment of Muslim women in contemporary society? 2) How has their activism created a space for their identity and power? 3) How have these women dealt with the resistance of patriarchy while posing a challenge to the existing order? Which factor, whether social cultural contexts or religious identity and other factors act as a major constraint in the way of their mobilization for their rights and gender justice? 4) Is this third space enough for Muslim women's empowerment?

Culture and Construction of Women's agency in Islam-

In all cultures, communities are very important for individuals because it extend a sense of belonging, history, rootedness and identity. Communities provide us with normative and conceptual resources which help to attach meanings to our lives. So every individual self is located in a cultural community which defines the ends of socially constituted subject. In words of Kymlicka, cultural membership is 'crucial for personal agency and development' (Kymlicka,1991:176). Cultural practices and community identity not only shape the life and experiences of individuals but also provides them

with moral particularity. But what needs to be questioned is the assumption that community membership equally benefits women to develop their faculties, assert rights and identity. It is quite visible that women are still treated unequally in almost all cultures although there is variation in their experiences based on several factors. So as one of factors, their location in community cannot be ignored and delinked from their struggle for rights, equality and justice as it provides special dimension to their struggle. But it is worth mentioning that a space is also there which emerges from the dynamic construction of culture. It is also known as 'third space' (Bhabha: 1994) which can be considered as a site of contestation, negotiation and empowerment. It enables women to assert their identity as well as agency.

The dominant discourse on Muslim women is influenced by the essentialist construction of Muslim women as a "passive victim", "oppressed", "backward" and "victims of the double tyranny" of their religion and the South Asian form of patriarchy and this influence is indomitable in representing them as both scanty and negative in contemporary India (Sarkar: 2008). As Zoya Hasan and Ritu Menon have pointed out most studies on Muslim women are still caught up in misconceptions that usually present Muslim women as invisible. Two sets of misconceptions tend to plague discussions of Muslim women: the tendency to see them as monolithic category and overwhelming importance attached to Islam, especially to the Muslim personal law in defining the status of Muslim women. Muslim women either are considered to be the wards of the community or citizens equal before the law. So it is difficult to recognize the discrimination, disempowerment and disadvantage which are experienced at particular intersections of class, caste, gender and community (Hasan: Menon: 2005). The question of Muslim women is also generally addressed from the "dangerous triangle", there are, triple talaq, question of polygamy and the veil (Ataulla: 2006). Muslim women had already been established discursively as backward and hence deemed incapable of liberal and progressive thinking. Such stereotypes are furthered reinforced by the lack of systematic scholarship and information on the unequal access to resources and opportunities experienced by the different groups of women in India today. That is why any discussions on Muslim Women should be based on the critique of cultural essentialism as well as reductionism and the formulation of historically and socially grounded concerns and strategies (Sarkar: 2008). Historians like Gail Minault (1998), Barbara Metcalf (1990) have shown that Muslim men and women have constantly fought for new or re-definitions of existing women's rights since the second half of the 19th century. So it is important to highlight the creation of the various kinds of spaces in which Muslim women are able to participate in the public sphere. And these new public spaces have developed a reassessed gender relation which is central to the evolving position of Indian Muslim women from the end of the nineteenth century As Gurpreet Mahajan argues, 'culture can however be viewed as an arena of contested meanings

and practices only by treating tradition as a socially and historically constructed objects' (Mahajan: 2002). But in reality norms, traditions given by community are beyond interrogation or contestation especially when it continues to disadvantage women. When existing cultural practices are represented as community's way of life and positive, the space for contesting those cultural practices within the community has steadily eroded and it has also affected women's agency in society.

There are several reasons for this. It is true that religion is a salient feature in people's self-definition and it does influence the contours of women's lives and the scope of their self-assertion. Islam no doubt is an integral part to define them in society. Apart from this, it is also important to mention that the cultural articulation of patriarchy is mostly expressed and justified by the reference to Islam. The patriarchal structures and processes present women's rights as contradictory to Islam. It also shows the anti-women bias in male creation and interpretation of Islamic texts throughout history. The social and cultural segregation of women, contradictory and conflicting legal codes, and the monopoly held by a select group of male theologians on the interpretation of religious texts result in oppression of women and in suppression of their rights. Interpretations of women's rights in the Sharia are also influenced by cultural understandings about women's limited capabilities and the centrality of women's role in the family (Engineer: 1995). It definitely impacts Muslim women's capability to exercise their agency.

So culture and religion has integral relationship with women's agency. If culture is defined in terms of attitudes, ideologies and belief systems then in many cases culture can be perceived as means of dominance at the disposal of the powerful (Poitevin: 2000). It can easily be used to subjugate women. Asghar Ali Engineer commented whatever Quran has given to women, has been taken away by the male dominated society because interpretations of religious texts on women are never free from the influence of patriarchal values and norms (Engineer : 1999).

It has been maintained by the orthodox Ulemas as well as conservative Muslims that woman's role is strictly confined to home. Her primary duty is to look after her family, husband and children. She is not allowed to go outside her home except the permission of her father or husband and she has to be accompanied by a close male relative. But these are not Quranic requirements. The Qur'an neither prevents women from going out of their houses nor does it mention that they should be accompanied by a close male relative when venturing out of their houses. At best this prescription could have been enforced out of fear at some point of time to protect women from molestation (Engineer: 1999).Not only that, such restrictions imposed on women in view of certain situation were not relaxed but they became more stringent with the passage of time.

But in early Islam, the status of Muslim women was very different. In the time of the Prophet women participated freely in the affairs of war, which is strictly a male-dominated field. It is also argued that veiling was not introduced by the Prophet of Islam.

It was essentially a non-Arab practice prevalent in those areas dominated by Roman and Persian empires. In reality the Holy Quran gave all the rights to women but the way the Quran was interpreted by the religious leaders mullahs, ulemas, it has taken all the rights from them. So Islam is not one and only responsible factor for the subordination of Muslim women in society, rather constitution and reconstitution of patriarchy and cultural articulation of this at several levels of family, community as well as the state projects a negative image of Muslim women as passive victims in society (Engineer:1995).

So there has been a need to reinterpret this in light of the humane and egalitarian spirit of Islam as distinct from its rendition by its male guardians. And in this case Muslim women's activism to reinterpret the religious texts and assertion for their rights in the light of Islam throws light not only on the issue of agency but on the fact that existing space within the culture can be utilized by women for the sake of their empowerment.

Muslim Women and Third Space: Politics of Culture, Agency and Identity

For women, who are considered to be the protector of culture, the issue of identity is crucial. Women's agency as well as empowerment both challenges and are challenged by cultural and political issues of identities. And when women seek to expand their space by rejecting and redefine the roles previously designed for them, they in fact challenged more than the contours of their lives. In the same way where Muslim Women try to create their own third space and redefine their roles in society, it automatically challenges the patriarchal version of Muslim Women's ideal role in society. The expression "third space" (Bhabha: 1994) is used here because most of the Muslim women in India are caught into two poles and attempting to negotiate the inherent ambiguities and contradiction implicated within these poles. In India, at the one hand Muslim Women are equal citizens entitled to all the political, social and economic rights, on the other they are also member of the minority community which assigns extra duties and responsibilities on Muslim Women to protect their authentic culture and identity. In this process the state not only maintains a principled distance from the minority community but also impose a notion of homogenous minority culture and community. And in many cases a clash has been generated between individual and community rights and culture. Third space can emerge out of these constructions of self and community identity. This space not only enables Muslim Women to challenge the Islamic Patriarchal structures and stereotype constructions of "proper" and "virtuous"

Muslim Women but also deal with pressure of an “authentic” Islam and “original” culture(Khan: 2002). It is also the space for their collusion (to some extent) with the religion. So third space is the site for resistance, negotiation as well as empowerment and it empowers women members the in minority community to negotiate with their identity as “Muslim Women”.

The emerging activism of women in this space also questions the notion that “Muslim Women” are passive and always oppressed by their religion and community. Rather it shows that Muslim Women can be active agent, autonomous, critical as well as feminist in the third space. So the notion of the space emerges as an alternative discourse where women script the notions of the original, pure and stereotypical. They contest, resist as well as collude through individual as well as organizational strategies in the process of cultural, political and economic empowerment(Saliba: Allen: Howard:2002).

Muslim women as Agents in colonial Bengal-

Nineteenth century colonial Bengal witnessed the “emergence” of “new Muslim woman” who enjoyed the privilege of voice and visibility, no doubt limited. The writings of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain show that Muslim women can provide a critique of their cultural practices and raise their voice against the discriminatory cultural and social norms of society. So it represents women as actors as well as subjects with the will, rationality and meaning to remake the world (Kumar: 1998:9). Begum Rokeya was pioneer of female emancipation and her writings not only expressed the evils of segregation, illiteracy, religious fanaticism and above all the domination of men over women. She, one of her published articles in *Nabanur* wrote:

“In order to keep us in darkness men have acclaimed the scriptures as the commandments of God..... Had God sent any emissary to rule the women, it is unlikely that they would have confined themselves only to Asia. Is he God of Asia alone?....Whatever it might be, we should no longer tolerate with heads bent, the unnecessary overlordism of the male” (Hossain: 2008: 152).

Begum Rokeya in her book *Motichur* said that the cause of present plight of women in Islam was due to the distortion of meanings of scriptural texts. She said that Islam was not responsible for women’s oppression in society; rather the distortion of the religion was responsible for women’s plight. In one of her articles “God gives, Man Robs” she argued that in order to keep women darkness, men have always used the religions scriptures. God cannot be unequal to women. She identified two factors responsible for women’s degradation in society: a) selfishness of men and b) mental slavery of women. Rokeya in a journal named *Nabanur*, protested against the overlordism of the male. She also raised her voice for the emancipation of Bengali Muslim women. In an essay

published in *IslamPracharak* in 1903 she also protested against practices like polygamy. In her “God Gives Man Robs” she laments that Islam allows every freedom to women but in reality Muslim women suffer from curses like early marriage, illiteracy as well as lack of empowerment and everything is justified on the ground of religion. In her *Aborodhbasini* (1929) she protested against female seclusion. She also unveiled the varied facets of oppressions, suppressions and deprivations of Muslim women in the purdah dominated society although she was strictly not against purdah system.

It is not only that Begum Rokeya protested patriarchal control over women but equated women’s emancipation with women’s education and economic independence. Her pragmatism lies in the realization that education should not be considered as a means but an end in itself and it is a pre-condition for Muslim women’s economic independence. In her book *Motichur* she has argued for women’s right to work as well as property.

In her article *Sultana’sDream*, she had visualized the existence of a woman’s world “Lady Land” where women’s talent and power of knowledge were capable of demonstrating complete mastery over nature without the help of men. Through this creation Rokeya tried to broaden the mental horizons of men and women and especially she tried to portray an image of a Muslim woman who was supposed to be confident and self-reliant. Rokeya in her essays like “Stree Jatir Abanati” (Degradation of Women) “Ardhangi” (Better Half) and “Narir Adhikar” (Rights of Women) raised her voice against the problems of patriarchy. She said that distortion of religion has imprisoned women in the present day and she also commented that not only Islam but no patriarchal culture emancipates women. She said that, for the true emancipation, urge should come from within otherwise the door of the prison will never be opened. Apart from Begum Rokeya, Nurrunesa Khatun, Mamlukul Khanum in an article *Sikha* (Education) Fazilatunnesa Zoha in her “ Muslim Narir Mukti”(Emancipation of Muslim Women), Sufia Kamal also through their writing resisted the patriarchal domination and emphasized the need for women’s education.

Not only in colonial Bengal but also in other states Muslim women tried to raise their voice. Writings by Rokeya and other women played a great role to construct the identity of Muslim women. But it is also important to say that utilization of existing space in this normative oppressive social order remains incomplete if it does not take the shape of political activism. Although agency is not wholly encompassed by political activism but still we need to explore the distinctive ways and arenas in which women can exercise their capacity to make choices and take decisions. In this context the paper will highlight some examples where Muslim women’s resistance to patriarchal domination and agency has been translated into feminist political activism and influence the politics of identity construction.

Narratives of Muslim Women's Activism-

First I will like to start with the story of an upright, courageous woman named Zehra Cyclewala who is untiringly fighting against the religious orthodoxy in Surat. Zehra's struggle started when the chief priest of Dawoodi Vohras Dr. Mohamed Burhanuddin Saiyedna issued a fatwa in 1985, stating that no person of the Dawoodi Vohra community should not work in an institution which is involved in the transaction of Interest. Zehra refused to follow the fatwa because she had the responsibility to maintain her old widow mother and her own living. But the leaders of the community forcibly tried to make Zehra believe their beliefs and they neglected the question of their financial condition. Her fight against fatwas became stronger when she tried to find out the justification and realized that Dr. Saiyedna was trying to interpret the Quran for his own convenience. She realized that she has not changed her religion and follow the principles of the community based on Islam then what is her fault? Zehra faced a lot of hurdles because of her continuous struggle against religious orthodoxy but she refused to submit any such tyranny or harassment. The whole community boycotted her and did not allow the burial of her mother Muddae Fulibai in their cemetery and issued the order that no one should participate in her funeral ceremony. Her life was also under threat and she was given police protection for 13 years by the order of Gujarat High Court. On 24th June 1997, English Daily News Paper "Indian Express" published a report "A Victor, Because She Never Gives Up" admiring her struggle (Baluwala: 2004). In this context, contribution of Daud Sharifa Khanam is also worth mentioning as she has started a Muslim Women's Jamaat in 2003 to provide Muslim women with a space to express themselves and contest traditional repressive cultural social norms in Pudukottai, Tamilnadu. This Muslim Women's Jamaat is an attempt to challenge the authority of the traditional jamaat system which to a large extent controls the social life of Muslims including Muslim women. This Women's jamaat encourages a liberal interpretation of Sharia law as the conventional jamaat is dominated by the maulvis who are extremely influenced by patriarchal values. Even the understanding of Islam is deeply shaped by their mindset. Sharifa said that in her early stage of life she was not conscious of her Muslim identity but when she was involved in a project on the socio-economic conditions of Muslim women for the London-based organization, women living under Muslim Laws Network, experienced the miserable conditions of Muslim women who were arbitrarily divorced, beaten by husbands, harassed for dowry. All these instances inspired her to form a NGO, STEPS in Pudukottai, a small town in Tamilnadu. Muslim women's jamaat not only offers them a space to raise their voice for justice but also to voice for economic independence and empowerment. She said that STEP deals with the issues of women's education, empowerment and discriminatory aspects of personal laws. But it is worth mentioning that Muslim women's social, educational and

economic marginalization is not only product of conservatism nurtured by the patriarchy within the Muslims community but also neglect and discrimination by the state as well as the wider society.

In this way, Sharifa Khanam has added a new dimension to the idea of Muslim women's agency in society. Another interesting example is the formation of All India Muslim Women Personal Law Board in 2005. This board raised important issues like triple talaq in one setting, model Nikahnamah and polygamy. In this context, name of another Muslim woman becomes inevitable, she is, Parveen Abidi who set up All India Muslim Women's Personal Law Board in 2005 as a reaction to unwarranted patriarchal interpretations of Islam of the All India Muslim Personal Law Board. Her efforts have inaugurated the beginnings of an autonomous Muslim women's movement in India. She has proved that gender justice can be achieved by using Islamic arguments. This organization has played an important role in drafting the Model Nikahnama to protect the Muslim women against divorce and polygamy. Parveen Abidi said that the conservative patriarchal maulvis continue to misinterpret Islam to reinforce women's subordination. So there is a necessity to speak out against these practices. She also said that maulvis try to subjugate women through fatwas. So women should be very conscious about their legal rights. So that no one can rule them. So this organisation has challenged the misogynist interpretations of Islam. So Muslim women should have proper knowledge of Islam so that they can interpret and speak about it for themselves]. Apart from this, the president of this Board, Shaista Amber argued for representation of women within the All India Muslim Personal Law board so that their issues and problems can be understood and resolved in a better way.

Politics of Muslim Women's Attempt to Reinterpret Normative Order-

So the third space is a mode of articulation, a way of describing productivity and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibility. It is an 'interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative' (Bhabha:1994) space of new forms of cultural meaning and production blurring the limitations of existing boundaries and calling into question established categorizations of culture and identity. That is why in this space the activism of women can produce an alternative from of meaning of experiences of their subjugation. The third space is an ambivalent site where cultural meaning and representation have no 'primordial unity or fixity' (Bhabha: 1994). And because of this reason women can challenge the patriarchal interpretation of the Quran. Despite the exposure of the third space to contradictions and ambiguities, it provides a spatial politics of inclusion rather than exclusion that initiates new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration and contestation (Bhabha: 1994).

It is generally argued that those women including Muslim women in the most extreme positions of marginalization have no way of having their voice heard or becoming visible through the process of self-representation. Patriarchy makes it more difficult for subaltern to speak (Spivak: 2000). As the knowledge system is controlled and produced by patriarchal ruling class, so the prevailing interpretation of the reality will reflect the interests and values of the ruling class. This kind of power play not only dominates women in society but also ignores the daily sufferings faced by the members of the oppressed group. It presents a series of particularly significant problems to be explained.

No doubt Muslim women's lives, experiences have remained ungrounded and invisible relegated to the "underside" of men's culture, history and lives. Generally Muslim women's marginalization is equated with a vicious circle of triple talaq, polygamy and veiling and they are assumed to be voiceless in their community. Their silent voice and marginalization is the product of the way, women have been driven to articulate selfhood in terms of the oppressor. But some women have definitely challenged the process of knowledge production by the Muslim religious patriarchy which tries to interpret the Quran in order to subjugate Muslim women in society. So listening to the voice of Muslim women and observing the society through the lens of their experience helps us in having a better understanding of the society. It also helps us to acquire a new identity of Muslim women which is beyond the stereotyping of Muslim women's identity as 'too weak to fight for her rights', 'submissive' and 'fragile'. The contribution of above mentioned Muslim women's activists lies in the fact that these women very successfully raised their voice not against their religion but against the misinterpretation of verses in the Quran which continues to subjugate women in this patriarchal society. These women have constructed a new identity of Muslim women which is very different from the 'ideal' Muslim women in Islamic 'fundamentalist' discourse. This discourse defines the notion of ideal Muslim women in terms of rules and norms derived from a restrictive and patriarchal reading of the Islamic scripture based tradition (Shirazi: 2009). And the new identity constructed by these women represents a different picture of Muslim women who are raising question against all form of oppression in the name of Islam.

Muslim Women and Challenges of Empowerment-

So the above discussion shows that Muslim women are not just only passive victims of their situations. In spite of all hurdles, Muslim women are capable of decision making and resisting the patriarchal domination. But in practice the linkages between Muslim women's agency, activism and empowerment in many cases seem to be problematic. It is important to mention that the exercise of autonomy is not only related to the patriarchal power relations that operate within the community but it should also be

placed in the context of structural, institutional and inter subjective constraints which women in face in society. Muslim women not only face problems because of their community and religion but socio-cultural contexts play equally important role in controlling their capacity of agency. But the point is that we should not underestimate the contained and responsive activism of Muslim women mobilized around their agendas. Muslim women may not be greatly empowered but the firmer identification as members of a particular community and their strong sense of what issues are worth fighting for helps them to exercise their oppositional agency. It can also clarify the intricate connection between systematic relationships and directionality of power. By waging struggle they have shown that patriarchal power can be challenged and reinterpreted in a new manner. Muslim women's resistance shows that the knowledge which is generated and interpreted by the patriarchy may not be blindly accepted by Muslim women and alternative form of knowledge of their oppression can be developed by themselves. So the presence of multiple and fluid structures of domination and resistance proves that alternative spaces exist within the cultural community which enables Muslim women to develop their own definitions of autonomy and power. And there is a need to recognize these spaces as it provides a new dimension to the identity of Muslim women.

Conclusion-

Now the question is, to what extent third space can enable Muslim women to fight for their rights and justice? Is this space enough for their empowerment? No doubt this third space empowers women to raise their voice but is this space adequate to alter the complex web of power relations in the community as well as society? It is also important to highlight that Muslim women's empowerment as well as resistance in the third space is subject to several factors. In this case their location in class, educational attainment and economic condition also influence their activism and strategies of resistance to the patriarchal domination. It is also visible that Muslim women's contestation and empowerment in the third space cannot ignore the reality that institutions as well as the physical space also play an important role in continuing the overall backwardness of Muslim women in society. Muslim women like women in other communities face several problems like educational backwardness, poverty, lack of economic opportunities. But in this community Muslim woman's marginalization and suppression is justified in the name of religion and cultural practices. So the patriarchal structures find new instruments to exert control over Muslim women. It is not only visible in the interpretations of the religious texts but also in early marriage, disrupted education, conservative attitude towards employment.

Apart from this Muslim woman's location in the minority community also attach different dimension to their backwardness. But it is worth mentioning that in spite of being placed in the discourse of backwardness, identity and experiences of Muslim women should not only be equated with marginalization. Rather their efforts, struggles for justice and empowerment need to be recognized by the community as well as larger society.

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Muslim Women and Indian Cinema: Past and Present

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Film making started in 1896 in France. Simultaneously, Germany experienced in film making. However in the Indian social context it proved to be quite conducive for this industry. It was in 1896 that Lumiere Brother's came to India with their first to be exhibited her which Indian film viewers and enjoyed the success of this film encouraged some Indians to try hands at film making and the persons who came forward along with some others Harish Chand Salha Ram Bhata, popularly known as Dada Saheb Phalke. With his films one in 1897 and the other in 1900 he created a wave in the industry.

Success of films in India owes much to deep and far reaching roots of theatre with the old age tradition of Ramayana, Mahabharata and folk drama. Pawara and nautankis were popular in Maharashtra and utter Pradesh respectively, while Parsi theatre and other dramas nurtured the taste of the Indian viewers. However women were kept off the stage for a long period of time. When needed men themselves put on the female dress to perform the role of women.

Introduction of films gave women an opportunity to demonstrate her potential in acting. Watching film and writing review in it as an interesting and important job. Acting in films for a long time was considered to be a deplorable act. But some local and confident women demonstrated their art and skill and made the entire world convinced of their acting.

The first and the most significant among women associated with the film industry was **Fatima Begum**. Born in 1892, she started working in silent films since very children in to become popular very soon. She was also a singer as usual as writer. She had the credit of being the first women film director and producer. Initially established with Kohinoor studio and imperial studio as a salaried actors. She later established her own film company with the banner of Fatima Films to later become Victoria Fatima Films. The first film she directed was Bulbule Hazar Dastan released in 1926 and it was a super hit. Her prominent films include Veer Abhi Manyee 1922, Bulbale Paristan 1926 and Dunya Kya hai and they had a great appeal for viewers.

One of the greatest contributions of Fatima Begum is that she encouraged her three daughters Lubaida Begum, Shazada Begum and Sultana Begum to take to acting. Fatima Begum contribution to India cinema can never be forgotten. She died at the age of 91.

Born in 1911, **Zaubaida Begum** followed the footprints of her mother. She gave her debut appearance of the age of 12 and continued to act in several silent films with her mother and sister. A major venture of its times *Vir Abhimanaya* with Fatima's leading role brought her tremendous popularity. In 1925 Nine films with Zubaida in leading role were released significant among them were 'Kala Choor'. In 1926 Zubaida played leading role in *Bulbule Paristan* directed by her mother. 1927 was a significant year in Zubaida's life when films like *Laila Majnu*, *Nand Bhayai* and *Qurbani* came on the screen. In 1928 Zubaida achieved with *Saluhan* and master vithal in *"Balidan"* based on Rabindranath Tagore's storey. This was the first film to gain international acclaim and exhibited even in the European countries.

The turning point came in the history of Indian cinema when the first talking film *"Alam Ara"* was released in 1931 with Zubaida as heroin. Films like *Vir Abbi* *Mayan Alam Ara* and then, *" Mere Jaan"* with Zubaida in the leading role that became super hit in a quick succession made her reach the climax of popularity where she was the most expensive heroine.

Between 1930 and 1940 Zubaida played important historical parts in a number of films like *"Subhandra"*, *Uttara* and *"Darapan"*. Zubaida was the first heroine who unhesitantly posed for a kissing scene in Ezra Uris film *"Zaraina"* giving the censorship of the time a subject debate. Among her later films *Mahalaxmi*, *gulo samahar*, *Rashk zaila* and *Nirdosh Abla* are quite noteworthy. She died in 1988 at the age of 88.

Born in 1914 and basically a singer, **Kharsheed Bano** is an important name in the early phase of the Indian cinema who acted in silent films including *"Alam Ara"* and played the role of heroine in a number of films between 1930 and 1940 such as *"Laila Majnu and Shakuntala (1931)*, *Chitra Bascaoli*, *Hatti Dulhan*, *Muflis Aashiq*, *Radhya Shayam (1932)*, *Naqli doctor (1933)*, *Swarg ki Sirli Bomb Shell Charghe Husun and Mirza Sahiban (1935)*,. *Ailam group and Keemyagar (1937)*, *Madhur Milan (1938)*, *Murad*, *Kaeem Kisi Ka and Sitara (1939)*.

As there was no facility of playback singing, heroes and heroines sang in their own voices while accompanist hid behind trees and walls. This is why heroes and heroines in the films of early days took support of a tree or branch or wall while

singing. Mostly they were made to sing sitting or reaching at one place. Actors who could also sing were in great demand. Therefore Khursheed Begum was a great heroin then. Her match with Kundan lal Sahgal, Moti lal Jai Raj and Eshani Lal was a great success. In the films of the fourth decade he gains remarkable reputation for acting as well as singing. In 1940 Musafir and Bhigai mari Sare.; paradise in 1942(Pahle go Mohabbat se inkar kiya hota) and (Mori atarya hai suni); “ Beti” and Shaadi Gair gharaae badarva); Bhakt surdas(parchhi bawara). Other famous lyrics of the same film are “Madhur madhur gal manwa, “Johli ghar tera la de re, and a duct with L.K sehgal ‘ chandni rat aur tera khile hon’. Among ever green lyrics are ‘ barso ghate ghangar ghor’, ‘ dukhya jiyari’, ‘ Ab raja bhac ware balam; and more balapan ke saathi chhaile.

Khursheed Bano’s last film in India was ‘Papi la Re’ released in 1948 followed by her shift to Pakistan where she appeared in two films ‘Fanker and Mandi with poor appeal. Following her marriage in 1956 she said good bye to the industry. She died in Karachi in 18 April 2001.

Born on 4 September 1926 in a Punjabi Muslim musician family to Madad Ali and **Faleti Bi originally named as Allah Wasai Malkae Tarannum Noor Jan Begum** acted on stage and act to fulfill her parents wish. She received training in classical music from Ustab Barl Ali khan where he groomed her with knowledge of the nuances of dhrupad and ‘ Khayal’. At the age of 9 Noor jan became disciple of Punjabi musician Ghulam Ahmad Chisti who exposed Noor jan’s talents later, her family took residence in Kolkata where famous singer of her time Mukhtar Begum advised her to act in films and also helped her two sisters to get roles in films and recommended them to her husband Agha Hashr kashmiri to induct them into his theatre group. It is here that Noor Jan was named as Allah Wasai. The trio of Noor jan and her sisters was a nick named as Ranjab Mail.

In 1935, Noor Jahan gave her two sisters in a Punjabi tittle ‘Pind di Kuri and, her identity with the release of Misr ke Silara in 1936 and Heer- sayyal’ the next year. In 1938 on her return from Kolkata to Lahore famous musician Ghulam haider got Noorjhan’s first song recorded for his film Gul Bakauli’ while she was still acting as child artist she gave her first appearance as a heroin in Khandan with Paswan.

In 1942, Noor Jahan did play back singing for’ “Duhai”. The lyrics was shot on Husan bano, the heroin of the folm. In 1945 she gave her voice in film ‘ Bari man” along with Lata Mangeshkar and Asha Bhosale. Her famous qawwali aahan na bharain shikw ne kiye in collobaration with zohara bai ambale wali and Amier bai

karna taki became a super hit . It was the first qawwali recorded in a female voice. In India Noor Jahan's last film was Mirza Ealibam released in 1947.

Noor Jahan gave her voice to 127 lyrics in Indian films and acted in 69 films from 1932 to 1947 including 12 silent films. The titles of her talking films were , Gul Bakauli, Imandaar, Parghane haq, Dheeraj, faryad, Khanda, Nadam, Dulai, Naukar, Lal Havcli, Dost,zeenat Gaon ki Gori, Bari mam, Bhaijan, Anmol Ghanri, Dil, Hejilo, Sufia, Jagirdar, Mohana pratap, Mirza Sahibam, Juju, Abida Mira Bai Chumare, Dupatter, Gulnar, Nooram, Chhu Mantar, Neend, Paralean, Koel, Mirza Ghalib, Besides, she acted in several films made in Pakistan and sang more than 300 lyrics. Her ever green lyrics like awaz de kahan hai, and jawan hai mohabbat' are still resounding in the Indian environments she died on 23 Dwecenber 200 and was buried in Guzri graveyard in Karachi.

Born on 1 June 1929 **Nargis** was the sister of famous film actor Nasir Hussain. Her father worked for films in various roles and potions singer, dancer, director, musician and actor. At the age of 6 she got a chance to appear as a child artist in 1935 when she was called Baby Nargis.

However acted in several films she was offered a major role in 'Taqdir' Hamayun' In 1949 Maboob Khan's Andaz became a hit taking Nargis to the peak of her fame. The film proved to be a mile stone for appearance of Nargis on the screen with super star of those times namely Dileep Kumar and Raj Kapoor. It is remembered as the best love story in the history of Indian cinema. The release of Barsaat boosted up her fame, her series of hit films with Nargis as heroine she became darling of cinema goers as a great artist depicting female sentiments. She was the first Indian actress to be awarded Padam Shree Jogan, Mela, Babul, Deedar, Bewafa, Aawara, Shree 420, Chori Chori, Mother India, Kala Bazar are unforgettable films in the history of Indian cinema.

Nargis mostly appeared with Dileep Kumar , Raj Kapoor and Dev Anand and she was known to be more friendly with Raj Kapoor. But during first on the set the schooling of mother India it was Sunil Dutt who reserved her in the role of her son. Impressed of this she got married to Sunil Dutt on 11 March 1958 to become the most successful example in the Indian film industry. She died of cancer in 1981.

Born on 14 Febrauary 1933 in Delhi **Mumtaz Jahan Begum Delhari** alais **Madhu Bala** who hailed from an aristocratic Afghan family left a permanent mark on the Indian cinema at the early age of 36. She died on 23 February 1969. Having been dismissed from Afghan army her grandfather had sought refuge in India while

her father shifted to Mumbai. Fifth among her siblings Madhubala entered the film world at the age of nine. She gave appearance in Basant in 1942 playing the role of the daughter of Mumtaz Shanti then famous heroine. The she worked in a number of films as a child artist till her talent impressed Devika Rani who advised her to adopt the name of Madhubala.

She begun to get roles of heroine from her very childhood. It was Kedar Sharma , Neel Kaal that she was Raj Kapoor's heroine. Though only sixteen she won people's heart and became famous as a talented and beautiful star till she got sweeping success in 1949 with release of "Mahal" when Ashok Kumar was on the peak of his fame as a hero. With Mahal lyrics 'Aye ga' Lata Maghashkar gained popularity. In 1950 she was diagnosed with heart disease not easy to cure in those days. However she continued to work in films and her fame crossed the national borders till she begun to receive offers from Hollywood. She was first Indian heroine who featured on the title page of European magazines. . Due to her father's refusal to send her to Hollywood, a chapter of her progress closed there.

For four years after Mahal, Madhubala played leading roles in 24 films . Film critics maintained that she was more beautiful than her acting. She therefore accepted to work in every film she was offered a role in part due to her beauty consciousness and partly due to familial obligations. However she exercised self restraint and established that she can do justice to every role offered to her. In 1955 Madhubala produced a film "Nata" (Relationship) where she played the main role. The list of her good films is quite long. Asif's master piece Mughl-e- Azam immortalized Madhubala. There are quite a few events relating to Madhubala in the context of Mughal-e Azam. She was really in love with Dilip Kumar. This passion gave legendary dimension to Anarkali's unforgettable character. Madhubala's father did not like her daughter's for Dilip Kumar. He took care to keep a guard on Madhubala whenever she went for shooting with Dilip. B.R. Chopra had first signed Madhubala for his Naya Daur and some of its shooting was done. However when the staff was almost to head for a long shoot Madhubala's father refused to allow her daughter to accompany the troop saying that he was providing Dilip kumar a chance to come closer to Madhubala. An annoyed B.R Chopra had to sign Vaijayati Mala which deeply shocked Madhubala. Meanwhile Madhubala developed intimacy with Kishore Kumar on the sets of Chalti Ka Naam Gadi to ultimately marry in 1960 causing much displeasure to their family members forcing the couple to live separately. Gradually her disease took a serious turn making acting difficult for her. Then she moved towards direction and started the movies "Farz and Ishq in 1969 but could not complete the same due to her ill health. On 3 February, 1969 she died and was buried in Santa Cruz grave yard. Her husband Kishore Kumar erected a

marble plank on her grave yard with Quranic verses inscribed on it as a token of tribute. During brief span of life Madhubala acted in 70 memorable Indian film.

Zahra Sehgal is a significant name in the history of Indian cinema. Born in an extremely religious Rohila Pathan family of Rampur 1927 Zohara. Zohar's name was Shahzadi Zohara Begum Mumtaz Ali Kahn. Fond of games and sports from very child hood she travelled throughout India and to many countries in west Asia and Europe by car with his uncle. Back home she was made to put a veil (Burqa) and following the tradition of the elite of the day was admitted to Queen Mary's Girls college Lahore. She gave up the veil on her graduation and joined Uday Shanker Dance group to give stage performance in Japan, west Asia, Europe and America when she got a chance to do roles in a few films besides developing intimacy with Kaneshwar Nath Sehgal whom she married in August 1942 despite opposition from her kin. Pandit Jawhar Lal Nehru is said to be supposed to attend her marriage which he could not due to his arrest and imprisonment for supporting Gandhi's Quit India Movement.

Zohra Sehgal ran a dance school in Almara and then Lahore and later having joined Prithvi Raj Kapoor's theatre gave stage performance in various cities. After his husband's demise she shifted to London where she stayed for 20 years and acted in English films. Back home she resumed acting in Indian cinema. Now a days Zohra Seghal live in Delhi with her daughter. Though a centurion she is quite active with particular interest in films.

Veena Kumari whose real name is **Tajwar Sultana** was born in 1926 in Quetta Baluchistan. She first appeared in swastika at the age of 13 in 1939 and three years later acted heroine in Gareeb directed by Mehboob followed by a number of Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi films some of her noteworthy films are Halaku 1956, Chalti Ka Naam Gari 1958, Kaghaz ke Phool 1959; Taj Mahal 1963; Do Raste 1969; Pakeeza 1972; Shahnai 1965; Shatranj ke Khilari 1977.

Born on 18 February 1933 in **Agra Nimmi** with real name **Nawab Bano** was one of the most popular heroines of 1950's. Having lost her mother at the tender age of 9 and brought up by maternal grandmother who was herself an actress, she was shown way to films by Director Mehboob Khan while she met Raj Kapoor on the sets of Andaaz who signed her for Barsaat working with major artists like Nargis Raj Kapoor and Prem Nath she got her talent recognized. Nimmi was also a singer and gave her voice for few films. She appeared in Deedar 1951, Daagh and Aan 1952, later being the first Indian film released simultaneously throughout the world with English version as savage princess for which she travelled to London

where she met top film celebrities including Errol Flynn whose attempt to kiss her was failed by her saying 'I am Indian girl you can't kiss me'. This made the headlines in British journals and the media named her a 'un-kissed girl of India'.

Subsequently, Mehboob Khan signed her for "Ameer" and a little later Nimmi released "Danka" under her own banner. In 1955, she surprised the viewers with her double role in Sohrab Modi's 'Kundan' followed by her role in 'Uran Khatoala' with Dilip Kumar. It was in 1956 and 1957 that she was on appreciation from critics and received award as well.

Some of her famous films are "Barsaat 1949, Bari Bahu 1951, Aan 1952, Uran Khatoala 1955; Char din Char Rahain 1959, Mere Mehboob 1963.

Born in 1916 **Nasim Bano** was popular for both her beauty and art of dancing. Her mother Shamshad Begum alias Chaya was also famous for her lyrics and dancing. **Nasim Bano** touched the zenith of popularity at a tender age. Some of the films she acted in have left a mark in the history of Indian cinema. They include 'Pakar', 'Avokhi', 'Ada', 'Sheesh mahal', 'Baghi', 'Nausherwa', 'Aachi'. Nasim Bano is more recognised as Saira Bano's mother and Dilip Kumar's mother-in-law. Nasim Bano died on 18 July 2000.

Saira Bano who inherited her talents in dancing and acting was born on 23 August 1944. Besides being the daughter of Nasim Bano and good daughter of Shamshad Begum Alia's Chaya Bai she owed this to her father Ehsanul Haq who was himself a producer. Brought up and educated in London she started demonstrating her talent from very childhood. On her return from London while she was 12 she gave her maiden appearance in 'Junglee' in 1961 with Shammi Kapoor where she was selected for the best actor for film fair award. The song titled 'Yahoo chaha koi mujha' is still listed among the heart songs.

1960's and 70 gave us many successful films. She was selected for film fair award for the best three films. They were 'Shagun 1967; Deewana 1968 and Sagina 1974. Her career took a sharp turn with 'Padosan' that still helps the list of humorous creations. During the peak of her popularity she was married to Dileep Kumar, 22 years older than her. This film couple is deeply admired and revered by all. After 1975, Saira Bano has been keeping aloof from films. However she appeared with her husband Dileep Kumar in 'Bairag 1984 and Faisala 1988 some of her other pictures are 'Sazish 1958; Shadi 1962; Aai Milan Ki Bela 1964; Jhuk Gaya Aasman 1968; Victoria No. 203, 1972.

A famous heroine of her times **Shyama** with real name **Khurshid Akhtar** was born in 7 June 1935 in Lahore and first appeared in Guru Dutt's 'Aar Paar' followed by her best acting in 'Tarana' and 'Barsat ki Raat'. She was given Filmfare Award

1957 for her performance in 'Sharda'. Though she featured in 200 films, Roop Lekha 1949; Dhoop Chhoon 1955; Apna Ghar 1960. Bahu Rani 1964; Dil Diya Dard Liya 1966; Milan 1967; Savan bhadon 1970 Payal Ki Jhankaar 1980 are quite unforgettable.

Surraiyya- Surraiyya Jamal sheikh who was born in Gujranwala Punjab and died on 31 July 1937 in the age of 73 first appeared in 'Us ney kya socha' as a child artist . During the same period she performed in Taj Mahal where she played the role of junior Mumtaz Mahal. Musician Naushad heard her song an item on All India radio in 1942 and she was asked for recording a song at the age of 13 for Sharda. She came in prominence with her performance in Phool' followed by Mehboob Khan's Anmol Ghari that led K.K Sehgal to seek her up for Umar Khayyam 1946; and Parwana 1947. Surayya captured the play back singing in India's film industry after Noor Jahan and Khurshed Bano shifted to Pakistan. She made a mark with Pyaar Ki Jeet 1948 Bari Bahan and Dillagi 1949 and then Waris, Mirza Ghalib and Rustam-o- Sohrab'.

An affair between Dev Anand and Surraiyya- was much talked of. A boat mishap during a shooting when Dev Anand saved her made her to fall in love with Dev Anand and never married. This true love often got expression in her pathetic voice in the lyrics of Mirza Ghalib.

“Aah ko chahiye ek umar asar hone tak
Dil – e- nadaan tujhe hua kya hai
Yeh na thee humari kismat ke wesal- e- yaar hota”

Born on 14 May 1936 in an aristocratic family in Hyderabad **Wahida Rahman** was bestowed with captivating beauty and appealing personality. She travelled a lot with her father who was transferred frequently during his service as district magistrate and who wanted her daughter to study medicine. However this dream could not become reality as her parents passed away when she was still a child. She got a chance to act in a Tamil film Jai Sinha in 1955 followed by "Raja Tomar the same year and subsequently, was invited by Guru Dutt to appear in CID to play the role of vamp that brought her much fame. Her role in Pyasa 1957 took everyone by surprise. With Kaghaz ke Phool she came closer to Guru Dutt but to depart soon. Despite distanced hearts they acted in 'Chaudawin ka Chand' 1960 and Sahab Bibi aur Ghulam 1962. Later Mujhe Jene Do and Kohra ans Khamoshi proved to be mile stones in her career.

In 1965 she came on screen in Guide with Dev Anand. It brought her film fair award for the high actress. She touched new heights of fame with Dil Diya Dard Liya while Pather Ke sanam and Ram aur Shyam were great hits. Neelkamal 1968,

brought her another film fair award. She took to character roles after 1980 some of the memorable hits are CID 1956; Pyasa 1958; Kala Bazar 1960; Sahab Bibi aur Ghulam 1962; Bees Saal Baad 1962; Mujhe Jinay Do 1963; Trishul 1982; Delhi 2008.

Meena Kumari (real name Mah Jabeen) was born on August 1933. Her mother Iqbal Bano and grandmother had been associated with stage programmes while father Ali Baksh was harmonium player. Her two sisters Khursheed Jahan and Madhuri were best in dance and music. However the family lived in utter poverty compelling Mahjabeen to take film acting instead of going to school. She first appeared on the screen at the age of 6 in Dig Vijay Bhatt's Pujalu film 'Kar jan de watan. Subsequently she got roles after roles and award after award for the best acting, appealing voice attractive personality and perfect dance.

Meena Kumari did a number of films as a child artist for Rs 16 to 80 and the fee was tremendously enhanced when she stepped into blossoming youth. She was given Rs 1400 for Baiju Bawra 1952 acclaimed all over the country and taking her to the fininacle of fame. This was the first film exhibited in one cinema hall for continuous 100 weeks house full in all its shows. She got film fair best actress for Baiju Bawara, some of her super hits are Daira. Dil apna aur preet parayee, Parnita, Sharda , Ek hi rasta, Azad, Kohe Noor , Phool aur pather , Footpath , Pakiza . Her acting watch matchless and she were aptly given the title of 'tragedy queen'.

At the age of 20 she was hospitalized for treatment when Kamal Amrohi visited her and she fell in love with him at the first sight one's falling in the love while in profession of acting is not a matter of surprise. Meena married double her age Kamal Amrohi and they lived together for 13 years to be distanced away due to some misunderstanding. Kamal Amrohi started making Pakiza in 1958. Its progress stopped for years lasting gloom over Meena Kumari's life. She sought refuge in drinking. Though not formally educated she had a literally jest. Meer and Ghalib were her favourite poets. Once a well wisher explained to her the harms alcohol suggesting to give up drinking. In a reply she quoted Ghalib;

Nasiha naare jahnnam se darata hai mujhe

Main to khud pighli hui aag piya karta hun.

(The mentor threatens me of the hell fire I myself drink liquid fire)

Pakiza was started after a long gap on the persuasion by some well meaning people and Meena resumed work dispel having been divorced. A few days after completion of the film Meena kumari passed away on 31 march 1972 making Pakiza an eternal. By profession Meena was an actress and singer with a poet's heart and a taste for appreciating and competing.

Some of the couplets composed by Meena Kumari are:-

Han Koi aur hoga koi tune jise dekha hoga

ham nahin aag se bach bach ke guzarne wale
tukre tukre din bita , dhajji dhajji raat mili.
Jitna jis ka anchal tha,utni hi sughat mili
Hans Hans ke jawanhum kyun na chne tukre
Har shakhs ki qismat men inaam nahin hota
chand tanha hai asman tanha
Dil mila hai kahan kahan tanha.

Nigar Sultana, born on 1932 played important roles in Rang Bhumi 1946, Mitti ke Khilone and Aag 1948; patanga 1949 ' Mirza Ghalib 1954; Mughleazam 1960; Mere Humdum Mere Dost and Do Kaliyan 1968 are her famous films.

Tabassum Alia's baby Tabssum is known for her vitality in film world with her first appearance in Suhaag 1947. Her noteworthy films are Deedar 1951' Baiju Bawra 1952 Baap Beti 1954 Mughl -e- Azam 1960 ' Dulhan ek raat ki 1967; Tere mere sapne 1971' Pyaar ke Do Naam 2006.besides Tabasum has been popular television anchor. Phool Khile hain gulshan gulshan, a T.V serial that continued for 21 years in 1970 on Doordarshan gave her permanent fame. She also featured in number of interviews and humors presentations.

Born on 31 July 1945, **Mumtaz** is an important name in the Indian film industry with her entry as an extra artist she played minor roles in major films much as Sunsaan , Tarzoo and King Kong. Due to working alongside Dara Singh for 16 years she was nick named as Stunt heroine. However, she came in focus with her role as a vamp in Mere Sanam where the song 'Yeh hai reshmi zulfon ka andhara' was shot on her. However she reached to the peak with Ram aur Shyam in 1967 with Dilip Kumar and Wahida Rahman. She was nominated for the Filmfare best supporting actress that led to sharp demand for her in supporting roles. Subsequently she worked with Sharmila Tagore and other prominent stars in films like 'Savan ki ghata; Ye raat phir na ayegi; and Mere hamdum mere dost. In 1968 she became popular for her dance items in Brahmchari. In the days of aaj kal mere pyar ke charche , she was much talked of for her affair with Shammi Kappor.

Mumtaz made her break through with the release of Raj Khosla's super hit 'Do Raste' making Mumtaz, Rajesh Khanna favourite stars of the public. Heroes like Shashi Kapoor and Rajendra Kumar who shunned her being a stunt heroine earlier now desired to take her as heroine and thus she appeared in two super hit Tange Wala with Rajender Kumar and Chor Machaye Shoor with Shashi Kapoor.

During her 12 years film carrier, Mumtaz played roles in more than 100 films and she was given film fare award 1970 for best actress. She said good bye to films in 1977 with the release of Aina. Some of her memorable films that came in 1960's

were Istree, Baghee, Saaz aur awaaz, Kajal , Hum Diwaane, Patther ke sanam, Humraaz, Chandan ka paalna, Do Raste, Bandhan , Dushman, Hare Rama Hare Krishna, Bandh Haat, Jheel ke us paar, Roti, Prem Kahani, Nagin and Aaina.

Born on 18 September 1950 daughter of actress Shaukat Azami and poet and intellectual Kaifi Azami, **Shabana Azami** a graduate from St – Xavier’s college Mumbai and FTII entered Indian cinema a new vista and made a place for her in the industry by virtue of her gifted talents.

Her first film was ‘Fasilah’ though released after Syam Bengal’s ‘Ankur’ with Shaban’s critical role that she played desterciosly. She bagged national award consequently for three years 1983, 84 and 1985, and she is the one who received six national awards in the history of Indian cinema. Besides Filmfare award for four times and receiving Padma Shri and Gandhi Foundational Peace Award and a number of national and international honors were conferred on her, Jamia Millia Islamia (a central university) conferred honorary doctoral degree on her. She is not only one of the best actress but also a passionate social worker and reformist. She is found active on every front right from serving the poor in slum clusters to fight against the fatal disease of AIDS. .

She has worked in more than 100 films and each film where she played a role was a great hit. Some of her most favorite films are;

The Bengali Night; 15 Park night, Mandi, Ankur, Aas Pass , Arth, Masoom, Paar and God Mother.

Born on 19 November 1951, **Zeenat Aman** was one of the most beautiful girls of her times who won Miss Asia Pacific Award. His father Amanullah Khan a story script writer had been in the team of script writers of Mughal - e Azam and Pakiza. While Zeenat was 13 her father expired and she shifted to Germany with her mother who was remarried to Gr- Heing owing maladjustment there she returned to Mumbai to graduate from St- Xavier college followed by her stay in California for higher education where she took the journalism and later made modeling.

In 1971, she appeared in Halchal and then in Hangama. They did not do well. It was in 1972 that Dev Anand signed Zahida in Hare Rama Hare Krishna with main heroine Mumtaz . Zahida was dropped out at the last movement. It had a new song ‘Dam maro dam’ shot on Zeenat Aman. The film brought Zeenat Filmfare’s Best Supporting Actress Award. Subsequently she came with Dev Ananad in early half a dozen films such as ‘ Ishiq, Ishq , Ishq, Prem Shastr, Warrant, Darling, kalabaaz. The song item in Yaddon ke baraat 1973 boosted up her fame. She occupied the cover page of almost every major Indian magazine.

In 1978 Raj Kapoor's super hit film; Satyam Shivam Sundaram was much talked almost while the release of 'Shalimar' the same year project her in a different image. She was greatly appreciated by the Indian viewers for her western look. With the rise of multi star movies Zeenat aman became a sex symbol while the rape scene in " Insaaf Ke tarazoo was shot on her, followed by Lawaris, Ali baba aur chalis chor'. Her last film was Gawahi.

Then she distanced from films for long period. Meanwhile she acted in some films of Hollywood besides appearing in television programs. After 2002 she again was seen playing different roles.

Parveena Bobby was born on 4 April 1954 and died on 20 January 2005. Her father Mohammad Bobby was the chief administrator of the Nawab of Junagrah a famous land lord. It is after a long wait for 14 years that he was bestowed with a female child, Parveen Bobby. Mohammad Bobby died when Parveen was 7 years old. Having graduated from St- Xavier college Ahmadabad she stepped into the film world and soon became popular in the Indian cinema due to her frank interaction and western outlook. She appeared as a heroine for the first time in 1973 with famous character artist Saleem Durani. The Film was a flop but it gave rise to Parveen Bobby. Her first successful film Majboor was released in 1974 and she emerged as a symbol of beauty. She followed the footprints of Zeenat Aman in doing any role without inhibition. She was the only Indian actress whose picture was published on the cover page of Time magazine. Her onscreen pairing with Amitabh Bachhan was very much liked by the viewers and thus many of her films became super hit such as Deewar , Amar Akbar Anthony, Kaliya, Khuddar. She acted in Meri awaaaz suno and The burning train with Vinod Khanna;; with Manoj Kumar in Kranti and Mark Zubair in Ye Nazdikiyan. In 1983 she left for New York. Her last film Iradah was released in 1990. In her late life she suffered from mental illness, taking to seclusion and on 22 January 2002 she was found dead in her flat.

Colonial Modernity and Muslim Women: Interventions by three Muslim Women Writers in English in the Twentieth Century India

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Introduction

It merits mention at the very outset that notwithstanding the polemics involved in the use of the term 'Muslim', in this paper, the term 'Muslim Women' writer merely indicates women writers of Muslim ancestry or kinship who reflect on Muslim identities through their fictional characters.

As one surveys the literary culture of Indian writing in English one finds that Muslims as characters and even more as writers have occupied only a marginal space much like Edward Said's cultural 'other' or Spivak's 'subaltern'. They have either been subjugated or absent from the literary patrimony. What is even more interesting to note, however is that even in this marginal space, Muslim women writers could carve a niche for themselves, as early as in the beginning of the Twentieth century. Beginning with the revolutionary writers like Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Iqbalunnisa Hussain, Zeenuth Futehally, Attia Hosain, Qurratulain Hyder, Anees Jung to even contemporary diaspora writers like Samina Ali, these writers have always succeeded in voicing their views and representing their contemporary reality. Within whatever limitations it may be, these writers have succeeded in problematizing western notions of modernity so readily lapped up by Indian reformers and in addressing issues that women's movements have time again gone back to such as education, resistance to oppression, ability to question institutions like purdah and expose the machinations of a patriarchal society that indoctrinated them into defending and justifying their own subjugation. This paper takes a closer look at the writings of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain (1880-1932), Zeenuth Futehally and Attia Hosain (1913-1998) as a case in point.

Modernity and Muslim Women: Points / Counterpoints

"Between patriarchy and imperialism ...the figure of the woman disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third world woman' caught between tradition and modernization" writes Spivak. The plight of Muslim women was somewhat similar at the time when these women writers started writing. They were secluded from the public space by purdah which made them even more isolated from social and cultural change than were their men. This made Muslim women totally invisible to historical and social analysis as compared to other Indian women. This perhaps is the reason why even in the nationalist discourse Muslim women represent a negative space marked by backwardness.

Partha Chatterjee in his seminal essay “Nationalist Resolution of the Woman’s Question” explains the ‘disappearance’ of the women’s question from the political domain by the end of the nineteenth century as the result of nationalism’s “refusal to make the women’s question an issue of political negotiation with the colonial state”. Chatterjee feels that a re-articulation of Indian womanhood was important in the formation of Indian identity. For him, the central problem for Indian nationalism was of modernizing the nation on western terms and yet retaining an essential national identity as the basis for political claim to nationhood which was resolved by drawing a dividing line between the spiritual and the material, in which women were identified with the spiritual space. Muslim women, however, remained outside this debate for a long time as the Muslim society responded late to modernizing needs of the time. A section of Muslim society remained strongly opposed to the idea of education for women. Even the early Muslim social reformers excluded women from this project and preached them to stay within the fold of ideal Muslim woman (as is witnessed in the plethora of didactic literature such as *Bahishti Zevar*, or Maulvi Nazir Ahmad’s writings that were in circulation in the second half of the 19th century. Even when education for Muslim women was accepted, it was merely to groom them to the ideals of *ashraf* who had their own set of values privileging piety, frugality, education and self-restraint etc. Thus through women’s education the space of the ‘zenana’ became colonized by the male authority and values.

At the start of the twentieth century, however, despite pressures of religious orthodoxies, social prejudice and class/gender bias, Muslim women successfully emerged from the isolation of traditional roles as self-aware individuals, determined to claim a greater role in public affairs and make a dent on the literary horizon. A deluge to literary journals propelled by print culture facilitated their creative pursuits and also played a significance role in creating general atmosphere of acceptance. With modernism emerging within the Muslim middle-class, it paved way for the women writers to engage reflexively with modernity as an ongoing project in their lives and the lives of the Muslim community and the nation. The middle class background of some of these women writers becomes crucial to the understanding of their experiences of modernity and how their experience is depicted in their writings. It must be noted that the middle class among various communities had a varied relationship with the project of modernization. It is acknowledged that gender had a major bearing on the construction of nationalism and modernity but little attention was paid to the ways in which women writers not only negotiated with a ‘fractured modernity’, but also helped in its construction. This experience can be seen in the works of Progressive writers such as Ismat Chughtai, Razia Sajjad Zaheer, Rashid Jahan, Khadija Mastur, where these women posited the question of what it meant to become ‘modern’, not just as women, but as professionals, as middle-class citizens, as Muslims, as Indians and particularly as agents of social change in the Indian society. These women made foray into the male dominated literary world, in a way showing how and what they could write.

1. Zenana Vs Mardana: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, now almost revered as a pioneering Bengali Muslim feminist and educationist, a life-long crusader of the women's cause, defied all stereotypes. Her novella/story *Sultana's Dream* first chronicled in *Indian Ladies Magazine* in 1905 is clearly subversive in its approach. It is an evocative story that portrays a feminist utopia where women preside over the society and the men are isolated in the *mardana*, just as the women were secluded in the *zenana* in society.

The central concerns of the story are the tug of war for dominance between the men and women, the advantages of science without its ill-effects, the use of natural resources to govern a society, position of women, their education and a subversion of the practice of purdah in the utopian land created by Hossain. *Sultana's Dream* is marked as the first Indian science fiction written by a woman. Having learnt to read and write English from her own brother and encouraged by her husband, she used this medium as a weapon in asserting her opinion about the position of women in the Indian society and predominantly in relation to Bengal.

Hence, in order to analyze Rokeya's work, one must answer the question of what happened to the Bengali Muslim women in colonial India. Mahua Sarkar throws light on the reception of Bengali Muslim women in colonial India in an influential essay, "Muslim Women and the Politics of (In) visibility in Late Colonial Bengal":

The representation of Muslim women as "backward/victimized" were initially related to the production of the category modern "ideal Indian women" as Hindu, upper caste/middle class and the category "Muslim" as predominantly male, violent, dissolute and "medieval" in late colonial Bengal.

It is not surprising then that until independence, the writings of Muslim women such as Rokeya and Sufia Kamal (1910-1999), who published a series of periodical, journals and articles in support for the women's cause and who by their writings altered the position of women within the precinct of their dwelling and redefined their social order, went unnoticed.

The dual colonization of women- western as well as patriarchal is spoken about at length in this poignant tale about Sultana and her journey to the 'Ladyland', a 'Utopia' which is free from the restraints of male autonomy and is like the 'Promised' land for the women on earth. The story, thus aims to 'deconstruct' the conventional parameters laid down for women and 're-cast' a feminist ideology based on liberty and equality of all women. Rokeya brings into play the trope of fantasy as a device to undermine the dominant male discourse. The story thus alters the feminine site that is related to the 'home' into the very 'nation' itself. So how does Rokeya amalgamate the two contested sites of the 'home' and the 'nation' in one path? For this, the beginning of the story is crucial in Rokeya's point of view. The most vital theme of women's position in the Indian society is hinted at in the very first line of the story: "One evening I was lounging in an easy chair in my bedroom and thinking lazily of the condition of Indian womanhood" (p.9). This line is not chance rumination about the position of women in general. It points towards the disappearing issue of womanhood that was supposed to be the fundamental question to the nationalist movement but which pressed the problem to the rear. The recurring motif in the story is the education of women in Indian society. As Barnita Bagchi states in the Introduction to the Penguin edition of the story: "It is evident from the focus of Rokeya's activities

that in *Sultana's Dream* the driving force behind the success of the utopian feminist country of Ladyland is women's education" (p. xii). Rokeya's own dream of educating Muslim women is reflected in the story itself when Sister Sara tells Sultana:

Our good queen liked science very much. She circulated an order that all the women in her country should be educated. Accordingly a number of girl's schools were founded and supported by the government. Education was spread far and wide among the women (p. 7).

Thus, Rokeya highlights the significance of female education which she thought was the key to the empowerment of women in the Bengal that she lived in. Her dream was not just for a basic education of women; she wanted women to apply their educational achievements to their lives so as to bring about an all-round development of their personalities. Rokeya challenges the notion of women's subordination within the private sphere and men's claim to political power by reversing the whole order in favour of women. She also engages with the social constructs of *zenana* and *mardana* conceived as the rightful spaces for women and men in her times. In Ladyland, it is the men who occupy all the womanly qualities, thereby being forced to move to the *zenana* whereas the women, no longer obliged to be cultural dolls and preserved for the sake of honour of the nation, are at the forefront, ready to tackle each and every obstacle with their intellect.

The discussions between Sultana and her Guide bring out the differences between gender segregation in India and the freedom enjoyed by women in Ladyland. When Sultana tells her Guide that "We have no hand or voice in the management of our social affairs. In India man is lord and master, he has taken to himself all powers and privileges and shut up the women in the *zenana*", her Guide chides, "You have neglected the duty you owe to yourself and you have lost your natural rights by shutting your eyes to your own interest." (p.5) The Guide also informs Sultana how all this was achieved by women earlier confined to the *zenana* by using their intellect in saving the country at the time of invasion when the men of the country failed. The idea of men being put into seclusion, '*zenana*' now called '*Mardana*', to perform all household chores and women engaging with matters of governance and economy, a privilege achieved as a reward of their scientific knowledge is quite radical though appropriate given the number of women in the forefront of the national movement. The radical edge of Rokeya's feminism gets foregrounded in Sister Sara's polemics, "Men, who do or at least are capable of doing no end of mischief, are let loose and the innocent women are shut up in the *zenana*!" (p.5) Do you think they work all the seven hours?" 'They dawdle away their time in smoking...they talk much about their work, but do little" (p.7) Rokeya very deftly deals with the inner outer-outer world that demarcates and distances the men and women. By inverting and using the outer world for the women, she seems to revert to and redefine the nationalist position regarding the women's question which as Partha Chatterjee has demonstrated, conceived of "the inner/outer, spiritual/material worlds as feminine/masculine respectively" and assumed that Indian womanhood represented the "inner/spiritual world of the home and therefore was burdened with

an authentic national identity. But in *Sultana's Dream*, Sister Sara boldly tells Sultana that "We shut our men indoors... They are fit for nothing. Only catch them and put them into the zenana" (pp. 5-6), thereby suggesting that in Ladyland women not only occupy the 'masculine' space but also are involved in nation formation, which is primarily attributed to the men in real life. Rokeya Sakhawat Hosain thus contests the nationalist notion of modernity borrowed from the west by redefining categories such as 'masculinity', 'nationalism' and 'tradition' and 'modernity'.

The utopian Lady land is a creation of fantasy and a question one may ask is why a writer as deeply drenched in socio-political struggles of her times as Rokeya resorted to 'fantasy', an escapist strategy in her story? To this, one may argue the element of fantasy allows Rokeya to reflect on her own ideas vis. a vis. the position of women in society and conceive and construct the ideals she firmly believed in i.e. a world free from patriarchal hegemony. Rokeya thus opens up what Freud calls "unfulfilled but possible futures to which we still like to cling in fantasy, all the strivings of the ego which adverse external circumstances have crushed, and all our suppressed acts of volition which nourishes in us the illusion of Free Will. Lady land for women becomes their true home where before the women go out for war, the men must "retire into zenanas... for the sake of honour and liberty" (p.10). Both the words are used by Rokeya as contradictory to each other, which implies that men should be kept in purdah because they are the perpetrators of 'honour' and 'liberty'. The aim of Rokeya is to awaken women from their dormant position; she makes use of the fantastical to ruminate and explain the familiar and to drive home her project of modernity. Since the story is only a dream fragment, it implies that modernity for Rokeya remains an fragmentary project and therefore the entire debate surrounding 'women's question' remains unresolved.

2. Quest for Sovereignty in the Wilderness of 'Ideal Muslim Women': Zeenuth Futehally

From the subversive textual terrain of 'Sultana's Dream', as we move on to *Zohra*, a novel by Zeenuth Futehally published in 1951, but written mostly during the final phase of the nationalist movement when nation had become almost an attainable reality, we come across a toning down of engagement with woman's question. The writer, herself hailing from the elite class, is no longer keen to challenge or subvert the social hierarchies. The freedom struggle forms a backdrop to this tale, Gandhi firing the imagination of an entire generation as in real life. But *Zohra* is not a political story in that sense. It is a love story. The novel, mostly written in the style of romance, is a *bildungsroman* as it traces the trajectory of an educated young girl Zohra's life, as she passes through phases of early marriage, motherhood, indifferent husband and romantic affiliation with a Gandhian brother-in-law. In the process it delineates life as it were in upper-class Muslim households in the princely state of Hyderabad, a place which had a stifling effect on women's lives as they were confined to the world of *zenana* and had to comply with the custom of purdah. Hyderabad is described as a city which looked like a 'replica of paradise itself' (Editor's "Introduction", *Zohra*). Much like Hossain's novella, *Zohra* is also a novel of protest, albeit of a different kind. Here also the primary thematic concerns of the novelist are more or less the same i.e. the position of Muslims in general and of Muslim women in particular in India's

social and political order, their place in the nationalist movement, and the practice of purdah, marriage, education and love.

The novel opens with the description of a young, carefree girl Zohra, who is playing on a swing with her servant Gulab. She is described as “swinging heedlessly, eyes aglow and hair disheveled” (p. 1). Her arguments with Unnie, her mother’s nurse, underline the divergence in the upbringing of girls in twentieth century. As Unnie scolds Zohra for her defiant behaviour, “In our days, girls behaved like girls...girls never entered the outer garden, not even when it was high-walled. What is the zenana courtyard for? Your mother- may Allah bless her- never dreamed of doing such things when she was your age” (p. 2). The very beginning of the novel brings to the forefront the theme of purdah and *zenana*. The banter between Unnie and Zohra reflects the generational gap between them, a gap not just in their viewpoints but also in practice, one steeped in the traditions which have been practiced since ages, and the other aiming to reject them in protest against their repression of women’s liberties. Purdah was strictly practiced by the women in the nawab’s family by the women. Zohra’s Quranic lessons were conducted in purdah, her mother and other women of the house lived within the space of zenana allotted to them in which the only male allowed were the members of the family. Zohra’s protest over her early marriage expresses her resentment at not having a say in her marriage. She contemplates: “Perhaps she could implore her parents to let her go and work with Mahatma Gandhi... And was he not bringing emancipation to the women of India, even causing a number of Muslim women to shed purdah in the zeal to work for the national cause?” (p. 35). Zohra is unable to go against the wishes of her parents and has to give up her studies, even under firm compliance with purdah and its conventions. Zohra’s home after marriage is also segregated between the *mardana* and the *zenana*, whereby women are expected to move within the precincts of purdah rather than fetching the woes of the male gaze. Bashir’s mother objects to the couple going on a honeymoon. She reprimands Bahir: “How can a new bride and bridegroom go out visiting together... this is the good that has come out of your English education... Young people have no sense of modesty left” (p. 67). While Zohra has Nalini, her Hindu friend from school who understands her sentiments, eventually she succumbs to her situations and her rebellious temperament finds expression only in the company of her husband on whom she can vent her anger.

Expectedly, education is another leading theme in *Zohra*. The protagonist-Zohra, by means of her learning and upbringing surfaces from the placard of female stereo-type and radically redefines the position of women. Zohra’s mother is reprimanded by other women (interestingly, those who have objections belong to lower/working classes as opposed to Zohra’s own feudal family) in the family for letting Zohra continue with her studies. Unnie exclaims:

Begum Sahiba, how can you allow Chotti Bibi to go on with her studies? What is she going to do with all this...Besides, I tell you this school is no place for our girls to go to. What can you expect when it is run by mems? As you know, ladies often come on the pretext of seeing the school; but owi! What have they to do with

learning? They simply come to cast an eye over the girls and select brides for their sons...

Unnie's view is that education does nothing but spoil the girl's upbringing by leading them astray and she speaks strictly against the western system of education which is useless for the girls of honourable families.

The novel also highlights the advent of modernity that had paved way for a plethora of changes in the socio-political milieu in India. Partha Chatterjee reminds us that the use of the word "modern", with its implications of progressive continuity, may well be an epithet applied to what those in an earlier age recognized more simply as the 'new'. The biggest example of this variety of modernity in the novel is Nawab Safdar Yar Jung, Zohra's father. He is presented as a picture of modernity throughout the novel. He supports Zohra all the way in her life, be it her education or the fulfillment of her wishes. The nawab and his wife are at variance in this regard with the nawab wanting to bring up his girls in a modern way and Zubaida, his wife opposing the same. When the nawab's wife rebukes him for giving Zohra the freedom to study, the nawab explains, "Her heart is set in books. You cannot snatch that away from her... It is sheer delight to read Persian with her...she is sensitive and has a delicate imagination (p.11). Along with acquiring religious education, he stresses on the importance of learning English, "English is essential these days. Though I am not a great English scholar, I know that it is the gateway to modern thought. All educated young men want their wives to speak it like the memsahibs do" (p.11). Though his wife never understands the significance of studies, the nawab is responsive to the need of Zohra, whom he calls his 'son'. Education thus becomes a gateway for Zohra to let out her volatile imagination in the form of poetry, but she is unable to find a way to make her writings public as she ponders after hearing a poetry reading, "She thought of her own writings, which she had never shown to anyone, except a few to her father."

In all this, Zohra ostensibly emerges as a projection of an ideal 'educated Muslim woman' conceived by male reformers of the likes of Nazir Ahmad, Shaukat Thanawi to whom the objective of women's education was only to facilitate them to become good mothers to their sons. Thus education may be an accomplishment for Zohra, it does not give her any kind of agency as she has been convinced about the sanctity of purdah, and brought up on doses of feminine virtues.

However, the fact that this does not make Zohra happy and the way the novel projects her inner angst and her restiveness exposes the hollowness of the ideals upheld by the Muslim male reformers. It is in this sense that *Zohra* delves into and depicts the inner mind of feminist consciousness. Zohra's mind and her psychological musings on life throw fresh light on the lives of the Muslim women who were fighting on many fronts to achieve agency and bring about change. If on the one side, they had to contend with the views and practices propagated by the Muslim social reformers, on the other they also had to engage with the perspectives upheld by the nationalist leadership which was no less complex and no less damning for women..

David Washbrook posits that “The presumed universal project of modernity expressed itself within the colonies in contradictory ways, its rhetoric and practice at great variance” These variations are played out in the relationship between Zohra, her husband Bashir and his brother Hamid and their views on education, nationalism and their approach to life. Modernity and its project is understood in a different way by the different characters in the novel. While for Zohra, modernity means equilibrium connecting the spiritual and the material, Bashir opts for modernity for his own interest; for Hamid modernity is a step towards accomplishment of independence and modernity attains another meaning for him—the blend of material and spiritual which connects him to Zohra. In *Zohra*, modernity, individuality and the nation are woven together by a common strand, that is, the quest for sovereignty: individual as well as national. All the major characters in the novel aspire to achieve freedom, be it from clichéd traditions, or from their monotonous lives, or from the repressive social customs.

While Zohra is a staunch ally of Gandhi’s principles of nationhood, Bashir speaks in favour of having a nation-state run along the lines of England and he does not trust Gandhiji’s ideology of attaining freedom. Their opposed views are reflected in a dialogue:

Bashir: We need a revolution of thought, revolution of methods, and revolution of systems...

Zohra: But isn’t Mahatma Gandhi doing that... Only, his is a new way of revolution. But it will surely lead to the regeneration of India.

Bashir: I, too, was of the same opinion when I was about your age... But frankly I have never had faith in Gandhiji’s methods (p. 68).

While these disparate views create a wedge between Zohra and Bashir, Zohra gets drawn to Hamid as their views on modernism, nationalism, love and life are posited as analogous. Bashir accepts the material benefits of borrowing from the western conception of ‘modernity’, he is not ready to accept Hamid’s views on the need to reform.

In this novel, there is a debate between Hamid, the brother-in-law of Zohra, and Bashir, her husband, about violent and non-violent methods of struggle. Hamid maintains: “Non-violence is not only best suited to our conditions but it is also the most civilised way. It is without doubt the highest form of courage, to suffer and not to hit back... Only the land of the Buddha could have produced the Mahatma...” Bashir, on the other hand, avers: “We fight in the open battlefield... This method is certainly not suited to the Muslim genius.” The debate continues with Hamid questioning terms like “Hindu genius” and “Muslim genius”, when “the majority of us are from the same stock.”

However, while the entire exchange is between the men in Zohra’s life, she remains a mute witness and though she is more in agreement with Hamid than with her husband, she offers no observations of her own.

Thus trapped between the two opposing poles of opinions, both of which upheld women’s education but denied women any ‘agency’ or space of their own, Zohra’s protracted death-bed and her final death only symbolizes a struggle that did not end with country’s independence. Zohra epitomizes a woman liberated in mind and spirit but tied down to traditions in the lived

reality, a split which the half-baked 'modernity' espoused both by the reformers as well as the nationalists with their patriarchal biases, tended to perpetrate.

3. Deconstructing Izzat/Honour Vs. Sharam/Dishonour Debate: Attia Hosain

Attia Hosain's novels and short stories are reflections of the various changes that occurred in the position of women in pre and post independence India. Her works distinctly highlight the two dominant concepts of Indian behaviour- Izzat/ honour, and sharam/ dishonour. The basic principles of Hosain's view of society, culture and art are influenced largely by the Marxist principles of the All India Progressive Writer's Association (AIPWA). As Hosain notes,

I was greatly influenced in the 30s by the young friends and relations who came back from English schools and universities as left wing activists, Communists and Congress socialists. I was at the first Progressive Writer's Conference and could be called a "fellow traveler" at the time.

The first collection of AIPWA writings, *Angarey (Embers)*, published in 1932 paved the way for free expression of women life in India. Hosain's feminist impulses were inspired by the outspoken women of AIPWA like Rashid Jahan. At the same time, Hosain's writings place economic factors as the main reason for the oppression of women.

Some of the dominant themes of Hosain's only novel, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1961) are the social life of Muslim women and the culture of belonging to a Muslim family, education among the Muslim women, and belief in purdah, treatment of the themes of love and marriage and the unequal status accorded to the women in the family. Since the novel is written after independence, it traces the evolution of the *taluqdar* family of Lucknow from pre-independence to post-independence and a variety of changes in the characters during that span of time. The novelist in order to highlight these themes makes use of comparison between the characters such as Laila who contrasts with her cousin Zahra, Asad with his brother Zahid. It is Laila, a thoughtful child who questions her family's rules and societal norms and is criticized for reading too much.

The Muslim family presented in the novel is a rich conservative family upholding the traditions of purdah which denies women the freedom to choose their future or their husbands. Purdah is treated as sanctimonious as the *sharif* women are intended to be restricted to purdah in order to preserve their modesty and chastity. Purdah gives powers as well as dis-empowers women in the novel. It becomes a symbol of patriarchy as depicted by Baba Jan, the oldest patriarch of the family, who stands for a stringent purdah system. The very first sentence of the novel highlights the centrality of purdah motif in the novel. As Laila says in first person narrative: "The day my aunt Abida moved from the *zenana* into the guest-room off the father's room, we knew Baba Jan had not much longer to live" (14). This shows the segregation between the "*mardana*" and the "*zenana*" thereby alienating the space of the females. Young men and women are not allowed to mingle and with the help of purdah, the patriarchs of the family try to control

the sexual impulses of men and women. As Hanna Papenek comments on the practice of purdah:

The institution of purdah provides symbolic shelter-and often very real shelter-for the women of the family, but what are these women being sheltered from... symbolic shelter is provided both against real dangers of a segregated world but also, and not least significantly, against the strong impulses such as sexual desire and aggression which are clearly recognized as being part of the human condition (p. 35).

The presence of male members in the zenana is disapproved by the servants of the house just like Baba Jan. Laila, the protagonist grows up in the nestled world of zenana where transgressing the boundary is considered a sin. The motif of purdah is deployed by Hosain in such a way that it's meaning keeps changing from character to character. Zahra, who acts as a foil to Laila observes purdah before marriage but after her marriage, she comes out of purdah as desired by her husband and becomes a modern wife. Similarly, aunt Saira who as Laila tells us in the novel, "Before she was married, she had lived strictly in purdah, in an orthodox, middle-class household" (p.87), gives up purdah after her marriage in compliance with the wishes of her husband.

One can posit a question here: Does coming out of purdah bring about any change in the outlook of these women? Interestingly, Hosain herself observed purdah during her stay in India before independence. The point to be noted here is that purdah or veil in itself does not fasten a woman to narrow mentality as is the generally believed. Visibility does not necessarily guarantee agency just as veil does not necessarily mean lack of agency or authority. A woman can think freely even when she observes purdah. A similar thinking is portrayed by Laila in the novel. As a child, Laila resents the purdah system which puts a restrictive eye on her vision. But as an older woman, she nostalgically thinks of the female space of the zenana. As she muses:

My life changed. It had been restricted by invisible barriers almost as effectively as the physically restricted lives of my aunts in the zenana. A window has opened here, a door there, a curtain had been drawn aside; but outside lay a world narrowed by one's field of vision. After my grandfather's death more windows had opened, a little wider perhaps, but the world still lay outside while I created my own round myself.

Amina Amin in the essay "Tension between Restriction and Freedom: The Purdah Motif in Attia Hosain's Sunlight on a Broken Column" gives a series of adjectives to describe the feminine space of seclusion in the novel. She makes use of words such as 'zenana', 'screen', 'bamboo curtain', 'curtained windows', 'curtained car', 'sheeted palanquins', 'high encircling walls' as used in the novel to depict the lives of women who have to comply with strict observation of purdah. Laila who acts as the voice of Hosain herself describes the female space as follows:

Women did not stray into the men's quarters unless they were asked to. Hakimian Bua, who had fed and nursed Laila since she had lost her parents, kept a close eye on the movements of Laila and Zahra and did not allow even Asad and Zahid, their cousins, to remain in their room after a certain hour in the day. In fact, their presence in the girls' room at any time was met with disapproval. Young Laila seems to feel a little confused about the norms of observing purdah (18).

But the scrutiny of purdah does not restrict many of the women in the novel from acquiring education. Baba Jan, the patriarch, permits Laila to have English education. Her aunt Abida is also well read in Arabic, Urdu and Persian. She is a character bound with traditions and she regrets that Laila does not follow those traditions. One can say that Hosain very dexterously combines the traditional and the modern in the novel, whether it is the matter of the veil, education, marriage, notions of freedom, nationalism, or the representation of various characters. Zahra is a character who makes an overall transformation from traditionalism to the modern world. She is a subservient girl who follows the ideals of a traditional Muslim girl before marriage. But after her marriage, she changes completely: "She was now playing the part of the perfect modern wife as she had once played the part of a dutiful purdah girl...Just as she had once said her prayers five times a day, she now attended social functions morning, afternoon and evening" (140). She becomes a perfect modern wife in compliance to her husband's wishes and chides Laila for her traditional thinking and ways of living. The two patriarchs are also caught in the complex tradition versus modernism web of life. Baba Jan stands for all that is old and traditional whereas his son Hamid emulates the western way of living to posit that he had acquired a modern lifestyle. Laila brings into view the modern qualities of Hamid's character: "His relations no longer expected him to conform to traditional patterns; and he was too self-sufficient to care for what they thought" (86). But the two are not very dissimilar as they depict the patriarchal agenda of keeping the women in control. Aunt Saira, Hamid's wife, acts as his resonance; she is 'dominated by him' and points to the differences between the two. After Saira's marriage to Hamid, Saira comes out of the strict boundaries of purdah and Hamid 'had her groomed by a succession of English "lady companions" (87). Therefore, Saira fits the role of what Partha Chatterjee calls the 'new woman'. The 'new woman' of the reform movement, he believed, 'was to be modern, but she would also have to display the signs of national tradition and therefore would be essentially different from the "Western" woman'. Hence, Saira blends the traditional and the western to appease her husband and her situation can be aptly summarized by Barbara Metcalf's observation. Metcalf points out how the Reform Movement brought about changes in the lives of Muslim women. She argued: "(w) hile the teaching of the *ulema* implicitly distinguished Muslim women from non-Muslim women; they explicitly drew the line between the proper well-brought up Muslim woman and the ignorant one". The main intention of their discourse was 'the enemy within': the unreformed, uneducated woman who did not know Islamic doctrine, was caught up in expensive and corrupting ceremonial practices, and handled badly the responsibilities of her everyday life'. Therefore, Saira is modern only superficially; underneath she is steeped in traditions and values which she was brought up with.

Thus veiling and unveiling only relates to matters of lifestyle and does not necessarily reflect empowerment. It is Laila in the novel whose education awakens her to the notions of freedom and selfhood. Laila's character, which is based on Hosain's own life, acquires western education and this brings out the rebel in her. Laila breaks the stereotyped image of docile women. Her aunt constantly chides her reading habits; her nanny says: "Your books will eat you. They will dim the light of your lovely eyes, my moon princess, and then who will marry you, owl eyed peering through glasses?" (14). Hence, the demarcation and segregation is grilled into the psyche of the women right from their early childhood. Laila, who receives liberal western education, places her happiness above her family and decides her future herself including her marriage to Amir who belongs a class lower than hers, even if that means having separate opinion from the family. Like Laila, her friend Sita too acquires western education, but that education does not give her the courage to transcend the boundaries of religion and traditions. She is unable to marry Kemal, a Muslim, and instead marries a groom chosen by her parents as she is aware that her love for Kemal would not be approved by her society. Unlike her, for Laila, marriage is not a break away or a compromise, it is her love for Ameer that gives her the strength to bear the estrangement between her and her family, as she believes her love for Ameer is pure. Laila's life, her decisions are intertwined with the life of her nation as it underwent the upheavals of the Partition. It caused not only the splitting up of the country but also the collapse of her family which once lived together. Partition leads to social, political, emotional and psychological dislocation in the novel as pointed by Sarla Palkar:

In the first place, one cannot neatly compartmentalize the personal history of Laila from the social-or national history- in fact what makes Sunlight on a Broken Column a three dimensional novel is the manner in which the personal, the social, and the national issues keep interacting and reflecting in one another.

Thus, one can say that the personal history of the protagonist is linked to the social and national history and to the partition of the country. Here too she displays her free will as she chooses to stay back in India even as Uncle Hamid dies; aunt Saira lives in Hasanpur; Zahid, Asad's brother dies on a train to Pakistan; Zahra too leaves for Pakistan. Vrinda Nabar points out, Laila, Asad and Kemal (all Muslim characters who remain in India after partition), are important in the context of independence and the period following, because they debunk fundamentalist distortions about the Hindu-Muslim divide. While it would be simplistic to pretend that irrational suspicion and hatred do not colour attitudes on either side of the border, significantly large number of Indian Muslims think of India as 'home', a choice made without any apparent mental conflict.

Hence, the character delineation by Hosain is done in such a way as to portray a wide range of round characters that constantly trigger the sensibilities of the readers and push questions of modernity such as education, purdah, marriage, gender asymmetry in the Muslim society and the boundaries between the public and private sphere of identity, individuality, modernity and the nation to the forefront rather than sidelining them in the midst of Laila's love

story and the trajectory of her evolution into a resistant female. The novel of Hosain is not just an autobiographical narrative; it is an intervention, a narrative of resistance by a Muslim woman writer who carved a literary niche for herself in times when the woman's question was not engaged with reflexively owing to the backwardness of women in socio-political and educational field.

Conclusion

The entire nineteenth and early twentieth century, driven by the imperial agenda of its colonial masters, engaged with the issues pertaining to women's situation in Indian society. While the Reform Movements including those led by the Muslim Reformers readily embraced ideals of colonial modernity, the 'Nationalist Movement' found a way out by creating the Inner/Outer, Spiritual/Material divide and partially accepting the Western ideals concerning women. But as has been discussed, both these approaches were mired in the patriarchal biases. The significance of the three women novelists discussed above lies in the fact that by problematizing all patriarchal representations of women, they provided new literary tools to address post-postcolonial Muslim identity. Refusing to abide by the patriarchal, Islamist, Reformist or Nationalist representation of women and yet not rejecting their Muslim identities, these writers lived oscillating lives, yet continually battled for superiority and self-assertion. Their writings offer possibilities of alternative modernity where all assumptions, perceptions and presuppositions can be challenged and their identities both as Muslims and as 'women' can be accommodated.

Trade and Commerce: A Study on Contribution of Muslim Women

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Abstract:

Advent of Islam brought a fresh air of independence and relief to the womenfolk, who otherwise around the world and especially in the Arab region were subjugated lots. Despite of Islam propagating equality of men and women, the area of trade and commerce has been devoid of Muslim women at large. Further, the Mamluk, Safavid and Ottoman documents show that Muslim women were engaged in many kinds of trade and they managed business. Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) himself promoted women in various spheres of activities, trade and commerce was one of them; his own wife being one of the biggest traders of that time is the testimony to the fact. The present paper explores through secondary sources to assert why Muslim women are left behind in this sphere of activity and what their problems are. The paper also explores that though Muslim women are there in many trades, but their contribution largely goes unnoticed and unacknowledged.

Though initial review of literature does indicate that like for instance in Kelantan region of Malaysia, street markets are dominated by Muslim women traders, or for instance in Kuwait or Indonesia, there are women in trade and business, but still they are underrepresented if we take up the scenario as a whole. In India and many other countries Muslim community due to lack of education have not encouraged their girls to get educated, explore employment opportunities and engage themselves in trade and commerce.

The paper concludes with the findings of the research, which emphasize the contribution of the Muslim women in trade and commerce down the ages to the contemporary times and also their marginalization in this field. The paper also recommends how society, government and Muslim women, being women, with their will power, emotional strength, sense of crisis management at home, and their ability to plan, organize, direct, coordinate, and budget, which are very important functions of management, can manage trade and commerce and face the problems thereof.

Key Word: Trade, Commerce, Contribution, Muslim, Women

1. Introduction

Islam as a religion has been a great force for the uplift of the women folk; it has truly liberalized women, if we compare the women of Arab and other regions before and after the advent of Islam. From subjugation, women became independent, thanks to the philosophy of Islam and its Prophet. Women in Islam are treated as equal to men in spiritual as well as other aspects of life. It can be ascertained as according to Turabi (1991), in teaching and instructing the Muslims, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to address both men and women together (p. 22). Additionally, we find that women are recognized in Islam as independent legal entity, who can run a business. Further it states that men and women are equal and a woman can work outside their home and contribute to family income as stated by Khan (2003, p. 226). Therefore women are free to engage in business and commerce (Turabi, op.cit., p. 22). Even the first wife of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) was a business woman herself (Hussain, 1984, p. 5).

Idris and Shahadan (1991) give the view of holy Quran as stated in Surah An-Nisa: 32, which assert that Muslim women can also work, as the essence of this verse is that the livelihood, earning and well being of men and women are based on their efforts. Work is an effort through which one can obtain earning. Further it states that work is based on one's talents, abilities, culture and environment. Women were never forbidden from trading in Islam. During the Prophet Muhammad's time there were many well known women traders like Umm al-Munzir binti Qays, Asmah binti Makhzemah bin Jandal and during the rule of Saidina Omar, a woman trader Al-Shifa binti Muawiz was elected "commandant" of Medinah market. We find that in Malaysia Muslim women work freely and voluntarily (p. 122-123).

Keddie (2007) has observed in the Mamluk, Safavid and Ottoman periods in the history of Turkey that documents show Muslim women controlled significant amount of money, engaged in many kinds of trade and managed businesses. Moreover, secluded women sometimes used agents to conduct businesses. Women were active in property management and speculation and in providing capital for trade, business and construction (p. 57). Joseph & Najmabadi (2005) site in their work about educated Muslim women in USA that many were actively involved in small businesses, many of which are run from home (p. 149). In many cases, these women are central to the survival of the small ethnic entrepreneurial businesses, not playing second fiddle to their husband.

Nevertheless, the review of relevant literature pertaining to equality and the contributions made by Muslim women in trade and commerce suggest that they are marginalized lots in India as well as other parts of the world. According to Hasyim (2006) equality within Islam does not exist or work in daily practical life. Certain Islamic discourses also promote slogans that are against efforts to empower women, certain groups of people asserting

Islam's rejection of equality between men and women, Islamic fundamentalism being an example of such groups (p. 14). Furseth & Repstad note the observation of Riffat Hassan, an Islamic feminist of Indo-Pakistan origin who claimed that the negative attitude pertaining to women in Muslim societies are because of theological assumption that man is the origin of creation, women are defined temptresses and that women are created as means for men (p. 181).

If we take the case of India, in the medieval period, whose manifestations are also felt today, it was found that due to *pardah* system (veil) Muslim women were abstained from public life. The education in medieval as well as the British times for most of the Muslim women remained with the privileged few. In the late nineteenth century only .86% of the Muslim girls were attending recognized schools and no one had passed matriculation examination in either Bombay or Madras. According to a study in 1901-2 only 4 out of 100000 Muslim girls were secondary students.

Devoid of national or visionary leadership, political opportunism of Muslim males who claimed to represent the community combined with the failure of the state programmes to alleviate the socio-economic status of the Muslim women, left them economically and educationally improvised. The situation of women is further compounded with the fact that there is lack of data on Muslim communities in India on socio-economic conditions, with very few studies on economic profiles (Kazi, 1999).

Khan (2004) has stated that there are multiple causes responsible for bad condition of Muslim women particularly in northern and eastern parts India. Reasons are not exclusive and reflect the fused, overlapping and historical character of socio-cultural and economic life patterns of Indian society. Roy (1979) looks into the status of Muslim women of North India in historical and sociological perspective. According to her Islam is the controlling vision of the world Muslim community and the Indian Muslims are no exception. Their behaviour patterns are determined by Islamic world-view and value-system.

The situation is not good internationally also as according to Keddie (2005) in the Middle East, extreme economic necessities only force women to earn, as compared to Japan and Europe where situation is quite different for the women (p. 87).

2. Objectives

Objectives of the study were:

1. To ascertain what Islamic philosophy talks about its women taking up various trade and commerce related activities and their participation thereof.
2. To understand the profiles of Muslim women in trade, commerce, business and entrepreneurial endeavor.

3. To analyze available literature on the issue.
4. To know and recognize Muslim women's contribution in different trade and commerce activities.
5. Problems faced by Muslim women around the world engaged in various trades, commerce and business related activities with special emphasis on the Muslim women in developing countries.
6. To recommend suggestions for improvement of the status of Muslim women vis-à-vis trade and commerce.

3. Review of Literature

The participation of Muslim women in the social and economic spheres is inadequate vis-à-vis their female counterparts in other religious communities. White (1978) reports "In comparison with other major culture areas, the Muslim majority countries of the world have low rate of reported economic activity by women, low female literacy at all levels". He further notes that illiteracy, ignorance, male domination and traditional beliefs have been stumbling blocks to the progress of the Muslim women in India.

Jain (1988) in an empirical study of the Muslim women in Jaipur city throws light on the perception of Muslims regarding issues like employment, education, and control of household finances etc. She tried to find out whether the process of modernization in India has brought a change in the status of Muslim women. The trends shown in the study are that Muslim women are favourably disposed towards economic independence. It was observed that 66.7% women were of the opinion that employment of women is good in contemporary situation, the opinion gradually increased in frequency in the young age category respondents. The study concluded that only education of Muslim women can be instrumental in ameliorating their economic and socio-political condition.

In a study on women by Standing (1991), she found that the *biri* workers (Muslim), were dissatisfied with wage rates rather than employment itself reflecting community's preference for home based work. It also found that home based workers like tailors were dissatisfied with their jobs because of the constraints of the domestic responsibilities.

Ahmad (1996) in a comparative study on Hindu and Muslim women found that social background play an important role in determining women's access to education and her subsequent employment. Major findings of the study were that majority of the working women came from those families in which the father was educated, there was no significant difference between the Hindu women and the Muslim women in so far educational background of their parents is concerned. More Muslim respondents in the study came from prestigious occupational background than Hindu women and more Muslim women come from comparatively economically better off families than Hindu women.

Hussain (1998) in her study on attitude and aspirations of Muslim women towards employment in Darbhanga, India concluded that the Muslim women, though comparatively less in number, are entering into different fields of employment in spite of social hindrances. Most of the women under study have negated the idea of women working outside home in any gainful or respectful job as un-Islamic. At the same time they emphasized that when they go out for work they must not put such dress which reveals their charm. The respondent felt that in today's socio-economic situation women should help their husband economically, socially and emotionally in running the family and for providing better education to children and that the men must support the women in carrying out both the duties.

Jan (1998) in her study concluded that Islam has given women the rights which no other religion has given. Due to lack of proper knowledge of Shariah (Muslim Law) as well as wrong practices largely deviating from the true Islamic teachings wrong notions exist about Muslim women. Adequate knowledge about the Islamic view point and this knowledge was advocated in the study to reassess women's role in the light of new changes and new situations.

Rahman (1998) in her paper "Status of women in Islam" concluded that Muslim women are beginning to express an independent opinion in agreement with modern needs and are pressing for a reconsideration and re-statement of social legislation in their favour. Rahman further observes that a great number of Muslim women continue to be uneducated, exploited and unaware of their legal rights, education being important for some measure of economic independence.

In a study based on a sample from Pakistan's Punjab Province and from two Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, indicate that women's autonomy—in terms of decision making, mobility, freedom from threatening relations with husband, and access to and control over economic resources is highly constrained. Findings suggest that South Asian women are largely excluded from family decision making, they have limited access to, and exercise limited control over resources; their freedom of movement is severely constrained (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001).

In a study of predominantly Bengali Muslim women in Bangladesh, findings are that they are actively involved in the *biri* making work, of course they also do household work. Women and their children are often vulnerable as their able bodied male household members migrate to cities for work. The study recommends involvement of women in nonfarm income generating activities to take care of Monga affected community. Monga is particular periods in the agricultural calendar of Bangladesh where people are trapped in phenomenon of poverty and hunger (Neeti Gobeshona Kendro, 2007).

A study by Sarikhani (2008) based on population census in 2001, with the objective of investigating Muslim women's work participation in India found a wide gap between the

works participation rate of males and females. A significant part of Muslim women were recorded as unskilled work sources in the country.

Kazi op. cit. discusses Muslim women's position in India along with the political, socioeconomic and legal position. The research emphasizes the complex diversity of women in Muslim communities and the range of factors influencing their status. Muslim women's contribution within the women's movement is also discussed. The findings of the study suggest Muslim women have the lowest work participation rate (WPR) as compared to Hindu and Christian women among the 3 categories of work like self employment, regular workers and casual workers (11.4% is the WPR), according to The National Sample Surveys, 43 round, 1987-88, schedule 10. The study recommends improvement in reforms, constitutional provisions, economic status, education removing social prejudice (p. 1-38).

Roomi (2009) conducted a study on women owned enterprises in Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Statistical analyses and in-depth interviews confirmed that women entrepreneur's in Pakistan, whose social conditions are not very different from India vis-à-vis Muslim women, personal resources and social capital, have a significant role in their business growth. The study further discovers that moral support of immediate family, independent mobility, and being allowed to meet with opposite gender play a decisive role in both sales and employment growth of women owned enterprises in an Islamic country like Pakistan.

There is a well developed amount of literature on female entrepreneurs in developed nations, which is not true for developing economies and particularly so in case of Muslim women. A research by McIntosh & Islam (2010) which uses a survey of 180 women entrepreneurs in Bahrain to examine the influence of various socio-economic factors on their decision to choose entrepreneurial careers was done. Major finding which emerged was that women who abided by Islamic customs were accepted in a typically male-dominated business world.

4. Methodology

To collect the data, present study employs secondary data sources such as articles, research papers, published in national and international journals. Besides, books and reports by various scholars, sociologists, social scientists, government agencies and management experts showing figures related to census and data on work, employment, trade, business, commerce and entrepreneurship among the Muslim women from around the world were utilized. The government documents like Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India, popularly known as the Sachar Committee Report has an overbearing influence on the present paper. References of such material from other countries were pertinent keeping in mind objectives of the study and also as Islam and Muslim women are present at the international level. The library material for related

literature was collected from Zakir Hussain Library, Jamia Millia Islamia (A Central University) and internet databases and bibliographies. Researches done among Muslim women contributing in a range of trade and commerce related activities form the base of conducting the present study.

5. Major Findings

5.1. Profile of Muslim women in various Trade and Commerce related activities

Muslim women are overwhelmingly self-employed (engaged in home-based work) in India. Sewing, embroidery, *zari* work, *chikan* work, readymade garments, *agarbatti* rolling, *beedi* rolling are some of the occupations in which Muslim women workers are concentrated. There is high share of Muslim women workers engaged in self-employment activity like in own account worker in household enterprise 29.1% and employer in household enterprise 0.7% (higher than Hindus). As compared to all other socio religious groups, a much larger proportion of Muslims (both men and women) work in self-owned proprietary enterprises. This is particularly so in urban areas. Participation of women workers in women-owned proprietary enterprises is significantly higher for Muslims (13.7%). However, as enterprises of Muslim women are mainly home-based, they are typically engaged in sub contracted work with low levels of earnings. Clustering of Muslim women in home based work raises issues about spatial mobility and other work related constraints for them. Traditional barriers, in many cases, still prevent women from going out of their homes to work, limiting the scope of work women can undertake and they often get into very exploitative subcontracting relationships. Moreover, women with responsibility for household duties (including childcare), find it difficult to work outside their homes or areas of residence (Government of India [GOI], 2005, p. 95, 96). Participation of women Muslim workers in PSUs or with the government is the least among all socio religious groups both in urban and rural area.

Muslim women are also significantly engaged in sectors like manufacturing (especially manufacture of tobacco products and manufacture of textiles and textile products like wearing apparel) and wholesale and retail trade as compared to Hindus and other groups. Among urban female workers also, the probability of undertaking regular work is the lowest for the Muslim workers. As far as the occupation groups are concerned, compared to other socio religious groups Muslim females are engaged as sales workers, production and related workers, transport equipment operators and laborers (GOI, 2005).

Azim (1997) in her study “Muslim Women : Emerging Identity” points out that the Muslim community, in the name of religion, has developed certain notions about women’s employment, and shows that there is no inherent contradiction between the two. The study identifies education as one of the decisive factors in sensitizing Muslim men and women.

5.2. Problems of Muslim Women engaged in different Trades and Commerce

Muslim women are engaged in array of trades and commerce related activities, but they have many problems to face. Being women it is their dual responsibility, to take care of work and also at the same time they are expected to take care of their homes. For instance according to Littrell (2010) women artisan have to do daily work like prayer, stockpiling water, child care and other household tasks but if these things are taken care, than they can engage themselves in gainful activities such as trade or craft. Besides the household work, the women who work encounter economic exploitation like low wages. The plight of a Muslim woman can be judged by the case of Amina Huq, a Bengali Muslim *biri* worker, who faces discrimination in wage rates, on virtue of being a woman as discussed by Standing (1985, p. 252).

Abidi (1986) in the case study based research of Muslim women weavers in a village of Eastern Uttar Pradesh, India draws attention on problems faced by Muslim women weavers in the home-based textile industry. The study concludes that women were engaged in weaving activity for 6 to 8 hours a day and at least 1 to 3 hours in winding process along with doing household chores like child care, animal husbandry, cooking for family, etc. Although women weavers carried out the whole responsibility of textile weaving, they did not get any important place in family like decision-making or power to spend money on their own. Their position in the textile industry is very low and the factors responsible for their backwardness are use of *pardah*, restrictions on outside moments, lack of education, marriage, procreation and capital deficiency among others.

Bhatt (2006) discusses the plight of women workers engaged in the embroidery work. She says that the traders are well aware of women's desperation to sell the embroidery work as they have no cushion to wait for a better price as ready cash is of unparalleled value in tough times (p. 147). Worst still among the problems which women face like those working in the brick-kilns of Bihar is sexual exploitation. Of course the problems discussed above are not Muslim centric only, but are faced by all the women, but as the present study is on the Muslim women, it is tried to focus on their issues only.

Wilkinson-Weber & Clare (1999) in their in depth study of *chikan* embroidery industry in Lucknow notes that Muslim women have very few job opportunities and embroidery work is their only source of income (p. 120). For Muslim women traders that have female seclusion and sexual segregation practices, market ignorance prevails in this trade.

The work conditions of Muslim women are characterized by low income, poor work conditions, absence of toilet and crèche facilities, lack of social security benefits like health insurance and the absence of bargaining power. In several states home-based industry has virtually collapsed leaving poor Muslim women spiraling downwards to penury. The distinct pattern of Muslim women's employment in home-based work is in part due to discrimination

in formal employment. In part, it is due to the vicious cycle of poverty, lack of education and technical skills, leading to low-skilled, low income work, and back again to poverty. Muslim women are unable to bargain for better work conditions because much of the work they do is sub-contracted. This restriction of mobility (based on social and cultural factors) restricts their employment opportunities and wages. They do not have independent access to credit facilities, opportunities for skill up-gradation, or access to markets. There is active discrimination in giving Muslim women credit facilities it was pointed out (GOI, 2005).

There is increasing ghettoisation of poor Muslims (Abidi et. al., 2009). This leads to the seclusion of home-based female workers, cutting them off from channels of communication and hindering their ability to organize into collectives. Many home-based workers are so low down in the assembly line of production that they operate entirely through middlemen and do not even know who their employer is. Muslim women have minimal participation in Government micro-finance programmes such as Self Help Groups (SHGs), Watershed Programmes and Panchayati Raj (GOI, 2005, p. 22).

Suwaij (2008) notes that Islamist ideologues are fond of citing the example of Khadija, Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) first wife, who was an accomplished businesswoman. She analyses that interest in Khadija and Muhammad's relationship is primarily for how it highlights "complimentary" roles, rather than equality for women business executives. Suwaij further points out the problem of Arab businesswomen in contemporary scenario is that today they would have to travel with *mahram* (male relative chaperone) on business; could not be alone in a room with the head of General Motors—on account of him being a male and a non-Muslim; she would require the consent of a male relative to travel. Ironically, if she were to enter into a commercial disputation with a male businessman, it appears her testimony would be worth only half of the man's in court. The Islamist vision thus curtails the potential of women executives and entrepreneurs according to her (p. 7).

5.3. The Positive Aspects of Muslim Women in Trade and Commerce

It is not that the problems cannot be tackled. On a brighter side, another story of a Muslim woman Jahan Ara of Netrakona, Bangladesh is that she was making a living as a *biri* maker but her aspirations were to have better living, that she could teach her children, herself read letters from her parents, avoid being cheated by shopkeepers, read signs and addresses in the city and understand her passbook. Micro credit or loans and savings as demonstrated in by Nessa & Mazumdar (1998) have helped Muslim women like her run small businesses, keeping accounts, understand alternative ways of improving her economic status and monitoring profits. She now feels confident and her economic conditions have improved.

On a brighter side Essers & Benschop (2009) have talked about how female entrepreneurs of Moroccan and Turkish origin in the Netherlands construct their ethnic, gender and

entrepreneurial identities in relation to their Muslim identity. It further elaborates that Muslim women entrepreneurs have resisted traditional, dogmatic interpretations of Islam to gain agency at the crossroads of gender, ethnicity and religion.

People in Muslim community (especially women) belonging to well endowed households (e.g., large landowners), may not participate in the workforce because there is no compelling economic need to do so. Given the endowments if the work available is not of the kind which a person prefers, s/he may not work. These work preferences are a function of a variety of factors, social, cultural and economic. Moreover, non-availability of employment may result in situations that people (especially women) withdraw from the labour force, which is called “discouraged worker effect”. The low aggregate work participation ratios for Muslims are essentially due to much lower participation in economic activity by women in the community (GOI, 2005, p.89).

Further we find that work participation rate for Muslim women is 25% as compared to upper-caste Hindu households, where there may be socio-cultural constraints to women’s work. In rural areas, while about 70 per cent of the Hindu women participate in the workforce only about 29 per cent of the Muslim women do so. The lower participation of women in rural areas is partly explained by the fact that Muslim households (and hence women) are less likely to be engaged in agriculture. The situations of WPRs for Muslim women in urban areas are even lower (18%), presumably because work opportunities for women within the household are very limited. Such opportunities may be somewhat higher in rural areas with ownership (though limited) of land making participation of Muslim women somewhat higher in these areas.

6. Conclusion

Wrapping up the present study the observation and review of relevant literature and studies conducted on Muslim women suggest that Islam as a philosophy per se is not against its women working or engaging themselves or contributing their worth in trade and commerce related activities. Many prominent Muslim women down the ages have been involved in various occupation and vocation which have allowed them to come out of their homes. Around the world they have had control over wealth, had proprietary control over their businesses, besides they were also employed in professions owned by others.

Nevertheless due to the limitation of education and the societal pressures arising out of wrong interpretation of Islamic teachings, Muslim women in many societies have been discouraged to contribute to trade and commerce and allied areas leading to their low work participation rate (WPR). Even those women who out of economic necessities are working faced problems as they had to cater to the dual responsibilities of managing their work as well as managing their homes and other domestic responsibilities.

Additionally, Muslim women, not necessarily due to their religious affiliation but due to the fact that they being women are faced with discrimination vis-à-vis payment of wages, they not been able to connect with formal channels of communication and marketing, thereby playing in the hands of middlemen who exploit the situation. Muslim women also do not get their due share of recognition for their efforts at societal and governmental level. Nonetheless the study also finds that in societies where Muslim women were able to assert themselves, they have got their proper due like for instances the female entrepreneurs of Moroccan and Turkish origins. Consequently there is a need of proper education in the Muslim society and empowerment efforts aimed at Muslim women so that they are able to excel in various trade and commerce activities and contribute their worth to the fullest. Recommendations on those lines are discussed below.

7. Recommendation

Efforts to increase Muslim women participation in trade and commerce are necessary. The government should directly give contract to Muslim women for jobs to reduce their reliance on middlemen. Separate financial institutions and self help groups (SHGs) for Muslim women entrepreneurs should be provided by government. The socio-economic-cultural aspirations of the Muslim women are not very different from those of women from other socio-religious groups. There should be more institutional based studies in reference to Muslims women for their contributions in trade and commerce by the governments across the world and the the problems thereof should be immediately identified and addressed.

Civil society and NGOs should come forward and work on the issue for this neglected section of the society. Government should immediately make a comprehensive plan to tackle various socio-economic-cultural issues of Muslims by removing their apathy and introducing programmes, schemes and facilities. In planning and implementing development schemes the participation of the local community, including Muslims and other marginalized groups, must be ensured.

The Muslim community leaders should be made aware of the problems concerning the women so that they can exert their influence on the community for the positive developments. Civil society and NGOs should come forward and act as a pressure group on the government to get the aspirations of the Muslim women fulfilled. Misconception on issues related to trade and commerce vis-à-vis women in Islam should be removed and factual message should be spread in the community as well as in other community that Islam gives equal rights to men and women to acquire knowledge. Dialogue on Muslim women's issues in relation to work also needs to be initiated with the media, politicians, bureaucrats, and non-governmental organizations. Setting up dedicated agencies to look after these needs of Muslim women by the Government is an urgent requirement. The government should take immediate steps for socioeconomic empowerment of Muslim women.

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Women as Invisible Workers in Household: A Case Study of Kashmir Valley

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Introduction

The prosperity and growth of a family, community or a nation depends on the welfare and wellbeing of women. Women constitute about half of the total world population and are considered as the cardinal stone on which the main structure of the society rests. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has estimated that sometimes women's work could be longer than men's work by as much as 43 per cent.¹ Rao, an eminent Indian economist concluded that if women were paid for the domestic work and childcare their wages could account for half of the National Income (Rao, 1988).² The International Labour Organization (ILO) noted that the value of unpaid household work constitutes over 25 per cent of the Gross National Product (GNP) in the developing Countries. Malathy, estimated money value of household services done by women, which was almost 42 per cent of the family income. He also reported that value of household services constituted about 47 per cent of National Domestic Product (NDP), (Malathy, 1988).³

This paper attempts to analyse the role of women in household activities of a tradition bound society of Kashmir Valley. The main objectives of the study are:

- To evaluate the role of women in household chores.
- To analyse the various household activities and time devoted to them by women.
- To identify the help provided by the male members of the family.

Kashmir Valley has a unique geographical setting. It is an oval shaped synclinal basin about 150 kilometres long and 42 kilometres wide, with a floor situated in the Jhelum flood Plain 1585 metres (5,200 feet) above the sea level. This fertile Plain of Jhelum is surrounded on all sides by high mountains with height ranging from 3,900 to 5,400 metres above the sea level. Its south and south-west border is formed by the Pir-Panjal Range where as the Great Himalayas and North Kashmir Ranges make its north and north-eastern boundary, thus cutting it off from the frost bitten desert plateau of Ladakh. The slope of these mountains are drained by a number of tributaries which later meet the main stream of Jhelum.

On the basis of topographic features, altitude, slope, climate etc., the region is divisible into the following physiographic divisions:

1. The Valley Floor
2. The Karewas

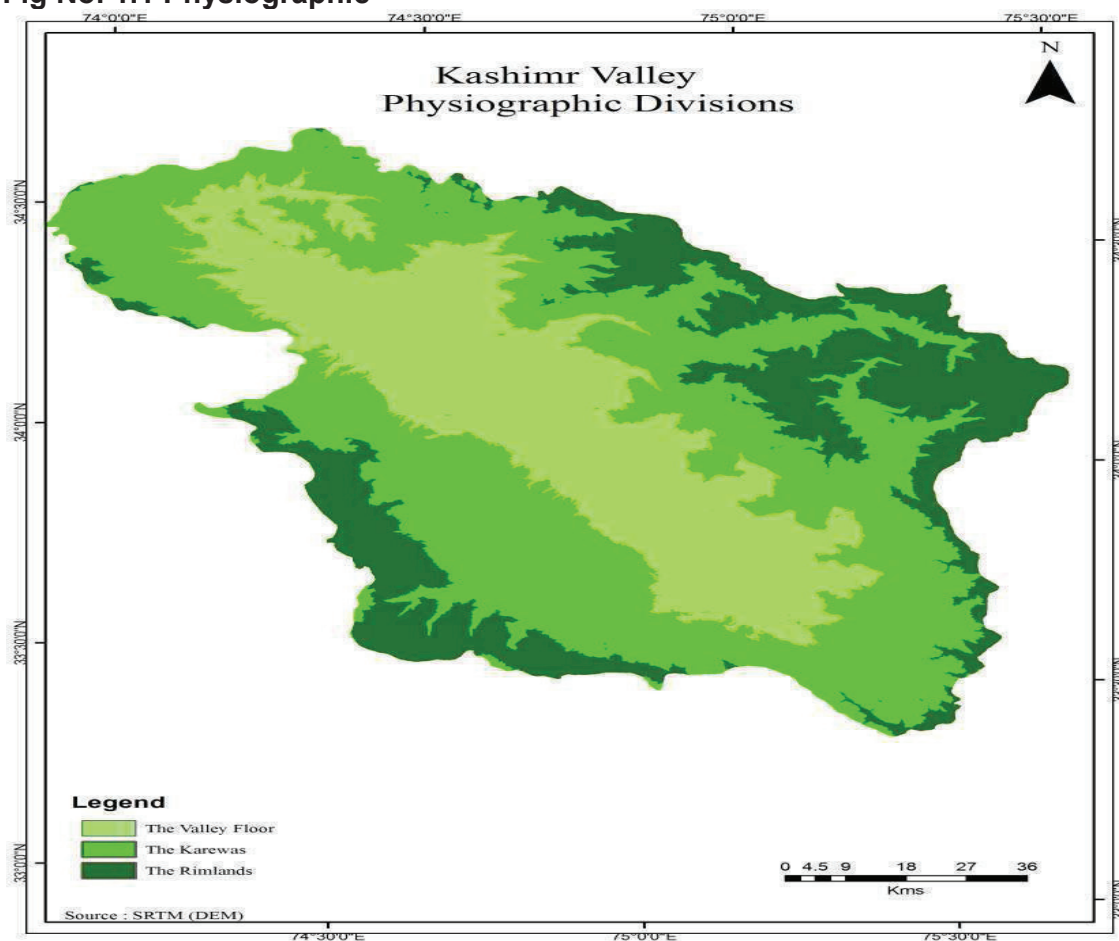
3. The Rimlands

The Valley Floor is a plain tract extending from the banks of the Jhelum and its tributaries which have laid down alluvial deposits in it and made it the most fertile agricultural zone of the Valley. The plain has a slope from south-east to north-west direction. Here river Jhelum flows in a zigzag path giving rise to a number of meanders. During floods the Jhelum overflows its banks and deposits huge quantities of recent alluvium on both sides. Many low-lying patches of the floor are marshy and waterlogged which are locally called as *Nambals*. In spite of their fertile soil, they are practically useless because of water logging. An area of 4865 square kilometres is mainly composed of fertile recent alluvium and constitutes an asset for agriculture.

The Karewas (*Wudars*) are low flat mounds or elevated plateaus and are distributed throughout the Valley. Karewas are composed of blue, grey, and buff silts and sand of lacustrine origin which have been intermixed with conglomerate and terminal moraines. The Karewas exhibits a varied type of topography. Towards the western half of the Valley, the Karewas on the foot hills of Pir Panjal are highly dissected and undulating where as in the lower peripheries they are almost horizontal. In eastern half of the Valley, most of the Karewas are of great significance for their agricultural intensity and land use pattern.

The Rimlands or *Kandi* areas are forested and high snow clad mountains surrounding the Valley. They rise above the altitude of 3500 metres. The lower parts are thickly forested with conifers in north and deciduous on Pir Panjal in south and south-west. The upper peripheries are devoid of any vegetational cover and remain under perennial snow which provides water to all the streams of the region and hence regarded as the source of the life in the valley.

Fig No. 1.1 Physiographic



Divisions of Kashmir Valley

The primary survey was conducted in 12 villages of all the three physiographic divisions of Kashmir Valley, four villages in Rimlands or *Kandi* areas, four in Karewas and four in Valley Floor, in order to know the situation throughout the Kashmir Valley. The household schedules were prepared for this purpose and information collective.

Kashmiri Women have been playing a vital role in indoor as well as in outdoor activities. But the pivotal role played by them in the process of development of the society and nation has not been recognised fully as in the case of other women. The most basic struggle of women revolves around their efforts to get enough to eat for their families and for themselves and procuring the most basic necessities of life such as food, water, fuel, fodder, shelter and clothing. This struggle is made even more grim because as women they have very little control over the conditions and products of their labour. They have almost no say in deciding who gets how much of the family's meagre resources. For most men, even poor men, struggle does not take the same implications as for the women. For men, struggle is generally confined to the workplace, while home and leisure offer a contrast. Whereas for almost every woman, like her work, struggle too seems to occupy her entire life. For women- there is no clear division in their work and leisure, in paid and unpaid work, in work and non-work relations. A good deal of women's work remains invisible. The under estimation of women's work and contribution results partly the economist's traditional view of time utilization pattern into 'wage employment' and 'leisure'. Such a framework ignores the economic value of goods and services that women produce within the household concerning particularly to food preparation, child and animal care, housekeeping etc.

Housework is an activity performed by women within their own houses. According to Oakley, "it differs from most other work in three significant ways; it is private, it is self defined-family based roles which define the situation of women as well as the situation of the housewife"⁴. House work is considered as totally non-productive work because it is just family work which has only use value and no exchange value.

Lenin's definition of housework given so many years ago is as pertinent today as it was in his time. Lenin said, "Housework is the most unproductive, the most barbarous and the most arduous work a woman can do. It is exceptional, petty and does not include anything that would in any way promote the development of the women"⁵.

Another researcher, Margery Spring Rice, who conducted a study of British housewives in the Great Depression, underlined the enormity of the burden that women were forced to carry through their role as 'housewife'. She writes, "--- in the large majority of homes, the woman is the slave without whose labour the whole structure of the family tends to collapse". All these definitions bring out that housework is a global problem for the universal women. It is essential to our social and economic structure of which the family is the basic unit⁶. The housework has no fixed hours, no holiday and no pay and it is done almost exclusively by women.

In the west, however, it is quite ironical that housework began to be calculated in monetary terms after a number of law-suits were filed by men for compensation of the loss of a wife's services. Various methods were employed in the estimation of the value of housework. The value of its production has been estimated at 25 to 40 per cent of the measured GNP in industrialized countries⁷.

In India, where as the invisibility of women's work and her consequent powerlessness has been recognised by feminist scholars, no serious attempt appears to have been made in estimating the value of housework in monetary terms. Economists do realise that housework adds to welfare and is as productive as the activities carried out in the market sector, yet they have not arrived at an acceptable method of evaluating it for the purpose of including it in the national income estimates. Brooman observes, "By cooking, cleaning and baby tending, households render valuable services, logically these should be treated as production and included in aggregate output. But it seems impossible to set proper money value on them, so for the lack of information, this form of production is omitted in calculation of the nation's output"⁸. According to Clermont, the value of housewife's services is the largest single item missing in national income accounting among other things⁹. Murphy confirms that, "among the many activities excluded from official GNP statistics, non- market household production ranks, quantitatively at least as one of the more important"¹⁰. Thus it is imperative that this housework be quantified and evaluated in monetary terms. But if housework is considered as productive work then it has to be deprivities. According to Nona-Glazer, if the family as a unit of production is deprivities then the emphases in analysing family relationship shifts from the husband – wife relationships to the institutions outside the family that affect the relationship within it. It is this radical shift in the perspective of housework that brings into focus the relative invisibility of women and also gives recognition to housework as work and calls for estimating its value in terms of productive labour¹¹.

Housework is traditionally attached to women in all societies. According to prevailing family role norms in India, household duties are regarded as the sole responsibility of the housewife. She is expected to be competent in cooking, in keeping house clean, in washing clothes, in looking after children, entertaining guests, and visitors etc. All these constitute a heavy work load for her. In India 63 percent of all adult women

are engaged in housework which roughly includes 8 years of their average life span of 50 years within the kitchen alone. In the home, therefore even by the standards of the western male ideology, housework is the primary occupation of women who identify mainly as wives and mothers¹². Even after doing all this she is considered as a dependent. Why is it that the important work of women in 'domestic work' – finds no place anywhere as work? The contribution to the national income of these services that women render free, ranges between 1/4th to 1/3rd of national income. Yet a woman is regarded as dependent. The moment marriage breaks down; she is left without support from the very home that she helped built with blood. A woman who neglects her household duties becomes an object of ridicule. A girl in India is socialized in this manner from very childhood. The earlier conditioning of the girl child through psychological brain-washing and socialisation processes, which clearly outline the difference between 'boy's work' and 'girl's work', 'boy's play' and 'girl's play' 'boy's toys' and 'girl's toys' and so on, help in women themselves turning up to become strong and militant advocates of the importance of the mother wife role in a women's life.

In India, husband is superior and the wife is his subordinate. The entire role complex in family about their relationship is based on this hierarchy. It is but natural that the husband who enjoys superior status in the family is reluctant to do housework which carries low prestige as well as which is considered as women's job.¹³ Although it requires knowledge of management and skill to perform the tasks related to house work, yet it is low status work.

In the case of employed women, new additional role is added to her existing roles as housewife and mother thus she is subjected to plurality of role expectations which are mutually incompatible. So the employed women are subjected to role conflict, unless and until certain changes conducive for resolving her role conflict must occur in her familial situation or in her work role outside.

Women in peasant households show a higher rate of participation in agricultural work, the burden of house work still falls on their shoulders. In the spare time they are involved in some activities of household industries. The prevalence of these multiple standards is a legacy of continued observance of patriarchal values which consciously keep women from exercising a direct control over the family resources.

In developing agrarian societies such as that of India, housework can be quite arduous, monotonous and isolating since it is performed and utilized within the household. Kashmir Valley is not an exception to this. Modern labour saving devices have revolutionized the kitchen in Western Countries and have proved a real bone to house-wives. But in India in general and in Kashmir Valley in particular, the modern labour and energy saving tools of home making are not affordable by masses. The traditional time consuming monotonous tiresome patterns of household chores are followed.

In the surveyed villages of Kashmir Valley, women are inevitably involved in housework i.e., cleaning, sweeping, cooking, washing, maintaining houses, child care; other persons care along with or without being economically active. In the absence of labour saving devices, paid domestic labour is the only available remedy to reduce the drudgery of such work. Among the medium and small scale self cultivating peasant households this facility is also not available because of the lack of resources. The responsibilities of performing the housework therefore falls on the family members only. Sex being the guiding factor in allocation of non-productive work, females are assigned the household activities

Time Devoted to Various Household Activities

In fact, all women in Kashmir Valley like women of other parts of India have busy and untiring work schedule which starts in the early hours of morning-even before sunrise and they are the last to retire to bed at night. In addition, all household activities are usually performed single-handedly without any mechanical aid or any male support. The various household activities performed by women and the time devoted to each activity by women has been given in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1. Time Devoted to Household Work by Women per day

S. No.	Household Activities	Time Devoted in Various Physiographic Divisions in Hours/Day				
		Rimlands	Karewas	Plain Areas	Total	Average
1	Food Preparation	4.5	4	2.5	11	3.6
2	Cleaning of House	1	1.5	2	4.5	1.5
3	Washing of Clothes	1.5	1.5	2	5	1.7
4	Child Care	1	1.5	2.5	5	1.7
5	Fetching of Water	2	1.5	0.2	3.7	1.2
6	Care of Aged persons	0.8	0.6	0.4	1.8	0.6
7	Cleaning Grains and Grinding of Flour	1	0.7	0.4	2.1	0.7
8	Repairing Clothes etc.	1.0	0.5	0.3	1.8	0.6
9	Miscellaneous	2.5	2	0.5	5	1.7
	Average	4.9	4.6	3.8	13.3	13.3

Source: Primary Survey 2011.

Fig. No. 1.2 Time Devoted by Women in Household Activities per Day

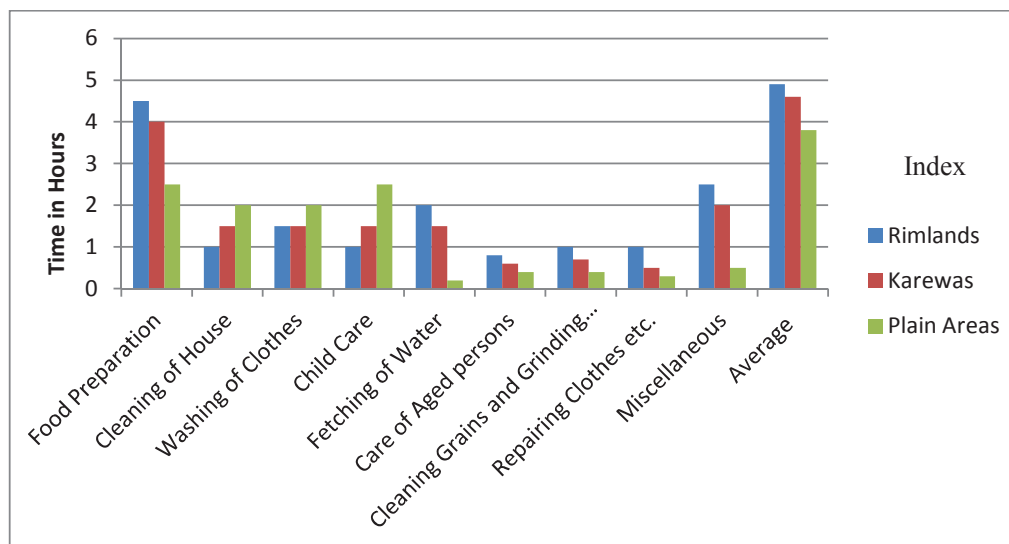


Table 1.1 reveals that time devoted by the women of Rimlands and Karewas in various household chores varies greatly from the women of Plain areas. Actually this time devotion process is greatly influenced by the factors like: (i) the distance from the city or urban centre. (ii) Economic prosperity and social awareness and (iii) facilities available.

It is evident from Table 1.1 that the women devote more than 13 hours in 24 hours to household chores. Maximum time is devoted to the preparation of food which includes cooking, serving, bringing fuel and cleaning utensils. On an average time devoted to food preparation is 3.6 hours. In Rimland areas it is 4.5 hours, in Karewas 4.0 and in plain areas 2.5 hours. The main activities which consume much time are collection of fuel wood and cleaning of utensils. In Rimland areas and some Karewas, women have to go long way to collect fuel wood from local areas. In plain areas and some nearby Karewa villages every type of fuel wood is available and women do not face many difficulties.

Next important activity is house cleaning. Time devoted to this activity is greater in the Plain areas (two hours) and it goes on decreasing in Karewas (1.5 hours) and in Rimlands (0.5 hours). The inhabitants of Rimlands are less conscious of cleanliness. Some people live in single rooms and they pay less attention to its cleanliness. Contrary to this the people living in the Plain villages are mostly aware of the hygienic principles. A lady is considered as an ideal housewife if she keeps her house tidy and clean.

Clean clothes are an important indicator of the social and economic status of a person and his family. The time devoted to the washing and cleaning of clothes varies from area to area, village to village and family to family. For example, in the villages situated in the Plains, about two hours are spent in the washing of clothes, while in the villages of Karewas 1.5 hours and in Rimland belts less time, 1.0 hour is devoted per day for the cleaning and washing of clothes. The poor families living in Rimlands and Karewas do not have extra clothes. It is one of the reasons why they do not pay adequate attention towards cleanliness of their clothes. In the winter season, harsh climatic conditions and non-availability of social amenities discourage washing of clothes and bathing. In Rimlands or *Kandi* areas, when the clothes of children are washed, they are given an old piece of cloth or *chaddar* to protect and wait for the drying of clothes. In some cases children remain naked until the only shirt dries.

Much attention is not paid to childcare in the *Kandi* areas and the far-flung villages situated in Karewas. In these villages mothers devote less time to their children because they remain most of the time busy in the outdoor activities. In modern societies children are fed, bathed, nurtured properly and given extra coaching at home. In rural Kashmir in general, children are brought up anyhow without sufficient time devoted by mothers. The situation is more pathetic in *Kandi* areas and far-flung villages (Table 1.1). In the villages of Jhelum Valley Floor about 2.5 hours are devoted by a mother in the nurturing of children, while this time is very less in *Kandi* and also less in Karewa villages.

Fetching of water is an important responsibility of women in Kashmir Valley, especially in rural Kashmir. In Rimlands and some Karewas women have to go long way to fetch water from local streams, springs and wells. In plain areas and some nearby Karewas, running water is available at shorter distances and women do not face much problems. The time devoted to this activity in the surveyed areas is 2 hours, 1.5 hours and 0.2 hours in Rimlands, Karewas and Jhelum Valley Floor respectively.

Care of aged is also an important activity generally being done by household women. More time is devoted to this activity (0.8 hours) in *Kandi* villages. In Karewa villages and in the villages of plain areas less time (0.6 and 0.4 hours) is devoted to this

activity. In *Kandi* areas people are God fearing and possess sound moral values. They respect their elders much more and generally look after them properly.

Cleaning of grains and storing of surplus produce are the other activities in which the females have to devote their time. The inhabitants of Plain areas and Karewas are mainly rice eaters. Wheat bread is generally eaten in the breakfast and along with the afternoon tea. In *Kandi* belts maize is the staple food. In most *Kandi* areas grinding of maize and wheat and dehusking of rice is done by women in homes. Maize being hard to grind consume more time of the household ladies in the *Kandi* areas.

Stitching and repairing of clothes, knitting of sweaters etc. is another activity performed by women. In *Kandi* areas, women devote 1.0 hour per day to this activity whereas 0.3 and 0.5 hours are devoted in Karewas and Plain areas. The variation in the time given to these activities is mainly due to the inequalities in income and social status of the people living in different villages.

The miscellaneous activities include different household activities which keep women busy and overburdened. These include attending of guests, attending sick and ailing persons, paying social visits etc. Repairing and making *Chulhas* (earthen oven) is another activity which is done by females. Since fuel wood is used for cooking, the maintenance and repair of chulhas is essentially required. But this is done occasionally.

It is clear from above that women get no time for themselves. They live for others, smile for others and act as binding force for families.

The world economic profile of women shows that they make up 80 per cent of the official labour force and work 60 per cent of all working hours, receive 10 per cent of the world economy and own even less than one percent of the world property.

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CONTRIBUTION OF MARGINALIZED MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE TRADITION OF AZADARI OF MUHARRUM

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Over one thousand three hundred and fifty years ago, on the 10th of Muharram, just before 'Asr', a man stood on a sand dune at Kerbala. He was bleeding from several wounds on his body. He had lost everything. Since early morning he had carried several dead bodies into his camp. He had even buried his infant child. He looked at the bodies of his loved ones. Tears flowed out of his eyes. He looked at the sky and seemed to draw some strength from an unseen source. Then, like a muezzin from a minaret, he raised a call:

Is there anyone who will come to assist us?

Is there anyone who will respond to our call for aid?

He turned direction and repeated the call. He did this four times.

Whom was he calling out to? Surely he was not expecting anyone to come to his aid. Those who wanted to help him had already crossed the lines and laid down their lives for the cause. He knew there was no one left. He knew that there was no other Hur*. And yet, meticulously and laboriously, he made sure that his call reverberated in all directions.

Of course that call was a call to Muslims of every generation in every land. It was a call to us wherever we may be. It was a call for help. Help against Yezeedism, which in every age rears its ugly head to oppress justice, truth and morality. Hazrat Imam Hussain was calling out to every Muslim of every age and time to combat Yezeedism, both within himself and as an external force. This was his battle cry for jihad-ul-akbar (Great Struggle). He had already demonstrated that his objective had always been to create a spiritual awakening through amr bil ma'ruf and nahyi anal munkar. Now he was calling out for the continuation of this jihad at the individual, social and political levels.

Muslims, have answered this call with the unique institution of Azadari. With every tear that we shed for him we pledge to resist the oppression of injustice, immorality, inequity and falsehood. For long the word azadari has been exclusively used in connection with the remembrance ceremonies for the martyrdom of Imam Hussain. Azadari includes mourning congregations, lamentations, matam and all such actions, which express the emotions of grief, anger, and, above all, repulsion against what Yezid stood for.

The term majlis has both a grammatical meaning and a meaning, which relates to azadari. In its technical sense, a majlis is a meeting, a session or a gathering. In reference to aza-e-Hussain, it means a gathering to mourn Imam Hussain. In this sense it was first used by sixth Imam, Ja'far Sadiq A.S. Aza-e-Hussain was a phenomenon, which gripped Muslim conscience immediately after the tragedy of Kerbala.

The first majlis of Imam Hussain was recited in the market-place of Kufa by a lady from whose head her veil had been ripped off, whose hopes and aspirations had been destroyed on the blood-drenched sands of Kerbala but whose indomitable spirit stepped forward to free the Islamic values from the yoke of tyranny and oppression. She was the first one to answer the call of Imam Hussain. Standing on her unsaddled camel, she looked at the multitude rejoicing the victory of Yezid. As soon as people saw her, they were quiet. They knew that a historic moment for Kufa had arrived. Looking straight at them, the daughter of Hazrat Ali Bibi Zainab said:

"Woe upon you O people of Kufa. Do you realise which piece of Muhammad's heart you have severed! Which pledge you have broken? Whose blood you have shed! Whose honour you have desecrated. It is not just Hussain whose headless body lies unburied on the sands of Kerbala. It is the heart of the Holy Prophet. It is the very soul of Islam!"

Fatimah Binte Huzaam, also known as Ummul Baneen, carried her young grandson Ubaidullah ibne Abbas and prepared to go out. When asked where she was going, she said that she was taking the orphan of Abbas to offer condolences to the mother of Hussain. Marwan ibne Hakam reports that every afternoon men and women would gather at Jannat-ul-Baqee and there would be remembrance of the tragedy of Kerbala and the weeping and wailing could be heard miles away.

When Yezid finally freed the prisoners, they asked for an opportunity to have rites of remembrance in Damascus. A house was made available to them and aza-e-Hussain went on for over a week. Mr. Majid Raza in his Marsia the title is, "khursheed masaib" pay homage to Bibi Zainab in this words-

Kyun Na ho Fatima zehra Ki hai sani Zainab

Majlise hazrate shabbir Ki baani Zainab

Karbala walon ka paigham zabani Zainab

Jis se Islam hai zinda who kahani Zainab

Sare shabbir pe jo taje baqa rakha hai

Uske har tar ko Zainab ne saja rakha hai

On their return to Madina, Bibi Zainab took over the leadership of azadari in the city of the Holy Prophet. This aroused such strong emotions in the people and such revulsion against the oppressor that Amr ibne Said ibne al-Aas wrote to Yezid to have Bibi Zainab exiled from Madina. This was done in the beginning of 62 A.H. Bibi Zainab died shortly afterwards.

Shaykh Ibne Babawayh-al-Qummi better known as Shaykh as-Suduq who died in 381 AH was the first scholar to have introduced prose as medium of conveying the message of Imam Hussain. He would sit on a pulpit and speak extempore while many of his students sat by the side of the pulpit and recorded the speech. His speeches have been preserved and to this day are known as the Amali (dictations) of Shaykh Suduq.

Public demonstration of grief first occurred in 351 A.H. On the 10th of Muharram, there was a spontaneous procession in the street of Baghdad and thousands of men, women and children came out chanting "Ya Hussain! Ya Hussain!" beating their chest and reciting elegies. In the same year, a similar procession took place in Egypt. The regime tried its best to stem the tide of azadari-e-Hussain but failed. Very soon azadari-e-Hussain became an institution with deep roots in the hearts of Muslims. Majlis evolved into an institution for amr bil ma'ruf and nahya anal munkar as well as reminder of the tragic events. Here I quote again few lines from the marsia written by Mr. Majid Raza and the title of his marsia is "khursheed Masaeb"

*Roke khud sanea zahra ne rulaya sabko
Karbala Kyun hue ro ro Ke bataya sabko
Pae-b-pae girye Ke zarboon se jagaya sabko
Bhai Ke qatel ka paigham sunaya sabko
Rone wale Ki har ek bat ghazab hoti hai
Khabre marg kahin Hans Ke bhi dee jati hai*

As Islam spread, different cultures adopted different modes of azadari-e-Hussain. Taimur Lang introduced the institution of tabut, alam and Tazia in India. As Islam spread southwards on the sub-Continent, the form underwent changes to take into account local cultural influences so as to portray the message of Kerbala in the medium best understood by the local people, both Muslims and non-Muslims. By the beginning of the 19th Century, there was not a corner of the world, from Spain to Indo-China, which did not have some form of demonstration on the 10th of Muharram.

In India, the Ashura processions became part of the Indian Muslim culture. Even the Hindus participated in these processions. The Maharajah of Gwalior was always seen walking behind the 'alam of Hazrat Abbas barefooted and without any insignia of his exalted office. Marsiyas and majaanis were such strong influences on the Muslim population that they helped strengthen not only their Islamic beliefs but also their political resolve.

History reports that even Mahatma Gandhi on his famous Dandi march to protest against the oppression of the British Raj took 72 people with him in emulation of Imam Hussain protest against Yezid's oppression.

Marginalized Women

Young (2000) defines marginalization as exclusion from meaningful participation in society, partly because the labour market does not or cannot accommodate them, proving to be one of the most dangerous forms of oppression. Marginalization has the ability to cause severe material deprivation, as well in its most extreme form can exterminate groups. Minority groups such as individuals living with disabilities (physical or mental), women, racial minorities, aboriginal communities, elderly individuals, single mothers, and homosexuals may all face certain forms of marginalization due to dominant discourses(s) within the structures of society (Mullaly, 2007).

Material deprivation is the most common result of marginalization when looking at how unfairly material resources (such as food and shelter) are dispersed in society. Along with material deprivation, marginalized individuals are also excluded from services,

programs, and policies (Young, 2000). Marginalization can be understood within three levels: individual, community, and global-structural / policies.

A number of sociologists, social anthropologists and social psychologists in the west have tried to understand and analyze the problems of women, their status role functioning and role tensions. In our country the status, role and the various characteristics and problems of women have been culturally much different from the women in the west. We must understand this sociological fact that the Indian women are not a homogeneous group or category. We have religions, races, castes, classes, culture, linguistic group, rural-urban and age differences which divide our womenfolk in many different strata or groups. Sociologists Andre Beteelle in his article 'The position of women in Indian society' published in Indian Women 1975 had rightly mentioned the following: "What does it mean to view the position of women in India in sociological perspective? It means first of all to bring Indian society down into its basic structural divisions and to examine the place assigned to women in each of them. The confusion that we find in discussions about Indian women arises from our failure to take sufficiently into account not the internal differentia present in Indian society."

Women in India being a marginalized group are victim of patriarchy, class, caste, religion and gender. When we are talking about the Indian marginalized women we must consider these sociological interpretations. In the present paper I have divided marginalized Muslim women in three broad categories economically, socially and culturally. I would like to focus here, their contribution with reference to tradition of azadari of Muharram for this purpose. I have mainly covered Tawaifs (courtesans), Merasins (singers) and Lalbegees (unclean caste, scavengers). I covered mainly two places, Lucknow and a small village known as Dhourli, District Meerut U.P.

Case Study of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

Lucknow, being the centre of Shia culture and religious activities, observes the rites of mourning with great passion. Little can describe the passion that Muharram evokes in the heart of believers. Their intense faith, the marked reverence and the unwavering devotion culminates on the 10th day of the month of Muharram- a day when all Muslims mourn the death of their beloved leader Imam Hussain.

After Safdar Jung, Nawab Shuja -ud-daula became the Nawab wazir in 1756. His Famous wife, Bahu Begum, was a pious lady and took active part in the growth of azadari by spending huge sums of money. Asaf-ud-daula succeeded his father in 1775 A.D. and built the world famous Imambara in the year 1784. Bada Imambara is a famous monument of Lucknow that has historical, cultural and heritage importance. It is important to know that Imambaras are actually the replicas of tombs dedicated to the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his family members. His family members are known as Ahl-ul-Bait. Imams are the religious heads of Shiite Islam who are connected to Prophet by blood. Imambara have a special place in the hearts of Shiite Muslims and is the seat of most of the meetings, gatherings and Azadari congregation. Bada Imambara is also the venue for annual Muharram gathering that is staged to commemorate and lament the martyr hood of Imam Hussain, the grandson of Prophet Muhammad.

When I visited Lucknow to collect information with reference to this article I met and interviewed few Shias. I am thankful to several people who provided information in preparation of this report.

In the above-mentioned paragraph I discussed the role of Bada Imambara in the Azadari of Imam Husain in Lucknow City, which was built by a well-known Nawab, but I have come to know this story that there is a contribution of an old and economically marginalized woman that was never highlighted by any historian or writer. Meer Jafar Abdullah of Sheesh Mahal informed me that when Kifayat Ullah Khan finalized the architecture of Asafi Imambara, shahi Farman passed to vacate the place but old lady Lado-Sakhan did not agree to leave the space. Asif-ud-Daula came to her house and asked for the reason, Lado Sakhan replied how can she leave this Chowk because she keeps Tazia and perform Azadari of Imam Hussain. Nawab Saheb requested her to leave and said that he was also planning to build Imambara for the purpose of Azadari and need the area of her house and that he would pay sufficient amount to her. She told Nawab Saheb that she cannot accept money, but took a promise from the Nawab that it should be mentioned in his shahi iqarnama that his or after him, his family member would never stop the tradition of taziadari there. Till date Husainabad Waqf board is keeping Tazia by her name on the Chowk, which is now a part of Bada Imambara. This Tazia is kept on 28th of Zilhijja, two days before Muharrum month and brought out with Shahi Jaloos on first Muharrum from Bada Imambara just behind the Shahi Zari, most of the people know this Tazia as 'Budhia Ka Tazia' but this is actually associated with an economically marginalized Muslim women named "Lado Sakhan"

Courtesans of Lucknow

In Lucknow the world of the tawaif was as complex and hierarchical as the society of which it was part courtesans were and still are usually a part of larger establishment run by a chaudharayan, or chief courtesan, an older woman who has retired to the position of manager after a successful career as a tawaif. The courtesans of Lucknow were usually divided into three categories. The first were the kanchanis, women of the kanchan tribes, who were actually harlots and whose primary and regular profession was to sell their virtue. They were actually inhabitants of Delhi and the Punjab, whence they had started to come at the time of Shuja –ud- Daula. Most of the well-known prostitutes of the town belong to this category. The second category was the Chuna walis. Originally their work was to sell lime but later they joined other group of bazaar women and became well known. Chuna wali Haider, who was renowned for her voice belong to this category and collected a large group of courtesans of her caste. The third category was Nagarnt, from the Gujarat area. These three classes were the queens of the bazaar. They established themselves and worked in groups. Some women who had gone astray joined these groups (Abdul Halim Sharar, Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture, (1860-1920).

During Muharrum courtesans and their retinues in Chowk area of Lucknow put away their musical instruments, their Gunghrus, Payals and the tabla (musical instrument). Umrao Jan Ada's Khanam commemorated Hussain's martyrdom on a more elaborate scale than any other courtesan in Lucknow, decorating the place of mourning with banners, buntings, chandeliers, globes. Umrao Jan was herself an accomplished

Soz khwan (reciter of dirgis). The most celebrated professionals dare not perform in her presence. Her account finds resonance in Attia Hosain's description (1992:64) of her visit down the forbidden street whose balconies during the first days of Muharrum were empty of painted, jeweled women when visitors climbed the narrow stairs only to hear religious songs of mourning'.

Abdul Haleem Sharar (*Lucknow: The Last Phase of an Oriental Culture, (1860-1920)*, Abdul Halim Sharar) describes his visit to Talkatora Karbala in Lucknow on the day of Chehlum. He witnessed a procession of women approaching carrying tazias. As the group passed through the gates of the shrine, he heard the following lament:

When the Caravan of Medina, having lost all
Arrived in captivity in the vicinity of Sham
Foremost came the head of Husain, borne aloft on a spear
And in its wake, a band of women, with heads bore.

Mirza Jafar in his book "*Qadeem Lucknow Ki Aakhri Bahar*" also discussed the role of socially marginalized Muslim women during Muharrum days. He highlighted few names like Choudhrayen, Badi Jaddan Bai, Hassu were famous to recite Soz and Marsia and they joined and recite in procession along with their Tazia. Most of the elite class of Lucknow requested them to read near Nakhas and on the way to Talkatora Karbala. These courtesans were the part of Azadari during the year of in Lucknow. Another important name also mentioned by Jafar Hussain are, Allah Bandi and Nijju Courtesan they had given their houses to trust for Azadari and now this place is known as Imambara of Allah Bandi and Nijju in Chawal Wali Gali.

When I met Mr. Ahsan Jalali who is residing in Banjari tola muhalla in old Lucknow near Victoria Street he shared with me his memories of 1960 to 69. He mentioned one courtesan name Babban Bai from Chowk area she was well known and she observed Muharrum and used to recite in a melodious voice, marsia of Anees along with her Sazinde and people gathered near her requested her to read marsia and nauha.

At present the culture has been changed, the Chowk area has become commercialized during the year 1970. So only male members and their processions are coming out on the street, females are also contributing in azadari but their processions are not allowed on the road. They can join and repeat matam of the procession but there separate processions are generally not in practice all over India. And as per my knowledge this is very common practice almost all over the world.

Prof. Anees Ashfaq also gave me one name of an old courtesan named 'Ramzano bi' he said that Ramzano always decorated her imambara at the entrance of Imam Bara Nazim Saheb, only on the ninth of Muharrum (night before Ashura). She recited nauha Salam and Marsia the whole night. She died ten years back but this taziadari is being performed by her family members till today.

Meerasins of Lucknow

Nawab Jafar Meer Abdullah has given me very fruitful information regarding Meerasins of Lucknow, he mentioned that Lucknavi culture may be consider as Rose and Lotus fusion, in this context marginalized women like Meerasins, Bhadin, Dhadin contributed a lot in the tradition of azadari in Lucknow. Most of the Meerasins were invited by the Shia families to recite Sozkhwani, Salam and marsia in ladies Majalis. Meerasins are socially and economically marginalized women, but very talented and well trained in classical music generally these ladies recite soz, Salam and marsia with raga.

Sikander Jahan Begum was very famous for her presentation in this field her daughter and family ladies also used to accompany her when she recited in Majalis. Mr. Athar Sajjad Abidi informed that in Wazeerganj Lucknow he remembered that her mother invite Meerasins for sozkhawani and nauhakhani in zanani Majalis he also told me that at present Ishrat, Maher are famous for their marsiakhwani. He said that these ladies recite these nauha in his imambara in Muharrum. I quote few among them as-

Saidaniyan rooti hai run hilita hai naloon se
Qismat ne churaya hai aaghush ke palon se

Mannat se muradun se manoen ne jinhe pala
Aada ne unhe mara talwarun se bhalon se

Abbas na qasim hain na dilbare muslim hain
Raushan hai zami run ki ab enke ujalon se

And this nauha---
Run main sar dulha ka kata wawaila sad wawaila
Naushahnaya dunya se chala wawaila sad wawaila

Kahti thi roke dukhiya maa haye Na hune paye javan
tu bhuka pyasa qatal hua wawaila sad wawaila

And this nauha-
Banu kahti thin ke run main ajal aee hugi
Bund pani Ali Asghar ne na pae hugi

Lalbeeges of Lucknow

I covered this marginalized group mainly to discuss their contribution in azadari. Ghaus Ansari in 1960 first time suggested the models or groupings among Shia Muslims in India in his pioneering work "Muslim Castes in Uttar Pradesh". He mentioned Lalbeeges (sweeper and scavenger) as unclean occupational caste. Though the vast majority of Muslim Bhangi or Lalbeeges are Sunni, a small number comes from the Shia

fold also. Their females were popular as 'Bahu' in Lucknow. At present most of the Lalbeeges are not doing the earlier jobs but still they are socially marginalized group. Mr. Abidi shared his memories and informs me that near Tahseen Ali Khan Masjid in Chowk area there were few Lalbeeges family residing (in 1960). At that time their male and female members performed unclean and dirty work of the society. Being a member of Shia community they also perform rituals of Muharrum, they invite Qari Mijjan a local Shia member to decorate their azakhana and request him to perform all the rituals of Muharrum in their Imambara (to keep Tazia, Nazar, Hazri, Majlis etc.). When I asked why they do not did themselves all the rituals he said it might be due to their unclean profession or a feeling of polluted caste.

Practice of purity and impurity, including the related one of untouchability were also present all over Muslim community (like Hindu community) in domestic as well as public life, in practicing kinship and marriages and in myriad different contexts and situations. These ideas played a crucial role in separating one caste from another and in arranging them in hierarchy, that is to say in ordering the basic structure of the society. Apart from this cultural impact the teaching of Islam is against this notion of caste, class hierarchy, but there is a clear-cut difference among Ashrafs and Arzal in India, which was discussed by Eminent Sociologist Professor Imtiaz Ahmad in his work on caste and social stratification among the Muslims in India.

But radical changes have been taken place in the entire culture of purity and impurity due to the processes of industrialization, urbanization, westernization, modernization, secularization, rationalization, humanitarianism and mere exigencies of modern life. This change occurred first in urban areas, and gradually affected rural areas. Its pace increased with the pace of urbanization during the second half of the 20th century, and is likely to be faster during the 21st century.

Same changes happen in the situation and belief among the Lalbeeges of Lucknow. They are now performing all the rituals themselves and trying to mix-up with other upper castes among Shia community. Due to the mobility and Sanskritization process they are trying to imitate all the rituals, life styles, belief and food habits of upper caste Sadaat. Their females are actively participating in Majalis and Azadari and during Muharrum we cannot observe any kind of inequality or discrimination on the basis of false notion of caste and class. I would like to conclude here with this message of Urdu poet Mehdi Nazmi-

Dare Hussain pe milte hai har khyal ke log
Ye ittehad ka markaz hai aadmi ke liye

Dhourli Case Study

Primary and secondary sources were mainly used to collect informations. I used interview as a research technique to collect various vital information regarding the observation of Muharram and conduct of *Azadari*. I am thankful to Syed Shahid Hussain 65 year's old resident of Dhourli Village to provide this information and he showed me

the copies of old documents where *Umda Begum's* property details are mentioned. This has been presented in a case study format.

Dhourli is a small village around 60 km approximately from the national capital. This village of 12000 people is in district Meerut of UP and is near the border of Ghaziabad. The main occupation of the inhabitants in general and the Shia community in particular is farming. Some youths have also migrated to bigger cities like Delhi and Meerut looking for better employment opportunities. The Shias mainly consist of the Syeds who consider they to be "Ashrafs". Besides them we also find a very small and marginalized community, who no doubt are Shias but have a slight twist in their sociological history, keeping them segregated from rest of the community. The case in point is the clan of a tawaif named *Massamat Umda Begum*, whose devotion to Imam Hussain was on a point where she gave away all her property to Waqf Board in the cause of Muharram and Azadari. The property was registered in 1938 and is presently used as an Imambara for religious congregation of majlis. It also has a small mosque for people to offer namaz. Though the imambara is in a deplorable condition and requires much attention on part of the community at large to conserve it, but it does not dampen the spirit of the clan in their devotion to the prince of martyr Imam Husain.

Later on Shia Waqf Board registered *Mussamat Umda Begum* property under Shia Waqf board registration act and number is E 579/871. Tahir Hasan the present care taker (Mutawalli) of the imambara and mosque ensures the practice of majlis, as has been the practice for decades. Though people allege that Tahir Hussain has got the property registered in his name and the authority of the Waqf Board ceases to exist. He could not be contacted, as he was not in the village at the time of the study.

The economic conditions of the *Umda Begum's* clan are not good. The members of the clan go mainly to Meerut in search of work and those who reside in the village do menial work in the fields of the other landowners and also work as labourers in the village.

The clan mourns the great sacrifice of Imam Husain in the month of Muharram as any other Shia do. They arrange for the speaker to deliver lecture on the greatness of Islam, it's prophets, his companions and the tragedy of Karbala. They also distribute tabarruk, as any other Shia would do. On the seventh of Muharram the ceremonial and largely symbolic jhula of Imam Hussain's six-month-old son Hazrat Ali Asghar is also brought out in a procession. All the members of the community attend it. Earlier on the seventh of Muharram, the symbolic flag (Alam) of Imam Husain is also brought out by all the members of the Shia community and the procession comes to its end at the imambara of the *Umda Begum*. Both these vents are marked by great passion and devotion by the community. All along we see that all the community comes together in various events but there is still a serious stigma in the mixing of the syeds or the saddaats and the clan of *Umda Begum*. It is still a serious taboo to mix up socially among the saddaats and the members of the clan. No female member of the sadaats attends the majlis organized by the members of the *Umda Begum's* clan. They are seen as members of socially marginalized community. They are looked down upon; not even

considering the fact that one of their people had devoted all her property in the name of Imam Husain. The female members of the clan do attend the majlis organized by the sadaat but they come to attend the same covered head to toes without revealing their identity. The majlis they attend is basically of male members of the sadaat and they are allowed to sit in a corner separated by the cots from the rest of the members of the community. Many of the members of the clan who have settled mainly in Meerut city come every year all the way to organize and participate in azadari. The members of the clan are well aware of their social status and know that they can never mix socially with rest of the community, whether through a common platform, mutual love and marriages are out of question.

It was also observed in the field study that the clan at large has feeling of isolation and discrimination Vis a Vis sadaat and they cannot come out of the fact that one of their ancestors was a tawaif. Prostitution may well be the oldest profession of the world but it is never recognized by the societies, it is a fact but all the purging acts of the clan were never enough get them out of being to some extent as a social outcast.

In contrast there is another marginalized community in the village who are Shias, the Shahs. The Shahs were the faqirs and converted to the Shia school of thought. Shahs also mourn the tragedy of Karbala and show their love to Imam Husain with same fervor and devotion. They also have imambaras and organize majaalis and other Shia religious procession, like the sadaat and the members of the Umda Begum's clan. The male and female members of the sadaat community attend all their religious congregations. There is a certain degree of social, religious intermingling between them and the sadaat unlike with the members of the Umda Begum's clan. Despite of all their devotion, social intermingling is still limited and again inter marriages are out of question, they not being "Ashrafs".

The Shahs cannot marry their sons and their daughters with sadaat, it is true with members of *Umda Begum's* clan, and thus the former and the latter marry among themselves, limiting their social scope.

Despite all the stigmas attached there is a great scope in the form of Muharrum and Azadari to bring various sub-communities within the Shia sect in this small village together and more importantly closer. Azadari top a great extent has been a bridge to bring people on a same ship with their common love and devotion to the spirit of tragedy of Karbala and martyrdom of Imam Hussain. The elders, leaders of the community and other responsible people of village have a great responsibility on their shoulders to have a meaningful dialogue among themselves. They should never forget the fact that Imam Hussain gave away everything in the cause of Islam, the religion of peace, having no discrimination on the basis of clan, class, race etc.

It should be kept in mind that members of the *Umda Begum's* clan follow Islam and mourn the sacrifice of Imam Husain through Azadari as any other devoted member of the Shia community. They should not be singled out due to the fact that one of their ancestors was in wrong situation due to reasons unknown Even Islam forgives all the sins and bad acts of the past of the person if he sincerely come to the right path.

I conclude my paper with this message of Mr. Raza Sirsvi (he is a well known Qasida and Salam Poet of India)-

Amal ki shama jalao agar husaini ho
Jahane zulm pe chao agar husaini ho
Phuroe deen nebhao agar husaini ho
Kisi ka dil na dukhao agar husaini ho

Pade na kahna shahe mashreqain wale hai
Zamana khud hi kahe ye Husain wale hain

Glossary

Alam	battle flags symbolic of Imam Hussain's Flag
Azadari	The practice of mourning
Chowk for Tazia	Raised platform where Tazias are kept in Muharrum
Hurr	A martyr of karbala and join Imam Hussain on the day of Ashura and left Yazid regime
Juloos	Procession
Jhula	replica cradle of Imam Hussain's six-month child Ali Asghar
Matam	beating of chest, which sometimes goes to frenzied heights.
Marsia	Marsia is basically an elegiac poem that is recited to commemorate martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussein and his clan at Karbala in the then Iraq. Marsia generally consists of six-line units, with a rhyming quatrain, and a couplet on a different rhyme.
Majlis	condolence congregation
Muharrum	The first month of Islamic Calendar
Nauha	A Nauha (Elegy -- which means a poem of mourning, a reflection on the death of someone or on a sorrow generally) about the tragedies which befell Imam Hussain, his Family and his Companions, in what is known as the Battle of Kerbala which took place on the 10th of Muharram, known as the Day of Ashura.
Soz	Dirgis

Taboot	mock coffin
Tazia	replica of the tomb of Imam Hussain in Karbala generally made Of bamboo framework and coloured paper
Zanani	for ladies (plural of word Zan means woman)

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Contribution of Muslim Women in the field of Medicine

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Muslim women have made a rich contribution to scientific, intellectual and literary movements within the circle of Islamic civilization. Throughout the different stages of Islamic history, thousands of distinguished and brilliant learned women have excelled in the arena of science. Since the time of the Prophet (PBUH), Muslim women have been known to seek knowledge and excel in it. The prophet once said “seeking knowledge is a mandate for every Muslim (male and female) (Sahih Bukhari).

In contrast to modern Western civilization, the classic Islamic tradition does not separate science from religion. Islam teaches individuals and societies to live a physically, mentally and morally upright life. At a physical level, the Quran and Sunnah encourage healthy eating and at the same time forbid substances that cause bodily harm, such as intoxicants, drugs etc. The Quran itself is a book of healing. The traditional Islamic medical system that developed in the classical period contains a mixture of spiritual and physical elements, including the use of natural substances and Islamic supplications for healing and cures. It includes preventive measures, curative medicine, mental healing, surgery and spiritual cures for the body and soul. The scientific and medical achievements made during the Classic Islamic period had a significant influence on the formation and development of modern medicine in Europe.

There is an ingrained value in every Muslim man and woman alike to pursue knowledge. In keeping with this value, Muslim women continue to make headway in the field of science and their participation in terms of graduation ratios often surpasses that of Western women in pursuing scientific degrees, according to UNESCO¹. Although there are obstacles to education in much of the Muslim world today, it has endured some of the most hostile attacks in recent decades, which has affected the overall quality and safety of youth trying to obtain education. For instance in war torn Afghanistan and Iraq schools of all levels have been bombed and shelled by US military forces.

The presumption in the West in general is that women from Muslim countries are oppressed and submissive, especially those wearing the 'hijab'. The Western media never tires of churning out stereotypes and outdated clichés about Muslim women. Their favorite propaganda being that it is because of discrimination ordered by Islam that Muslim women lag behind in the field of education, while the truth is the other way round. Islam has given women the dignity, honor and importance of being mothers, wives, daughters, as well as stateswomen and pioneers in the field of science and medicine.

Over time, Muslim women have contributed greatly to the field of health and medicine, taking roles as Midwives, specializing in female anatomy and physiology. In the early days, the most important branch of Medicine women worked in were pregnancy and birth, which was exclusive to women for hundreds of years. Historic records show that women participated in science and medicine in Muslim societies. **Rufaidah Aslamiyyah** was the first professional nurse in Islamic history ². She lived at the time of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in the 1st century A.H. She acquired the skills from her father who was a great physician. She trained other nurses, and also worked as a social worker to solve social problems leading to disease. She nursed and restored to health, soldiers wounded in battles fought at the time, such as the battle of Khandak, Badr and Uhud. Her tent was equipped with instruments for first aid and surgery; the injured in the battle of Khandak were ordered to be taken to her tent by the Prophet (PBUH). Likewise there were other women at that time such as **Rubaiyyah bint Muawwidh, Umm Muta, Umm Kabasha, Umaima** and **Laila** who had knowledge and skills of both medicine and surgery.

In the Ottoman Empire women of all status and class are known to have had a close relation to matters of health – either sponsoring health institutions or practicing medicine themselves. Some of their famous hospitals called '**Dar- al- Shifa**' were founded by ladies – either wives or mothers of Sultans, such as **Hafsa Sultan Hospital** (Manisa, 1539 AD) and **Nurbam Sultan Hospital** (Istanbul, 1582 AD).

During that period, women preferred to be treated in their homes, by family physicians, midwives or traditional healers, which was a privilege and signified protection of the female. As early as the 15th century in Turkey, female physicians called '**tabibe**' existed who practiced gynecology and surgery, in addition to midwives. Archival documents also show that female physicians occasionally operated upon male patients as well. Also, there existed female healers who practiced traditional health medicine, generally specialising in single diseases. Professional women physicians and folk medicine practitioners also prepared and sold drugs. Midwifery was a long standing tradition in the Ottoman reign where the art was a family profession transferred from mother to daughter or close relative. However nursing as a profession was not emphasized until

the beginning of the 20th century, since close members of the family acted as nurses when required ^{3,4}.

A unique feature of medieval Muslim hospitals was the role of female staff, who were rarely employed in hospitals elsewhere in the world during that period. Medieval Muslim hospitals commonly employed female nurses and were the first to employ female physicians – the most famous being two female physicians from the **Banu Zuhr** family who served the **Almahad** ruler **Abu Yusuf Yaqub al Mansur** in the 12th century AD ⁵. This was necessary due to segregation between male and female patients in Islamic hospitals. Later in the 15th century, female surgeons were illustrated for the first time in **Serafeddin Sabuncuoglu's** text ⁶.

In the modern era, with more and more Muslim women entering into all fields of education, there has been a surge in the number of women opting for the medical profession. In conservative Muslim society, women overwhelmingly prefer to be treated by physicians of their own gender. Initially most of the women chose to practice nursing, midwifery, gynecology or pediatrics, but are now venturing into areas hitherto considered as male bastions, such as specialisation in the different fields of medicine and surgery. This has impacted the lives of conservative Muslim women patients (rural and urban), who were too inhibited to visit male specialists and suffered quietly, have found great relief from this changing trend, especially in the more remote and backward areas of the country.

Muslim community leaders and doctors have stressed the need to encourage Muslim women to join the nursing profession, which is currently not preferred among conservative Muslim households. Muslim parents must be exhorted to remove this taboo, and encourage their daughters to enter this profession as well, taking a cue from countries like Egypt, Philippines, etc. Those hesitant to work with males may work in female wards, Gynecology and Pediatrics, and be allowed to wear shalwar kameez instead of skirts.

Muslim women are increasingly being recruited in the medical academic sector as well, standing shoulder to shoulder with men in the job of imparting and disseminating knowledge. They are being entrusted with administrative responsibilities at par with their male colleagues, and excelling in every sphere of work they venture into. They have become leaders in their fields, receiving awards, earning patents and contributing in furthering man's knowledge.

Some Muslim women who have received global recognition and honors for their untiring efforts are mentioned here ^{7,8,9}.

Prof Samira Ibrahim Islam: was nominated as distinguished scientist for the year 2000 by UNESCO, for her significant contribution in drug safety by defining Saudi Profile for drug metabolism.

Dr Bina Shaheen Islam: has been awarded several patents for anticancer constituents and biopesticides.

Dr Houriya Kazmi: Specialist breast surgeon and UAE's first lady surgeon and private practitioner, who runs the only breast cancer group in Dubai.

Dr Manzar Ashtari: received full scholarship to study nuclear engineering in medicine at the prestigious MIT, Harvard University, USA

Prof Farida Fortune: Dean for Dentistry and Oral Health, Queen Mary's School of Medicine, London, UK

Dr Shehla Masood: Consultant Clinical Geneticist and Head of Services, Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, London, UK

Dr Yasmin Naqushbandi: Medical Director, Barking, Havering and Redbridge, NHS Trust, UK

There are numerous lesser known figures who continue to raise the banner of Muslim women and provide inspiration for generations to come.

In the social context, religious and cultural beliefs of Muslim women impact their health care needs, and they face major barriers while seeking health care that the rest of the population, particularly health care providers, often are unaware of. Modesty, for example, is a key concept in Muslim women's lives. Observant Muslim women prefer to avoid unnecessary close contact with men, and most choose to wear clothing that covers their bodies. Due to their religious and cultural beliefs, Muslim women have specific health needs, e.g. same-gender providers, dietary restrictions, special needs during fasting, and personal hygiene needs related to daily prayers. Lack of education of Muslim women on preventive medicine, such as screening mammograms (for breast cancer), Pap smears (for cervical cancer), screening for risk factors for heart disease, screening for colon cancer, prenatal health care, and postnatal follow-ups makes them very vulnerable to life-threatening diseases being diagnosed at later stages.

There are no clear cut instructions on contraception, tubal ligation, allowed in Muslim countries like Iran, Indonesia, Bangladesh, but discouraged in many others. Because of the sanction of polygamy and its misinterpretation the problem of infertility becomes a much greater calamity for a Muslim woman with the threat of her husband's second marriage compounding her problem.

Because they belong to the more backward, illiterate and deprived section of most population many of their health problems are rooted within these factors, and can be overcome with the education of Muslim women.

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Exclusion or Inclusion: Muslim women and Politics of gender in India

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Introduction

Gender roles and gender relations are conceived at the family, household community and societal levels' (Gupta & Yesudian, 2006). Like gender, politics is omnipresent everywhere and doing politics is an immediate source. Gender is a key ingredient for individual and group life, social relations and culture. Gender is political in the sense that societies are ordered according to the certain pattern of gender behavior and gender power relations. Gender politics comprising the ongoing construction of the social gender relations within which individual and groups act in all sphere of societies. There are many actors which are engaged in gender politics. Among these are social movements that challenge the dominant gender order. The ordered and systemic exclusion of Muslim and Muslim women in particular has been unnoticed phenomena in Indian politics. Despite the longstanding and vigorous women's movement, patriarchy remains deeply entrenched in India, influencing the structure of its political and social institutions and determining the opportunities open to women and men. The negotiation and conflict between patriarchy and the women's movement are central to the constitution of the nation-state.

This paper explores these issues of politics that rocked the Indian Muslim society at greater extent, and this is well noticed by Eickelman & Piscatori that 'women are thus central to the larger political and moral imagination, essential to the upholding of civic order and virtue'.

In fact 'Gender inequality is rooted in the social stratification which is primarily based on the roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women and the differential valuation of their roles. Thus women positions and degree of empowerment is determined by the ways that gender identities to achieve the result which is due since long time. Politics is nothing except intention and action to do either in favor or against. Politics bring the world together and for developmental causes. The politics vary with the space to space and giving a chance to the minority and majority to share the space equally.

Gender politics in India is a part of wider network of social relations, economic factors, identity discourse, political movement, and representation. In India, Muslim women remained to live in seclusion and despite low in both public and private space; she seldom made louder voice than her Hindu counterpart across the field. Do they find excluded or included!

The women's movement in India took off in the 1920s, building on the 19th century social reform movement progressed during the period of high nationalism and the freedom struggle, both of which shaped its contours. Among the many achievements of the movement, the most significant were the constitutional guarantees of equal rights for women and universal adult suffrage in independent India. However, these guarantees did little to bring about social and material change in the lives of most Indian Muslim women.

A New Women's movement, articulated to mass and popular politics, emerged in the 1970s. Despite the longstanding and vigorous women's movement, patriarchy remains deeply entrenched in India, influencing the structure of its political and social institutions and determining the opportunities open to women and men. The negotiation and conflict between patriarchy and the women's movement are central to the constitution of the nation-state.

However 'women are central to the larger political and moral imagination, essential to the upholding of civic order and virtue'¹.

Gender is the study of inequality, imbalance, along with endorsement of the social fact. 'Gender inequality is rooted in the social stratification based on the roles and responsibilities assigned to men and women and the differential valuation of their roles. Thus women positions and degree of empowerment is determined by the ways that gender identities, gender roles and gender relations are conceived at the family, household, community and societal levels².

Like gender, politics is everywhere and doing politics is an immediate source to achieve the result. Politics is nothing except intention and action to do either in favor or against. Politics bring the world together for developmental cause or the opposite. The politics vary with the space to space and giving a chance to the minority and majority to share the space equally.

The sketch about the both women and Muslim women receive critical look. To say, in Kandiyoti's viewpoint, the 'Islamist discourses on women that uphold the authenticity of tradition thus seek to draw boundaries not only between the Muslim and non-Muslim community but also between the "true" guardians of community and the "internal other" '(Kandiyoti, 1991: 7-8). 'A key dimension of Muslim politics is the contest over the meanings attached to 'women' as symbol. The underlying belief, common to ideological formations, is that women must remain 'in their place' for political and social harmony to prevail. Unlike

¹ (Eickelman & Piscatori, 2004)

² Gupta & Yesudian, 2006

social conservatives, liberals and feminists, however, believe that women can remain 'in their place' and still have roles equal to men in all sphere of activity' (Eickelman & Piscatori, 2004).

Gender politics is an extension of social construction in which some time groups involved and sometime individual's valuable participation. It is a collective effort to achieve the assignment. In south Asia, the position of Muslim women is very low irrespective to their male counterpart in the same society and both living since time immemorial. Every time gender politics is carried under social movement seeks and expect common participation from the societies to achieve the social dream, it may be differentiated by space and time. In Indian society the role of women has been considered within the four walls and her position is still the same as it was during medieval period. At the same time whatever situation improves due to her participation in politics and gradually demanding their due shares as if it was unnoticed for years.

As we know, Indian society having a secular identity and providing equal right to all religion by faith across the territory, caste, creed, and class. All of this Muslim population is one of them, is getting larger pie and more and less scattered across the Indian space. Although in some pocket the population is dense and a few including Jammu & Kashmir, West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Kerala and U.P, where Muslim comprise larger number and the matter of fact in each and every election their role is meaningful to whom they cast their vote. The number of Muslim population is valuable in these regions. Therefore they are able to share their views in proportional way and are participating with the viewed perception of equality but not as compared to southern India. Southern Muslim are better than northern Muslim and they are sharing power in government equally which is quite absent in northern India despite of good proportion of population. In India the Muslim women's participation in the politics has been noted in large number during Khilafat movement in 1920's.

The various facets of the social movement in colonial India have been well documented and show the relevance accordingly; including Khilafat movement when first time Muslim women came out from veil and openly participated to fight against colonial empire for betterment of women. Across the freedom movement the situation of Muslim women has received less attention among politician, scholars and as well as intelligentsia. After the call from Gandhijee Muslim women made her presentation in the national freedom movement. Even many gave up purdah(veil) and actively participated in the swadeshi, and civil-disobedience movements. Among the Indian Muslim women purdah is regarded as one of the notions of Islamic practice which is seen as historically responsible for the limited participation of women activities outside the domestic sphere.

The political and economic changes of the nineteenth century had induced a societal reassessment as Indian reformers and Christian missionaries combined to press for changes in the status of women, beginning with education and raising the age of marriage. However, these goals were to be greatly expanded in the decades before independence to include

political participation, and to fight for expanding social and economic roles. At the same time the movement's leadership remained in the hand of a few families; it nevertheless provided opportunities to a variety of emerging leaders to express their views and disseminate the message of the movement to women's group.

While the leadership of the Muslim women's movement, as with the movement in other communities, tended to become identified with particular families; in Bombay the activities of the women from Tyabji, Rahimtullah and Chinoy families, in Punjab with those of Muhammad Shafi and Abdul Qadir (Lateef,1986). The link between social reform, the status of women and the national movement proved a source of numerical strength for the national movement and of political support for the women's movement. This mutually beneficial relationship led to considerable co-operation between leaders of the national movement and the women movement.

At the same time 'the issue of Indian women in the political sphere first emerged during the period over extending the franchise to women' (Karlekar, 2005) and finally through 'The Govt. of India Act 1935' made possible to Indian women to become voter, after long struggle.

In India there are around sixty million Muslim women who constitute world largest electoral population and doing less politically than households. Although they (women, including Muslim women) get right to vote and voted back to 1920's, but situation do not improve even after we celebrated our sixty third independence festival with the first women president. And government made many promises to the peoples including woman reservation provision in the parliament. Since 1970s many talks were made about The Women Reservation Bill. Since then many governments formed and gone but the Woman Reservation Bill (WBR) remain waiting to pass from the houses where it is lying there over than decades. The Woman Reservation Bill sought and witnessed many prime minister and their sympathy but still unable to say something including left coalition UPA-I government. The role of parliamentarian is susceptible and very unpredictable within the patriarchal ambient and during coalition era government where no single party has majority in the Parliament(Lok Sabha).The provision of this bill is to provide thirty three percent reservation to the woman in the house.

Hasan and Menon notes that gender politics is nothing more than except the compartmentalization of politics for either men or women, or for both. 'Since the early 1980's, India has witnessed a resurgence of politicized religion in which Hindu and Muslim communal politics alike have given a central place to gender issues. Women have figured as important signifiers of differences between groups. Sometimes they have vigorously participated in various communal projects, at other times they have spoken out against communal identity. They heightened mobilization of women has become the focus of debate in analyzing the empowerment of women' (Hasan & Menon, 2004).

Muslim women joined other women in the struggle for access to economic resources, education and employment. The impetus of the women's movement lay somewhat diffused in the aftermath of independence because most of influential, educated and money lender of northern belt immigrated to newly created country Pakistan. Though it is communal divide and most painful for Muslim women where they lost their identity and in fact even in both country still wounding between identity. What is the position of Muslim women in the past is almost eroded with the time and partition zeroed their identity. Devoid of a national or visionary leadership, the voices and experience of Muslim women came to be usurped by male Muslim claiming to represent the community. The political opportunism of the latter, combined with the failure of state programmes to alleviate women's socio-economic status, left the majority of Muslim women economically impoverished. With the dawn of twentieth century the impetus of social reform generated an awareness of women's issues and provided solution within legal ambit. Including much ignited debate like Shah Bano-Muslim personal law case created much furor across the country in the past.

Since independence only some northern part experiences political ambition. In the parliament the number of Muslim women never crosses the double digit, though once in the past during 6th parliamentary election the representation of Muslim women was around 16 percent within women parliamentarian. After that they never cross the fare number of representation in the Lok-Sabha election. Even some time the number came down to zero, which is unprecedented for the community and also for the parliament where there is no Muslim woman who is representing the community.

Though the number of women parliamentarian increased but the number of Muslim women seldom feels the moment of my space when she found that both public and private space including legislation where she can walk freely round the clock. Even after sixty three years of independence the political activities remains only with a few family and few selected pocket, where she can manage their sojourn to the parliament.

Muslim women in Lok-Sabha and their percentage of representation

Lok Sabha Election	Total Seat	Men MPs	Women MPs	Muslim Women MPs	Muslim Men MPs	Muslim Women % of total women
1 st (1952-57)	499	476	23	0		0
2 nd (1957-62)	479	455	24	2		8.3
3 rd (1962-67)	543	506	37	2		5.4
4 th (1967-70)	548	516	32	0		0
5 th (1971-77)	553	527	26	0		0
6 th (1977-79)	559	541	18	3		16.7
7 th (1980-84)	565	533	32	2		6.3

8 th (1984-89)	571	526	45	3		6.7
9 th (1989-91)	531	503	28	0		0
10 th (1991-96)	534	494	40	0		0
11 th (1996-97)	545	505	40	1		2.5
12 th (1998-99)	545	501	44	0		0
13 th (1999-04)	545	498	47	1		2.1
14 th (2004-Till Now)	545	500	49	2		-
Average			33.5	1.1		3.2

Source: Lok Sabha website, <http://www.parliamentofindia.nic.in>

The above figure is almost unveiling the position of Muslim women where she stands. During first democratic election which held with many dream and promises to the destiny, but the missing element is that not even a single Muslim women made her position with par to her Hindu counterpart women in the existing democratic process. The situation little improved in the second parliamentary election in which Mafida Ahmed from Jorhat constituency (Assam) and Maimoona Sultan from Bhopal constituency (M.P) made their destiny true. Meanwhile the numbers of woman increased in the 3rd parliamentary election but Muslim woman remain in the same line. Only Zohraban Akbarbhai Charada from Banaskantha (Gujarat) and Maimoona Sultan from Bhopal constituency (M.P) had won the election. But subsequently in 4th and 5th Lok Sabha election the number again heavily come down and touched zero. Following in the forthcoming 6th parliamentary election shows the highest number of Muslim women who manages to win the election. Among them was Rashida Haque Chaudhary from Silchar, Akbar Jehan Abdullah made twice once each from Srinagar and Anantnag (J&K) and Mohsina Kidwai from Azamgarh and Merrut (U.P) made their victory sign and pushed the ratio in a higher number in the parliamentary election. While the 7th parliamentary election made different taste and only two manage to won election from U.P, they were Mohsina Kidwai (Merrut) and Begaum Abida Ahmed (Bareilly). Apart from the both only Noor Bano managed to win the election from Rampur constituency (U.P). In the 14th Lok Sabha election Mehbooba Mufti from Anantnag constituency (J&K) and syeda Rubab from Bahriach Constituency (U.P) manages to win the election.

Those who managed to win the election were all from Congress party, except Akbar Jehan Abdullah who belongs to National Conference party and Mehbooba Mufti (Anantnag) from JKDPDP. They represented only northern region in the parliament. Only nine Muslim women have served in the Lok Sabha in the past sixty years.

Muslim women MPs in the history of Rajya Sabha

Name	state	Nominated(N) / Elected(E)	Party	Tenure
Begaum Aizaz Rasul	U.P	E	Cong	1952-56
Saddiqua Kidwai	Delhi	E	Cong	1956-58
Anis Kidwai	U.P	E	Cong	1956-68
Aziza Imam	Bihar	E	Cong	1973-82
Maimuna Sultan	M.P	E	Cong	1974-86
Hamida Habibullah	U.P	E	Cong	1977-79
Noor Jehan Rezaak	T.N	E	Cong	1978-82
Fathema Ismail	T.N	Nominated	---	1978-84
Najma Heptullah	Maharashtra	E	Cong BJP	1980-04 2004-till now(BJP)
Mohsina Kidwai	U.P	E	Cong	1984-
Sayeeda Khatoon	M.P	E	Cong	1986-92
Sayeeda Anwara Taimur	---	Nominated	---	1988-92
Sabana Azimi	----	Nominated	---	1994-2004

Source: Karlekar, 2005

In the upper house the position of Muslim women is considerable good in compare to the Lok-Sabha, except the few initial years of 1970's when there are no Muslim women in the house. The interesting things pattern comes out is that out of thirteen, ten are from congress party and Najma Heptullah who was later elected from BJP after leaving Congress party. Apart from election process, three Muslim women are nominated from the president of India in the house.

Across the state assemblies the number of Muslim women who have participated in provincial government since independence has proved to be more difficult because of vague information. Even after carefully prepared list during the past 50 years, 26 Muslim women have been elected to the provincial legislative assemblies (Karlekar, 2005). This is indeed

quite a low proportion against their number which should be in the assemblies. Even the maximum made their sojourn (stay) with the Congress tickets.

Muslim women elected to the state assemblies

Name	State	Constituency	Party	Tenure
Sayeeda Anwara Taimur	Assam	Dalgoan	Cong	1978-85 1991-96
Begaum Khurshid Kidwai	Delhi	Matia Mahal	JNP BJP	1977-83 1983-93
Tajdar Babur	Delhi	Barakhambha Road Mintoo Road	Cong	1983-93 1993-
Avasha Begaum Saheb(Md Ali Sheikh)	Gujarat	Soamnath	Cong	1977-85
Noorjehan Bhakta Babi	Gujarat	Balasinor	Cong	1985-90
Tamiz ben Qureshi	Gujarat	Kalupur	Cong	1985-90
Hajra Begaum	J&K	Banihal	Cong	1972-
Zainab Begaum	J&K	Amirkadal	Cong	1972-
Sakina Akther	J&K	Noorabad	JKN	1996-04
Mehbooba Mufti	J&K	Bijbehra	---	1996---
Mukthar Unnisa	Karnataka	Narasimahara ja	Cong	1985-90
Nabeesa Ummal	Kerala	Kazhakuttam	Independent	1987-91
Firoza Ahsan Ali	M.P	Burhanpur	Cong	1985-90
Sajida Begaum	Punjab	Malerkotla	Cong	1972-77 1980-
Hamida Begaum	Rajasthan	Churu	Cong	1985-90
Zakia	Rajasthan	Tonk	Cong	1985-90 1998--

Zeenath Sharrifden	T.N	Chepuk	Cong	1991-96
Hamida Habibullah	U.P	haidergarh	Cong	1969-74
Kudsia Begaum	U.P	Sandila	Cong Indp Cong	1969-74 1977-80 1980-90
Mohsina Kidwai	U.P	Masauli	Cong	1974-77
Ashraf Imam	U.P	Mirzapur	Cong	1985-90
Reshma Arif	U.P	Arya Nagar	Janta dal	1989-93
S. Khatun	W.B	Basanti	Cong	1967-69
Mumtaz Begaum	W.B	Ratua	CPM	1987-96
Rubi Noor	W.B	Suza Pur	Cong	1991-
Khatun Mafuja	W.B	Kumarganj	CPM	2001--

Source: Karlekar, 2005

A more detailed examination of the selection of Muslim women politicians are revealing a high degree of similarity in terms of family background, education, party affiliation and even her legacy which she is carrying. Most of them do hail from elite and find politically active all the time. Muslim women politician like Mehbooba Mufti, Noor Bano, and Mohsina Kidwai, all they are from such politically active family where they considered it is for the cause of peoples and the locality and inherited the election in running her legacy politically.

Hasan and Menon cites that Even though the majority of surveyed women were unaware of the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments and 'three-quarters supported reservations for women in legislatures; moreover, they expressed an interest in contesting election, especially at the local level' (Hasan & Menon, 2004). The political awareness regarding names of party and belonging candidate is increasingly a good sign of the time to come when Muslim women are eager to join the election process and stand in queue equally.

A study conducted by CSSEIP, MANUU, Hyderabad on "socio-economic conditions of excluded Muslims in Hyderabad" also shows the growing aspiration of Muslim women in politics too. A section was devoted on the questions of gender politics and contribution of Muslim women in family and lifeworld reflects a positive note.

However, according to the census of India 2001, 59 per cent of Muslims are literate as against the national average of 65 per cent. Muslim women fare even worse in both rural and urban areas; their lowest work participation and education.

In tune to the earlier discussion, let me give a brief note of women and Parliamentarians in general and then move on to conclude the paper.

In the last decade of twentieth century, the issue of political empowerment of women gained momentum across the world societies. By 1995, only 10 per cent of women parliamentarians which became 16 per cent by end of 2008 (Dahlerup 2006).

This did not reach to the endorsed percentage of United Nations Economic and Social Council set for 30 per cent by 1995 to be made across the world. This makes clear that politics is meant for the men's cricket which can be sold at higher prices, showing predominantly 84 per cent male parliamentarians. If you look Indian scenario, women in the 14th Lok Sabha constitute only 51 in numbers with 9.51 per cent where as in Rajya Sabha only 23 at 9.50 percentage of the House³.

In India, women have been given exalted position with equal treatment in political and philosophical spheres. Down the centuries, it deteriorated. But Muslim women received excellence in the political activities too. The right to decision making capacity of women has been regarded since the lifetime of Prophet Mohammad (pbuh). The marriage of Prophet Mohammad (sas) with Khatija (rah) was not simply a marriage of common man but it was also about the inclusive spiritual political message to the entire civil society across the world to accept and give due space to women '*the other half/better half*'.

The equal participation of women in pre Islamic era was quite appalling. Islam and Muslim women in the post Islamic era proposed a different paradigm to the world society due to the strong lived message of the last Prophet Mohammad (sahw). In addition to this fact, the message of Islamic way of life of women equality and participation in decisions making was carried even to Indian sub continent by Sufis in the late 10th century and 11th century. The phenomenon of Sufism played pivotal role in the life of Muslim women in particular and Muslim population in general during medieval period in India.

But the conditions of Muslim women started degrading sharply after partition of India. Muslim society contributed and nurtured women as world class leaders in countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh today. It does not mean that they represented the entire poor masses of Muslim community but yes, even it is a metaphor, a few Muslim women represented the nations as a whole in Asian sub continent as above mentioned.

Women in India were subjugated in the course of period in different political period of the existing society in India. Islam neutralized the caste system wherever it travelled and almost abolished untouchability in its fold. Hence, it seems that Muslim women got equal space in political ambience but in return found influenced with the established patriarchal political flow in India.

³Occasional Paper Series -1/2008, Reservation of Seats for women in legislative Bodies: Perspectives, Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 2008.

The meaningful role of women is seen during the Indian freedom movement and Mahatma Gandhi finds the severity of women participation in struggle. He writes in Harijan on 21 April 1946, “enrol women as voters, impart or have imparted to them practical education, teach them to think independently, release them from chains of caste that bind them so as to bring about a change in them...if they will do this, they purify the present unclean atmosphere.”⁴ Although he did not mention Muslim women in particular but that meant for women from all section of the society.

Constitutional Provisions to women in India

Equal political status to women, there is scope for ‘positive discrimination’ in their favour as is evident in Article 15(3) of the constitution. Other articles which lay upon equal provisions or equality between men and women such as Article 14 provides equality before law; Article 39(a) states that the state shall direct its policy towards securing equality to men and women the right to an adequate means of livelihood, and 39(d) enjoins the state to direct its policy towards securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women. Article 42 provides for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief; and Article 51(A) (e) talks about the fundamental duty of citizens to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

Actually the discussion on political participation of women does not get sanctity in the larger society until there is enormous consensus across the gender and religious boundaries. Else the motivation of Muslim women in political spheres gets lesser space and return. The higher the participation of women in politics, the dividends are higher to the society. Even after independence, the representation of women in Lok Sabha has not crossed 10 per cent, from the first having only (22 members) 4.4 per cent, it has reached to 51 women numbers in 14th Lok Sabha i.e. 9.51 per cent. In 1952, Rajya Sabha women numbers were merely 15 constituting 6.94 per cent of the House which in 2008 was 23 numbers (9.50 per cent). The Rajya Sabha has never seen women crossing 12 per cent after independence. The Constitution (108 Amendment) Bill, 2008 popularly known as Women’s Reservation Bill was introduced on 6th May 2008 in the Rajya Sabha and passed on March 9, 2010 by a majority of 186 to 1 but still needs to be taken in the Lok Sabha.

Women of Muslim community can be far better contributory in Indian politics considering the given Islamic notions of equality and participation in all aspects of life. But the space can be created with the help of quota within quota for Muslim women on the bases of Minorities suffer higher degree of exclusions than the others. Similarly Fatwa cannot facilitate Muslim women until they are given due space to work and join hands in the outside the ceiling glass.

Why I am saying this has one important reason, for instance 90 districts/areas were referred as Muslim dominated areas in Sachar Committee report⁵. In other words, even half of the

⁴ “What about Women?” in collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 90, 25 February- 19 May 1946, p.231.

⁵ Sachar Committee Report, 2005

areas (i.e. 45) is reserved for Muslim women, the contribution of women in India will be enormous and well desired for the present society. If women are given tickets in all the constituency, by all parties. It will change a lot.

Conclusion

The challenges and issues of Muslim women are wide and inevitable across the territory and required an immediate attention for improvement. The roles of Muslim women in Indian politics are very limited and marginal. The representation of Muslim women is just above than one percent which is considerable and alarming, while her Hindu counterpart is doing well which is around 33 percent. Unlike other politician among Muslim, the business of politics is confined within a few families and surrounded with few localities having higher proportion of population. In sixty three years of independence there are only **eight female** who can manage their path to the parliament in a different route. The representation is even below in different state legislative and which is around 26 by number after several hue and cry.

Hence, the role of Muslim women in politics is quite limited and therefore may be one of the reasons of her backwardness in education, employment and frequent cause of domestic violence or visa-vi. Thus unlike other challenges these may be quite known challenges which should be tackle down under systematic involvement and enhance her participation in politics and other social cause to lower down the both intra and inter inequality in the society, spatially. Precisely, 'Muslim women stands neither excluded nor included', is one of the most difficult tasks to address and conclude.

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The role of Muslim Women in Print and electronic Media: The past and the Present

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A review of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries in the context of Muslim women's contribution to the print and electronic media will not be disappointing. Contrarily today, in the 21st century when Muslim girls are building and taking to a career in media and even making their presence felt in the sphere of documentary and the film making. The subject requires a serious debate in the context of sound journalistic approach and achievement of lofty journalistic motto.

The period from the last quarter of the 19th century to the first quarter of the twentieth century was marked with far intense desire of Indian masses to get rid of slavery of the British on one hand while the influence of western education and culture had brought a significant change in the thoughts of our leaders on the other. In England and Japan academic institutions had opened their doors on women. In Muslim countries like Egypt and Turkey women's education and women's liberation movements have spurred the Indian Muslims to give a thought to this issue. Among Hindus Brahmo Samaj movement of Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Rama Krishna Mission of Swami Vivekananda and among Muslim educational movement of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, social reform movement of deputy Nazir Ahmad and Syed Ahmad Dehlavi and reformist movement of Shaikh Abdullah alias Papa Mian at Aligarh focused on women educational and social upliftment had paved the ground not only for Muslim women but also for the women belonging to other communities. Between 1813 and 1837 there appeared women's magazines in Bengali, Hindi and Urdu languages as a result of the pioneering task of Christian missionaries followed by Lord Dalhousie, David Havie, Annie Besant. With the publication of these magazines there came into existence a front formed by women writers struggling for women rights and women's liberation and supporting modern culture. Bengali language has the credit to publish the first women's magazine edited by Swaran Kumari Chaudhary, Rabindra Nath Tagore's sister. Urdu superceded on this front as Urdu and Persian were the languages of the elite. Even otherwise when it comes to development of journalism in India Bengali is followed by Urdu.

Scholars taking up research on Urdu prose have described Tahzeebe Niswan published from Lahore as the first women's magazine published under the patronage of a Deoband

graduate Molvi Mumtaz Ali and edited and printed by his wife Muhammadi Begum. However as mentioned by Q.A. Haider in her article in *Khatoon*, this magazine was started in 1896. Molvi Mumtaz Ali was influenced by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and he had a keen interest in learning English language despite having studied in Deoband. Initially daughter of his first wife Yaqub Begum edited the magazine while Molvi Mumtaz Ali's second wife took over as editor.

The first women's magazine in Hindi 'Sugrahini' began to be published from Allahabad in 1888 edited by Hemant Kumari Chaudhrani who basically hailed from Bengal. Since her father was associated with Brahmo Samaj it was patronized by the Brahmo Samaj movement. Thus the Hindi women's magazine has precedence over *Tahzeebe Niswan*. Dr. Meera Ramitul in her book 'Rashtriya Naujagran aur Hindi Patrakarita' has given description of a magazine titled 'Indu' with reference to women journalists that was published in 1883 from Lahore but it does not bear the name of its editor. She is of the opinion that in 1888 a fortnightly title 'Bharat Bhagini' was launched from Lahore edited by Shrimati Maha Devi (not Mahadevi Verma). Dr. Meera Rani determines the year of publication of *Sugrahini* as 1889 as it was published from Shillong as the editor Hemant Kumari's father was then posted in Shillong. Referring to women's magazines in Urdu, Dr. Simi Samar Fazal in her research thesis on the topic contribution of Urdu novels in the modern educational development of the Indian Muslim women has listed a number of women's magazines that appeared before *Tahzeebe Niswan*. She holds that that the first Urdu magazine devoted to the educational awakening among Muslim women was 'Rafiqunnisa' launched from Lucknow in 1880 followed by 'Akhbar-un- Nisa' in 1884 from Delhi edited by Syed Ahmad Dehlavi. Thus as Semi Samar claims, these two Urdu magazines launched in 1880 and 1884 preceded the earliest Hindi magazines like 'Indu' *Bharat Bhagini* and 'Swagrahini'. Moreover , Fatima Begum an inspector of schools in Bombay and the daughter of Mohi Mahbul Alam who was himself a journalist edited a magazine 'Shareef Bibi' and later patronized another magazine 'Khatoon' for a long time. It was in the year 1900 that Molvi Abdul Halim sharer launched the monthly 'Parda e Asmat'.

The dawn of the 20th century was ominous for educational upliftment of Muslim women. Two major tasks were accomplished during 1904-1905 at Aligarh under the leadership of Shaikh Abdullah alias Papa Mian and the supervision of his dynamic daughter Rasheed Jahan, a social activist. Firstly the organization of the first Muslim women's conference attended by educated and enlightgened ladies like Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum from Bhopal, Mrs. Habibur Rahman Sherwani, Nazr Sajjad Haide, Humayun Sughra and secondly the launch of the most important women's magazine 'Khatoon' that greatly inspired women writers. In 1908, Allamah Rashidul Khairi started monthly 'Ismat' focused on reform among women and protection of the eastern socio cultural values. The monthly 'Alhijab' began to be published in 1909 from Bhopal. Deeply influenced by the thought of

Abdul Haleem Shasar, the monthly *Ismat* was confined to home keeping tips, ideal bride in Muslim families, adverse impacts of the western values on eastern culture, opposition to superstition, contrarily, 'Khatoon' under the patronage of Rasheed Jahan had a wider canvas and it gave vision to Muslim women. Khatoon has played a significant role in moulding the minds of women to the demands of modern India. Its contents consisting of articles, stories and serialized novels covered the themes of topical interests including modern education, women's health, women's rights and liberation, social inequality, participation of Muslim women in native movements and advantages of patriotism and western education.

Introduction of female characters in the socialized novels was aimed at familiarizing the readers with the similar thinking and foreign attributes. These characters were depicted as actively taking part in the non cooperation and reformist movements. Thus there came into existence a group of women who wrote on serious issues with a specific purpose and they were encouraged by male members of their families to do so. They included Mohammadi Begum, Abbasi Begum, Nazr Sajjad Haider, Rasheed Jahan, Sughra Humayun, Begum Intiaz Ali Taj, Begum Shahnawaz Fatima, Begum Mrs. Abbas Tayyabji, Akhbari Begum, Zia Bano, Nafees Dulhan, Begum Sherwani, Razia Sajjad Zahir and others.

In 1921, when a freedom fighter was jailed, his wife shouldered editorial responsibilities of 'Hind'. All these women belonged to educated and enlightened families. On the other hand the educational condition of the middle class Muslim was as a whole pitiable. This section of women kept the torch burning against the whirlwind and their initiative inspired an entire generation. They made Muslim women aware of their domestic and social powers. Hijab Intiaz Ali Taj was the first Muslim woman aviator who was given professional pilot license by the Northern Lahore flying club as reported in detail in 'Khatoon' magazine. The common denominator among the earliest women's magazine was literary journalism that served as vehicle of conveying women's issues to them. Though the examples of participation of women in direct political journalism and their contribution in Urdu dailies do not exist the approach of our veteran women journalists notably was quite clear and straight forward.

It was this clarity of purpose that groomed up a whole generation of women journalists. The monthly *Khatoon Mashriq* launched in mid twentieth century from Delhi by Khawaja Aziz Hasan Baqai and Bano launched by the Shama Publishing house in Delhi catered to the literary taste of women from Muslim families in north India. Zeenat Kausar Dehlavi, wife of Yunus Dehlavi edited 'Bano' for quite a long period to be taken over by her daughter Sadia Dehlavi besides establishing herself in English journalism through her column in 'Outlook' and 'Hindustan Times'. It would be aptly said that a team of women journalist could have been prepared under the patronage of Zeenat Kausar and Sadia Dehlavi following the closure of 'Bano' and they could have played a historic role as it is the same walled city to

which has produced a flock of Muslim girls taking to their career in journalism by working with newspapers, magazine, radio and TV channels.

The mid twentieth century also witnessed the emergence of Zaibunnisa Hameedullah and Qurratul Ain Haider who won a distinct place in English journalism. Born of English mother and Bengali Muslim father, married to a Punjabi husband and educated in a western environment Zaibunnisa Hameedullah transcended common women's issues to write on political themes. She had stepped into the sphere of journalism well before the partition of India. She made her maiden appearance with a piece of verse in Illustrated Weekly while a number of articles in English magazines were published between 1940 and 1946.

In 1945 she was at the Simla conference with her husband. She was influenced by Fatima Jinnah and on latter's recommendation had an access to Mohammad Ali Jinnah for a detailed interview. In the wake of partition Zaibunnisa migrated to Pakistan where she regularly contributed to 'Dawn' on social themes from 1947 to 1951 and established herself as a political commentator later. Her column 'Through Women's Eye' became very popular. She never compromised with her ideology. As there developed some differences with the editor she disassociated herself from Dawn to edit and publish Mirror the first glossy magazine of Asia. Zaibunnisa Hameedullah was a member of Pakistan delegation to Europe in 1955. She was the first Muslim woman to address a gathering at Al Azhar Universit Cairo. She remained active as a feminist in Pakistan till 1971. A street in Karachi is dedicated to her. D A Haider was basically an Urdu fiction writer and this art gave permanence to her popularity. However she started her career with 'Imprenit' published from Bombay which she served as editor from 1964 to 1968 besides being on the editorial staff.

Coming back to the walled city I remember a courageous journalist and poet Noor Jahan Sarwat who followed the foot prints of Zeenat Kausar. Except Zaibunnisa, all women journalists I have mentioned here had been associated with monthlies, weeklies and fortnightlies. Noor Jahan was perhaps the first woman in Delhi to work with a daily to make a place for her in the sphere of Urdu journalism. She daringly kept pitted against all odds in the working environment of Urdu newspapers. She particularly broke the mentality gripping Urdu Journalism that the profession was not good for Muslim girls. She started her career with Qaumi Awaz and worked in a senior position for nearly eight years. For a short period she also worked as the editor of Qaumi Awaz followed by her association with Inqulab, Delhi edition as Assistant Editor. Noor Jahan joined mid day after the closure of Inqulab, Delhi edition. The period when Noor Jahan was serving Qaumi Awaz access of women to the offices of Urdu news papers was forbidden fruit. Presence of women there was frowned at by so called morally awakened calligraphers. There was no room for women in other dailies like Aljamiat, Nai Dunya and Dawat. However it was the same period when Anees

Jung was writing boldly on social issues in English journals and magazines. When Biswen Sadi was taken over by Rahman Nayyar his wife Shama Afroz Zaidi was seen active in Urdu journalism and also supervised the publication of Biswin sadi for sometime after Rahman Nayyar's demise.

A new chapter of Muslim women's contribution to journalism was opened with the launch of an Urdu monthly of Rashtriya Sahara after 1991. Here too the environment for women was not favourable. However the policies of the patron of Sahara India and its higher management led to opening of avenues for women. Consequently girls and women are employed in Delhi, Lucknow, Patna, Kolkata, Gorakhpur, Mumbai, Hyderabad, Kanpur stations Rashtriya Sahara Urdu in editorial, field reporting, computer, marketing and circulation sections. This led them to getting access to other Urdu dailies such as Hamara Samaj, Hindustan Express and Sahafat to work in different positions. It is from this point of view that Sahara India has played a memorable role in providing opportunities to women in the sphere of Urdu journalism.

Closure of women's magazine Bano was compensated by the recent launch of a monthly titled 'Roshan shama' from Delhi edited by Salma Siddique.

In print media, many women are working on beats like war reporting, films and fashion showing a deviation from editing traditional monthlies. On national level, Nuzhat Kazmi has made his place in film journalism through Times of India while Farhan Farooqi is writing now a days features on films in Filmfare. Currently associated with a TV channel, Seema Mustafa started her career with the print media where she wrote on issues relating to Kashmir besides war reporting.

33 year old Dilnar Buga from Maharashtra has recently being the prestigious Kate webb Prize for each value of 4200 dollars for her excellent photo journalism in the sensitive area of Kashmir. She has provide noteworthy images of AFP and other international websites while based in Srinagar for one year.

Now a glance at Muslim women's participation in provincial journalism both print and electronic. In Jammu and Kashmir which is all the time in the grip of terrorism and where women's activities have been badly affected and restricted may feel proud of having talents like Rabia Noor (Greater Kashmir), Biswan Malik (Kashmir Times), Professor Saeeda Afshan (Department of Mass Communication, Kashmir University, Srinagar) who contributes her articles regularly to the daily Greater Kashmir besides Afshan Gul an anchor at Door Darshan, Farhana (NDTV), Naeem Ahmad Mahjoor, a senior journalist with BBC Urdu service, London.

Sheeba Mosvi, wife of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq launched a women's magazine 'She' which is no more in print. A freelance journalist Asia Jilani was on North Kashmir tour with the election monitoring team seven years ago was killed in a terrorist bomb attack in April 2004. She was awarded with Kashmir's most prestigious award for journalists 'Civil Society of Kashmir Award' posthumously. About 20 years ago, Shamima along with another freelance journalist was killed at the hands of terrorists for war reporting.

In Karnataka, a women's magazine is being edited by Farida Rahmatullah for seven years. Among others are Naheed Abdullah, Nigar Sultana, Afshan Yasmeen and Aisha Qasim associated with Times of India voice, Hindu Daily and Star News. In Maharashtra, Rehana Bastiwala has been associated with Inqilab for more than two decades while presently she is serving BBC. Huma Khan, daughter of Haroon Rasheed, editor of daily Inqilab is working with voice of America. Sameera Khan was a reporter with Times of India.

In Uttar Pradesh, Shameera Naem is the bureau chief of 'Tribune'. Earlier she has worked with a few English dailies in Delhi. Kulsum Talha, once with Times of India is now working for ASP while Fatma is serving ETV Urdu.

In Bihar, Nazia Naushad and Reshma Aftab are working as sub editor and reporter for Patna edition of daily Rashtriya Sahara. There are also three or four women computer operators. However presence of women in other 4-5 Urdu newspapers being published from Patna is invisible despite a good number of Urdu reading women in the state.

Unfortunately I could not gather information about women from Andhra Pradesh engaged in media activities. There must be some to add to the list given here. However it may be suggested that in view of the existing avenues in computer graphics, photo journalism, web journalism in addition to general print and electronic media Muslim girls and women too should make use of such opportunities.

Muslim women registered their presence in electronic media in the very nascent phase of television. A shining example is Salma Sultan who had joined Door Darshan as 'News Reader' followed Nasish Hussaini, Nayyar Sultana, Jamshed and Ghazala Ameen. The new generation has certainly been inspired and encouraged by this lot of TV journalists. With the introduction of private channels there began to appear many Muslim female faces both in the field and on the screen like Naghma, Aarifa Khanam, Shazia (cont. last page)

Cont... Farhat Rizvi

Ilmi, Aliqa Farooqi, Samina Khan, Sameera, Zehra Zaidi, Hamra, Syeda Afifa, Samra, Samad and Farah Zaidi, Afshan Anjum, Roohi Parvez, Subuhi Parvez to name a few, who

are working with different channels. Besides, Kakul Rizvi, Sabiha Farhat, Sadaf Rizvi are engaged in making a programme based on freelance women journalists. Samina Khan has been presenting for over two years a programme titled 'Asmita' for Lok Sabha channel where she has raised important social issues including property rights, adaptation, health and education and employment.

On international level also Muslim women have made their mark. Born in India and now based in London Nasreen Mini Kabir has been presenting some special feature under Bollywood annual for UK channel-4. As a link of this process she has made documentary films on Guru Dutt, Amitabh Bachchan, Lata Mangeshkar and Shah Rukh Khan. Anusha Rizvi created a sensation through 'Pipli Live'. There are a few important points that need serious consideration. Firstly Muslim women's presence is not proportional to their total population.

The pages of dailies and magazines specific to women's issues do not aptly present material suiting women as an interest. There will be quite a few women who know that Babur's daughter Gulbadan Begum was perhaps Asia's first fiction writer and the first historian in the Mughal era who wrote Humayun nama on which Abul Fazal based his Aine Akbari. Also there are not many people who know that Aurangzeb's talented daughter Zaibunnisa Makhfi had compiled a volume of poetry which has been translated into English though not in Urdu. Women do the pioneering work of familiarizing the subsequent generations with their historical heritage but before doing so, not only the elite but also common Muslim women will have to become aware of that heritage.

Thirdly, the girls and women who have gained experience in the sphere made not touched even the border of the devotion and hard work their predecessors demonstrated. True, the present scenario is void of ideal guidance and reformist movements but Urdu media is lagging behind in terms of journalistic approach compared to English and Hindi media. The interest in electronic media owes more to impression of glamour than journalistic integrity and jest to serve the society. Make up rooms, studio and opportunity to show their faces on the screen is driving them into the profession. Both the quality and quantity need equal attention.

MUSLIM WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION TO ISLAMIC THEOLOGY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HADITH

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"How splendid were the women of the ansar; shame did not prevent them from becoming learned in the faith."

Prologue

Unlike Christianity which refused to attribute gender to the Godhead and never appointed male priestly elite to serve as an intermediary between creature and Creator, Islam as a religion started life with the assurance that while men and women are equipped by nature for complementary rather than identical roles, no spiritual superiority inheres in the masculine principle.¹ As a result, the Muslim community was happy to entrust matters of equal worth in God's sight. Only this can explain why, uniquely among the classical Western religions, Islam produced a large number of outstanding female scholars, on whose testimony and sound judgment much of the edifice of Islam depends.

Throughout the different stages of Islamic history, Muslim women have made a rich contribution to the scientific,² intellectual and literary movement, within the circle of the Islamic civilization and excelled in the areas of science, the branches of knowledge, medicine³ and poetry⁴ which is approved by many Islamic scholars.⁵ Apart from this their contribution to Islamic theology is not less prominent than male scholars of their time. Even the ladies of the family of Prophet (PBUH) were excelled in this field such as- Lady Fatimah bint al-Hussein Ibn Ali was the most genius, knowledgeable and pious among the

¹ Whoever works righteousness, man or woman, and has faith, verily to him will We give a new life that is good and pure, and We will bestow on such their reward according to their actions. Qur'an 16:97

² Tamima, daughter of the Moroccan Sultan Yusuf Ibn Tashfeen was brilliant in science.

³ Um Amru Ibn Zahr, sister of the famous physician Abu Bakr Ibn Zahr, was skillful in theoretical and practical medicine.

⁴ Hisham Ibn Orwa quoted his father saying: "I have not seen any one who is more knowledgeable in theology, in medicine and in poetry than Aisha".

⁵ Al-Hafid Ibn Hajr writes in his book "Al-Isaba Fi Tamyiz Al-Sahaba", about the life of one thousand five hundred forty three women, among them scholars, preachers and women of letters, and so does Imam al-Nawawi in "Tahthibu Al Asamae Wa Al-lughat", al-Khatib al-Baghdadi in his "Tarikhu Baghdad", as-Sakhawi in "Addawu Al-lami Li Ahli Al Qarni Attasi", Omar Reda Kahala in "Muâjamu Aâlamî Al-Nisae", and many others who wrote biographies of learned women in religious jurisprudence, literature and poetry

women of her time. Ibn Is'haq and Ibn Hisham based their recording of the Prophet's tradition on her narrations.

Laila al-Ghifariah, took part in battles by way of carrying water and nursing the wounded, Suffiah bint Abdul Muttalib even fought and killed the enemies to protect themselves and the Prophet (PBUH) and Umm Dhahhak bint Masoud were rewarded with booty in the same way as the men. Ibn Jarir and al-Tabari favored women's judicial position to adjudicate in all matters, though Abu Hanifah excluded females from matters of the decisions involving the heavy hadd and qisas punishment. The Holy Quran even speaks favorably of the Queen of Sheba and the way she consulted her advisors, who deferred to her good judgment on how to deal with the threat of invasion by the armies of Solomon.⁶ Women have sometimes headed Islamic provinces, like Arwa bint Ahmad, who served as governor of Yemen under the Fatimid Khalifahs in the late fifth and early sixth century.

In this Islamic spectacle, the author is venturing to write on Muslim women's contribution in the field of theology of Islam through the instrumentality of a hadith. This is not meant to be a polemical piece but is an earnest appeal the females of present time to take lesson from the Islamic history and proved their excellence following the Islamic tenets with the glance over the concepts of Islamic theology, articles of belief, Islamic feminism and relation of hadith in Islamic theology etc.

What is Theology

According to the Oxford dictionary the literal meaning of the term theology is the study of the system of a particular religion. Theology attempts to consider every aspect of religious practice and thought. The basic question of how theologians may go about creating systems of thought is being interpreted by asserting that personal experience can be an important component of insight into the divine, along with the more traditional sources of holy books or received tradition. Theology is the systematic and rational study of religion and its influences and of the nature of religious truths, or the learned profession acquired by completing specialized training in religious studies, usually at a university or school of divinity or seminary. Richard Hooker defined "theology" in English as "the science of things divine"⁷.

Islamic Theology

The Holy Quran, the very words of Allah and the Hadith and Sunnah the reports of the sayings and the model practice of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are the basis of Islamic theology. The Arabic word 'Aqidah' means faith, is attributed to Islamic theology which is derived from the root word "'A-Q-D", which means to tie or knot. Islamic theology is a

⁶ Qur'an 27:32-35

⁷ Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, 3.8.11

branch of Islamic studies regarding the beliefs (aquaid-plural of aqidah) associated with the Islamic faith. Muslims enumerate their creed to include the Six articles of belief that are clearly articulated in the Holy Quran over which there is a consensus on the elements of this creed across all spectrums as sectarian differences between Shias and Sunnis are often expressed in differences in branches or elaboration of creedal beliefs as opposed to the core creed (aqidah). In the history of Muslim theology, there have been theological schools among Muslims displaying both similarities and differences with each other in regard to beliefs. Sectarian differences may be about the ideas regarding the attributes of God or about the purpose of angels but there is no dispute on the existence of God, that he has sent his revelation via messengers nor that man will be held to account and rewarded or punished with heaven or hell.⁸

Articles of Belief

The six articles of belief are:

- Tauhid- Belief in oneness of God (Allah) only worthy of all worship
- Malaika- Belief in the Angels
- Kutub- Belief in the Books sent by Allah i.e. The Holy Quran
- Rusul- Belief in all the Messengers sent by Allah
- Qiyama- Belief in the Day of Judgment and in the Resurrection (life after death).
- Qadar- Belief in Destiny (Fate)

The first five articles are based on several Quranic injunctions:

*"Whoever disbelieveth in God and His angels and His scriptures and His messengers and the Last Day, he verily wandered far stray"*⁹

*"...righteous is he who believeth in God and the Last Day and the angels and the scripture and the prophets"*¹⁰

The first theological controversy in Islam is over the sixth point as Shias do not stress God's limitless power (qadar), but rather his boundless justice 'adl' as the sixth point of belief. This does not mean either that Sunnis deny his justice or that Shias negate his power; it simply reflects a difference in emphasis. In both Sunni and Shia having Iman literally means to have belief in these six articles which lays the foundation for acting on the secondary matters which would be the rights and regulations of Islam. These 'aquaid' have taken a significant technical usage in Muslim history and theology, denoting those matters over which Muslims hold conviction.

Islamic Feminism

⁸ "Islamic Belief (Al-'Aqida)" Islamicweb.com

⁹ Surah An-Nisa':136

¹⁰ Surah Al-Baqarah: 177

Islamic feminism is a form of feminism concerned with the role of women in Islam. It aims for the full equality of all Muslims, regardless of gender, in public and private life. Islamic feminists advocate women's rights, gender equality, and social justice grounded in an Islamic framework. Although rooted in Islam, the movement's pioneers have also utilized secular and European or non-Muslim feminist discourses and recognize the role of Islamic feminism as part of an integrated global feminist movement.¹¹ Advocates of the movement seek to highlight the deeply rooted teachings of equality in the Holy Quran¹² and encourage a questioning of the patriarchal interpretation of Islamic teaching through the Holy Quran, hadith and shariah towards the creation of a more equal and just society.¹³

Hadith and Islamic Theology

The Arabic plural of hadith is ahadith that are regarded by traditional Islamic schools of jurisprudence as important tools for understanding the Holy Quran.¹⁴ In Arabic the word hadith means '*that which is new from amongst things*' or '*a piece of information conveyed either in a small quantity or large*'. Hadith also refers to the speech of a person.

In Islamic terminology, the term hadith is used to reports the statements or actions of Muhammad (PBUH), or of his tacit approval of something said or done in his presence. Classical hadith specialist Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani says that the intended meaning of hadith in religious tradition is something attributed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as opposed to the Holy Quran.¹⁵ The word Sunnah (custom) is also used in reference to a normative custom of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) or the early Muslim community.¹⁶

Ibn al-Salah, a hadith specialist, described the relationship between hadith and other aspect of the religion by saying: "*It is the science most pervasive in respect to the other sciences in their various branches, in particular to jurisprudence being the most important of them.*"¹⁷ As for Quranic exegesis, the speeches of God's are preferred manner to explain by means of what has been accepted as a statement of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). There is a distinction between the acceptable and unacceptable traditions. The difference in Sunni and Shia hadith collections is due to the difference of the reliability of the narrators and transmitters. Those which are not from Prophet's family are seen as unreliable by the Shias, they also reject the hadith narrated by Aysha. This difference has contributed the difference in worship practices and shariah law.

¹¹ II International Congress on Islamic Feminism

¹² The works of male and female are of equal value and each will receive the due reward for what they do: Never will I suffer to be lost the work of any one of you, male or female...Qur'an 3:195

¹³ Al-Ahram Weekly | Culture | Islamic feminism: what's in a name?

¹⁴ Ibn Hajar, Ahmad. al-Nukat ala Kitab ibn al-Salah, vol. 1, pg. 90. Maktabah al-Furqan.

¹⁵ Al-Asqalani, Ahmad ibn 'Ali (in Arabic). Fath al-Bari. 1. Egypt: al-Matba'ah al-Salafiyyah. pp. 193. ISBN 1902350049.

¹⁶ "Hadith," Encyclopedia of Islam.

¹⁷ Ulum al-Hadith by Ibn al-Salah, pg. 5, Dar al-Fikr, with the verification of Nur al-Din al-'Itr

Contribution of Prominent Women in the field of Theology through Hadith

Islamic history is witnessed that women had been taking a prominent part in the preservation and cultivation of hadith which continued down the centuries. At every period, there lived numerous eminent women-traditionists, who had been not only the instance for the evolution of many traditions, but had also been their transmitters to their sisters and brethren in faith even during the lifetime of the Prophet (PBUH).¹⁸ As a custodian of the rich stored knowledge many women Companions were approached for the instructions after the death of the Prophet (PBUH) particularly his wives which they had gathered in the Prophet's company. The names of Ayesha Hafsa, Umm Habiba, Maymuna, Umm Salama, and A'isha, are familiar to every student of hadith as being among its earliest and most distinguished transmitters.¹⁹

Hafsa, the daughter of Ibn Sirin,²⁰ Umm al-Darda the Younger²¹ and 'Amra bin 'Abd al-Rahman, are the key women traditionalists of period of the Successors. Umm al-Darda' was held by Ilyas ibn Mu'awiya, an important traditionalist of the time and a judge of undisputed ability and merit, to be superior to all the other traditionalists of the period, including the celebrated masters of hadith like al-Hasan al-Basri and Ibn Sirin.²² 'Amra was considered a great authority on traditions related by A'isha. Among her students, Abu Bakr ibn Hazm, the celebrated judge of Medina, was ordered by the caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz to write down all the traditions known on her authority.²³

The prominent female traditionalists of the fourth century were Fatima bint Abd al-Rahman,²⁴ Amat al-Wahid,²⁵ Umm al-Fatah Amat as-Salam,²⁶ Jumua bint Ahmad and many other women whose classes were always attended by reverential audiences. In the fifth and sixth centuries of hijra, Fatima bin al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn al-Daqqaq al-Qushayri was celebrated for her piety, her mastery of calligraphy, her knowledge of hadith and the quality of the isnads she knew.²⁷ Karima al-Marwaziyya²⁸ was figured as a central point in the transmission of this seminal text of Islam.²⁹ Godziher writes 'her name occurs with extraordinary frequency of the ijazas for narrating the text of this book.'³⁰ Among her

¹⁸ Al-Khatib, *Sunnah*, 53-4, 69-70.

¹⁹ See above, 18, 21.

²⁰ Ibn Sa'd, VIII, 355.

²¹ d.81/700

²² Suyuti, *Tadrib*, 215.

²³ Ibn Sa'd, VIII, 353.

²⁴ Known as al-Sufiyya on account of her great piety (d. 312/924)

²⁵ The daughter of distinguished jurist al-Muhamili (d. 377/987)

²⁶ The daughter of the judge Abu Bakr Ahmad (d.350/961)

²⁷ Ibn al-Imad, *Shsadhara al-Dhahah fi Akhbar man Dhahah* (Cairo, 1351), V, 48; Ibn Khallikan, no. 413

²⁸ Abu Dharr of Herat, one of the leading scholars of the period, attached such great importance to her authority that he advised his students to study the *Sahih* under no one else, because of the quality of her scholarship. (d.463/1070),

²⁹ Maqqari, *Nafh*, I, 876; cited in Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 366

³⁰ Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 366. "It is in fact very common in the ijaza of the transmission of the Bukhari text to find as middle member of the long chain the name of Karima al-Marwaziyya," (ibid.)

students were al-Khatib al-Baghdadi³¹ and al-Humaydi.³² Aside from Karima, a number of other women traditionalists were Fatima bint Muhammad who received from the hadith specialists the proud title of Musanida Isfahan³³, Shuhda was described by the biographers as 'the calligrapher, the great authority on hadith, and the pride of womanhood.' and Sitt al-Wuzara bint Umar³⁴ who, besides her acclaimed mastery of Islamic law, was known as 'the musanida of her time', and delivered lectures on the Sahih and other works in Damascus and Egypt³⁵. Umm al-Khayr Amat al-Khaliq was regarded as the last great hadith-scholar of the Hijaz³⁶. Still another authority on Bukhari was A'isha bint Abd al-Hadi³⁷.

Apart from these women, Umm al-Khayr Fatima bint Ali and Fatima al-Shahrazuriyya delivered lectures on the Sahih of Muslim³⁸. Fatima al-Jawzdaniyya narrated three Mujams of al-Tabarani to her students³⁹. Zaynab of Harran's lectures attracted a large crowd of students who taught them the Musnad of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, the largest known collection of hadiths⁴⁰. Juwayriya bint Umar and Zaynab bint Ahmad ibn Umar had traveled widely in pursuit of hadith and delivered lectures in Egypt as well as Medina⁴¹. Zaynab bint Ahmad acquired 'a camel load' of diplomas and delivered lectures on the Musnad of Abu Hanifa, the Shamail of al-Tirmidhi, and the Sharh Maani al-Athar of al-Tahawi.⁴² The great traveler Ibn Battuta⁴³ and the famous historian of Damascus, Ibn Asakir had studied traditions under more than 1,200 men and 80 women⁴⁴. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti studied the Risala of Imam Shafii with Hajar bint Muhammad.⁴⁵ Afif al-Din Junayd, a traditionalist of the ninth century AH, read the Sunan of al-Darimi with Fatima bin Ahmad ibn Qasim.⁴⁶

In his work al-Durar al-Karima,⁴⁷ Ibn Hajar gives short biographical notices of about 170 prominent women of the eighth century, most of whom are traditionalists, and under many

³¹Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba', I, 247

³²COPL, V/i, 98f (428/1036-488/1095).

³³The great hadith-authority of Isfahan (d.539/1144)

³⁴Ibn al-Imad, IV, 123, Sitt al-Wuzara' was also an eminent jurist. She was once invited to Cairo to give her fatwa on a subject that had perplexed the jurists there. (d.716/1316)

³⁵Ibn al-Imad, VI 40

³⁶Ibid. VIII, 14.

³⁷.Ibn Salim, al-Imdad (Hyderabad, 1327), 36

³⁸Ibn al-Imad, IV,100

³⁹.Ibn Salim, 16

⁴⁰Ibid. 28f

⁴¹Ibn al-Imad, VI 56

⁴²'On her authority is based,' says Goldziher, 'the authenticity of the Gotha codex ... in the same isnad a large number of learned women are cited who had occupied themselves with this work.' Goldziher, Muslim Studies, II, 407

⁴³Ibn Battuta, Rihla, 253.

⁴⁴Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, V,140f

⁴⁵Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba,17f

⁴⁶COPL, V/i, 175f

⁴⁷Various manuscripts of this work have been preserved in libraries, and it has been published in Hyderabad in 1348-50. Volume VI of Ibn al-Imad's Shadharat al-Dhahab, a large biographical dictionary of prominent Muslim scholars from the first to the tenth centuries of the hijra, is largely based on this work.

of whom the author himself had studied⁴⁸. Ibn Khallikan, author of the well-known biographical dictionary *Wafayat al-Ayan*⁴⁹ is the student of Zaynab bint al-Sha'ri. Karima the Syrian was described by the biographers as the greatest authority on hadith in Syria of her day⁵⁰ Juwayriya bint Ahmad gave lectures on the Islamic disciplines at the great colleges of the time.⁵¹ Many students undertook long journeys in order to sit at her feet and study the truths of religion.⁵² Sitt al-Arab had been the teacher of the well-known traditionalist al-Iraqi and of many others who derived a good proportion of their knowledge from her.⁵³

Muhammad ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Sakhawi mentioned many women traditionalist, in a biographical dictionary of eminent persons of the ninth century called *al-Daw al-Lami*.⁵⁴ Mu'jam al-Shuyukh of Abd al-Aziz ibn Umar ibn Fahd compiled in 861 after Hijri and devoted to the biographical notices of more than 1,100 of the author's teachers, including over 130 women scholars under whom he had studied.⁵⁵ Umm Hani Maryam learnt the Qur'an by heart in a her childhood acquired all the Islamic sciences including theology, law, history, and grammar, and then traveled to pursue hadith with the best traditionalists of her time in Cairo and Mecca.⁵⁶ Other celebrated names are Bai Khatun,⁵⁷ A'isha bin Ibrahim,⁵⁸ Umm al-Khayr Saida of Mecca.⁵⁹

Lady Nafisa bint al-Hassan Ibn Zaid bin al-Hassan Ibn Ali, used to attend lectures by Imam Malik in al-Madina al-Monawara. In Egypt she gave religious lectures that were attended by the most prominent scholars of the time, including Imam Ashafii who, during his lifetime, used to visit her to discuss with her the matters related to jurisprudence and the essentials of religion. Zainab bint Abbass al-Baghdadia was a woman of jurisprudence and knowledge, and used to attend religious lectures by the outstanding Muslim scholar Ibn Taimya. Shahda bint al-Abari al-Katib a prominent scholar in the field of Prophet's sayings, has students included Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn Qadama al-Maqdissi, among many

⁴⁸ Goldziher, accustomed to the exclusively male environment of nineteenth-century European universities, was taken aback by the scene depicted by Ibn Hajar. Cf. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, II, 367: "When reading the great biographical work of Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani on the scholars of the eighth century, we may marvel at the number of women to whom the author has to dedicate articles."

⁴⁹ Ibn Khallikan, no.250.

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Imad, V, 212, 404

⁵¹ 'Some of my own teachers,' says Ibn Hajar, 'and many of my contemporaries, attended her discourses' A'isha bin Abd al-Hadi was one of Ibn Hajar's teachers, who was considered to be the finest traditionalist of her time, Ibn Hajar, *al-Durar al-Karima fi Ayan al-Mi'a al-Thamina* (Hyderabad, 1348-50), I, no. 1472

⁵² Ibn al-Imad, VIII, 120f

⁵³ Ibid VI, 208. We are told that al-Iraqi (the best know authority on the hadiths of Ghazali's *Ihya Ulum al-Din*) ensured that his son also studied under her.

⁵⁴ A summary by Abd al-Salam and Umar ibn al-Shamma' exists (C. Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, second ed. (Leiden, 1943-49CE), II, 34), and a defective manuscript of the work of the latter is preserved in the O.P. Library at Patna (COPL, XII, no.727).

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Sakhawi, *al-Saw al-Lami li-Ahl al-Qarn al-Tasi* (Cairo, 1353-55), XII, no. 980.

⁵⁷ Who took special delight in teaching and studied traditions with Abu Bakr-al-Mizzi

⁵⁸ Ibid., no. 450 Known in academic circles as Ibnat al-Sharaihi

⁵⁹ Ibid., no. 901.

others. Um Habiba al-Asbahania taught al-Hafid al-Mundiri, who stated he had obtained a license from her.

Fatimah bint Mohammad bint Ahmad Assa-Marqandi was a dignified scholar who acquired knowledge from many a scholar, and devoted herself to teaching knowledge. She wrote several books in jurisprudence and the Prophet's sayings and she used to draw the attention of her husband, Sheikh Ala-al-Kassani to his errors whenever he committed one.

Fatimah bint Ahmed bin Yahiya was a knowledgeable scholar deducing legal rulings. Her husband, Imam al-Motahhar, used to consult her about the difficulties he ever encounter in some issues and about the lessons he prepares for his students etc.

The mosque which became the first Islamic university in the world was built by Fatimah al-Fihria known as al-Qarawyeen in Fes. Her sister, Maryam built al-Andalus mosque in Fes, which is one of the most famous transmitters of the Prophet's tradition. In the beginning of the ninth century, there lived in the city of Fes Lady Alia⁶⁰ taught logic in al-Andalus Mosque in Fes and gave special classes which were staged in other regions in the Muslim world, such as in Egypt, Damascus, Mesopotamia, Persia, Turkey, Transoxiana and in India. Abu al-Hassan Ali an-Nadawi stated that he was taught by some women among his relatives who were brilliant in religious and literary disciplines.

Neither class nor gender was obstacles to the rising of ranks of Islamic scholarship for these devout women as Abida was a slave who impressed by her learning Habib Dahhun, the great traditionalist of Spain who married her, and brought her to Andalusia. It is said that she related ten thousand traditions on the authority of her Medinan teachers.⁶¹ On the other hand Zaynab bint Sulayman was princess of the Abbasid dynasty, who gained a reputation as one of the most distinguished women traditionalists of the time and counted many important men among her pupils.⁶² In the cultivation of the Prophetic tradition the continuous participation of women with their peer reveals that every major collection gives the names of many women as the immediate authorities of the author.

Present Women Theologian

Aishah bint Muhammad⁶³ a muhaddithah of 14th century born in a prominent Hanbali family in Damascus was the student of the famed hadith scholar, al-Hajjar. She acquired several certificates to transmit several works from al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim. Her most famous student was al-Hajar al-'Askalani, great Hadith scholar. Aishah's role as hadith transmitter outside the madrasa marks the success of religious education outside formal, male-dominated institutions.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Daughter of the great scholar al-Tayyeb bin Kiran

⁶¹ Maqqari, Nafh, II, 96.

⁶² Al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, Tarikh Baghdad, XIV, 434f

⁶³ Hijri 723-816 (AH) 1323-1413 (CE) Syria

⁶⁴ Asma Sayeed, 'Women and Hadith Transmission: Two Case Studies from Mamluk Damascus,' *Studia Islamica* 95 (2002): 71-94.

Aminah Assilmi⁶⁵ collected millions of signatures for petitions that were presented to the United Nations in support of the thousands of women who were abused and raped during the ethnic cleansing campaigns in Bosnia. She was instrumental in the U.S. Postal Service's 2001 issuing of the "Eid" stamp, which marks the two main Muslim holidays. She drew on her knowledge and love for Islam to demand equity for Muslim women wherever it was denied to them.⁶⁶

Cemalnur Sargut⁶⁷ advocates finding solutions of today's problems in the Sufi view not through mere words but by actually living Sufism. In this spirit, she helped establish a chair of Islamic Studies in 2009 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and at Peking University in China. These academic efforts taking place both inside and outside of Turkey play a leading role in building a spiritual bridge between the East and the West so that true Islam can be introduced. Apart from her studies on Sufism, Cemalnur publishes books of commentaries on the Quran compiled through the commentaries of such great Sufi masters as Rumi, Ahmed-er Rifai, Abdulkadir Jilani, Ibn-i Arabi, Mısri Niyazi, Jili, Shams and Sultan Veled. She continuously serves people by giving spiritual discourses and teachings on Rumi's Masnavi and Ibn Arabi's Fususu'l Hikem. Cemalnur aims to enable humanity to reach the joy of life where people live in harmony without attempting to change those that are different and see all as one without discriminating between genders, religions, sects, or outlooks. Setting an example to such a living by practicing (akhlaq) morals is the reason for her existence and she performs her duty with great ease, only for the sake of God.⁶⁸

Aisha Lee Shaheed⁶⁹ endeavors to create links amongst women and women's groups within Muslim countries and communities; to strengthen local and global struggles for social justice; and to increase women's knowledge about both their common and diverse situations in various contexts. She enjoys dividing her time between Canada, Pakistan and England, and is especially intrigued by representations of women that cut across various markers of identity. Her forthcoming publications include chapters on the politics of clothing in Muslim contexts and storytelling as feminist historiography. She is currently working on an analytical overview of the status of women and women's activism in Saudi Arabia.⁷⁰

Dr. Amina Wadud⁷¹ Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA-USA is an expert on the theology of Islam and gender equality. She is the author of

⁶⁵ Director of the International Union of Muslim Women, 1364- 1431Hijri, 1945-2010 CE United States

⁶⁶ http://www.famousmuslims.com/Aminah_Assilmi.htm

⁶⁷ President of the Turkish Women's Cultural Association founded in 1966, Spiritual teacher 15 Safar 1372 AH, 3 November 1952 CE, Turkey

⁶⁸ <http://www.Metacafe.com/watch/4670845/z-k-r-n-en-st-n-cemalnur-sargut>

⁶⁹ Writer/researcher, networker for Women Living Under Muslim Laws, Canada

⁷⁰ <http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=250&pup=wise.muslimwomen>

⁷¹ A visiting scholar at the Starr King School for the Ministry in California and a visiting consultant on Islam and gender at the International Centre for Islam and Pluralism in Indonesia

several books.⁷² A core member of Sisters in Islam, Malaysia since 1989, Dr. Wadud contributed the theological basis for the organization in its earliest stages of development and continues to combine academia and activism; progressive Islam and spirituality in her work.

Dr. Wadud taught Islam, gender and human rights at the Center for Religious and Cross Cultural Studies at Gadjah Mada University, in Yogyakarta (2009) and in an intensive workshop at University of Melbourne, Australia (2010). She continues to travel extensively providing consultation on areas related to Islam and Pluralism and doing research on knowledge production and gender in Islam.⁷³

Asma Barlas⁷⁴ the first woman to be inducted into the foreign service left Pakistan after General Zia ul Haq dismissed her for her critical remarks about him and the Pakistani judiciary, and settled in the U.S (1983). She served as Spinoza Chair in Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam (2008). Barlas' varied span of research interests began in graduate school with a study of the politics of military rule and representative democracy.⁷⁵ In 2002 her focus has shifted to the hermeneutics of the Quran, Muslim sexual politics, and relations between Islam and the West (Re-understanding Islam, 2008; Islam, Muslims, and the U.S., 2004; "Believing Women" in Islam, 2002). Currently, she is delving into religious embodiment and violence and has presented two papers on the topic. Her work on the Quran has been translated into Bengali, Indonesian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Urdu, and has been invited to present on it in a number of venues in the U.S. and internationally.⁷⁶

Epilogue

The Islamic history is witnessing the excellent and distinguished contribution of Muslim women at a time when women in other societies had no contribution, what so ever, to any of the fields of intellectual activity. Throughout the history of feminine scholarship in Islam it is clear that the women's involvement did not confine their study to a personal interest in traditions, or to the private coaching of a few individuals, but took their seats as students as well as teachers in public educational institutions, side by side with their brothers in faith. The colophons of many manuscripts⁷⁷ show them both as students attending large

⁷² Inside the Gender Jihad (One world Publisher, 2006), and Qur'an and Woman (Oxford University Press, (1999), now available in 7 translations

⁷³ <http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?v=250&pup=wise.muslimwomen>

⁷⁴ Professor of Politics and Director of the Center for the Study of Culture, Race, and Ethnicity at Ithaca College in New York, known for Qu'ranic and Islamic research, studies on women and gender in Islam, and Comparative and International and Politics (Hijri 1369 - Present (AH) 1950 - Present (CE) Pakistan) Her credentials include a Ph.D. in International Studies from the University of Denver, an M.A. in Journalism from the University of Punjab in Pakistan, and a B.A. in English Literature and Philosophy from Pakistan's Kinnaird College for Women.

⁷⁵ Democracy, Nationalism and Communalism, 1995

⁷⁶ <http://www.asmarbarlas.com/cv.html>

⁷⁷ Kitab al-Kifaya of al-Khatib al-Baghdadi, and of a collection of various treatises on hadith, show Nima bin Ali, Umm Ahmad Zaynab bint al-Makki, and other women traditionalists delivering lectures on these two books, sometimes independently, and sometimes jointly with male traditionalists, in major colleges

general classes, and also as teachers, delivering regular courses of lectures.⁷⁸ The work of these scholars has helped feminist theologians claim historical figures as their predecessors in feminist theology.

But on basis of available sources⁷⁹ it can be said that the involvement of women in hadith scholarships, and in the Islamic disciplines considerably declined from the tenth century of the hijra. But it would be wrong to conclude from this that after the tenth century, women lost interest in the subject. Some women traditionalists gained good reputations and continued their services to the sunnah such as Asma bint Kamal al-Din⁸⁰ A'isha bint Muhammad,⁸¹ Fatima bint Yusuf of Aleppo⁸² and Umm al-Khayr.⁸³ The most important figure of the twelfth Islamic century was Fatima al-Fudayliya, also known as al-Shaykha al-Fudayliya excelled in the art of calligraphy and the various Islamic sciences with special interest in hadith, received many diplomas from many good scholars. She settled at Mecca in her last days and founded a rich public library. Among her disciples the names of Shaykh Umar al-Hanafi and Shaykh Muhammad Sali were prominent.⁸⁴

Islam was the most revolutionary liberalization of women's rights that the civilized world has ever seen. But afterwards Muslims became ignorant of this and now Muslim countries are the scene of some of the worst abuses of women's rights, contends American convert to Islam, Yahya M.

"The treatment of women raises serious questions about the level of faith and Islamic behavior on the part of the protagonists in the civil war in Algeria. Islam itself is being disfigured and perverted!"⁸⁵

As society becomes more and more complex, the institutions are pressed to assume social obligations- to train for employment, to solve social problems and to help them to set ethical directions for society. It is necessary to strengthen their optimism and eschew their

such as the Aziziyya Madrasa, and the Diyaiyya Madrasa, to regular classes of students. Some of these lectures were attended by Ahmad, son of the famous general Salah al-Din.

⁷⁸The certificate on folios 238-40 of the al-Mashikhat ma al-Tarikh of Ibn al-Bukhari shows that numerous women attended a regular course of eleven lectures which was delivered before a class consisting of more than five hundred students in the Umar Mosque at Damascus in the year 687/1288. Another certificate, on folio 40 of the same manuscript, shows that many female students, whose names are specified, attended another course of six lectures on the book, which was delivered by Ibn al-Sayrafi to a class of more than two hundred students at Aleppo in the year 736/1336.

⁷⁹Books such as al-Nur al-Safir of al-Aydarus, the Khulasat al-Akhbar of al-Muhibbi, and the al-Suluh al-Wabila of Muhammad ibn Abd Allah contain the names of barely a dozen eminent women traditionalists. These are the biographical dictionaries of eminent persons of the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries of the hijra respectively.

⁸⁰She lectured on hadith, and trained women in various Islamic sciences. And often made recommendations to the officials of her time which they always accepted. Al-Aydarus, al-Nur al-Safir (Baghdad, 1353), 49

⁸¹The wife of the famous judge Muslih al-Din, taught traditions to many students, and was appointed Professor at the Salihyya College in Damascus. Ibn Abi Tahir, see COPL, XII, no. 665ff.

⁸²Ibid

⁸³Goldziher, Muslim Studies, II, 407.

⁸⁴Al-Suluh al-Wabila, see COPL, XII, no. 785.

⁸⁵Aicha Lemsine, Middle East Times, Cairo, March 16, 2001

cynicism from their mind. At last it is an earnest attempt and humble request of the author to the Islamic women world to regain the glory of past and prove their excellence observing the Islamic tenets.

Note: the author is greatly indebted with Dr. Muhammad Zubair Siddiqui: Hadith Literature: Its Origin, Development, and Special Features & Criticism (The original edition is out of print. A revised edition is published by Islamic Texts Society Cambridge, 1993. It was revised by Sir Ashutosh Professor of Islamic Culture, Calcutta University in 1961.)

Women and Employment: An Explorative Analysis of Indian Muslims

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Introduction

One of the major index of development of any society is the status of its women in comparison to men. The more balanced the opportunity structure for men and women, the larger the role women have in society and consequently the higher their status.¹ In the developing society like India, it is essential that both men and women play equal and important role in the development effort. Hence, economic participation is one of the critical factors in the improvement of the status of women. In the context of an emerging democratic polity and the ideal of an egalitarian social order, the constitution makers were acutely conscious of the hierarchical nature of Indian society, the cumulative disadvantages suffered by certain sections of society and the collective nature of the social affiliations. In order to eliminate these disadvantages, there is need of holistic economic development to support the process of social change, individual mobility and social equality for all social groups through social justice and of integration and mainstreaming.² Women are the discriminated and ignored in the society by their male counterpart. Here is a need to bring them into the main stream and without their contribution national development will be mere a dream.

Gender inequality refers to the obvious or hidden disparity between individuals due to gender. Gender is constructed both socially through social interactions as well as biologically. Gender systems are often dichotomous and hierarchical; binary gender systems may reflect onto the inequalities that manifest in numerous dimensions of daily life. Gender inequality stems from distinctions, whether empirically grounded or socially

¹Menon, M indu, Status of Muslim Women in India: A Case Study of Kerala, New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House

²Karuna Chanana 1993. Accessing Higher Education: The Dilemma of Schooling Women, Minorities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Contemporary India , Higher Education, Vol. 26, No. 1, Perspectives on Higher Education in India, pp. 69-92

constructed (Wikipedia). The burden of hardship often falls disproportionately on women within every community, nationality, caste and class. The afflicted world in which we live is characterized by inequality between men and women. Gender inequality exists in most parts of the world and India is not an exception. It can take different form. “Gender inequality is not a homogeneous phenomenon, but collection of disparate and inter-linked problems” Sen.³

In the pre-independence period it was the sub-committee of the National Planning Committee which emphasised in its report the importance of independent economic means for women, and the significance of the economic value of women’s work. It is unfortunate that this important report was lost in the avalanche of events and issues following Independence. After Independence, it was the historic report ‘towards Equality’ (Report of the Committee on the status of Women in India, 1974) which highlighted the neglect of women’s contribution to economic activities especially in the unorganized sector.⁴ Of course women are the silent contributors in the economic activities. They must be given the recognition of their work in the society. Women, on the other hand, deserved equality.

As we aim on the women’s work and their contribution in the economic activities of the society or the state. At the same time we are aware about the complexity of the issue. It is often believed that “women’s work in the private sphere cannot be recognized as a contribution to the national economy as it is not paid”, that “women are neither producers; nor capable of hard physical labour”, that “women’s economic status is linked to their family’s economic status”, and that “men are the breadwinners, so they and not women are heads of the households”. This perception is also valid for Muslim women. This paper is based on the census data of 2001. The data has been calculated by us for 35 states including union territories, pertaining to work participation rate across sex and residence, main workers and marginal workers, and categories of economic activities.

Muslim Women in Indian Society

India has the second largest Muslim population in the world. It is well documented that Indian women who enjoyed a higher status during the Vedic and Buddhist period suffered a reversal in their status during later times. The position of women got further deteriorated in later years. When the Muslim ruler came to establish their rule over India, they found that the position of women in Hindu society is more or less similar. There is rhetoric that the position of women in Muslim society is low as compared to the male members of the society. There are many phenomena their role is ignored like

³ Sen, Amartya 2001. Many Faces of Gender Inequality, *The New Republic*

⁴Desai, Neera & Usha Thakkar 2001. Women in Indian Society, India: National Book Trust

settlement of marriage is totally concern of the parents, dowry system is borrowed from the Hindu society, practice of divorce was a common phenomenon at earlier times. But the ruler like Akbar prohibited these practices by law. Another practice which is generally prevalent among the Muslims women was the '*Purdah*' or seclusion. It is more prevalent in the high class earlier time. But the poor women were not practiced *purdah* like their sisters in upper class as they had to go outside to work. Do Muslim women contribute in the economic activities in the country? Why there is imposition of *fatwas* on working women in India? The paper shall engage these questions by the following objectives:

- (i) To analyses the Muslim women's status in larger society.
- (ii) To examine the contribution of Muslim women in the economic activities.
- (iii) To measure the gender gap in the work participation and the reasons of this gap.
- (iv) To examine the status of Muslim women in India.
- (v) To explore the employment situation of Muslim women and existing gender inequality.
- (vi) To analyse the existing inequality as a Muslim women in the light of recent debate and *fatwas* declared by the Da rul-Uloom, Deoband School of Islamic Thought in Indian context.

Religious Distribution of Population

As we all know, India is a country with significant religions like Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jain and other religions. Hindu religion has been noticed as the major religion which constitutes around 80.5% out of total population (in which male constitutes 80.6% & female constitutes 80.3%). Muslim constitutes 13.4% of the total population Muslim, religions like Christians, Sikhs, Buddhist, Jains and other accounted extremely nominal share i.e. 2.3%, 1.9%, 0.8%, 0.4% & 0.6% respectively. Additionally, 0.1% population fall under the category of religion not stated. Hindus constitute 73.9% of rural population of the country and 74.4% Hindu woman are living in rural areas. While 64.3% Muslims lives in rural areas and the total Muslim women population of rural area is 65%.

Table: 1 Work Participaion Rate of Religious Communities across Sex and Residence

Religious Communities	Residence	Persons	Male	Female
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All Religions	Total	39.10	51.68	25.63
	Rural	41.75	52.11	30.79
	Urban	32.25	50.60	11.88
Hindus	Total	40.36	52.37	27.45
	Rural	42.96	52.74	32.59
	Urban	33.02	51.34	12.52
Muslims	Total	31.33	47.48	14.08
	Rural	32.83	47.41	17.52
	Urban	28.64	47.59	7.74
Christians	Total	39.67	50.71	28.72
	Rural	41.96	51.30	32.63
	Urban	35.20	49.56	21.21
Sikhs	Total	37.69	53.29	20.23
	Rural	39.89	54.19	23.93
	Urban	31.62	50.82	9.96
Buddhists	Total	40.64	49.16	31.70
	Rural	46.85	51.32	42.19
	Urban	30.72	45.73	14.81
Jains	Total	32.90	55.19	9.20
	Rural	38.81	56.36	20.07
	Urban	31.04	54.82	5.79
Others	Total	48.36	52.50	44.19
	Rural	50.13	53.50	46.75
	Urban	31.68	43.25	19.71
Religion not stated	Total	41.55	50.42	31.69
	Rural	45.26	52.41	37.43
	Urban	31.83	45.37	16.16

The national average of work participation rate is 39.10 per cent. The male (51.68%) participation in work is higher than the female (25.68%). Among all the religious communities the highest percentage of women workers are found among the Buddhists and Lowest among the Jains. Whereas among Muslims the participation rate of women is 14.08% which is much lower than the male members of the society. Though a sizable gap is exists among all the religious communities between male to female work participation. This indicates that there is some underline patterns hinder the women's mobility outside home and restrict their contribution in the work participation. Moreover, it is well documented that the contribution of women in the economic sphere is not recognized by the society. In this paper we are mainly concerned with the contribution of Muslim women in the economic sphere because it is rhetoric that Muslim

women are excluded from the participation in the economy by the male members of the society and manifested religious norms. As the gap is persists across all states we analyze the data of Muslims to set a pattern so that it can easily led to conclude what are the actual condition of the women in the economic sphere.

State wise Work Participation Rate of All Religions & Muslims

There have been a number of studies on female work participation and its determinants from the census of 1961 and 1971. The studies found that participation of women in the working force is low and mostly concentrated in the agriculture and cultivation in the rural areas (Nath 1968 a, 1970 b, Pandey 1973, Nayyar 1987). But, recently there are few studies have comes up on the basis of census 2001 data (Dev 2004). This being the backdrop, analysis of women participation in the working force of India reveals that there is a variation in the women's work participation rate across the state and union territories. Among the union territories and states the lowest work participation rate are Pondicherry (1.98%) and Kerala (15.38%). And the states with highest WPR are Dadra and Nagar Haveli (38.74%) and Mizoram (47.54%). The analysis for general women WPR shows the lower rate of participation in the work. In addition to it, there is a gender gap prevails as far as the participation of women in work is concerned. The same trend is observed across the religious communities and Muslims are not the exception.

According to census 2001 data, it has been examined that the average Muslim WPR is around 35%, which is only 5% less from the national WPR (i.e. 40.4%). If we analyze across states/UTs, it is accounted that Mizoram is the state where the Muslim WPR is highest for both the sex, i.e. 86.5% for male and 37.9% for female. After Mizoram, Himachal Pradesh occupies second position for having maximum women Muslim WPR which is 32.9% and for male it is 56.3 %. There are around 13 states whose Muslim women WPR varies between 15% to 30%, the name of these sates are J&K, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, M.P, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. While, Muslim womenWPR in remaining 20 States/UTs are found even to be below the average rate of Muslim women WPR, out which Podicherry is the worst having merely 4.2% but in such state Muslim Male WPR has been observed as 46.5% which 11 times more than the Muslim women WPR. Whereas Muslim male WPR is 51.8% which is 0.3% high from national male WPR (i.e. 51.5%) but muslim female WPR reported as 15% which is extremely low as 11.5% from national female WPR (i.e. 26.5%). The broad analysis indicates that Muslim female WPR is found to be very low across all states and UTs. Also Muslim women participation in work is low as compare to Muslim male across all states/UTs. It is thought that women are at home and they are not engaged in work. Because the work they are engaged is not recognized by the male member of the family or by the society. In fact, women's work sustains society. Women run households, rear children, care for

the aged and the sick, and toil on farms and in factories, but most times, their working hands remain invisible. Their work is taken as their duty and their contribution to the betterment of the family and society is regarded a natural outcome of their caring, nurturing and self –effacing nature.⁵

Table: 2 State wise Work Participation Rate of All Religions & Muslims by Gender

S.No	India/States/UTs	Work Participation Rate (In %)					
		All Religions			Muslims		
		Person s	Male	Femal e	Person s	Mal e	Femal e
0	India	39.1	51.68	25.63	31.3	47.5	14.1
1	Jammu & Kashmir	37.01	49.99	22.45	35.1	47.2	22.0
2	Himachal Pradesh	49.24	54.62	43.67	45.9	56.3	32.9
3	Punjab	37.47	53.6	19.05	40.3	56.7	19.7
4	Chandigarh	37.8	56.11	14.22	39.6	60.6	7.3
5	Uttaranchal	36.92	46.14	27.33	27.5	46.0	6.4
6	Haryana	39.62	50.3	27.22	37.8	45.2	29.4
7	Delhi	32.82	52.06	9.37	30.9	51.3	4.8
8	Rajasthan	42.06	49.95	33.49	34.7	46.7	21.7
9	Uttar Pradesh	32.48	46.8	16.54	29.1	44.6	12.4
10	Bihar	33.7	47.37	18.84	30.9	45.8	15.1
11	Sikkim	48.64	57.44	38.57	53.4	70.9	13.6
12	Arunachal Pradesh	43.98	50.63	36.54	45.0	61.6	18.4
13	Nagaland	42.6	46.7	38.06	43.6	60.5	16.2
14	MANIPUR (Excl. 3 Sub-Divisions)	43.62	48.12	39.02	36.8	43.7	29.6
15	Mizoram	52.57	57.2	47.54	76.1	86.5	37.9

⁵Desai, Neera & Usha Thakkar 2001, *Ibid*

S.No	India/States/UTs	Work Participation Rate (In %)					
		All Religions			Muslims		
		Persons	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female
			9				
16	Tripura	36.25	50.62	21.08	29.2	46.2	11.2
17	Meghalaya	41.84	48.34	35.15	31.4	48.9	11.8
18	Assam	35.78	49.87	20.71	29.1	47.2	9.7
19	West Bengal	36.77	53.99	18.32	32.9	50.5	14.0
20	Jharkhand	37.52	47.96	26.41	31.6	43.5	18.8
21	Orissa	38.79	52.53	24.66	26.9	45.9	6.8
22	Chhattisgarh	46.46	52.81	40.04	32.3	48.5	15.0
23	Madhya Pradesh	42.74	51.5	33.21	32.8	47.6	16.9
24	Gujarat	41.95	54.87	27.91	32.7	51.1	13.0
25	Daman & Diu	46.01	65.47	18.61	37.5	61.6	7.3
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	51.76	62.33	38.74	42.5	64.3	11.0
27	Maharashtra	42.5	53.28	30.81	32.4	50.0	12.7
28	Andhra Pradesh	45.79	56.23	35.11	33.8	50.1	16.8
29	Karnataka	44.53	56.64	31.98	36.4	52.1	19.9
30	Goa	38.8	54.6	22.36	34.3	54.6	10.9
31	Lakshadweep	25.32	42.41	7.28	23.0	38.9	7.1
32	Kerala	32.3	50.2	15.38	23.2	42.0	5.9
33	Tamil Nadu	44.67	57.64	31.54	31.8	52.0	11.9
34	Pondicherry	35.17	17.2	1.98	24.4	46.5	4.2

S.No	India/States/UTs	Work Participation Rate (In %)					
		All Religions			Muslims		
		Person s	Male	Femal e	Person s	Mal e	Femal e
			5				
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	38.26	56.57	16.6	34.5	53.8	12.1
	Average	40.4	51.5	26.5	35.3	51.8	15.0

Source: Census of India 2001

Disparity between Male & Female Work Participation Rate

India has made commendable progress in the economic sphere but it has not trickled down to the masses as a result we find inequality in the society. As an outcome, women's are lag behind in different sectors of employment but a significant part of Muslim women among all religion are recorded as inefficient labour source in the country. At the national level WPR of women's stands at 26 percentage point less than the male members, while the gap for Muslim women increased by 33.4 percentage point. Among all the states and union territories the largest gap of WPR between female and male is found in the state of Daman & Diu with 46 percentage point, Delhi with 42 percentage point and also the gap is evident in Northern states. Where, in the Muslim religion the largest gap has been examined in the four states, namely Sikkim (largest gap), Daman Diu, Chandigarh and Dadra Nagar Haveli, calculated at the percentage of 57.3%, 54.3% & 53.3% respectively(where 53.3% has been observed for Chandigarh & DNH). The lowest gap has been observed across in the state of Nagaland i.e. 8.6% while while among Muslims it is 14.1% in the state of Manipur. Although, the average of gender gap of WPR for general population is 25% across the States/UTs. While the gender gap is unexpectedly high among Muslim i.e. 36.9%, which is 11.9% high from the national average. Here the question arises, why the gender gap in work is sharp among the Muslims in India? This shows the need for further micro level study to explore the socio-cultural and religious factors of the present low contribution of Muslim women in India.

Table: 3 State wise distribution of Gender Gap in Economic Participation of All Religion & Muslim

S.No.	India/States/UTs	Gap in Male-Female WPR(In%)	
		All Religions	Muslims
0	India	26.05	33.4
1	Jammu & Kashmir	27.54	25.1
2	Himachal Pradesh	10.95	23.4
3	Punjab	34.55	37.0
4	Chandigarh	41.89	53.3
5	Uttaranchal	18.81	39.7
6	Haryana	23.08	15.9
7	Delhi	42.69	46.5
8	Rajasthan	16.46	25.0
9	Uttar Pradesh	30.26	32.2
10	Bihar	28.53	30.7
11	Sikkim	18.87	57.3
12	Arunachal Pradesh	14.09	43.1
13	Nagaland	8.64	44.3
14	MANIPUR (Excl. 3 Sub-Divisions)	9.1	14.1
15	Mizoram	9.75	48.7
16	Tripura	29.54	35.0
17	Meghalaya	13.19	37.2
18	Assam	29.16	37.5
19	West Bengal	35.67	36.5
20	Jharkhand	21.55	24.7
21	Orissa	27.87	39.0
22	Chhattisgarh	12.77	33.4
23	Madhya Pradesh	18.29	30.7
24	Gujarat	26.96	38.1
25	Daman & Diu	46.86	54.3
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	23.59	53.3
27	Maharashtra	22.47	37.3
28	Andhra Pradesh	21.12	33.3
29	Karnataka	24.66	32.1
30	Goa	32.24	43.7
31	Lakshadweep	35.13	31.8
32	Kerala	34.82	36.0
33	Tamil Nadu	26.1	40.0
34	Pondicherry	15.27	42.3
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	39.97	41.7

S.No.	India/States/UTs	Gap in Male-Female WPR(In%)	
		All Religions	Muslims
	Average	25.0	36.9

Source: Census of India 2001

State wise Status of Muslim woman in India

India is a solitary country where we can find unity in diversity, diversity related to ethnic, cultural, linguistic or religious. Though the diversity persists, but the there is the notion of unity is declining. Muslims are one of them who comprise the largest minority of the nation. However, it has been examined by many studies that the participation of Muslims in India's economy is low. Likely, they have been also deprived of the benefits of the economic growth of the country. And one of the major reasons behind it is the low participation of Muslim women in economy compare to women in other religion .So, before analyzing the reasons of having low economic contribution of Muslim woman in India, it's imperative to know about the status of Muslim woman in such nation.

In India the population of woman in general is 48.3% out of total population and the population of Muslim woman constitutes only 13.5%. The average population of Woman is 47.9% and the average of Muslim woman is 13%. Moreover, 53.7% women are literate in India out of which Muslim women comprises 12%. If we stress on the economy of India, the proportion of women's contribution has been observed as 25.63% and out of which 7.4% has been calculated for Muslim woman which is near to the ground. On the other hand, percentage of non working Muslim woman is calculated as 15.5% out of the total non working woman i.e. 74.4%. Average of Muslim working woman is low as they share 9.2% only in comparison to non working Muslim woman. Across the states/UTs, Lakshadweep is a single state where the highest rate of Muslim population, Muslim literacy rate, Muslim working & non working woman have been reported, rate in percentages are 98.2%, 97.7%, 95.9% & 98.4% correspondingly. It means majority of Muslims is in Lakshadweep and the economic contribution of Muslim woman is also very remarkable. Then the majority of Muslim woman has been observed in Jammu & Kashmir, where Muslim woman constitutes around 68% out of the total woman population in Jammu & Kashmir, and more than half share is of educated Muslim woman. Out of 35 states/UTs, there are 25 states/UTs where literacy rate of Muslim woman out of literacy of total woman has been examined below the average literacy rate of Muslim woman (i.e. 11.7%). While, the lowest literacy rate of Muslim woman is 0.3% found in Mizoram. Mizoram is found as the highest women contributor in the economic activities (i.e. 47.5%). In Contrary, the contribution of Muslim women is minimum i.e., 0.4. There are only 8 states/UTs where the allocation of working woman is high from the average (9.2%) and in 6 states Muslim women WPR ranges between

9.6% to 19.3%. In addition to this, 9 states have been recorded for occupying high rate from average of 14.2% of non working Muslim woman. In summary, this section proves that though there are some states/UTs where the contribution of women is high in general but as far as the Muslim women's WPR is concern they perform very badly in those states where the bulk of women in work are large.

Table:4 State wise Status of Muslim woman in India by Population, Literacy, Working & Non working woman

S.No.	India/States/UTs	Status of Woman (In %)							
		Population of Woman		Literacy of Woman		Working woman		Non working Woman	
		Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim
0	India	48.3	13.5	53.7	12.1	25.63	7.4	74.4	15.5
1	Jammu & Kashmir	47.15	68.32	43.0	55.0	22.45	67.0	77.5	68.7
2	Himachal Pradesh	49.19	1.78	67.4	1.2	43.67	1.3	56.3	2.1
3	Punjab	46.69	1.49	63.4	1.0	19.05	1.5	80.9	1.5
4	Chandigarh	43.71	3.56	76.5	2.4	14.22	1.8	85.8	3.8
5	Uttaranchal	49.04	11.35	59.6	7.1	27.33	2.6	72.7	14.6
6	Haryana	46.26	5.82	55.7	2.0	27.22	6.3	72.8	5.6
7	Delhi	45.08	11.41	74.7	8.5	9.37	5.8	90.6	12.0
8	Rajasthan	47.94	8.51	43.9	7.7	33.49	5.5	66.5	10.0
9	Uttar Pradesh	47.31	18.71	42.2	16.2	16.54	14.0	83.5	19.6
10	Bihar	47.90	16.75	33.1	15.6	18.84	13.4	81.2	17.5
11	Sikkim	46.66	0.93	60.4	0.8	38.57	0.3	61.4	1.3
12	Arunachal Pradesh	47.18	1.53	43.5	0.6	36.54	0.8	63.5	2.0
13	Nagaland	47.3	1.41	61.5	0.7	38.0	0.6	61.9	1.9

S.No.	India/States/UTs	Status of Woman (In %)							
		Population of Woman		Literacy of Woman		Working woman		Non working Woman	
		Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim
		8				6			
14	MANIPUR (Excl. 3 Sub-Divisions)	49.44	8.79	60.5	5.6	39.02	6.7	61.0	10.1
15	Mizoram	48.33	0.50	86.7	0.3	47.54	0.4	52.5	0.6
16	Tripura	48.67	7.94	64.9	5.9	21.08	4.2	78.9	8.9
17	Meghalaya	49.28	4.09	59.6	2.4	35.15	1.4	64.9	5.6
18	Assam	48.31	30.97	54.6	21.4	20.71	14.6	79.3	35.2
19	West Bengal	48.28	25.24	59.6	19.9	18.32	19.3	81.7	26.6
20	Jharkhand	48.47	13.83	38.9	14.6	26.41	9.9	73.6	15.3
21	Orissa	49.30	2.04	50.5	2.5	24.66	0.6	75.3	2.5
22	Chhattisgarh	49.72	1.92	51.9	2.8	40.04	0.7	60.0	2.7
23	Madhya Pradesh	47.90	6.40	50.3	7.7	33.21	3.3	66.8	8.0
24	Gujarat	47.93	9.15	57.8	9.9	27.91	4.3	72.1	11.0
25	Daman & Diu	41.52	8.30	65.6	9.3	18.61	3.3	81.4	9.5
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	44.82	2.70	40.2	5.0	38.74	0.8	61.3	3.9
27	Maharashtra	47.98	10.40	67.0	10.6	30.81	4.3	69.2	13.1
28	Andhra Pradesh	49.45	9.09	50.4	10.5	35.11	4.3	64.9	11.7
29	Karnataka	49.10	12.18	56.9	13.1	31.98	7.6	68.0	14.3
30	Goa	49.00	6.48	75.4	5.7	22.36	3.2	77.6	7.4

S.No.	India/States/UTs	Status of Woman (In %)							
		Population of Woman		Literacy of Woman		Working woman		Non working Woman	
		Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim	Total	Muslim
31	Lakshadweep	48.67	98.18	80.5	97.7	7.28	95.9	92.7	98.4
32	Kerala	51.42	24.97	87.7	23.6	15.38	9.6	84.6	27.7
33	Tamil Nadu	49.68	5.65	64.4	6.6	31.54	2.1	68.5	7.3
34	Pondicherry	50.02	6.37	73.9	7.1	1.98	1.6	82.8	7.4
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	45.82	8.29	75.2	9.7	16.6	6.0	83.4	8.7
	Average	47.9	13.0	59.8	11.7	26.5	9.2	73.0	14.2

Source: Census of India 2001

Participation of Muslim Woman in Economic Activities

Division of work force or economically active population into various occupational compositions is a primary aspect of economic development. The regional variation in the work participation under occupational group is quite notable to determine the work participation. Economic activities or occupational structures are classified into four categories i.e., Cultivators, Agricultural workers, Household industry workers and other workers. The following sections discussed Muslim women's WPR in four categories of workers:-

Cultivators

It is found that there is a close relationship between the occupation of cultivation and Muslim women work participation. In states where agriculture is a major source of capital generation Muslim women tend to engage themselves in the production process of agricultural products. State like Himachal Pradesh (77.9%), Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Nagaland, Manipur, Sikkim, Mizoram, Tripura, Assam, West Bengal, Orissa, Dara & Nagar Haveli, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and Meghalaya are found to have high Muslim women work participation than the average which is accounted as 20.3%. However, Lakshadweep is a particular state where there is a zero rate of Muslim woman cultivators; it is because of geographical location of the place.

Agricultural Workers

Muslim agricultural women workers are found in each and every state except Lakshadweep but their percentage differs from state to state. The highest percentage exists in the state of Bihar (63.8%). While the average rate of Muslim agricultural woman is 21.3% and total 17 states are counted as the states which have high share than average after Bihar. However, low concentration of Muslim women i.e. less than 5%, in agriculture, are found in the Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Chandigarh, Sikkim, Daman Diu, Goa, Puducherry and Andman & Nicobar excluding Lakshadweep. It is of interest to note that this is the reverse of the position in most developed countries, where agriculture is primarily a male activity and the proportion of workers in the non-agricultural sector is much higher than females (Nath 1968). Here the reason lies that particularly, Muslims society does not have discouraged women to participate in agricultural activities but once women want to work in urban sector job of high status they are discouraged to go outside of the house with the support of religious obligation and sometime *fatwas* has been imposed forcefully to confine themselves with the four walls of the house.

Household Industry Worker

The concentration of Muslim women in the Household work is low in most of the states. Average rate of Muslim woman in HHI is 11.8% which is being the lowest among the economic activities. The highest concentration has been seen in the state of West Bengal (38.9%) and lowest in Mizoram (1.5%). Such forms of engagement are generally small scale in nature and are located in the home or in an around the home. This being the reason most of the work forces are constituted by the members of the family or the extended kin. As these works act as an extended work of the family or the social relationship the workers themselves never consider it important to inform the data collectors. Hence, the participation of Muslim women has been not reported at the time of data collection. This is one of reason of their low contribution in the economic activities instead they are the main contributors in this sector, but their contribution is silently excluded.

Other Workers

All those workers other than cultivators or agricultural labourers or household industry workers are 'Other Workers'. This type of work includes medical, engineering, works related to academic and research. In most of the states the concentration of the Muslim women's worker in this category is high comparative to other sectors of occupational structure. However, average rate of Muslim woman workers has been reported as the highest as 46%. In 'other workers' the contribution of Muslim women worker is significant in Goa (i.e.92.5%) and Bihar is the state where concentration of other work is lowest (i.e. 9.3%). In the category of other work contribution of Muslim

women ranges from 1% to 30% in 9 states and union territories including Bihar. There are 26 states and union territories with 'other workers' in the ranges of 30% to 90% including Goa. As shown higher participation of women in this sector are found in maximum states. Probably, reason for Muslim women's increased participation in this sector may be due to the modernization of women and change in the attitude and increase social security.

Table: 5 State wise distribution of Muslim Woman Participation in Economic Activities

S.No	India/States/UTS	Participation of Muslim woman in Economic Activities (%)				
		Main Workers	Cultivators	Agricultural workers	Household Industry Workers	Other Workers
0	India	14.1	21.99	30.8	19.3	2.1
1	Jammu & Kashmir	22.0	49.03	5.9	14.1	30.9
2	Himachal Pradesh	32.9	77.90	3.7	2.8	15.6
3	Punjab	19.7	7.03	14.0	9.9	69.0
4	Chandigarh	7.3	1.18	0.4	13.2	85.2
5	Uttaranchal	6.4	1.18	21.4	12.9	48.9
6	Haryana	29.4	16.82	25.8	2.5	32.9
7	Delhi	4.8	38.78	1.0	14.7	83.5
8	Rajasthan	21.7	0.78	13.7	8.8	20.7
9	Uttar Pradesh	12.4	56.86	31.2	23.3	20.9
10	Bihar	15.1	24.65	63.8	11.2	9.3
11	Sikkim	13.6	15.66	3.8	5.6	76.5
12	Arunachal Pradesh	18.4	14.11	12.4	3.1	47.3
13	Nagaland	16.2	37.16	21.5	4.9	38.4
14	MANIPUR (Excl. 3 Sub-Divisions)	29.6	35.28	32.9	15.6	25.4
15	Mizoram	37.9	26.09	29.1	1.5	28.5
16	Tripura	11.2	40.98	37.0	4.9	36.2
17	Meghalaya	11.8	21.88	27.6	8.8	30.4
18	Assam	9.7	33.19	23.5	11.4	37.2
19	West Bengal	14.0	27.89	19.2	38.9	30.8
20	Jharkhand	18.8	11.01	36.8	13.4	19.2
21	Orissa	6.8	30.47	31.1	14.5	42.3

S.No	India/States/UTS	Participation of Muslim woman in Economic Activities (%)				
		Main Workers	Cultivators	Agricultural workers	Household Industry	Other Workers
22	Chhattisgarh	15.0	12.12	32.6	3.9	38.5
23	Madhya Pradesh	16.9	23.53	32.4	20.1	24.0
24	Gujarat	13.0	15.86	33.9	10.1	40.2
25	Daman & Diu	7.3	1.75	1.5	6.8	90.0
26	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	11.0	32.76	11.6	4.4	51.2
27	Maharashtra	12.7	15.70	43.8	8.0	32.5
28	Andhra Pradesh	16.8	9.05	46.0	15.4	29.6
29	Karnataka	19.9	8.53	33.3	25.3	32.9
30	Goa	10.9	1.63	1.4	4.5	92.5
31	Lakshadweep	7.1	0.00	0.0	17.7	82.3
32	Kerala	5.9	6.21	17.0	10.2	66.5
33	Tamil Nadu	11.9	8.10	14.3	31.8	45.8
34	Pondicherry	4.2	2.29	4.7	6.6	86.4
35	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	12.1	4.90	1.7	5.3	88.2
	Average	15.0	20.3	21.1	11.8	46.0

Source: Census of India 2001

Reasons of Low Muslim Women WPR:

1. Cultural or Religion Restricts Muslim Women's Access to work

- Practice of 'Purdah' system.
- Symbol of Morality (women confined to home as a demonstration of the family's morality and a symbol of its financial security.)
- Muslim male dominating society.
- Economic dependency on male members of their family.

2. Women's Economic Activity not reported in government statistics
3. Lack of reservation of Muslim women in government employment.
4. Low confidence of Muslim women.
5. Women face Wage discrimination
6. Lack of higher and professional education among Muslim women.
7. Low penetration of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) among the Muslim women.

Debate and Discussion

The data reveals that the share of contribution of Muslim women in economic activities is low India. In other words we can say that the participation of Muslim women in India as a whole and its states and Indian territories is low as compare to the women of the other religious community. Their share in the high status work is also low. Their participation in agricultural sector is more in those states where Muslim share in population is significant. There are many socio-cultural and religious factors responsible for the low contribution of women in the economy. Instead of the discrimination practice on the basis of religion and culture, they are not allowed to go outside of the home for work. In addition to it, *fatwas* has been pronounced against the Muslim women from time to time to restrict their mobility and participation in the economic activities. Instead, the participation of this large section of the population is compulsory for the development of the community or the nation. But the male members have no problem as far as their work is confined within the four walls of the house and agricultural and menial works. Recently, The Dar ul-Uloom, Deoband, Indias largest seminary pronounced fatwa on Muslim women working outside the home and a host of other women-related fatwas close almost all sources of employment. The fatwa reads by a bench of three clerics as:

“It is unlawful (under the Sharia law) for Muslim women to work in the government or private sector where men and women work together and women have to talk with men frankly and without a veil”. (April 4, 2010)

In other words, the fatwa implies that women can work only those places where they can be fully veiled and where they do not have to “frankly” (whatever that might mean) talk with men. These would presumably be jobs which involve an all-women staff, with only women clients and which hermetically seal off women from any contact with males. This is next to impossible phenomenon. The fatwa indirectly suggests the women to work inside the home only. At a time when there is a rising clamor for job quotas for Muslims in India and a yearning for progress in the community that sees itself

as neglected, the fatwa, although unlikely to be heeded, is clearly detrimental. Even the most conservative Islamic countries, which restrict activities of women, including preventing them from driving, do not bar women from working. Practically, thus the fatwa limits the opportunity for jobs for Muslim women to just a few girls' schools and *maktabs*, tailoring centers and the like, where they can work fully covered and where they need not interact with male colleagues or clients. Hence, although later clarifications in response to criticism of the fatwa and protest from the many corners of the society especially Muslim women, it is said that technically right in saying that the fatwa does not explicitly ban women from working outside their homes, in effect it does rule out most jobs, and certainly the well-paying ones.

The implications of fatwa can be dangerous for women of poor families. The maulvi sahebs may not need their women to work outside and may easily afford to have them stay cloistered within their homes, for they are usually fairly well-off or else survive on *zakat*, *chanda*, *sadqa* and other forms of donations by the pious. But what about the millions of Muslim families whose economic conditions are so pathetic that their womenfolk are compelled, by sheer economic necessity, to toil outside their homes – such as agricultural workers, labourers, petty retailers and so on? Remaining completely covered and confined within their homes is not an option for them at all. The fatwa-hurling maulvis, it seems, simply do not know the harsh realities of their economic conditions (such things are, of course, not taught in the madrasas), or, if they do, they probably could not care less. The fatwa, however, drew flak among other clerics. In response many Islamic scholar found the fatwa is not right. Rasheed, the Naib Imam of Lucknow's main Eidgah Mosque in Aishbagh said that "Men and women in Sharia are entitled to equal rights. If men follow the Sharia, there is no reason why women can't work with them," (TOI, 2010) and in another response Mufti Maulana Khalid Rasheed of Darul Ifta Firangi Meheli -- another radical Islamic body which also issues fatwas - criticized the Deoband fatwa as a retrograde restriction on Muslim women (TOI, 2010).⁶ We want to argue that there is need to look into details the permissibility of women in the domain of the holy Quaran and Sharia. Because it is evident from this study and other research studies that Muslim woman are not contributing or participating in the economic activities as desired. There are many Muslim women with higher education engaged in the household work because it is thought that the social status will be low if women went to work outside. Though there is few research studies addressed these issues which has immense importance. But the things have changed in the recent past

⁶http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2010-05-12/india/28280924_1_fatwa-muslim-women-darul-uloom-deoband

as this studies found that there is significant number of women engaged in 'other workers' workers category. This category comprises the jobs of high social status.

Conclusion

The above discussion leads us to conclude that the participation or the contribution of women in the economic sphere of the country is low. In some of the states and union territories it is less than 10% and varies from one state to another. Moreover, there is a sharp gap in the contribution of women as compare to male members in the community. This has some religious implications. As far as social status of Muslim women is concerned they are rated as low because they are illiterate population of the community. Even there is restrictions and fatwa on access of Muslim women education. As it is thought that education is one of the important index of development they are also deprived from the only tool to come in the mainstream. Their participation in occupational categories is largely varies from one category to another. Their contribution in all the categories is low. For example, it is well known that Muslims were traditional engaged in traditional small scale work in the household like carpet making, zari work, embroidery in various parts of the country, bangle making and lock industry in Aligarh, and women are actively contributing in this sector but their work is not recognized by the male members as well as not reported at the time of data collection. Hence, Muslims women are *doubly excluded* in the economic sphere one, by discouraging them to join work and secondly, if they work their work is not visible. Pathetically, they have been targeted by the religious institution, maulvis and maulanas by pronouncing fatwa against them and pushed them to more dark side from the practicality and reality of life to the extent that they perceived that their duty is only to look after the husband, their children and caring of the old age people in the family. But there is a paradigm shift among the women in the most parts of the world and in response; many movement starts by the women and also Muslim women are not lag behind. Now they come to many forms and participate in these movements to curb their right based demand. Here, we want to suggest liberal approach for the women as far as the issue of work is concerned. Khan⁷ pinpoints three sets of women as a Muslim in his ethnographic account and we found it is worth to mention here. The first set of women is those who, although they self identify as Muslim, have largely disavowed Islam. However, they are still forced to negotiate their identity as "Muslim." As a result, they are at odds with their families and communities, as well as with a wider society that forces them into a category with which they may not wish to be identified. The second set, there are women who have managed to construct hybrid identities and negotiate their lives in such hybrid spaces. At the same time, however, they accept the authority of

⁷Khan, Shanaz 2002. *Aversion and Desire: Negotiating Muslim Female Identity in the Diaspora, United Kingdom: Women's Press, Ltd., 2002. 152 pages.*

monolithic notions of Islamic views regarding what the Muslim woman is supposed to be. Finally, the third set of women accepts their identities as Muslim and strives to conduct their lives within what their communities consider to be Islamically appropriate behavior. However, they also recognize that, in practice, many aspects of Muslim behavior are sexist and unjust. Thus, these women choose to focus on the more spiritual and internal side of Islamic practice. In rejecting all manifestations of unjust treatment by others while still trying to perfect an ideal kind of Islamic spiritual practice, they have been able to negotiate and establish their own Muslim identities. Thus, finally the improvement in the traditional status of women, therefore, is a necessary first step to empower them.

MUSLIM WOMEN AND PERSONAL LAW

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On the eve of the Islamic era, Arabia stood on the periphery of the Middle Eastern imperial societies in a state of development equivalent to the ancient rather than the developed conditions of the rest of the region¹. The then profane, pantheistic conditions of Arabia and the lawless dissoluteness of the rule of life are the background to the progressive measure of Qu'ranic jurisprudence². The Arab themselves refer to the Pre – Islamic era as the days of ignorance i.e. the period of ignorance (jahiliyyah), or rather wildness or savagery, in antithesis to the modern reasonableness of a civilized man³. By the standards of the desert ethos of those days, Islamic Law was a radical step forward⁴.

Looking at the position of women in Pre-Islamic Arabia, it is very clear that their plight was miserable. The birth of a daughter in the family was considered as a calamity. Due to the degraded status of women, there used to be large scale female infanticide. Women were considered as chattels of men. They were not free agents in marriage. There flourished very loose and forbidden kinds of sexual unions between the two sexes in the name of marriage. Polygamy was rampant. Dower used to be misappropriated by the bride's father or brother. Suspensory divorce was prevalent. Women had no rights of inheritance.

In this situation, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) came as the greatest benefactor of mankind, an emancipator of women. He emancipated the status of women and restored to them their rightful position in the society. Islam raised the status of women to a footing of near equality with men when the Holy Quran gave a fresh, noble and universal message to

¹ Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p.30

² V R Krishna Iyer "The Religion and Law of Islam: Some observations of a Non-Muslim Judge." *Religion & Law Review*, Vol I: No. 1, Summer 1992, p.69

³ R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1966 P. 30

⁴ Supra Note 2.

humanity. The Holy Quran at various places proclaims the equality of men and women at almost every plane moral, spiritual and intellectual. The right to rise to full personality was recognized & womanhood had dignity⁵.

Further referring to the words of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), his hadith stresses the high standards of conduct which a man is meant to maintain in his relations with women.

The barbarous practice of female infanticide was prohibited by the Holy Quran. All kinds of marriages and sexual unions except one was prohibited. Woman was made a free agent in marriage Dower was made payable to the wife as a token of respect for the woman. Marriage by inheritance was prohibited. A controlled polygamy was allowed. Dower was permitted but it should be resorted to only in unavoidable circumstances where there is no other alternative. Women were given rights of inheritance. Looking further at the status of women, the first to become a Muslim was Hazrat Khadijah, the wife of Prophet Mohammad (S.A.W). Women led armies and were great artists, writers and saints – even rulers at that time⁶.

Position in India

Let us look into the legislative history of the laws pertaining to Muslims in India. It is very clear that Personal Laws of minorities are not reformed on the initiative of the State but the State would reform the laws if the demand to do so come from the community concerned. Same has been the case with Muslim Personal Law. Looking at the contribution of Muslim women in the Muslim Personal Law in India, it is very evident that whatever laws have been framed in India, if these can be termed as reforms, it has been due to the concerted & persistent effort of the conservatives, the clerics, the Ulemas or we can say simply say Muslim men and not Muslim Women. Let us look at the legislations one by one.

(i) The Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937: Going back to the pre-partition period, an opportunity dawned on the Muslims by the passing of the Government of India Act, 1935. This opportunity was utilized by the Ulemas comprised of the religious clerics of the Jamiat-ul-Ulama-i-Hind (hereinafter referred to as 'Jamiat') and the Muslim League who were the two most prominent groups articulating the interests of the Muslim community⁷. The Ulemas, the religious clerics of the Jamiat were the conservatives who claimed responsibility for safeguarding the *Shariah* and for giving the Muslim community religious and political guidance according to Islamic principles and commandments⁸.

⁵. *Ibid.*

⁶. *Ibid.*

⁷. Archana Parashar, *Women & Family Law Reform in India*, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 1992, p.146

⁸. *Ibid.*

When the Federal legislature started functioning after the elections under the Act of 1935, Ulemas, the rightful custodians of *Shariah* started working on the Muslim Personal Laws on a need- based approach. It was a matter of great concern for the Ulemas that Muslims in certain areas of India were not following the rules of succession and inheritance under the *Shariah*. As a result of this, they continued to be governed by the customary laws under which they could bequeath their entire property to the male heirs and avoid giving any property to the female heirs and act contrary to the spirit of Islamic Law.

The Ulemas introduced a bill in the legislature of the North West Frontier Province as the North West Frontier Province Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1935 which later became an Act. This was followed by the passing of a Central law called the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937. The major reason for the passing of this Act was to improve the status of women because certain communities despite their conversion to Islam continued to be governed by their customary laws under which women were being denied rights of inheritance to which they are entitled under the *Shariah* Muslim women also expressed their strong support for the measure⁹. At the behest of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the Muslim league leader, an amendment was proposed in the Act that individual Muslims should be given an option to decide whether they wanted to be governed by the *Shariah* or the customary Law. In doing so, he had in mind the interests of the rich Muslim Zamindars, the rich land owners (his political supporters) who were often ignoring the Islamic Law and denying rights of women¹⁰. This amendment was strongly opposed by the Ulemas, but finally it was passed. Muslims in India hereinafter are governed by *Shariah* in all matters except in matters of adoption, wills and legacies wherein they have the option to be governed either by *Shariah* or the customary Laws.

(ii)The Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939:

In India, the majority of Muslims are followers of Hanafi school of thought under which divorce is the prerogative of a husband only. Moreover under the Hanafi school of thought a woman's marriage would stand dissolved on her becoming an apostate. In the absence of any other alternative for release from a difficult marriage, many Muslim women chose to convert to another religion¹¹, which would validly dissolve their marriage. Hence the concerns of the Ulemas were also the apostatization of Muslim women to dissolve their marriage. So they decided to have a law empowering Muslim judges to dissolve a Muslim marriage on the initiative of a Muslim woman on the grounds specified. Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanvi (from the Deoband School) wrote a book titled as *Al-Hilat al Najizalil Halilat al Ajza* (a lawful device) published in 1932 in which he recommended that Muslim members of the

⁹. *Ibid.*

¹⁰. Tahir Mohmood, *Islamic Law in the India Courts since Independence, Fifty years of Judicial interpretation*; Institute of Objective Studies, 1997, pp.332-333.

¹¹ Supra Note 7 at p. 151

Federal Legislature should introduce a bill based on the book¹². Relying on this book, the leading Jamiat members prepared a bill which was introduced by Mohammed Ahmad Kazmi, a bill based on the doctrine of *takhayyur* (doctrine of eclectic choice) which permits the replacement of one school of Islamic Law with another school of Islamic Law in certain circumstances where the application of one law causes hardship¹³. By adoption of this doctrine, the principles of Maliki school of thought were adopted which allow a woman to get her marriage dissolved on certain specified grounds.

Under the Statement of Objects and Reasons of this Act, the main reason for passing of this Act is to remove the unspeakable misery of innumerable Muslim women in British India. Under this Act, there are a number of grounds on which a wife can seek divorce, further apostasy of the wife shall not result in automatic dissolution of her marriage. Moreover, the Ulemas could not retain the provision that only Muslim judges should have the competence to dissolve a Muslim marriage. But the Act, which gave Muslim women a right to seek judicial dissolution of marriage has been considered as a reform in the interests of women.

(iii) The Criminal Procedure Code, 1973:

Under Section 488 Criminal Procedure Code, 1998 a wife could obtain maintenance from her husband in summary proceedings –‘wife’ did not include a ‘divorced wife’. The Criminal Procedure Code 1898 was replaced by the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973. Under this Act, it was noted that in cases in which Muslim women claimed maintenance, men used to divorce their wives extra judicially and avoided the application for maintenance. Hence Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 was amended by which an explanation was added to section 125 under which ‘wife’ would include a ‘divorced wife’. The provision was objected to by Muslim leaders when the same was discussed in the Lok Sabha. The arguments put forth by Muslim leaders was that since Muslims are governed by Muslim Personal Law, the provisions of maintenance should be either deleted from the Criminal Procedure Code or Muslims should be exempted from its purview since such a provision is an interference in the Muslim Personal Law.

Later, religious heads of various institutions including some prominent leaders of Jamat-i-Islami & Muslim Majlis Mushawarat protested as a result of which section 127, Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 was amended by which if under any customary or personal law of certain communities certain sums are due to a divorced woman and once such sum is paid the magistrate’s order for maintenance under section 125 could be cancelled.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

(iv) The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986:

In the case of *Mohd. Ahmed Khan V. Shah Bano*¹⁴ (hereinafter referred to as Shah Bano Judgment) the Supreme Court held that if a Muslim woman is unable to maintain herself she is entitled to have recourse to section 125 Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 and section 127(3)(b) does not exempt a Muslim from the purview of section 125 Criminal Procedure Code as *mehr*(dower) not being an amount payable on divorce, does not fall within the meaning of that provision. This judgment was objected to by the Muslim masses as an interference in their Personal law which is divine and hence not susceptible to any modification by any human agency. The intensity of the agitation by Muslim masses compelled the government to bring the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act. 1986.

After looking at the legislative history of all the legislations pertaining to Muslims which were passed in India, it is very evident that whatever reforms/modifications which have been brought about in the Muslim Personal Law have been possible due to the efforts of Muslim males and as such in this field there is no contribution of Muslim women.

The Shah Bano Judgment:

This judgment has been the turning point for Muslim women in India. Shah Bano happened to be Mohd. Ahmed Khan's (a prominent lawyer of Indore) wife as well his first cousin from his mother's side, while his second wife, Halima Begum, also happened to be his first cousin. Hence Shah Bano and Halima Begum also happened to be first cousins to each other.

A family quarrel between the steps brothers and sisters was at the bottom of the controversy surrounding the Shah Bano case. Largely, inspired by the sons, began a series of disputes on the ownership of certain properties and maintenance of the mother. Shah Bano filed a suit for maintenance and also won the suit in all the courts including the famous victory at the Supreme Court of India. This judgment was opposed by more conservative maulvi elements whereas another section of opinion particularly among women was favorable, for them Shah Bano was becoming a symbol of the evolution of women's rights within the Islamic framework.

To neutralize this judgment, community pressure began to mount on her and her sons. Prominent among the maulanas who visited Shah Bano was Maulvi Abdul Karim Parekh of

¹⁴ AIR 1985 SC 945

Nagpur and representatives of Maulana Asad Madani of Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind. These Maulana descended on Indore from far & wide to obtain Shah Bano's retraction. It resulted in a conflict between the outside Maulanas especially Maulana Parekh from Deoband School on one side and on the other side the local Maulanas/Muftis and the entire Muslim community of Indore belonging to the Barelvi School of thought. Lucrative jobs were also offered to Shah Bano's sons but they did not succeed.

Later Shah Bano even made a public statement that she does not accept the Supreme Court decision but she was at liberty to accept the alimony sanctioned.

This judgment gave rise to a heated controversy among the conservatives and progressive Muslims. This was the first step towards the emergence of a new Muslim order- in which women are placed on an equal footing as a man and not just given maintenance money for 'iddat'.

Be that as it may, but according to Justice Y.V. Chandrachud, this verdict was overall considered as a significant landmark in the march of law towards social reformation¹⁵, According to him, this decision is the common passport to the human rights of women¹⁶.

After the passing of the 1986 Act, different High Courts gave conflicting decisions on the interpretation of Section 3 (1)(a) of the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 a debate continued till the decision of the Supreme Court in *Danial Latifi V UOI*¹⁷ wherein the Supreme Court held:

"A Muslim husband is liable to make reasonable and fair provision for the future of the divorced wife which obviously includes her maintenance as well, extending beyond the *iddat* period; and must be made by him within the *iddat* period, in terms of S. 3(1)(a) of the Act. His liability under S. 3, to pay maintenance is not confined to *iddat* period".

Shah Bano, the 75-year old matriarch with a wrinkled face but a strong resolution has contributed in her way, to the field of personal law in India. Whatever might be the reason for her filing the case and her plea later that the Supreme Court judgment be withdrawn, she became the pioneer of a new Muslim order which prompted a debate about the plight of divorced Muslim women in India. It made the topic of maintenance as a truly 'living' topic as it made people think about the position of Muslim women. It started a debate in the society. It got support from poor and harassed Muslim women who had been divorced on trivial grounds and had nobody to support them financially. It further led to the passing of the 1986 Act. It brought about a revolution in the field of Muslim Personal Law in India, a new era dawned for Muslim women as it gave rise to societal concerns for their betterment

¹⁵ SK Ghosh, *Muslim Politics in India*, Ashish Publishing House, 1987, p.69

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ (2001) 7 SCC 740

from all quarters. Whatever developments have occurred in the field of maintenance in India are due to the case filed by Shah Bano.

Position in Pakistan and Bangladesh:

Whereas in India, there has been no contribution of Muslim women in the field of enactment of legislations pertaining to Muslims, position in Pakistan is quite different. Since the emergence of Pakistan as separate state, elitist women's organizations particularly the All Pakistan Women's Association (APWA) had been making women aware of their basic human dignity and lobbying for their greater participation in public life & for reforms in Muslim Family laws¹⁸. The untrammelled rights of Muslim men to go for more than one marriage & talaq made the APWA members particularly very sore. What gave their movement for reform of Muslim Personal Law an added & pressing impetus was the second marriage of Muhammad Ali, the Prime Minister of the country in 1955 while still legally married to his first wife¹⁹. The APWA took up the cause of the first wife and organized a country wide agitation protesting against the Prime Minister's second marriage and demanded reforms of Muslim Family Laws²⁰. Not being able to stop the growing criticism of his activities, the PM agreed to meet the APWA members and also agreed to set up a high powered Committee to consider the necessary reforms in the present law. The Government of Pakistan on August 1955 announced a 7-member Commission on Marriage & Family Laws consisting of prominent men and women leaders of the country (4 men and 3 women namely- Begum Shah Nawaz Begum, Anwar G.Ahmed & Begum Shamsunnahar Mahmood. Out of 7 members, 6 were laymen and one was a religious scholar, namely, Maulana Ihtisham-ul-Haq.

The Report of the Commission published on June 20, 1956 contained an articulated statement of a modernist approach to the Shariah²¹. Maulana Ihtisham-ul-Haq gave his 'Note of Dissent' published on August 30, 1956 which is a reassertion of traditionalist stance on the subject²². The recommendations of the Commission faced intense opposition from the Ulemas who had tremendous political influence. The Jamat-i-Islami carried out a well organized campaign against the recommendations along with other religious heads and traditionalists. Due to the tremendous pressure exercised by the religious leaders &

¹⁸ Alamgir M Serajriddin, *Sharia Law & Society, Traditions and Change in the Indian Sub-Continent*, Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 1999, p.34

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Id.* at p. 35

²² *Ibid.*

political instability in the country, the government buckled under pressure & refused to implement it. But the APWA continued to demand implementation of the report and along with other women's organizations held "**Women's Demands Day**" to pressurize the government to implement the recommendations of the Marriage and Family Law Commission. The Ulemas expressed their deep resentment & organized rallies opposing the implementation but General Ayub Khan promulgated the Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1961 in March 1961 taking effect from July 15, 1961. This Law is a contribution of Muslim Women of Pakistan. The Muslim Family Law Ordinance 1961 which is based on the recommendations of the Commission is unquestionably the most significant & also the most controversial reform in the sphere of Muslim Personal Law in Bangladesh and Pakistan²³.

The Muslim Family Law Ordinance, 1961 restricts polygamy and makes it subject to the Arbitration Council²⁴, provides compulsory registration of marriages²⁵, provides a share to the children of predeceased son or daughter²⁶, makes reconciliation compulsory in the case of talaq which shall not be effective until the expiration of ninety days from the day on which notice is delivered to the Chairman²⁷. Hence, under this law, there is no room for triple Talaq for every Talaq to be irrevocable there is a waiting period of ninety days. Hence, we can say that under the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance only. Ahsan form of Talaq is allowed which has been regarded as the most approved form of Talaq (Talaq ur Sunnat) which carries the approval of the Prophet (SAW). There is also a provision for delegated divorce (talaq-e-tafweed).²⁸ It also makes provision for maintenance of a wife²⁹.

A Case study from Hyderabad:

In Hyderabad, there are a number of organizations working for the upliftment of Muslim Women and for protection of *Shariah*. It is pertinent to note that these organizations are being run by Muslim Women who are working selflessly for emancipation of Muslim Women.

(i) **Muslim Girl's Association, India:** It is an organization constituted in 1994, comprising of girls only (girl students).It invites female students and girls towards development of the community. It provides help to poor and needy girls. It tries to build up healthy atmosphere in educational institutions and in different localities. It fights moral degeneration, sexual anarchy and female discrimination in every field. It also makes effort

²³ Supra Note 18.

²⁴ The Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961, S. 6

²⁵ *Id* S. 5.

²⁶ *Id* S. 4

²⁷ *Id* S 7

²⁸ *Id.* S 8

²⁹ *Id* S. 9

to develop their mental, physical and intellectual capabilities. Further, its motive has been to prepare the girls for the huge responsibility of service to the community and protection of Shariat Islamic Law and creating awareness among Muslim girls and women. During the last 16 years, Muslim Girl's Association has organized and conducted hundreds of service programmes to bring about a positive change in Muslim girls and women. Recently on 5th February, 2011, a Convention 2011 was held in which 4th 5-year Policy and Programme (2011-2015) of Muslim Girl's Association, India was launched. As per the policy document, it will give a boost to the activities and campaign of Muslim Girl's Association, India. Further, there is a proposal for launch of a Women's Helpline to help women in family conflicts relating to Nikah, mahr, talaq, Khula, iddat, wakf property etc. and also work hard for the rights of Muslim girls and women and guide them according to the laws of Shariah.

(ii) **Shariah Protection Committee for Women:**

Shariah Protection Committee for women is a common forum constituted in 1997. A number of organizations (tanzeems) have come together on a common platform. The organizations, namely, Majlis Tameer-e-Millat, Anjuman-e-Mehedvia, Anjuman-e-Masoomen Shia, Jamat Ahle Sunnat, Muslim Girls Association, Muslim Lady Teacher's Association, Jamiat un Nisa Islamic, Jamiat ahle Hadees have formed the Shariah Protection Committee for Women. It has 120 all women members. It has organized a **Muslim Women Helpline (MWHL)** Hyderabad. The objectives of the Shariah Protection Committee is to work for the protection of Muslim Personal Law, to work for the unity of all sects of Muslims, to make the Muslim women aware of their rights and duties under Shariah, to campaign against Uniform Civil Code, to mobilize against the unIslamic practices prevailing as a part of Muslim Marriage. Further its objectives are to set up a fund for the help and upliftment of poor and suppressed women, orphan girls, widows and needy women.

Shariah Protection Committee is involved in an awareness campaign about Shariah, creating awareness about mehr (dower), Khula, Nikah, mutual rights of husband and wife, important integrals of marriage in Islam, and prohibited degrees of relationship. Further the Committee is involved in campaigning against giving and taking of dowry. In this connection a Shariah Conference, 2008 was organized on 25th -27th June, 2008 on 'Islamic Ideology of Nikah' (Sharai Nikah) in which the message given was that girls should be consulted before marriage, husband and wife are powerful and free entities, dowry demand (Jode ghore ki raqam) & lavish wedding arrangements etc are not part of Nikah (Muslim Marriage) and are illegal and against Islam. 1000 CDs were released on the occasion of the Shariah Conference 2008. The purpose of the CD was to eradicate the false customs prevailing in our society through strong awareness of Islam and to introduce the true concept & ideology of marriage system in Islam. A Special Conference for Women and girl

students was organized on 20th June 2010, on '**Social Reforms and Responsibilities of Women**'

The awareness campaign of the Shariah Protection Committee is carried out through posters, pamphlets, CDs, booklets, handbills and by organizing of convention, symposiums, public meetings and conferences. The Shariah Protection Committee is also running a short term course for women '**Usool us Shariah**' (principles of Shariah) for creating awareness and understanding and gaining knowledge about the basic principles of Shariah and intensifying the efforts in the introduction and protection of Shariah. The strong message given by the Shariah Protection Committee to the Muslim community is not to deprive the daughters of their rights of inheritance because of dowry given to them at the time of marriage and that women's right to property should be respected.

Some members of Shariah Protection Committee for Women are also members of the **All India Muslim Personal Law Board**. (AIMPLB). All women members of the Shariah Protection Committees are very passionately involved in its working. This is despite their professional commitments and taking care of their respective families, they are also providing great service to the Muslim community.

(iii) **Muslim Women's Helpline, Hyderabad (MWHL)**

MWHL has been formed by the Shariah Protection Committee for Women for providing free advice on Shariah, legal, social, medical and educational issues of Muslim women. This MWHL has the support of experienced lawyers and religious scholars. It is run by a responsible group of women who look into the problems addressed to the helpline and provide the necessary help. In case it is required, the matters are referred to the Legal Board or the Shariah Board of the MWHL.

This organization also provides an opportunity for out of court settlement of cases pending in various Courts and also pre-litigative settlement to prevent overburdening of Courts. Hence MWHL provides Alternate Dispute Resolution Mechanism (ADR) to decrease the burden of overburdened courts thereby contributing to the government initiative to resort to ADR mechanism and thereby reducing the pendency in Courts. The kinds of cases which the MWHL deals is relating to inheritance matters, partition, domestic violence, family matters and wakf property etc.

What is very clear from this case study from Hyderabad is that different women's organizations are carrying out the work of emancipation of Muslim women at the grassroot level which is a great service to the community, to the society and to the nation. Because the position of women in a society and their role is the true index of its cultural and spiritual attainments and the evolution of values and their status is the measuring rod in assessing the standards of culture in any age and the best indicator of a nation's progress. Running

helplines for women, mobilizing the community to follow the correct and basic principles of Shariah, working for the eradication of evil practices prevailing in the name of religion and creating awareness and advocating about property rights of women is a positive contribution to the society which needs to be encouraged and applauded. By their tremendous dedication to the cause of Muslim women they have set up an example for others to emulate.

The contribution of women from Pakistan is of course laudable but since enforcement of law is a problem, the whole effort comes to a naught. Hence, as is very evident from the case study from Hyderabad that making the community to follow the correct principles of *Shariah* is a great service to the cause of Muslim personal law. Contribution of women in this direction is the greatest contribution which can be possible in this field, in the present times. The most commendable part is that they continue to strive silently without any desire to get credit for their work. This is the real contribution of Muslim women to the cause of Muslim women and to Muslim Personal Law.



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Contribution of Muslim Women to the Service of Hadith

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In Arabic the word hadith means 'a piece of information conveyed either in a small quantity or large'. A hadith is a saying or an act or tacit approval or disapproval ascribed either validly or invalidly to the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

Hadith are regarded by traditional Islamic schools of jurisprudence as important tools for understanding the Quran and in matters of jurisprudence. Hadith were evaluated and gathered into large collections during the 8th and 9th centuries. These works are referred to in matters of Islamic law and history to this day.

Majority of Muslims rely on Hadith and clerics and jurists of all denominations classify individual hadith as *sahih* (authentic), *hasan* (good) and *da'if* (weak). However, different traditions within each denomination, and different scholars within each tradition, may differ as to which hadith should be included in which category.

In Islamic terminology, the term *hadith* refers to reports of statements or actions of Muhammad, or of his tacit approval or criticism of something said or done in his presence. Classical hadith specialist Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani says that the intended meaning of *hadith* in religious tradition is something attributed to Muhammad but that is not found in the Quran. Other associated words possess similar meanings including: *khobar* (news, information) often refers to reports about Muhammad, but sometimes refers to traditions about his companions and their successors from the following generation; conversely, *athar* (trace, vestige) usually refers to traditions about the companions and successors, though sometimes connotes traditions about Muhammad.

The two major aspects of a hadith are the text of the report (the *matn*), which contains the actual narrative, and the chain of narrators (the *isnad*), which documents the route by which the report has been transmitted. The *sanad*, literally 'support', is so named due to the reliance of the hadith specialists upon it in determining the authenticity or weakness of a hadith. The *isnad* consists of a chronological list of the narrators, each mentioning the

one from whom they heard the hadith, until mentioning the originator of the *matn* along with the *matn* itself.

The first people to hear hadith were the companions who preserved it and then conveyed it to those after them. Then the generation following them received it, thus conveying it to those after them and so on. So a companion would say, "I heard the Prophet say such and such." The Follower would then say, "I heard a companion say, 'I heard the Prophet.'" The one after him would then say, "I heard someone say, 'I heard a Companion say, 'I heard the Prophet...'" *and so on.*

The overwhelming majority of Muslims consider hadith to be essential supplements to and clarifications of the Quran, Islam's holy book, as well as in clarifying issues pertaining to Islamic jurisprudence. Ibn al-Salah, a hadith specialist, described the relationship between hadith and other aspect of the religion by saying: "It is the science most pervasive in respect to the other sciences in their various branches, in particular to jurisprudence being the most important of them." "The intended meaning of 'other sciences' here are those pertaining to religion," explains Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, "Quranic exegesis, hadith, and jurisprudence. The science of hadith became the most pervasive due to the need displayed by each of these three sciences. The need hadith has of its science is apparent.

As for Quranic exegesis, then the preferred manner of explaining the speech of God is by means of what has been accepted as a statement of Muhammad. The one looking to this is in need of distinguishing the acceptable from the unacceptable. Regarding jurisprudence, then the jurist is in need of citing as an evidence the acceptable to the exception of the later, something only possible utilizing the science of hadith." Bukhari and Muslim in particular, claimed that they were collecting only the soundest of sound hadiths. These later scholars tested their claims and agreed to them, so that today, they are considered the most reliable collections of hadith

Hadith studies are a number of methods of evaluation developed by early Muslim scholars in determining the veracity of reports attributed to Muhammad. This is achieved by analyzing the text of the report, the scale of the report's transmission, the routes through which the report was transmitted, and the individual narrators involved in its transmission. On the basis of these criteria, various classifications were devised for hadith. The earliest comprehensive work in hadith studies was Abu Muhammad al-Ramahurmuzi's *al-Muhaddith al-Fasil*, while another significant work was al-Hakim al-Naysaburi's *Ma'rifat 'ulum al-hadith*. Ibn al-Salah's *· Ulum al-hadith is considered the standard classical reference on hadith studies.*

By means of hadith terminology, hadith are categorized as *ṣaḥīḥ* (sound, authentic), *ḍaʿīf* (weak), or *mawḍūʿ* (fabricated). Other classifications used also include: *ḥasan* (good), which refers to an otherwise *ḍaʿīf* report suffering from minor deficiency, or a weak report strengthened due to numerous other corroborating reports; and *munkar* (denounced) which is a report that is rejected due to the presence of an unreliable transmitter contradicting another more reliable narrator. Both *ṣaḥīḥ* and *ḥasan* reports are considered acceptable for usage in Islamic legal discourse.

Classifications of hadith may also be based upon the scale of transmission. Reports that pass through many reliable transmitters at each point in the *isnad* up until their collection and transcription are known as *mutawātir*. These reports are considered the most authoritative as they pass through so many different routes that collusion between all of the transmitters becomes impossibility. Reports not meeting this standard are known as *aḥad*, and are of several different types.

The service of Hadith and its allied disciplines including usule Hadith, asmaur rijal, categories of narrators, juristic scrutiny and modifications have been a major field of intellectual activity for the Muslims. The science of Hadith is one of the peculiarities of Muslim culture. The main premise of this service is approximation of the exactness of the prophetic tradition. The Muslims invented nearly a dozen of sciences and general books to achieve the knowledge of this association. They evolved such principles *tabaqate rijal* and biography that analyse not only the personal details of the narrator of Hadith but also remorselessly scrutinize his moral condition and personal life. This analysis also takes into account the narrators, teachers and disciple's contacts with the contemporary religious scholars and the nature of these contacts. In short Muslims rendered tremendous services to protect the treasure of Hadith. Men were not solely responsible for narrating and protecting this tradition but women also took equal part to contribute to this cause. Women companion's particularly pious wives of the Prophet (PBUH) gave extra ordinary contribution to it.

Most of the family life of the Prophet (PBUH) is narrated by Hazrat Aisha and Haj Umme Salma. The present article gives an account of the contribution of women to the service of Hadith since the period *taabiat*. It was a period when women took lessons in Hadith and propagated it further through learning and teaching Hadith shoulder to shoulder with men.

In the era of *tabieen*, two daughters of Mohammad Bin Siren namely Hafsa and Ummul Rida occupied a distinguished place among the masters of Hadith in Basra. In Madinah, there lived Umrah Bint Abdul Rahman, a disciple of Hazrat aisha. Hazrat Umar bin Abdul Aziz had written to Abu Bakar bin Muhammad, a disciple of Umrah to keep a record of her narrations. Ali bin Madini has written about Umrah that she was a reliable narrator of

Hadith with the utmost command on narrations by Hazrat Aisha (RA). About Ummul Darda, Qazi Ilyas is of the opinion that she is the greatest scholars of Hadith.

Listening to a teaching of Hadith became more popular after the period of Tabaieen and Tabatabaeen when people wrote voluminous treatise on this science. Unlike other books these writings were not spread over sections and chapters but these were collections of Ahadith compiled subject wise and the only criterion was the authenticity of a statement as the tradition of the prophet (PBUH). These treatises did not bear a set title. They were named as sahiba (book), musnad (narrations by a narrator) or Mashikha (ahadith collected by a scholar). Women also compiled such Sahaif or treatise and evolved a system to promote them same as men did.

Tazkira and biographies of eminent persons contain disciplines of a number who rendered such services. Interestingly, women from all walks of life took to this service. One such teacher of Hadith was Abida al nadaniyyah an Abyssinian and a maid servant of Muhammad bin Yazid from whom she had taken lessons in Hadith besides benefitting from other masters of Hadith in Madinah, particularly Imam Malik. It happened on one of the occasions of Hajj that Muhammad Bin Yazid gifted her to Habib bin alwaleed Al Mariwani whom she accompanied to Spain. Later he was so impressed of her eruditeness that he not only freed her but also took her in marriage. Her mastery over the science Hadith brought her the honour of being the Muhaddisa of Spain. She has narrated approximately ten thousand Ahadith.

Remarkably a maid servant had made such a praiseworthy contribution to Hadith. How could the house of Prophet lag behind? So we find that Nafisa Bint Hasan was great narrator of Hadith of her times and shifted with her husband to Egypt where she used to give lessons in Hadith. Great jurists like Imam Shafai were among her disciples.

These two examples suggest that women with the elite background as well as those belonging to the lower strata of the society took equally keen interest in learning and teaching Hadith and thus irrespective of their social and familial status they contributed to the promotion of the science of hadith.

In addition to those two women narrators of Hadith there were others who got prominence in the field. They were Abida Betul Bashar, Umme Umar al Thaqufah, abida Bint Abdul Rahman, Zainab Bint Ali bin Abdullah, Khadijah Umme Muhammad who has established their circles for imparting the knowledge of Hadith to its seekers.

Another narrator of Hadith in the eighth century (2 century Hijrah) was Zainab Bint Suleman (759 AD/ 142 H). Though princess she gave up her stately luxuries for the

fondness of acquiring the knowledge of Hadith and devoted her entire life to its service. The Abbasid caliphs held her in high esteem for her scholarly qualities. It is said about Mamoon that he respected Zainab the most.

Abu Ubaid Qasim bin Muslim is a well known narrator of Hadith. His treatise Kitabal Awwal presents an exhaustive account of financial matters including laws of taxation and is considered to be the source material on his subject. He has been interpreted by a woman named Fatima Bint Muhammad alias Shahdah. She is also known as Hadith narrator of Iraq. She produced a deciple like Ibne Asakar Samani and Ibne A Jauzi who got prominent places in the field of Hadith literature.

It is through this book that almost all narrators of Hadith are indebted to Fatima bint Muhammad. General condition of the book in Arabic and its translations in other languages including Urdu has come out.

Fatima bint Abdul Rahman (924/312 H), Fatima Ummatul Waheed (grand daughter of Imam Abu Daud Sijistani 987/377 H) and Ummul Fateh Ummatussalam 999/390 H) are prominent Hadith narrators in the fourth century Hijrah whose study circles were attended by the seekers of Hadith knowledge from far off places.

Compilation of Hadith had been completed in the third century hijrah. Later study circles devoted to Hades were established for the books compiled. People came to attend the lectures of experts on Bukhari's 'Aljame al sahih' and Imam Muslim's 'Alsahih'. Such experts were found among both men and women.

Karima Almaruzia (1070/ 463 H) was one such narrator of Hadith who was famous for the lectures on the saheeh of Bukhari. Abuzar Hairi, himself an established narrator of Hadith used to urge his disciples to consult only Karima in matters concerning Imam Bukhari's 'Al Sahih'. Goldzheir, a leading orientalist wrote that she had been one of the most authentic narrators of Bukhari. Another authority on Bukhari, Fatima bint Muhammad (1316/539 H) was called 'Musnidatu Isfahan' (one who accompanied the throne of Isfahan). Still another authority on Al-Sahih of Imam Al Bukhari was Sithalnazra who gave lessons in Hadith in Damascus and Egypt.

There were women experts also of Sahih Muslim. They were Ummatul Khair Fatima bint Ali (1137/532 H) and Fatima al Shahrzuriya.

Some women were popular for their command on other treatise of Hadith. For example Fatima Al Juzdaniya 1129/ 524 H was famous teacher of the three treatise of Imam Tabrazi Majam Kabeer, majam saghir and majame awsat. Zainab Alhar Anea gave

lectures on 'Musnade Ahmad' while both Juwairujah bint Umar and Zainab bint Ahmad was famous for their authority on Darmi. The latter is also called 'Bintul Kamal'. She is the one who possessed most of the credentials for narrating Hadith. Besides Darmi she also taught 'Shrah Maaniul Aathaar of Imam Taharvi and 'Musnade Imam Ahmad'.

Even in later periods, women took keen interest in narrating and teaching Hadith adding to its treasure for centuries. Hafiz Ibne Hajar Asqalani has given a description about hundred women narrators in the ninth century Hijrah.

The services rendered by women narrators to the field of Hadith were not of casual nature. Rather they toiled for collecting authentic material pertaining to the discipline shoulder to shoulder with men taking up arduous journeys to many places.

Taking long journeys were very cumbersome in those days. Most number of journeys were performed by Fatimah Bint Saad el Khair who was born in Kashghar frequently traveled for collecting Hades first with her father and then with her husband. She died during long academic journey in Egypt. The narrators of Hadith, both men and women had evolved scientific system of compiling Hadith. The first are being hearing while others included quoting from books, seeking permission to interpret and comment on books, enquiring about a hadith through correspondence. These have been considered to a large extent a reliable system of transmitting Hadith. Hazrat Aisha had permitted many of her disciples to reply letters received from seekers of Hadith from far off places and to copy for them the hadith one has solicited to be sent. On top of them was Umrah bint Abdul Rahman whose rejoinders to correspondence are often quoted by established narrators of Hadith. Imam Bukhari in his treatise "Alkitabul Mufrad" has devoted a chapter to this theme titled "correspondence with women narrators and their replies".

These women narrators have been well acknowledged in almost every period. In treatise of 'Asmaul Rajal' (Levis of men of distinction), muhaddisal and women narrators have been generously acknowledged. The first treatise on life and character 'Tabaqate ibn Saad there one volume dealing with women narrators. Iman Mazri in Tahzibul Kamal and Hafiz Ibne Hajar in 'Tahzibul Tahzib' have devoted one volume of their treatise to the description of women. Hafiz Ibne Hajar in his another treatise 'Aldural Kaminah fi Kayan al Miat al Samirah' (An account of Men in the 8th century) and Hafiz Samari in his 'Alzaul Malme fi Ayanah qarm al Tase (An account of Men in the 9th century) has presented a description of at least hundred women narrators each while Hafiz rabbi in 'Sair Aalaam al Nabra' gives a description of woman narrators in all periods including such hundred narrators most of whom are 'Muhadithsat'. A contemporary writer Abu Abdul Rahman

Khalid Bin Hussain has written a collection of accounts titled 'Jane Akbural Nisar min Siyar Aalam a Nabala' dealing with the life of women narrators mentioned in various.

A modern scholar akram Nadvi took up this subject and did a valuable research. He is said to have prepared an account of 'Muhaddisat' in 40 volumes. A summary of these volumes in English is available in print under the title of 'Al Muhaddisat'.

A number of women joined the long journey of the science of Hadith. A number of such women have been mentioned in biographies and histories. It is quite possible that women that women could not have access to biographers as easily as men and likewise biographers could not have access to women narrators. However it can be confidently said that the promotion and propagation of the science of Hadith would have remained incomplete without the contribution of women and it would not have been enriched as much as it is today. Though a week tradition "Get your half religion from Aisha but the Hadith dealing with domestic life are mostly narrated by the pious wives of the prophet (PBUH).

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Women Poets of Urdu (With particular reference to Nazm)

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A penetrating view of literary history reveals that women have considerably contributed to the modern literary tradition of Urdu. Particularly the latter half of the twentieth century witnessed an enrichment of this tradition by women writers. Some of them are remembered with deep reverence in the field of fiction, namely novel and short story. Ismat Chughtai, Qurratulain Haider, Razia Fasih Ahmad, Khadija Maslur, Gilani Banu, Hajra Masroor and Zahida Hina are prominent among them. Prior to the emergence of these writers in the literary scene the writings of Rashid Jahan had won acclaim for representing hostile feminine sentiments. However by that time no woman who could make a place for her in the realm of poetry. It was perhaps due to the social ghetto that led to exploitation of women as consumer commodity and as subservient to the male.

A leading critic of Urdu Prof. Qamar Rais in his presidential speech at the inaugural session of an international symposium on "Women's literature in Urdu" in January 2003 had remarked:

As it is commonly accepted, the contribution of women in the sphere of poetry has been quite scant in comparison of male poets we are wonderstruck as this phenomenon as poetry is said to be a personification of delicate sentiments and this whole saga associated with the fair sex. However the factors responsible for this setback or shortcoming should be sought for in social error and cultural traditions.

(Urdu mein nasai adab ka manzar nama- Qaisar Jahan 20-21)

If women knew anything about the outer world it was just for name sake, and not to speak of taking to the hobby or vocation of composing poetry. They were forced to live a secluded life within the four walls of home. Poetry has to do with both sentiments and feelings and observation and realization which the women of that era totally lacked and consequently they either did not step into the sphere of poetry or made an attempt to cross the bar and to compose verse under disguise. This kept their poetic

compositions void of exactness, appeal and reality that characterized the compositions of their male counterparts. This is why we come across the names of very few women poets.

A distinguished Urdu critic of our age, Professor Ateequllah has made the following remarks on the women poets of Urdu:

“The history of Urdu literature, particularly the classical Urdu literature does have a mention of women poets but it is quite surprising that not a single signature has left its memorable identity. Our women poets no doubt did speak but did not take up a dialogue”. The roots of this situation lie deep in our value system which is ultimately patriarchal. (Tarjeehat-Ateequllah, 251)

Garsan De Tassi has enlisted many significant Urdu women poets of the eighteenth and the nineteenth century including poetesses like Kamran Jan Mushtari who received training in poetry from from Agha Shams Lakhnavi and who had rivalry with Umrao Jan Zehra and Zeenat Jan Nazuk. The two ladies were fond of the poetry of Ibrahim Beg Maqtaal And Ramji Nazakat. The latter was born in Narnaul and took residence in Delhi. Another poetess Nasiban Zehra was a dancer in the royal court of the last Mughal emperor. Taking interest in the poetry in 18th and 19th centuries was a token of honor and distinction. Some ladies belonging to the families of nobles and ministers also composed poetry. Prominent among them were Zaibunnisa Makhfi, the daughter of Aurangzeb Alamgir, Ganna Begum Shaikh, wife of Nawab Imadul Mulk, Bahu Begum alias Dulhan begum, wife of Nawab Asifuddaulah and Suraiya begum, wife of Mirza Ali Khan, a spiritual guide of a Mughal emperor. The most prominent poetess mentioned by Garsan De Tussi was Mahlaqa Bai. She was born in Aurangabad during the reign of Asif Jah and later shifted to Hyderabad. She was indeed a courtesan with clients in ruling circles. She excelled over other courtesans taking advantage of her political insight.

Due to being a reasoned and cultured courtesan she was close to nobles and ministers. Garsan De Tussi had named her as “Malka e Hyderabad”. Like other courtesans of her caliber, she composed poetry in Urdu and compiled her collection under the title “Gulzar e Mahlaqa” a copy of which is preserved in East India Office library, London. According to Samina Shaukat, an Urdu critic, Mahlaqa Bai is the first poetess of Hyderabad.

The beginning of the twentieth century was the corner stone in the history of India that opened a new horizon before the Indian mind and intellect. Although the footfall of reformist and political movement began to be felt at the close of the 19th

century, the early twentieth century a host of problems including women's education that occupied the attention of the leaders of the society. It was in this era that brutal customs and traditions against women were banished and the Indian women breathed in an environment of freedom, comfort and tranquility gave wings to her imagination. Women started to fight in Indian freedom struggle shoulder to shoulder with men. They got an opportunity to look at life from a close range while popularization of education widened women's literary attitude. However, this attitude was confined to imitation. Most of the women poets were influenced by their contemporary male poets and composed verses in the genre of nazm in latter's set style.

In the post independence era, the number of women writers considerably increased and now we come across the names of a good number of poets who appear in magazines and on the electronic media. With the fast changing life women have developed an interest in education as well as a taste for literature, art and poetry.

It deepened their taste for and approach to interpretation of literature, spreading before them a panorama of subjects and themes of poetry, socio-political awakening among women spurred them to express their views un-hesitantly on social, political, personal and gender issues taking guidance from their own conscience and relying on personal intuition. They have succeeded to a great extent in establishing their identities through their poetic expression. Ada Jafari, Fahmida Reyaz, Kishwar Naheed, Shafiq Fatima Shera, Parveen Shakir, Zehra Nigah, Sajida Zaidi, Zahida Zaidi, Darab Bani Wafa, Begum Mumtaz Mirza, Parveen Fana Syed, Jamila Bano, Azra Parveen, Shahnaz Nabi, Shabnam ashai. Some of the women poets have had a greater appeal for their terse imagination and refinement of expression. Besides, many of them have brought out collections of their verses such as Noor Jahan Sarwat, Siddiqah Shabnam, Nuzhat Siddiqui, Irfana Aziz, Syeda Shan Meraj, Malka Nazim, Wahida Naseem, Nasim Nikhat, Umme Hani, Shahjahan Bano Yaad, Masuda Hayat, Asma Saeedi, Rana Haidari, Salima Javed, Razia Rana, Rafia Shabnam Abida, Bilqis zafeerul Hasan, Tarannum Reyaz, Sta Habib, Nasreen Anjum Bhatti, Tanveer Bhatti, Maimuna Ruhi, Farkhunda Nasreen Hayat, Mahtalat, Azra Abbas, Rasheeda Ayan, Najma Mahmood (Shahryar), Mahmuda Ghaziya, Tasneem Siddiqui, Sadaf Jafari, Shahida Hasan, Humaira Rahman, Ishrat Afreen, Rukhsana Jabeen.

There are women poets who have featured in magazines frequently and have made a mark in the sphere of poetry but no collections of their poems has come out yet. All these poetesses compose poetry for a change of taste and to explore new dimensions of artistic life and experience.

Even before Ada Jafari there emerged the name of Zahida Khatoon shrvani who composed under the pen names and died in 1922 at the age of 22. A collection of her poems came out in the fourth quarter of the twentieth century. Ada Jafari wrote earlier as Ada Badayuni. Himayat Ali Shaer has described Ada as the first lady of the Urdu poetry. Ada began her career as a poetess in 1936. Her first collection appeared in 1949-50 under the title of "Mein Saaz Dhundti Rahi". Her poetry is marked with self assessment. In composing verse, she avoids hackneyed themes.

Both in form and content she takes care to give a novel touch. The similes and metaphors she employs are quite picturesque. She herself has confessed. "I cherish departure from tradition as much as I love tradition." (Saaze-Sukhan, Maktaba Jamia ltd. New Delhi)

One of Ada Jafari's poem titled "Ehsaase Awwalim" is a declaration of aversion from the decadent order of life. It is replete with a state of anxiety and unrest. The poem reads as:

Haae ye aarzue namalum
Ek naala sa hai be away
Ek halchal si hai na soz na saaz
Ruh mein inteshar sa hai
Dil ko ye intizaar sa kya hai
(ahsaase Awalim: Ada jafari)

In another poem "Eteraf" she thus speaks:

Dekh lo nikhate ralgaan
Aaj mahfuz-o-maamum hai
Har gule tar ko tum se muanwan kiya
Maine Khush he Rafta ko apna liya
Pahrahan taar taar ungliyan Khunchakan
Apna maslak magar bastar as dilojan
Kund hote nahin dardi ehsaas ke neshter
Dil ko phirbhi nahin khahishe rahguzar
Jo khata aaj tak mujh se sarzad hui
Us khata se mujhe aaj taj pyar hai
In rahon mein koi mein akeli nahin
Aur ashufta sar saath hain
Wo go ghairon ke pathra par hanspare
Aur apnon ke phulon se zakhmi hue

(Eteraaf: Ada Jafari)

Ada Jafari does not expose her feminine identity but this identity gracefully reflects itself in her expression. Her poetry seems to be full of self realization and confidence.

Zohra Nigah occupies an important place among women poets of Urdu. Her verses contain all ingredients that distinguish good poetry. She presents an amalgam of personal sentiments and collective suffering. It has an inter mixture of gushing motherly affection and womanly desperateness. She has dexteriously dealt with all shades of poetic expression:

Kaam Kaj ka pallu dale
Din bhar ghar se uljhun suljhan
Raat ko lekin aankhein munde
Pichli raat ka saawan dekhun
Ye mere laal bigad jayen
Chhota aangan niche kamre
Dur dur se haath milayen
Jagmag jagmag sune jaisa
Ghar sab ke nazroon men aayabhiga aanchal phaila kaajal
Kis ne dekha kisne chhupaya

(Aangan: Zohra Nigah)

Here Zohra has depicted the agony of a woman who had left her own parental abode for bridal home but she does not forget the freedom once enjoyed in a small room of her mother's house. In yet another poem Zohra Nigah reflects over the complexities of human relations:

Mulayam Garm samjhaute ki chadar
Yeh chadar ne barson mein buni hai
Usi se main bhi tan dhak lungi apna
Usi se tum bhiaasuda rahoge
Na khush hoge na pazmurda rahoge

Here we encounter the tragedy of a woman who is forced to live life unwillingly and with a heavy heart. It is she who prepares herself to bury down all her ambitions in

her heart and make a compromise with the male. It is a compromise to lead such a life that distorts her own personality.

Kishwar Naheed's poetry is representative of confident quest for restoration of women's rights. She is totally averse to giving vent to despondence and pessimism. Despite constituting the half of the world's population women cannot be deprived of their rights and freedom only because of belonging to the fair sex. Such approach will tantamount to designating woman as a marketable commodity or a supra human creature.

That very idol of love and embodiment of bashfulness emerges before us in an incarnation dominated by a sense of identity and self realization. Professor Atiqullah in one of his article writes:

Women who constitute nearly half of the society can never be deprived of their rights and liberties only because they belong to the fair sex, as if they are not humans but physical objects. Why do we have a separate code of laws and powers, different terms of acceptance, contradictory standards of approval and rejection. These issues have been raised by our poetesses time and again. They are disgusted with the code of conduct that function under the feudal stamp. She has been made into just a decoration piece where she can be a source of entertainment but can never be self reliant and independent. Perhaps the so called ethical and social tyranny and pressure are parts of her destiny.

(Tarjeehat: Ateequllah p.361)

Let us view some of Kishwar Naheed's poems in this light:

Wo nafraton ka boson ke rang dekar
Mere munh par nile nile dagh daal kar
Ye jatana chahta hai
Ke use mere jism ko har tarah se
Istemal karne ka haq hai

Mere munh par tamacha maar kar
Tumhare hathon ki ungliyon ke nishan
Phuli hui roti ki tarah
Mere munh par sadrang ghubbare
Chor jate hain

Tum haq wale ho
Tumne mehr ke awaz haq ki boli jiti hai

(Neelam Ghar: Kishwar Naheed)

Another poem by Kishwar Nahid read as under:

Ghaas bhi mujh jaisi hai
Zara sar uthane ke qabil hui
To kaatne wale machine
Use makhmal banana ka sauda hui
Hamwar karti rahti hai
(Ghas to mujh jaisi hai)

In yet another poem Kishwar says:
Ye sab rishte
Kache rangon ke kuch dhaage hain
Ye sab pather hain
Inke upar chalo to bhi luhu luhan
Ko saho to bhi lahu luhan
Par apne liye geria kyun mumkin nahi
Meri banno!
Suraj mukhi ki tarah
Ghar ke hakim ki raza par
Garden ghumate ghumate
Meri reerh ki haddi chatak gayi hai
(garub Kash: Kishwar Naheed)

The impression one may gather from Kishwar Nahid's poem is that she does not want to forget the tears she is inflicted with as a reward for her life long loyalty. The fire simmering inside her has not only eaten up her existence but also wounded her tender feelings and sentiments sometimes she frivolously reacts to such agonizing junctures.

Fahmida Riaz is boiling with hostility, courage and out spookiness the quality women poets did not possess in the times of Fahmida Riaz. In her earlier poems we may trace an ethos of mixed with hope and disappointment, objections and despondence.

Taweel raton ne aankhon ko kar diya benoor

Kabhi jo akse sahar tha saraab nikla hai
Samajhte the jisko nishan manzil ka
Fareb khurda nigahon ka kharab nikla hai
(Lambe Safar ki Manzil: Fahmeeda Riaz)

In her later poems, Fahmeeda Riaz demonstrates an acute element of provocation while she runs down the patriarchal social order where the tone of confidence is sharper than anywhere else:

Ye laundiya hain
Ke yarghamali, halal shab bhar rahin
Dame subhdar badar hain
Ye laundiya hain
Janab ke nutfae Mubarak ke nisf wase se
Motahar hain
Ye biwijan hain
Ke janggi ka khiraaj dene qataar andar qataar
Baari ki muntazar hain
Ye bachiyan hain
Ke jin ke sar par phira ja hazrat ka daste shafaqat
To kamsini ke numu se reeshe safed rangeen ho gai hai
Huzur ke hijlae muattar meiindagi
Khum ro gayi hain

Punjabi fiction writer Amrita Pritam recorded Sarah Shagufta's biography under the title of "Ek thi saarah". Protest is a dominant theme in the verses of women poets in Pakistan. In Fahmida Riaz, the nature of this protest is political. In poems by Sarah Shagufta and Kishwar Naheed this protest is marked with a quest for feminine identity against patriarchal society.

A poetic experience touching the border of violent passion coupled with a unique elemental plainness distinguish Sarah Shagufta's poetry from others. It lets us feel that she has not composed poetry but poetry has encompassed her entire existence and she burnt up in the fire within her. The intensity of feeling and foens on experience she had is rarely seen her contemporaries.

(Urdu mein NasaiAdabKa Manzar Nama- Qaisar Jahan p. 264)

Hamaare aansuon ki aankhein banai gain
Hamne apne apne talatum se rassa kasha ki
Aur apna apna bain hue

Sitaron ki pukar aasman se zyada
Main ne maut ke baal khole
Aur jhut par darrag hui

Aasman par mera chaand qarz hai
Main maut ke haath mein ek charch hum
(Chand ka Qarz-Sarah Shagufta)

When protest gets intense and reaches its climax it touches the boundaries of
obscenity. An example in her poem:

Insaan gaari ko tarateeb dete hue
Haramzadi ho gayi hun
Zindagi baar bachche nahin janti
Jo suluk ke paththar chalati rahti
Zamin ka saahil nahin hota
Main to chalte chalte miiti ko hamila kardungi
(Insaani Gaare- Sarah Shagufta)

To quote Aasif Farrukhi in Sarah Shagufta same pebble of words glare all of a
sudden to dazzle the whole environment. This very characteristic distinguishes Sarah
Shagufta's art.

Parveen Shakir opened a new vista in Urdu poetry. She blended the precise
womanly emotions in her poetry in such a fashion that gave a fresh mould to Urdu
verse. Some couplets are true representative of her mind and heart.

Usse ek baar to ruthen main usi ki in animal
Aur teri tarah se wo mujh ko mane aaye
Main phul chunti rahi aur mujhe khabar na hui
Wo shakhs aake mere shar se chala bhi gaya
Tu mera kuch nahin lagta magar jaane hayaz
Jane kyon tere liye dil ko dharakta dekhun
Badan ka karb ka ko wo bhi samajh na payega
Main dil mein roungi aankhon men muskuraongi

In one of her poems entitled 'Misfit' Parveen Shakir says:

Harvsubh mere shanon par
Zimmedari ka bojh lekin
Pahle s bhari hota hai

Phir bhi meri pusht par na ahli ka kub
Roz haroz numayan hota jar aha hai
(Misfit-Parveen Shakir)

Parveen Shakir demonstrates no disgust towards male but her main concern includes women's freedom, emancipation from thinking and living on ones own accord. We find in her frequent references to mera and Sappho. Rather some critics have tried to explore the traces of Mira Saifo and Quratulain Tahira, Nazir siddiqui makes the following observation:

The poetry that mira and Parveen composed is essentially a poetry of love by women. This may differ in degree but the level of success reached by them lies to a great extent in an extra ordinary faculty of love.

(Asri adab Khawateen special number p. 307)

Shafiq Fatima Shera belonged to a religious and academic family background with training in Arabic, Persian and Urdu tradition coupled with Islamic teachings. This is why she earned out from the very beginning a style much different from her contemporaries.

Wahshi hawa ke rele mein khud par
Qabre na pae
Bahti chali gaye
Be samt, be sud
Tah ek sunahra mann ha sa kerta
Ubhre pukaare
Us se ulajh kuch der kampain bikhre hue
Par phir shaant ho jayen
(Titli ki parwaz- Shafiq Fatima Shera)

Shera has imbibed intellectual fecundity from Iqbal, N. M. Rashid and Miraji as well as she has tried to beautifully deploy the diction of Hindi lyrics. One of her major poems titled "Fidaiyat Neemhe Khawab" reminds us of Abdul Aziz Khalid with reference to the Arabic vocabulary. The range of feelings and expression in Shera's poetry gives a sense of enormity. Shera has so far published four collections of her poems namely ' afaq Nama', 'Kiran Kiran', 'Yaddasht' 'Gallae Safura' and 'silsila e Muknalimaat', now available as complete work titled 'Silsila e Muknalimaat'.

Ye kaisi aagahi hai jis ki mashal hath mein lekar sada tanhiyon ke des mein phirti
hoon awara

Ye ek peham shikaste khawab ye chhulun to kya hoga

Usi se ho gai har surate maujud sad para to kya hoga
Bajuz ek ruhe naalam, chasme hairan ruh sargardan
Nahin taqsire parwaaze nazar ka koi kaffara
(sada ha sehra: Shafiq Fatma Shera)

The nazm is based on a quranic tale. It is a description of Prophet Moses and his wife Safura. The words employed in the poem will have metaphoric value for those who are familiar with Safura and her herd drink water at the stream. Viewed from this angle, the text contains and unwarranted text which reflects upon the plight of number of females like Safura.

The herd of Safura and speech animals may convey their feeling of thirst as well as the feminine sentiments but cannot quench their thirst. A heavy slab covers the stream of life and she has no courage to remove it. Safura who represents the femininity is well aware that her Maalyam is still far away. Woman has not yet got her due place in society. Even today she stands along the stream of life with the herd of her unsatiated desires and expectations.

It will not be appropriate to associate this behaviour of shera with feminism or feminine tone because feminism has its source somewhere else while Shera's intellectual legacy is deeply rooted in culture and a view of life. However it is undesirable that most of her poems both human and feminine issues emerge side by side in a particular society.

Sajida Zaidi's is full of a sense of life. This sense of life is sometimes agonizing and joyful of others. Thus they sense as a bond between man and life. It is this very sense that makes one weep bitterly in the moments of sadness on one hand, while it becomes a basis for life amidst despondence and frustration, taking shape into hope and ambition, on the other. However the individual in modern times has been robbed of even this sense. Life has become only an endless process of breathing rife with desperately live till the last breath amidst ambitions, hopes and dejection.

Aankh bhi tar nahi
Ab dil bhi talabgaar nahin
Regzaron mein kahan qatrae shabnam ka wajud
Khum gam jat hai
To phir aankh se dhalta bhi nahim
Zindagi jabr hai

Majbur hain hum
(Inkishaaf: Sajida Zaidi)

In another poem 'Wijdaan' she says:

Mere chaaron taraf bekaraan andhera hai
Main lakhon salon se hun ghoti jan
Tanhaiyan tarikiyon k eek be payan samandar men
Ye saare falsafe, ye nagahi aur fikr ke rishte
Ye tahzeebo tamassun ke baland aahang hamgane
Mazaahib aur suyasat ki fasun kari
Ye sab majzub ki bar hain
Ye saari kainat ek waahima hai ek namukammal waqsh hai
Taqhliq be maqsad be mani
(Wijdaan: Sajida Zaidi)

Sajida Zaidi's poetry is marked with a concern for the life one ought to live and the life one has to live. The nature of expression and idioms employed by her present her art in a distinct canvas.

Zahida Zaidi has peeked her subject matters from society and the environment around her. Instead of being thoroughly sentimental she depicts life with all its merits and demerits by putting into action her intellect and prudence. Her peculiarity is in her ability to give vent to her feelings in a suggestive manner by means of conscience and internalization of experience.

The two sisters Sajida and Zahida do not believe in taking up subject matters and diction that are exclusively meant for women promulgated under feminism. Thus they look at compartmentalization as a misleading proposition.

Maine dhumate use
Uljte hui gahraiyon mein use
Tang gharon mein
Thande begulaon mein
Kali kalaon mein
Paiham sadaon mein
Benam raahon mein
Khandaron mein
Chingariyon mein
Sangparon mein
Dhunda hai maine use

Maztarib munfail
Damane lafz men
Munh chupaye hue

(Maami: Zahida Zaidi)

Zahida zaidi has published three collections of her poems.

Familiarity with western thoughts and modern services and arts brought changes and new echoes in the general ethos of the east. Today's women are certainly different from their earlier generation. Before 1960 most of the women poets seem to advocated for human freedom indistinctively with the firm belief that gender plays no role in the creation and cultivation of artistic skill. In fact negation of the role of gender was the first imprint of feminism that gave women an opportunity to argue for equal rights, one may see the glimpses of this ideology in the following verses:

Ab main tum sab se nafrat karti hun
Kyon kit tum sab bhi mujhse nafrat karte ho
(Ek waqt aega: Farkhunda Nasreen Hayat)

A poem by Shehnaz Nahi thus reads:

Mujhe kamre ki is kali kasafat se zara bahar nikalo
Dhup mein rakho
Hawae taza mein khilne do
Shabnam se nahane do
Mere rag rag mein parihaan hai chlorophyll ka sarmaya
Use milne do suraj ki sunehri garam kirnon ke khazane se
Hawaon se
Mujhe kamre ki taariki se bahar to nikalo
(Photo synthesis: Shahnaz Nahi)

And here is poem by Azra Abbas:

Mein wade ki zanjeeron mein apni zindagi ki pahli
Subah se bandhi hui hoon
Uska sira kiske haath men hai
Mere haath khol diye gaen
To main is duniya ki diwaron ko apne khawalon
Ki lakiron se sijdah kar dun
Aur asman ki chat gera dun
Qahr ki bearish barsaun
Aur is duniya ko apni hatheli par bitha kar masal dun

(Meri zanjeer khol di gayi: Azra Abbas)

Shabnam Ashai maintains the same tone when she says:

Tumne jo roti mujhe khilai
Wo meri socj aur faisale karne ki taqat
Mujhse chin kar tumne kharidi
Jis chashmen ka pani tum mujhe pila rahe ho
Mere jism ki aamadgi se phutta hai
Meri tashna ruh me meri nason ka chaat rahi hai
Main sukar rahi hun
Aur tumhari aarzuon ki ragain
Kisi khwab ke nashe ki tarah
Phail rahi hain
(Ek nazm: Shabnam Ashai)

Bilqees Zafarul Hasan shares this complaint by speaking out her vows:

Tumhari tarh main bhi chahaton aur nafraton se
Roz milti hun
Tumhari tarh ek insaan main bhi hun
Tumhari paltu billi nahin main
Jise bistar mein sula kar us ki kahr khar
Se bahhut mahzuz hote ho
Tumhari tarh mujhko bhi khuda ne
Ek wajud apna diya hai
Kisi kamtar khuda ki khalq kardah
Kyon samajhte ho
Tumhara jo Khuda hai wo mera bhi khuda hai
Tumhari waza kardah zindagi jiti rahun mein
Ye tum kyon chahte ho
Mujhe mahfooz rakhne ka bahana mat taraashi-shukriya
Tumhari tarh apni zindagi mein aap jina chaahti hun

In one of her poems Farkhunda Nasreen Hayat employs a different metaphor to convey her agony:

Kuchh din pahle tak main kabutar thi
Aankhen band kar ke sochti
Ki duniya se billiyon ka wajud mit chukka hai
Aur use bhi pehle main chakor aur lectar ke samne koi shai thi

Subhan teru kudrat ki boli hoti hai
Aur chandni raat mein beqarar rehti thi
Jab mein usse phi pehle kutya thi
To saara saara din
Apne malik ke paon chatty rahti thi
Magar mere pyar ka yeh sila mila
Ki woe k aur kutiya le aaya
Uuse pehle ke janam mein
main ek khoobsoorat himi thi
wo zamaana sabse acha tha
magar baut jaldi guzar gaya
aur mujhe kutiya ban jana pada
(Janam Janam ki Kahani: Farkhunda Nasreen Hayat)

The women bought up in western culture are not willing to for reconciliation in the name of cultural sanctity she has broken the cob web she has been entangled with for centuries in the name of ancestral dignity or a social requirement. The literature created in Urdu in the west gives us both the reflections of life there and memories of the homeland. Shahida Kazmi (Washington), Rasheeda ayan (New Jersey), Azra Naqvi (Montreal), Sultan Mehr (California), Parveen Sheer (Canada), saleha Jabeen Anwar (New Jersey), Humaira Rahman (USA), Zarrin Yasmeen (USA) are adding to the existing treasure of Urdu literature having been inspired by the western literary experiences. A poem by Azra Naqvi (Montreal) finely depicts the emotions of an expatriate.

Mere mahboob watan, khak aur dhool
Men lipte hue marks wahan
Tera jo qarz hai mujh par wo chukana hai mujhe
Char su talkh haqaiq se mila kar nazrein
Phir naye taurse jine ki rahi rasm
Nibhana hai mujhe
Tune jine ko jo andaaz sikhaya that kabhi
Usko pardes ne kuchh aur jila bakshi hai
Mere mahboob watan imteha tera bhi hai mera bhi
(Khwabdar Khawab: Azra Naqvi)

Saleha Jabeen Anwar (New Jersey) unveils this intellectual dimension of the new woman.

Tane hue dabig parde ka hisaar tut gaya

Maashartu maselahat se main
Be bahra ho gai
Soch sahib
Mudabbirana rae
Halaat ki hama jalti
Meri paspa
Nae harifon ke daon pech mafluj
Be mehriye falak ki is inaayat par
Main zinda dargor hone se bach gayi
(Mohabbat ka naqeeb: Saleha Jabeen)

The intense feeling of injustice meted to women makes her protest to the creator who destined her for everything possible but damned her forever:

Mere zuljalal akram, mere adl ke mahafiz
Main tujhse hi puchti hun
Bena garm aur junah ke pae jurm
Kyon kharo hoon
Mere be zaban aziyat kabhi to zaban palo
(Aadhi gawahi: Shahida Kazmi: Washington)

The contribution of women poets to the Urdu literary repertoire is enormous. What we would like to say that it is not the question of patriarchal society but also the question of lameness of Urdu poetry.

Literary historians, critics, researchers and editors did not change their mental track to come out of the age old stagnation. They unlike other languages did not acknowledge the representation of women poets in Urdu, ignoring their contribution to literature. A biased approach towards women's creativity will make us a laughing stock. Here one point is worth considering. There should be a clear cut distinction between awakening and immorality. The wave of awakening in the western world has evolved the sense of morality, giving to such innovations that are concerns for the civilized society. It is equally important to strengthen the natural process of awakening and to guard oneself against the dazzling social innovations more so because it is a prerequisite to maintain the equilibrium in a civilized society.

Contribution of Muslim Women in the Field of Education

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INRODUCTION

Islam is the only religion that gave equal rights to the men and women and negated this theory that women are inferior to men. Islam also has the pride of giving equal opportunities of learning to both the sexes. The so called developed nations that are thought to be the cradle of learning slammed the doors of learning to the slaves and women. It was thought to be preserve of men only. The women were subjected to ridicule and humiliation in every field of life. She was deprived of all the rights. On the contrary, Islam gave equal status to women and prophet Muhammed (phuh) put this subjugated lot to such a high pedestal that the history of humanity takes pride in it. The prophet through his actions and sayings proved that they are not inferior to men in any respect. . Before Islam women were not allowed to read religious scriptures. The pages of history are witness to the pitiful plight of women.

The history of middle age shows that women were inclined towards education but unlike today they had no formal schools or colleges to go. Some Madrasas were dedicated to them but education women were not common. The people in general did not like it. They thought that four walls of house is the right place for them. In these circumstances establishment of schools and colleges was almost impossible for them. One of the reasons, in India, was the prevalence of the system of Purdah. Women's going outside was not the norm then as men did not like it. Still, the women from the royal families had special privilege. They had right in every field of life. So the enlightened kings took special interest in educating them. There are instances that several teachers were appointed to teach the inside the palaces.

In contemporary age, since the beginning of the 19th century, the Christian missionaries played a great role in spread of education among men and women equally. Women attached with the missionaries did utmost to bring the light of education to women

in particular. After their initiative, the Muslims also got attracted to this and with other countries, education in India among women gradually picked up speed. The enlightened Muslims established separate schools and colleges for women. Due to the Britisher's repression, the Muslims were against the Western education but without attaining the western education, the country could not progress. Hence, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan came forward and asked the Muslims to impart western education to their wards. His initiative bore fruits and Muslims started sending their children to educational institutions. Overcoming every obstacle in the way, Sir Syed Ahmad and his friends succeeded in establishing the girl's college in Alighrah in the beginning of 20th century. This collage opened all the doors of education to Muslim girls. Worth praise is this fact that along with men several enlightened women were part of this movement. In the 19th century this movement made rapid paces which surprised everybody.

Undoubtly women have proved their mantle in every age by the virtue of their education. From Ummahat – ul –Moimineen till this date the history is full of such pious and learned ladies who made the women proud by their achievements. Hazrat Aisha (RZ) taught not only women but men too. Several Sahabes and Tabaeen used to consult her regarding Hadith, Tafseer and Eiqh. Furthermore there is a long list of women who proved by their achievements that by no way women are inferior to men.

It seems during the Sultanate period women were less inclined towards education. The history could not put much light on this aspect. Razia Sultan is an exception. Her poetry had political colour. During the Mughal period Gul Badan Begum, Jahan Ara and Zaihur Nisa etc had praiseworthy achievements.

In current age, a lot of women participated in educational movement but at the top of the list are the Begums of Bhopal such Nawale Gauhar Begum Nawale Shah Jahan Begum and Nawale sultan Jahan Begum. They were not only amongst the best and successful rulers, administrators, poetess and authors but they also worked tirelessly to enrich the womenfolk with the much needed ornament of education and specially for women education particularly Nawab Shah Jahan Begum and Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum deserves accolades on this score. In every age a large part of women's education services consists of poetry. Women had been writings short stories and novels too. They have proved their mantle in the field of prose too. They wrote high standard stories and novels of all the genres – sociology, reformist, romantic, emotional etc. they also authored several educational books and established a large number of schools and colleges. A brief distribution of this will be presented in this article. Women were not lacking anyway in the field of article writing. They wrote on almost every subject be it the education of women, hygiene, home science the upkeep of children, conjugal life, industry and trade, tourism, religion, morality, economy, informative essays, literature, humorous etc.

During the Sultanate period, Princess Razia Sultan along with taking full part in the political affairs wrote beautiful poetries. Her pen name was Shirine. She wrote poetry in Persian and Turkish languages that were full of love and romance.

During Mughal period we see several learned women along with poetry authored useful books and established Madarsas and libraries. For example, Maliam Begum was Baber's principal queen and Humayun's mother. She belonged to an educated family and had a passion of learning and literature. For educational promotion she established a Madrasa named "Khair-UI - Manzil." The pious Malim Begum constructed a beautiful mosque along with the Madrasa which became a large centre of learning.

Gul Badan Begum authored "Humayun Nama" which enriched the historical knowledge. On Akbar's insistence princess wrote this book in Persian language. Since the Mughal language was Chuhtai Turkish, several Turkish works have cropped up into this. The book portrays the events and situations of that time. It also proves the author's forte as writer. Unfortunately her book of poetry got destroyed.

Jahan Ara was famous poetess and authoress her time. She had a great taste of fiction writing. She wrote poetries in both Arabic and Persian. Not only she was high calibers poetess, she is the authoress of two books, " Monis Al Arwah" and " Sahibia" too. Monis Al Arwah is the biography of Hazrat Moinudin Cisti in which authoress has portrayed the lives of Khaja Shah and his followers very effectively and frequently. This book represents the princess' religious and sufiana zeal. In "SAHIBIA' she has shown great respect and love for spiritual mentor Khawaja Moinddin Chashti. Her poetry is in religious and sufiana colours. The princess respected the poets and other learned people and often showered them with largesse.

Princess Zaib-un- Nisa was a learned lady and was used of passing most of her time in educational pursuits. She established a large library which housed books of all sorts. This library became a conglomerate of rare and priceless books, most of them having religious and literary taste. Maulana Shibli says that the court of Zaibun Nisa was a centre of learning which had learned people of all sorts. They were always busy in reading and writing. With the authors room there was a great library and a study room too. Zaibun Nisa compiled a collection of her letters and events named " ZAIB-UL – MANSBAT". The princess was a great poetess too. Her pen name was " MAKHFI". She had a book of poems to her credit but the researchers have conflicting view about her " DEEWAN- E- MAKHFI". Some researchers accept that it was her creation but several others claim that it was collection of poems of an Irani Ustad named " TABGHARA" By the way this is a fact that Zaibun Nisa wrote poems. She had the ability to compose poems at will. She helped learned people generously.

Bairam Khan's daughter and Akbar's daughter in law JANAN BEGUM was an intellectual. She translated the Holy Quran in Persian language. In reward Akbar the Great

gave her reward of 50 thousand Dinars. Some other examples are always there. Usually the educated women of that period resorted to poetry writing to express themselves.

The Begum of Bhopal top the list of the women who established Madrasa and schools. Since 1819 till 1926, spanning a period of 107 years, four Begums ruled continuously and successfully.

Nawah Gauher Begum was instrumental in bringing and setting in Bhopal a lot of learned people from other places. She dedicated several villages for religious education. She established “WAQFIA MADRASA” to impact the education of theology.

Nawah Skinder Jahan Begum took special interest in the affairs of the department of education. Urdu was declared the official language. She established Madrasas, She brought several learned persons to Bhopal to promote the education. In the year 1836 she established “DAFTAR- E- TARIKH”. A large printing press named “MATBA SIKANDARI” was established. She wrote several travelogues. The Turkish government had banned the translation of Quran then. So the Begum took the service of an expert of Turkish language Sheikh Ahmad Daghtani to translate the holy book. She made compiled of the Tafseer of Quran in four volumes upto para “AL MUHSINAT”. Renowned Ulamas were made to compile the of Quran grammar etc. She herself was an authoress. Other than dairies she authored several books such as “TUZK – E- SIKANDARI’ written in the form of “TUZK-E – BABRI”. In “SAFARNAMA HIJAB” she has written details of her travel to Mecca and Madina. “AAEN- E- SIKANDARI’ is an official guide on governance. She made the learned people to translate several useful books. To impact the education of Urdu and Persian several Madrasa were established. She established separate madrasa for Urdu and Hindi. She established “MADRASA SULAIMANIA” in 1853. She laid the foundation of “MADRASA VICTORIA” for the poor and uncared for children. She was instrumental in translating whole state of Bhopal into a centre of learning.

The reign of Nawal Ahah Jajan Begum was a golden period for Bhopal as for as spread of education is concerned. The Ulemas from all parts of the country were brought to Bhopal in this period. During the reign eight government printing presses were established which used to publish and distribute free books. She opened several Urdu Madrasa and released the laws in Urdu. She was fine poetess and authored several volumes books. She has two books of poems to her credit- “DIWAN-E, SHIRIN” and “TAJ-UL- KALAM”.

“TAJ-UL- IQBAL TAREEKH-E- BHOPAL” was started by Nawala Sikander Begum. She could give the account of the events till 1865. After that she compiled the history till the period of 1873. “TAHZEEB- E- NISWAN WA TARBIAT- E- INSAN” is a kind of encyclopedia for women. It has 400 pages. ‘KHAZANA- TUL- LUGHAT’ is a dictionary of 5500 words. It has equivalent words of six languages. “QATA- E- JADRI” has advises for prevention of pox and its treatment.

She opened a college of Oriental studies. "MADARASA SULAIMANIA" was given the oriental colors. Several other Madrasas were opened. Established "Jahanjixia school" for English studies with special stress on girls' education. To publish text books "Shah jahan Press" was established "MADRSA BILQISIA" was opened for poor and destitute children. She gave financial help to several other schools. Managed them and established so many Madrasas that students from other countries started coming. A separate school for technical education "DAR-US-SHAFQAT" was penned which also had the facility of learning Quran by heart. She imported several books from other countries and printed them here.

The movement for education particularly women's education which was started in during the reigns of the past Begums was sent to its zenith by Nawab Sultan Jahan Begum. She commissioned the learned people to write books of exceptional qualities. It added to the already existing wealth of learning and wisdom. She opened several English medium schools and introduced concept of compulsory education.

The public of Bhopal were made to understand the importance of education. The landlords and other officials were forced to send their children to schools or to the army otherwise they had to relinquish their entitlements. She helped only those people who took it upon themselves to get education.

By establishing "Ladies Club" she arranged for their good education and training. She brought a great revolution for the people of Bhopal through her speeches and writings. For inter education she opened "MADRSA SULTANIA" wherein along with the religious teaching there was arrangement for the education of handicrafts, ambulance and first aid too. Gradually Sultania school progressed so well that a branch for educational training was opened in it wherein women were imparted formal training to teach in Madrasas and schools. So staff for education was provided which helped in propagating the message of education. Eventually the number of educational institutions for women increased. During training the women were given stipends. Two years were dedicated for necessary subjects and a year was dedicated for teaching the principal and practical ways of education. A boarding house was attached to the school.

To spread the learning "HAMIDIA LIBRARY" was established which housed a huge wealth of education. Under the government patronage several libraries and study centers were opened.

Nawab Sultab Begum Jahan was the chancellor of Aligrah Muslim University too. She played very active role in the development of Mohammedan college. She made great contribution for the sake of learning. The Begum through her speeches tried to make Muslims understand the importance of English education. She also advocated about science and technology and the latest arts and crafts. Addressing Baba- E Urdu, Maulvi Abdul Haq she once said, "the transmission of scientific studies must be up to the text.

There is need to create scientific temperament in the country. The poor students of towns must be given stipend so that they could dedicate themselves to their studies.”

To impart medical education, she opened “ASFIA TECHNICAL SCHOOL” named on her deceased daughter Asif Jahan in which with surgery botany was also taught. To know about the culture of other countries she traveled far and wide including Turkey and Europe. In 1911 while in Europe she got impressed by children hospital. After returning Bhopal she established “ABIDA CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL” modeled on that hospital. She opened formal religious Madrasas in which the pupils were the given stipend for their upkeep. To revive the economic condition in the country she made compulsory the industrial education. She established several institutions for its development. In these institutions several trades including ironsmith cane furniture making and paint making were taught. After the demise of her husband as a remembrance she established “JAMIA AHMADIA” which is known as “ORIENTAL COLLEGE”. It had the classes of Munshi Kamil, Munshi Fazil and Axaliries Aalim, Fazil of theology and Fazil of medicine. It was affiliated with the Allahabad University. This Jamia was renowned not only I India but outside it too. Likewise in remembrance of her son she opened a centre for learning Quran and Tajweed named “MADRASA OBAIDIA”. To fulfill the requirement of current age the department of Allopathy was also added to it. To educate the children of landlords a separate school named “ALEXENDER NOBELS SCHOOL” was established. To educate the Hindu girls and particularly giving them religious education ‘ BARJISIA KANYA PATHSHALA” was inaugurated. For the welfare of women “ MADRAA SANAT_ O_ HARFATANAS” was established. For military education she opened “MILITARY RIDING SCHOOL”. She established many other schools too.. For bright students she established an educational trust through which stipends and support were given for the education of science, technology medicine and the arts. The begum was so much inclined to education that not a single large educational or religious institution was devoid of her charities.

Mavulan Shublia’s famous book” SEERUNTUN NABI “ was published And “Darul Musannifeen” was established which published a large number of books. She gave financial aid for publishing “Seerat-e-Aisha” and “Seerat-e-Sahabit”. Despite being busy she authored several useful informative books on morality, religion, sociology, biography, medicine etc. Thus, She enriched the Urdu language and literature too. She authored around 42 voluminous books. All these are in Urdu.

Furthermore the Begums of Bhopal created a huge trend of education among the people, particularly the women through their speeches and meetings. Associations were formed and used several methods to make Bhopal a great center of learning and it was called “Baghdal-al-Hind”. These Begums were not only education friendly; they were successful and astute rulers and good administrators too.

Other than the begums of Bhopal a large number of other Muslim women established Madrasas and schools. For example, Begum Barkat Rai established the school “Galshal

Mahal” for poor boys and girls inside her bungalow. She established “Madrasa Shabeena” for women’s education. She authored books for children and opened a branch of “Anjuman Tareq-e-Talim-o-Tamaddun. Begum Bahadur Khan opened a Madrasa in her house to educate the Muslim girls. She also arranged transport for them. Amna Nazli had great flare for writing. She was an authoress of more than a dozen books. Other than literature she wrote books on handicrafts and housekeeping. Compiled a book of short stories. A collection of dramas was published in 1944. Among her books “Daulat Pur Qurbaniyan”, “Hansi ki Bati”, “Taarikhi lateefe”, “Aql ki Bati”, “Ismati Dastarkhan”, “Mashriqi-Wa-Magrebi khane”, “Ismati Handkalia”, “Naashta”, “Bemari kay Khane”, “Mazakiya Khane”, “Motion kay Kaam”, Ismati Kashida kari“ and “Doshala” are still popular in women’s circle.

Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad’s elder sister Aabroo Begum was also a learned lady. Seeing her abilities Nawah Sultan Jahan Begum made her the literary secretary of the club which she had founded for the mental training of the ladies. She ran this club for a long time. She used to organize meetings of women in which other than education useful information were provided for hygiene, children’s upkeep, health etc. lady doctors were called to lecture these ladies. In a nutshell the club was a learning centre for the women.

Amna Khatein iffat born in Saharanpur in 1903. She started writing essays at an early age. She had command on poetry too to spread women education. She opened a school was named “Zanana Islamic Darshgah” This school got famed for English medium and she opened a “Sanat wa Harfat- Zanana School” which also got fame.

Ummatul Qadir was a resident of madrasa(now Chennai) After getting married she became famous by the name of Badrun Nisa. She was a lady of letters. Her book “Gulzar-e-Aadia” is a collection of the magical powers of pious men. Her second book is named “Mamalik – e- Islamia ki sair. Both these words got great fame.

Ashraf Zamani was a wife of nawab Mohammed Ismail. She opened “Hamidia Zanana school”. She was a poetess too.

Bilqis Fatima Bekas was born in 1911 in Meerut in such a family which did not like much the women’s education. But due to proximity with her mother Ibrat who was a poetess and education fondly, she became a sympathiser of women’s education. In Gwalior she established “Anjum –ee Khwaten-pardah Nasheen” in 1931. She established “Qadiriya girls School” for the education of Muslim girls which had classes upto the middle level. She was a poetess and an authoress too. In 1932 her collections of poems “gazbat-e-Bekas”, “Mausooma”, “Nala-e-Bekas” were published. To prevent the wasteful expenditures and customs of marriage and for the reformation she organized a group named “Razakar Mastoorat”. She also played a great role in spreading religious education among girls.

Begum Sultan was the first Muslim lady of the province of Bengal who passed BA. She was in Calcutta. She got early education at home through English teachers. She

toiled hard to educate the muslim women . In 1923 after marriage she shifted to Madras. Then the Muslims of Madras were dead against women`s education . So she did her utmost to change the mindset. She arranged for compulsory early education for the Muslim girls. She had to face too much difficulties in her endeavor but she used the media to spread the message of education. From Madras she went to Rajah Mundry where she established a ladies club inside her house. She organized various successful educational conferences.

Badrun Nisa was a resident of Ludhiana, Punjab . she wrote a book” Motion Ki kaan” which is a collection of priceless sayings of famed kings, Hakims, Poets , educationists and Mashaikhs. It was meant to morally uplift the people.

Begum Bahadur Khan was a lady who loved education. She was dedicated to the cause of women`s emancipation and their development. She used to lecture on this subject. For the religious teaching of Quran , Hadith, Tafseer for girls. She opened a school in her house . She arranged for their transportation also.

Pasha Begum was the daughter of Nawab Mohammed Yar Gung was based in Hyderabad. The Nawab was too fond of women`s education. So she also started talking interest in education. She did MA in Persian. She translated “Tarikh-e-Hind” from English to modern Persian. She worked hard for the spread of education among Muslim women and overcame every obstacle in the way.

Tasneem Salim Chetari was born in Nanital in 1926. Since childhood she was inclined towards learning and literature. She was a famous short story writer. Her first story was “Jal Pari”, “Kasak”, “ Door des ka rehna wala”, “Khalti” and “Nasheb-o-Faraz” are her famous stories. Her other stories like dak bangle, shajra-e-Nasb, toot gaya ek taara and bhoka hai bangal got great fame.

Khaditajulkubra was born in 1917 in Punjab. She was among the staunch supporters of women`s education but due to unavailability of educational facilities she could get education upto the middle level. It was the time when usually people disliked the girl`s education. After getting married with Maulvi Idris Ahmed in 1914 she shifted to Shahjahanpur. The Muslims of Shahjahanpur were dead against educating Muslim women.

So a government Muslim model school was not developing at all. The school`s principal asked for her help. She readily agreed and sent her two daughters to the school. After admitting her daughters she shifted the school to a big building adjacent to her house. She encouraged other ladies to send their daughters to the school. To please the Muslims a Muslim lady teacher was appointed in the school to impart religious education. Through her speeches and writings she exhorted the Muslims to send their daughters to the school. She arranged for fund through charities and also arranged for transportation of the girls to and from school. Her efforts bore fruit and the number of girls which was around 5-6 then reached upto 100. After increasing the number of pupils the number of teachers was

increased. She made a women's Anjuman to attract the people towards the school and contribute to the Tablighi fund. The Anjuman was a was a great success. Monthly meetings were held in which women participated in large numbers. Thereafter organizing women's Anjumans (organization) started at a large scale in other parts of India. Anjumans were formed in Bareilly, Roorkee, Karachi and Lahore. She was selected the president of Bareilly's Anjuman. These Anjumans played great role in spreading the message of education in Muslims.

Khadijatul Kubra was a great essayist too. Her essays usually concerned the women's sociological reform, the women's education and children's upkeep, etc. Her essays and articles were published regularly in the ladies journals of Lahore and Amritsar. She was rewarded too. Her article concerning the education and upbringing of children named "Bachchon Ko Taleem Ki Targheeb Wa Tashweeq" got great fame. In this article she highlighted the "KINDERGARTEN" form of children's education. After highlighting the pros and cons of this system she requested the people to send their children to modern schools. She pointed other ways for enhancing the abilities of children.

Rashidun Nisa was born in 1855. After marriage she shifted to Patna and started teaching Quran to neighborhood children. She also took interest in women's education. Many of the neighborhood's girl were educated by her. To educate the girls she founded "Madarsa Niswan". She was a good writer too. Her book "Islah-un-Nisa" got great fame which was written by her to reform the women.

Saleha Abid Husain was born in 1913 at Panipet. She was the wife of Jamia Millia Islamia's renowned member Dr. Syed Abid Husain. She was an authoress of repute. In 1936 her first collection of stories "Naqash-e-Awal" was published. Saleha Abid Husain Authored around fifty books. She wrote novels and articles too. Her most important book is "Yadgare-e-Hali". A collection of dreams " Zindagi ke Khel" and "Khud Nawisht" fourteen or fifteen children's books, ten or twelve translations and a collection of radio speeches include in her printed works. Though her writings she served well the Urdu literature. She edited several books too. "Khwateen-e-Karbala Kalame Anis ke Aaeena Mein" in among her famous books.

Ismat Chughtai was born in 1915 at Agra. Her ancestral place in Bhopal. She did her BA and B.ED from Aligarh Muslim University. She belonged to a highly educated family. she is among the most famous modern story writers. She wrote high class novels and film stories too. Her first novel "Ziddi" brought laurels to her. Her second novel was "Tershi Lakeer". Her other novels – Masooma, Saudaai, ganglee Kabooter, Dil Ki Duniya " ajeeb Admi , Ek Qatra Khoon , Naqli RajKumar and Teen Anari enriched the Urdu literature greatly. Ismat Chaghtai wrote several short stories too.

Qaiseri Begum was Kaniz of sultan Ghyasudin Khilji. She was from Hyderabad. She was a highly learned lady. She was fond of Arabic Language and Islamic studies. By

Compiling the verses of Quran topicwise she made a great educational achievement . She named the book “Tafheem-ul-Quran” which got great fame.

Quarratul Ain Hyder was the daughter of Sajjad Hyder. She was born in 1927 at Aligarh . After doing MA she started writing short stories . Her stories – safeena-e-Gham-e-Dil, Aag Ka Darya,Aakhir Shab Ke Hamsafer, Society, Hiram,dilruba, Chhae ke Baghat Kaare gahan Daraaz Hai” are among the best . A novel “Mere Bhi Sawam Khare” was also published.

Mumtaz Shirin is among the ladies who were expert of both Urdu and English languages . She was born in 1924 in Madras. Did Her MA in English . She was a story writer of high repute. Her stories enriched the urdu literature greatly .She started a Magazine “Naya Daur”. Her collections of articles”Meyaar” Got fame. Anhrace and Apne Nagaria are her famous short stories. A Large Collection of stories “ Megh Malher” was also applauded.

Alhaj Qaiseri Begum established “Madrasa Tadrees Alqulan” for the propagation of religious education. A large number of girls got free education in this madrasa. Transportation was also arranged for them.She wrote poetries too which had religious colour.

Shakila Akhtar was instrumental in establishing an urdu Madrasa where In poor and destitute students were educated. She wrote a novel “Mauj Aur Sahil” based on the happenings of Bihar in 1946. This novel got fame.

Sughra Humayun Mirza was a famous education loving lady . In Hyderabad a Madrasa for ladies where in subjects of trade and industry were also taught. She donated cash and a large property for madrasa. This Madrasa made rapid progress and a large number of girls were educated there. Sughra Humayun Authored several books. Masheer-e-Niswan, Sarguzasht-e-Hagra, Mohini,Bili Toor ka Khwale among her famous books . Her collections of poems Saffna-e-Najat and Anware-e-Parishan also became famous. She wrote several travelogues among saair Bihar Wa Bengal, Sayyahat junoobi Hind,Safar-e-Voltaire, Safarnam-e-Europe,Rehbar-e-kashmir deserve special mention.To propagate education in women she made associations, Wrote reformist and moral articles. She started on educational and literary Magazine “ANNISA” and struggled hard for the propagation of education.

Sultana Begum took keen interest in spreading education among the Muslim women.Against all odds she remained adamant established a madrasa at Peshawar cantonment inside her bungalow which progressed gradually . In 1915 she opened a Madrasa “Nayeema Madrasa” in Delhi named after her daughter.This Madrasa was a great success and a lot of forty, fifty were seen there. To educate her own family children she established “Sahabzada School” which had a hoarding house too. The teachers were

brought from Delhi. Along with education several sorts of training was also imported there.

She made several associations for the propagation of learning, gave lectures exhorted the women to educate themselves and their children. Helped financially the existing madrasa for women. Nur-un-Nisa Begum was also among the staunch supporters of women's education. She established a women's Madrasa inside her house where daughters of courtesans and landlords used to study. In this Madrasa along with studies special stress was given on girls training. They were given life teachings.

Ashraf Zamin was a education friendly lady who loved learning and literature. She gave special stress on women's education. For its development she established "Hamedia Zanana School" in Meerut and gave the message of learning through her poems too. Other than the above mentioned ladies there were many women who established Madrasa for the spread of education among women. Their efforts bore fruits and more and more girls flocked to these schools and the rays of education spread far and wide.

These women not only used Madrasas for the spread of knowledge. They also authored useful and educational books that helped in the speed of learning. We share instances of so many authoresses. Ummatul Aziz Begum was such a lady who worked in the field of FIQH. She translated FIQH-E-SHAFAI from Arabic to Urdu in four volumes. She also translated a Persian book of moral stories named "Alfarah Baada Shuda" which spanned on several hundred pages. The famous book "Sufism and morality" Lataif-e-Ashrafi" was also translated in Urdu. She also authored a book on Fiqh named "Hadayat – un-Nazain"reen" which is in more than three volumes.

Ummat-ul-Karim authored five books "Safeer-e-Niswan" at the tender age of sixteen which puts light very effectively at women's education and the losses of women's illiteracy.

Ruqaiya Khalil authored several books among whom a book "Ilm aur Taamir-e-Insaniyat Quran karim ki Roshni Mein" was published. Atia Khalil translated the Egyptian author Taufiq Alhatim's book "Muhammad Rasulallah". Mother of Maulana Murtaza Sharifi wrote a key to Bukhari in the Persian language. Inbisat Afza's "Hadya-e-Insaniyat" got great fame. Hasan Ara Begum Namkeen published three books by the name of "Kalam-e-Namkeen". In the first part fifty chapters are based on general knowledge. The second part consists of her and other poets poems. The third part consists of home remedies and the methods of prevention of certain diseases.

Sakina Begum compiled the Idarah Adabiat's famous book "Nazr-e-Deccan". Jahan Bano Begum authored several books such as Ramooz-e-kahandari, Raftaar-e-Khayal, Muhammad Hussain Azad, Barbat-e-Naheed, Arab aur Arabistan. Several famous Indian journals published great reviews on her works. Her Article "Wali ka Fun-e-Shairi" is among her best writings.

Ummatullah Tasneem was a learned and education friendly lady. She translated the famous book of Imam Noori Sharah Muslim and published it in two volumes with necessary comments named "Zaad-e-safar". Bibi Naseeba wrote a book for women in Urdu which consist chapters on commandments, Namaz, Roza and Taharat. The wife of Maulvi Tameezuddin authored a book "Zeenat-un-Nisa" which also contains chapters on Bidaat-e-Mahram and women's education. Among the writings of Ansa Mahmooda Razia "Durandana, Lala Zaar, Kohsaar, Armaghaan, Kahkashan are worth special mention. She wrote short stories too. Baba-e-Urdu Doctor Abdul Haque called her "Adeeba-e-Sindh". Mumtaz Jahan wrote a book in Urdu on the art of housekeeping which got fame. Amna Nazli had authored more than a dozen books.

Anwar Fatma Shameem published a book named "Anwar-e-Asrar-e-Ahmedia" which had authentic accounts of life and achievements of Prophet Mohammad. Abbasi Begum's writings are full of lessons. Still they maintain interest in them. Her most famous work is "Gul-e-Sahra". Her novels helped greatly less educated women in reforming themselves. Her Qasaid were effective in creating broad mindedness.

Abbasi's daughter Hejab Ismail followed her footsteps. She spent her time in educational pursuits. After the demise of her mother she completed her incomplete works. She wrote several useful articles and shone as a lady journalist. Ummatul Wahab Begum collected several thousand phrases used in Urdu writings. Unfortunately this voluminous book is found no more. Several other women took the task of spreading education through their writings.

There is long list of women who brought out magazines to spread education. For example Hussaini Begum brought out a religious magazine titled "Himayat-e-Islami". Bi Nazakat published "Shams-un-Nahar" in 1902. She was the first lady editor of her age. In 1907, Khamosh started the monthly magazine "Pardah Nasheen". In 1919 Sultan Jahan brought out monthly "DAEE" from Delhi. Its main aim was to imbibe the value of reading and essay writing in women. Begu Abu Bakar Khaweshky published the magazine "Hamjoli" from Hyderabad in 1929 to attract women towards education. This magazine was dedicated to the women. Begum Siddiq Ansari started publishing monthly "Hoor" from Calcutta. The magazine portrayed women's thoughts. It helped greatly in spreading the message of learning among the women. In 1925, Qamar Jahan Begum started monthly "Sartaj" from Multan. It was a rare blend of educational and sociological articles. Doctor Begum Abdul Gafoor started the monthly "Harm" in 1926 from Pilibhit which helped the women even in imparting knowledge. Many more magazines were stated then.

For the spread of education the women used poetry widely. Education was among their topics.

There is a large list of women who wrote articles on women's education and other related topics. Only a few examples are produced here. Amina Khatoon in her article

“Hamare Tallem” attracts women towards education and says that if women are not educated they will not be able to know and understand their surroundings.

R.K.Banu Muzmir made comparison of the educational advancement of the developed countries with that of India in her essay “Hindustan Aur Taleem Niswan”. Highlighting the lack of education she tries to attract the Indian women towards it. She says that purdah does not come in the way of getting educated.

Begum Sayed ali Aust, in her article “Angrazi Tallem ke Khilaf Beja tasub” while supporting the western education opposes those men who think that by reading English one becomes fashionable or immoral.

Turab-Un-Nisa in her article “Taleem Niswan” says that mere talks of education will not be accused. They must chart out educational course for the women folk. Like wise, Fatima Sultan Jahan in her article Titled “Hindustan Mai Mustoorat Ke Taleem Wa Tahzeeb” suggests about spreading the anjuman of khatoonan-e-Hamdard. It must spend the whole of India because their won't be real education and civilization unless the women of the country are educated. So, many women wrote articles highlighting the importance of education to arouse the passion among women.

So we can claim proudly that the women were not lagging behind in any field of learning. Going through the pages of history we could see that since the early ages till now the women had been proving their abilities in every field and their names shine like bright stars at the sky of learning and literature. To spread education the women established Madrasas and schools. They Opened libraries. Authored useful and educational books. Formed anjumans for propagation of education. They organized meetings and personally educated the girls. Published articles and essays on every topic and through poetries conveyed their views and their feelings to others. Obviously it was almost impossible to present their full introduction and give account of their achievements.

Reference-

HINDUSTAN MEIN MUSLIM KHAWATEN KE ELMI KHIDMAT(SULTANT PERIOD 1947)
Urdu edition author Naheed Zaffer

Creative Aspects of Tawaif

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Etymologically, 'tawaifs' is the plural of the Arabic word 'taifa' meaning 'band' or 'group' but the word tawaif as a singular in Urdu means 'prostitute'. The common and derogatory word for a prostitute in Urdu is 'randi'. There are different types of tawaifs: those who were hired permanently by a man and eventually might have married him and those who led an itinerant life moving from city to city.¹ In some cities, especially in Lucknow, the tawaif had a more or less respectable place in society and was admired for her sophistication and culture.² The elite of the town used to send their sons to the tawaif's residence for education in manners and letters. Dr. W. Crook, in an article on Indian prostitution in Hasting's Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics has remarked that in the present day, prostitutes are tolerated in India to an extent that can hardly be paralleled with any other part of the world.³ Also; the British discursive writing often alleged that prostitution has existed in India from time immemorial.⁴

The lifestyle of a tawaif was as hierarchal as its society, of which they were a part. Indeed these women were divided into two groups in the same way as Indian society, viz. tawaif and randi/kasbi/khangi. Unlike Indian society, their class division was based on talent and profession instead of birth. It would not be an exaggeration to say that they were counterfeit of Indian feudalism⁵. These skilled courtesans used to entertain only the elite. They hardly visited any houses except the big mansions of nawabs and taluqdars. Instead, people themselves used to come to their salons.⁶ It was a common belief that no one was considered polished unless he visited these salons.⁷ Indeed, in those days, salons were considered places of social etiquette as well as literary gathering.

Sometimes, even young boys of sharif families were sent there with an elderly person to learn etiquette and manners. Munir Bai, the famous courtesan and president of the Music-Artist Union of Deredar Tawaif of yesteryears laments the degrading status of her qaum. She recalled those glorious days in these words: 'Sir, as award was considered, it was as that noble used to throw note and coins on us. At that time we had very honour and respect. Even very rich people used to make us sit beside them.. Chaudharayan used to arrange darbar at her house. Honourable people used to go there to learn etiquette and manners. Now people consider us from Bagchavali Gali. There is no fonder remained in life.'⁸

Tawaif Culture: Umrao-Jan-e Ada as a Woman of Power

Mirza Hadi Ruswa delineated a very interesting picture of this hierarchical society in his famous novel *Umrao Jan-e Ada*. This is the story of a well educated, polished and classy courtesan of Lucknow. Amiran (before she was called Umrao Jan-e Ada) seemed to be a helpless and delicate girl entangled in an atrocious and an exploitative society, who plunged into the profession of prostitution. It was only with the help of her classical talent that she rebelled against society and created her own identity. This novel is a long narration of a woman's journey from Amiran to Umrao, Umrao to Umrao Jan. Eventually she settled as a self-reliant woman in the form of an eminent poetess and courtesan, Umrao Jan-e Ada. She presumed 'acla' as a takhallus for the literary world. Her debate on social issues and literature with famous litterateurs shows a vociferous challenge to the male-dominated world of literature, and thus, 'Ada' became talk of the town. As she claimed: 'My ability to sing dirges was well known, and no one knew more of the finer points of the art than I. Even the greatest master does not dare to open their mouths in my presence, and it was for this reason that I gained access to the court of nawab Malika Qausar. King himself praised my nauha khawani Every Muharram; I received much attention from royal circles. I also excelled in the art of the elegy, and in the evening, after having performed my lamentation in the imambara, I was obliged to stay at the place door until two in the morning. '9

It seems that by breaking the shackles of the traditional image of prostitution Umrao Jan was very keen to be skilled in the arts, and it appears that perhaps she wanted to stand as an equal of respectable people. Umrao Jan is not only the story of a courtesan but it also shows the duality of men towards women, how they considered them as commodities whose only job was to entertain men. Indeed a tawaif could be a partner—in some cases a life partner—and happy company for men, but she could never achieve the status of a wife despite several inherent talents. It is very interesting to observe that if a man desired intellectual enjoyment, he would visit such a salon,^{1°} and when he had to take advice regarding family matters he would discuss it with his uneducated wife. Thus, men have created double parameters for the public and the domestic woman. Though Ruswa has asserted in his preface of *Umrao Jan-e Ada* the book's originality, that it is the outcome of his regular visits to the salon and interaction with courtesans of that time, it is argued by many scholars that the book is only fiction.

However, we have some evidence of the existence of Umrao Jan Sahiba 'Dilbar' Saqin Unnao, Muqem Kanpur. She was a famous courtesan of the time who used to send her verse in *Payam-e Yar*, a monthly magazine, to be published. Coincidentally she was also a resident of Kanpur, and it is a point to be noted that the character of Umrao Jan-e Ada also stayed in Kanpur for few year. She seemed very skilled in her composition of ghazals:

Ik na ik ki voh jan lete hai
jab voh teero Kaman lete hain
Shikwa zor pe voh kahte hain
ham tera imtehan lete hain

Hoti hai vo lakeer paththar ki
dil me jo kuch voh than lete hain

Ye haya vasal me ki sartapa
voh dulaae ki taan lete hain

Badle angashtari ke ham tumse
dagh dil ka nishan lete hai

Dil ko dete hai ham use dilbar
jinko ham khoob jan lete hain

This fiction can also be corroborated with other sources. Malka Jan and Gauhar Jan were eminent courtesans of the time whose lifestyles also resembled Umrao Jan's. It is interesting to observe how Allen Victoria Heming adopted prostitution after divorcing her European husband and adopting Islam. Mrs. Yeward took the girl to Banaras and struggled for their livelihood for the next two years or so. In utter desperation, she found a patron in Benares where she began to live from 1881 onwards. Here she embraced Islam and assumed the Muslim name Malka Jan. She renamed her little daughter Gauhar Jan from Gaura. It is a bitter fact that most of the prostitutes and courtesans practiced Islam in British India.¹²

These courtesans lived in a particular area of the city under the supervision of the chaudhrayan. The areas of Chawk (Lucknow), Dal Ki Mandi (Benares), Hira Mandi (Lahore), were famous. The chaudhrayan was considered responsible for the management of every salon and for the recruitment of new beautiful and skilled girls. In this profession, the chaudharayan's role was very important; she used to keep a check on everything related to salons, including finance. Her share, as Oldenberg calculates, was almost 43.75% (almost 7 aana out of 16) of every prostitute's or courtesan's earnings.¹³ It can be imagined to what extent financial exploitation was rampant there if the chaudharayan took 44%. However, that does not mean that the remaining share was for the tawaif; indeed, there was a long list of middlemen they had to pay. However, a renowned courtesan hardly took a few years to familiarise herself with the manipulative ways of the salon world and quickly tried to establish herself independent from the chaudhrayan, clutching at fame. It was believed that a famous courtesan of that time could extract a fee for one night equal to the daily revenue of the king of Kashi.¹⁴

Traditionally, most tawaifs were used to this exploitative system since prostitution was largely a hereditary prostitute profession¹⁵. They like to call themselves deredar Tawaifs instead of Qasbi and randi, at whom they looked with contempt. Even Nagar saw protests from many deredar tawaifs on calling them bai, jan etc.; instead, they wished to be called begum, the most respectable term (though it shows its declining status). When he asked about it, Nasim Ara replied, 'O Sir! In these days, this word became a gallows for us. Otherwise we are not such kind of people that do filthy worker. That activity is performed here in Chawalvali lane. Sir, we are noble, we perform singing and dancing from many generations. We do not associate with everyone. That we are not such people who sell herself just because of money without knowing to each other becomes one's darling. This work does not take place in our house, we are deredar tawaif: 16

She boasted that deredar tawaif was the highest qaum of all Muslim tawaifs, and added, Deredar tawaifon me huzur sharif aurton ki si aan hoti hai. Aur isi wajah se hoti hai ki unhe izzat se rahna sikhaya jata hai. Kharidi bhagae gai aurton me vo aab kahan. '17

That is why the evidence of forceful abduction was negligible especially in deredar tawaifs.¹⁸ Though the leading character of Umrao Jan-e Ada is an abducted girl, Umrao Jan herself accepted that abduction is hardly the norm in big salons as most prostitutes chose this profession willingly. Their assertion was that women lived there willingly.¹⁹ Every salon also had its own music band and master for girls.²⁰ Girls living there were expected to learn the arts and wiles from infancy, in some cases it started from the age of six and was valued accordingly.²¹ Nasim Aara reveals a very classic picture of glorious years of Tawaif Culture and the meaning of talim-tahzeeb in these words:

'All those things in etiquette and manners, that is necessary for noble association. O Sir! From this time to hundred or two hundred year ago there was a custom that from very infant age girls used to make learn marksmanship, riding, poetry, dancing, sewing-stitching and chess etc. When sibling's education has completed then they used to be sent according to one's approach and talent. They used to sing at the mahfil of kings, Talluqdar and zamindar then she used to be offer to any noble. If she was liked and accepted then our girls used to receive land and property from them whatever their capacity. That girl used to stay at that noble's keeping for whole life.

They used to fix a monthly salary for girl's relatives too. And after his death his heir used to give this amount.²²

These Tawaifs used to learn singing, dancing and poetry from renowned ustads of the time. Umrao Jan truly delineated her training in Khanum's House: After I had mastered the scales, my ustad began with fragments of melody. He taught extremely methodically, and every note of the raga had to be learned by heart and produced exactly by the voice. You could never get away with flattening a sharp, or going slightly off pitch. And I had the habit of asking questions. At first the Ustad (may he be spared

his shame in the grave!) would hedge.²³

They used to boast about their ustads and the city from where they hailed, like Gorakhpuri, Lukhnawi, Badauni etc. They were proud to be shagird of renowned ustads of the time and never forget to mention names such as Janab Atar Badauni, who is referred to in some verses of Abbasi Jan Ada Tawaif's Qasida. Hina Sahiba Hina and Shagird Bi Jadu Sandelvi are names worthy of note.

Bat usne hai kab mani meri- roti hai mujhpar pur Armani meri
Yad Gesu ka asar hai bal-bal- kam na ho ya rab pareshani meri
Shaeri par e Ada Qurban hun- Sun rahe hairs ghazal khawani meri

Abbasi Jan Ada, tawaif Badauni Shagird Janab Atar Badauni 24

Kabhi ham bhule se jo nala karenge-to vo hashr pe hashr barpa karenge
Gham va aas va hasrat ka majma hai kaisa-ye kea qabr ashik pe maila karenge
Kahani ke pairae me ham unko ai dil-ham afsana-e gham sunaya karenge
Naseeb isme hame izzat ho ki zillat-ye dil jab talak hai tamanna karenge

Hina Sahiba Hina, Shagird Bi Jadu Sandelvi²⁵

Famous courtesan Bari Malka Jaan received her lessons in classical Persian from Husain Ahmad Asghar and Qadar Husain while Hakim Banno Sahib 'Hilal' was appointed to teach her Urdu.²⁶

Do vaar mein Malka nazar aaya naya aalam
Dam bhar bhi na khanjar se sitamgar ke lagi chot
Malka Jaan, Makhazeen-e Malka²⁷

Cultural and Creative Aspects

Since dance and singing are more natural to females, these salons became a learning institute of singing and dancing too. As Abdul Halim Sharar opined, Dance instruction is in the hands of men and they are the masters of this art. However, men could never have achieved the widespread popularity that the art attained. Dancing is more natural to women and they display their grace in art.²⁸

Their contribution in kathak, battana, thumri, khayal, ghazal and tappa is memorable.²⁹ Benares and Lucknow Gharana were very famous for the development of Hindustani music. Courtesans from every part of India cherished the dream to learn the art of music from these eminent musicians. Daughters of these musicians also gained popularity in the field of music. The most prominent among them was Zeba-un Nisa of Banaras Gharana, whose son often said that everything that he knew was due

to his mother.

These courtesans were not only skilled in singing and dancing but they were well versed in composition, too. A monthly magazine of that time Payam-e Yar reveals their composing skills. We found a number of courtesans from Gorakhpur, Ghazipur, Benares, Allahabad, Lucknow, Kanpur, Unnao, Badaun, Shahjahanpur, Sandila, Aligarh, Aara, Darbhanga, Calcutta, Delhi and Gurgaon. They used to send their ghazals and qasidas regularly to the magazine under pen names along with name of the city they belonged to. A few of them were very frequent, amongst them whose qasidas could be found in many pages and the most talented among them were Sitari Jan and Bigan Jan. Sharar has praised the literary skill of the courtesans Mushtari and Zohra. Mushtari and Zohra were not only poetesses but also accomplished vocalist and incomparable dancers.³⁰ In his opinion Jaddan Bai was famous dancer of her time. Here I am mentioning few fine examples of their collection, which shows how academically sound they were, putting a question mark on the rationality claim of the British education system. It is to be noted that these courtesan had never gone to any English schools, but they received instruction from the traditional Hindustani ustad.

They are the best example of the ustad-shagird culture, which carried on from generation to generation.

Is qadar furqat ne lagar kar dia- Shakal yaron ne na pahchani meri

Dar hai fir paida na ho tufaan-e nooh- Zor par hai ashak afsaani meri

(Sahab Jan Baqi, Tawaif, Gorsara Parghana Zamania, Jila Ghazipur)³¹

Kea kahun saudaiyon me hun- a kaminde zulf mai tere griftaron me hun

Bakhsh dega shafle mahshar ke sadqe me khuda- talibe rahmat hun a Zahra griftaron me hun

(Bi Zohra Bai Sahiba, Zahra, Sakin Jodhpur, Mulazim Riyasat Darbhanga, Shagird Nayyar)³²

Though it is not clear whether Zohra bai was the same Zohra whom Sharar admired so deeply. It is quite possible that this Zohra was the Zohra Bai of Lucknow since at that time there was no certain place for a tawaif. Indeed, they were mostly like nomads and used to move from one place to another depending on patronage.

Kisi zulf par dil fida ho raha hai- Griftar ranj-o bala ho raha hai

Kisi but ko khauf-e khuda ho raha hai- mera aj vaeda vafa ho raha hai

Mujhe hure jannat ki khawahish nahi hai- mera dil tumhi pe fida ho raha hai

Tere vassal ke jisme rahte the arman- vo dil aj matam sada ho raha hai

Raqibon ko mere aj khushi ho rahi hai-khafa mujhse vo dilruba ho raha hai

Khafa ho gae mujhse tum jabse sahib- mera dil bhi mujhse khafa ho raha hai

Laagate ho munh dukhtar raz ko zahir- ye haq me tumhare bura ho raha hai
Lagana kisi ka nahi dil se achcha- zamane ka rang ab bura ho raha hai

Shab-e gham ki baten jo sunae unko- vo samjhe ki mera gila ho raha hai
Vo apnizafaon pe nadim hue hai- nae sire se ande vafa ho raha hai

(Sitari Jan)33

Bat sun o dushman jani meri- kar lahar pe fateha khawani meri
Fir usi bedard pe marne laga- vae ghaflet vae nadani meri

(Bigan Jan, Bigan, Tawaif Laukhnaw Varad Patodi, Jila Gurgaon) 34

Rashak Aina hai hairani meri- vahshat afzan hai pareshani meri
Hai kisi aina ru ka dil ko dhean- kah rahi hai saf hairani meri

Khooon-e dil peeta hun ham khata hun mai- khub tum karne ho mehmani meri
Unki shokhi vassal me kahti hai ye- a haya tu kar nigahbani mari

Bat karne pe vo hote hai khafa- unse ab bolun to nadani meri
Apne is ashiftapan pe hun nisar- zul fen Jana bhi hai diwani meri

Sher parhte hai vo meri qabr pe- ho rahi hai fateha khawani meri
Hun vo awara ki saqi bad-e murg- qabr pe roi pareshani meri
(Sitari Jan, Ghazipur, Benares) 35

Almost all famous courtesans of that time were masters of thumri. The word `thumri is derived from the Hindustani word `thumakna' which means an attractive gait as explained by biographer of Gauhar Jaan.³⁶ The growth of thumri is initially linked with another sister art, Kathak, the classical dance of North India that originated in the Indo-Gangetic belt. King Wajid Ali Shah's period is considered the golden period for the development of these arts. He produced lavish dance dramas and lyrics and wrote excellent thumris and dadras under the pen name of `Aktar Piya'. The most famous of his compositions is:

Babul mora naihar chuto hi jae, chaar kahar mil duliyaan mangao apna bigana
chuto hi jae (O! Father! I forsake all my relationships in my maternal home. Four
bearers bear my palanquin and take me to my beloved's home).³⁷

Both Malka Jaan and her famous daughter, Gauhar Jaan, were excellent in thumri
composition and singing along with the ghazal. Malka Jaan has to her credit a
published diwan Makhzan —e Ulfat-e Malika. The Diwan was published in 1886 and
covered a wide range of topics from spirituality and philosophy to sensuality,
unrequited love, pessimism, betrayal and romance. Through her composition she also

seeks forgiveness from her God for whatever sins she has committed. One of her finest thumris reads:

Mero Mar lio chain, akhian rasili waaki
Mori aali who baanki chitwan, batyan karat peari-pear
Moorakh nipat anari baat chalet bholi bholi
Boli bholi kimag mag thak thak mohe muskaa de
Dagar chalet nit garaave baari basi
Vaako Krishna bhes hum unhi par tan man Malka taj dein

His eyes, full of elixir, have captured my mind. Being naïve and immature, I have been swayed away by his sweet talk and make some innocent conversation with him. As we walk the path, he tries to embrace me. But even if this attractive captor is not the original Krishna an imposter, Malka would still submit her body and mind to him.³⁸
A few of her couplets delineate a secular atmosphere of salons:

Nikal aayee dair va haram se Malka
Kare zikr Sheikh va Brahmin kisi ka

What does Malka have to do with matters of religion? Are not those better served in the hands of the Sheikh and Brahmin?

Malka aata hai ab tauba ka zamana nazdeek;
Wasl ke lutfutha leejie apni qasam se pahle

Oh! Malka your days are numbered and your end is nearing. Enjoy the indulgences of the world soon so that you can take an oath to abstain from sin thereafter and atone for the acts of omission committed by you all your life.³⁹

If the mother was a famous litterateur of her time then her daughter was not behind she was born Victoria Hemming on 26th June, 1873 in Azamgarh to Anglo Indian parents. At the age of six her parents separated and her mother took up dancing and singing as her means of livelihood and converted to Islam, influenced by her new partner, Khursheed. She received tutelage from an eminent musician of Benares, Pandit Bechoo Mishra. The mother-daughter duo became the talk of the town. Malka Jaan was known as Bari Malka to distinguish her from the other Malka Jaan of her time, while Victoria was renamed Gauhar Jaan. In 1883, they migrated to Calcutta where Malka Jaan began accompanying little Gauhar to Mujra and very soon, their fame spread all over the city. In one performance, the talent of young Gauhar caught the attention of famous musician Bindadin Maharaj who offered her to teach her. Bindadin was considered one of the most important figure in the development of thumri. Gauhar had to travel to his hometown, Lucknow, every now and then to continue her lessons. Another famous singer, Zohra Bai of Agra, was also his student.

Gauhar took lessons in Bengali songs from Bamacharan Bhattacharya. Like her mother she started composing songs under various pen names like Hamdam and Gauhar Piya. It is worthy to note that no self-respecting Mahfilen was considered complete without her presence. Gauhar Jaan's famous composition was 'Ras ke Bhare Tore Naina'

Arey pathik giridhari sun itni kahio ter
Dig jhar layi radhika ab brij bhoolat pher

Aa ja sanvariya tohe garva laga loon
Ras ke bhare tore nain, saanvariya

Ras ke bhare tore nain
Jehi chitwat tehi bas kari rakhat

Naahi pare moika chain saanvariya
Ras ke bhare tore nain

0 traveler just tell Girdhari (Krishna) when you see him that Radha has run out of tears, when he would come back to Brij. Come to my Saanvariya, let me embrace you. Your eyes full with elixir. 0 Krishna your image is in my heart and I can find no peace.° All big and petty kings, nawabs and wealthy persons were in habit of competing to see who would be the first to call a famous courtesan at any joyful event at his home. They used to bet everything they possessed.⁴¹ Therefore, courtesans of that time had earned both money and fame under the royal patronage of these connoisseurs. In addition, these royal patrons took a personal interest in the development of music and art. For this, King Wajid Ali Shah established a separate department and named it `parikhana Parikhana was a kind of music school where beautiful and skilled girls were recruited. The king's many mutahi and married wife hailed from this parikhana.⁴² Often it was observed that some courtesan settled their houses, leaving this profession after earning enough money for their future.⁴³ This settlement is known as Ghar Parna in brothel language instead of marital life.

Sharar gave the name some famous group of Lucknawi courtesans, the most prominent among who were Kanchan, Chunawali and ... who were considered as the queens of the market. However, Sharar acknowledged Kanchan as a harlot whose main profession was to sell her virtue.⁴⁴ Surprisingly, after some decades, this category of tawaif claimed themselves as the highest class of all deredar tawaifs and emphasized more on their got and Baum, ⁴⁵ It seems that social mobility was taking place among this group too. When famous Hindi litterateur, Amrit Lai Nagar, came across several prostitute and courtesans of bygone days for his famous book *Ye Kothewaliyan*, he wondered why a large chunk of prostitutes were from the Jugela

Gaur Thakur caste, as well as why most of them believed in Islam.⁴⁶ Perhaps this could be corroborated with British allegation that all loose Hindu women accepted Islam. However, Veena Talwar and Nagar both rejected the theory of their belief or faith. In fact these salons were the best example of Hindustani composite culture and matriarchal society. Interestingly, a Muslim woman was free to marry a Hindu just as a Hindu woman was free to marry a Muslim. It seems that they only believe in biradari and their Biradari derived from sisterhood and womanhood. There would often be gloom in the brothel if a prostitute gave birth to a baby boy, while they would welcome a baby girl.

Bhartendu Harish Chandra's correspondence with famous courtesan Husna shows that he was a regular visitor of the salon. Once, he converted courtesan Malka from Islam to Hinduism and named her Mallika. Due to this he had to despaired of his Chaudhrahath of Agrawal community and became the cause of a saying `Vo bhai ka sath na deen jo yawani ko Hindu keen '.⁴⁷ In addition, this saying shows the intolerance of the Hindu community. Here a question arises: why was Bhartendu so impatient about conversion? Whether he was looking for the purification of this group? Again this question is incomplete due to the dearth of other sources, especially Devnagri literature, and it is the limit of my research, which is basically confined to Urdu and English literature. Also, it was the period when India was facing a language clash where Urdu was linked totally with Muslims and there was natural demand for a Hindu language, and for this, Hindi was identified.

Furthermore, it was debatable why the British were keen to register all prostitutes as dancing girls under a professional class of the Muslim community.⁴⁸ The Census Report somehow contended that women of loose character of the Hindu community accepted Islam. The fact is that the prostitutes embraced Islam to safeguard their property for their children. Hindu Law gave no property rights to women and therefore prostitutes, in an attempt to provide maternal rights to illegitimate children, sometimes converted to Islam.⁴⁹ It is interesting that it is only in Islam where the maternity claim is recognized. Considering the fact that one cannot prove who the father is, but it is possible to prove who the mother is, Islam gave maternity rights to the illegitimate child, too. Government statistics also considered all prostitute as Muslims.⁵⁰ They could be registered as owners of property and be taxed. This could probably answer why all prostitutes were considered Muslim.

In this way 1857 is a turning point in a sense of cultural decline, too. By the end of the century there is no mujra, no mahfil or mushaira, when at one time it was considered to be an essential part of Oudh culture. Historian Mushirul Hasan connects its decline with degrading status of qasba culture. Once this happened, the qasba proved unequal to the task of distributing goods and services, wealth and even pleasure in living. Also, the fragility of the life was revealed. The shair, the bhand, the qcrwaal, the mirasi and mirasin, the zankha (eunuch) and the tawaif disappeared from

the qasba landscape. In real sense, the tawaif of the 19th century was the queen of the literary world. They were passionate about music, dance and ghazals, and I would like to conclude with these lines:

Bat usne hai kab mani meri
roti hai mujhpar purarmani meri

Yad-e gesu ka asar hai bal-bal
kam na ho ya rab pareshani meri

Shaeri pe e Ada qurban hum
sun rahe hai vo ghazalkhawani meri

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6. A close analysis of Umrao Jan-e Ada delineates very interesting picture of this trend. Sharar. p. 192.
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44. Sharar, p.146, Nagar, p.93.
- 45 Nagar, p.92, 97, 112, 119, 123
46. Ibid. p.124, 129, 127, 165.
47. Kashi ki Sangeet Paramparaen, p.136. He did not support's brother who converted Yawani to Hindu.
- 48 .The British often used to register them as dancing girls. See Wakefield, 1878, p.340-41.
49. In the Allahabad case, Justice Mahmood delivered a historical judgment that paternity could be disclaimed but maternity could never be.
50. CR, 1901, p.255, Subsidiary Table I. Abbasi Jan Ada

Role of rural women in agriculture: A study of Valley of Kashmir

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Introduction

Women all over the world play a major role in every field and sector of society. There are certain sectors which can't not be managed and run without the active role of women. Agriculture is one of the sectors where women play important role over the world. However the returns of agriculture are unequally distributed and reattributed. Munir Tahir Bhutt et. al (2010) maintain that "rural women over the world play a major role, agricultural production and in the development and stability of the rural areas but women face a number of constraints in approaching agricultural extension sources especially in developing countries. Rural women along with men play an important role in the agriculture sector like crop production, livestock production as well as cottage industry. But they have incomplete access resources agricultural extension education services and newest technical knowledge and information-sources". Women not only participate through physically in the field and home but are also engaged emotionally and mentally. There are certain agriculture sectors which are exclusively managed and maintained by women. Their contribution in the field of agriculture and allied sector is more than men. Mijindadi (1993) documents that women are responsible for 70% of actual farm work in Nigeria and constitute up to 60% of the farming population. Poultry farming is also one of the major Sources of rural economy in agriculture and these sectors are wholly and solely managed by women. Their role in poultry farming at household level is the central.

The rural women in Kashmir have been not apart from the rural women of world when it is of their contribution in agriculture sector. It would be not wrong to maintain agriculture sector is still alive in the valley because of women. When women start or are keeping away from the sector it starts to contract. One of the reasons for the decline of agriculture in the developed world can be attributed to women's participation in other sectors. Men cannot hold it together and keep it at the pace on which it was earlier without the participation of women. Women in Kashmir operate in every phase of agriculture production and cultivation. They bear the burden of working in the field, managing household and so on. However the returns of the sector are totally kept apart from them. Their contribution in the production and cultivation no doubt surpass men but their decision making role or share or return is

negligible even nothing at all. Culture, tradition, morality, ethics are interplayed between when it is of their rights and exploitation. The paper very briefly discusses the role of women in the agriculture. How they manage multiple departments together with culture of silence and burden. It also throws light on the social set up which force them to keep silent.

Study area

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is the northern most state of India situated between 32.15 degree and 37.05 degree north latitude and 72.35 degree and 83.20 degree east longitude. Agriculture and allied sectors are main source of livelihood of the people of the state. The state is the 11th largest state of India having a geographical spread of 101387 Sq(ms accounting for 3.20% of the total area of the country. It ranks 19th most populous state of India having a population of 12548926 souls (census. 20011). In terms of literacy Jammu and Kashmir is one of the most backward states of India. The literacy rate of J&K is 68.74% with male literacy of 78.26% and female literacy of 58.01% (census 20011) The State of J&K is divided into three regions Jammu, Kashmir and Ladkh. It comprises 22 districts, 71 tehsils, 141 CD blocks, 2690 Panchayats, 6652 villages. All the three regions of the state have different topographic and demographic features. The Jammu region is a plain area and is dominated by the Hindu majority. Kashmir is a valley surrounded by mountains and hills the majority of the population of Kashmir are Muslims. While as Ladkh is a hilly terrain

Objective of the Paper

The study was carried out with pre determined objectives and plans. The main objective of the study was to know contribution, participation and role of rural Muslim women in agriculture and allied activities.

Shortcomings of the study

The study was conducted in two districts of the valley of Kashmir thus confined to very small part of the Kashmir.

The interviews and informal discussion with female members were very confined, as they were either reluctant or hesitated to speak in the presence of other members of the society.

Another shortcoming of the paper is that it was very difficult for the researcher to cover two districts in short span of time.

The gender of the researcher often made female respondents reserved or to be frank and open. Researcher in very few cases got chance to speak female members of society in the absence of family members.

Despite all these odds the research was conducted successfully.

Further Scope for the Research

As the theme is very interesting and wide it would be better to have an ethnographic study of the issue. On the bases of field experience it is highly felt that a group of researchers with female members can explore the theme much better.

There is scope to conduct household survey and observe the role of women in household during the seasons of cultivation, business transition and other activities.

Methodology

The present work is the outcome of intensive work of selected districts of the Kashmir valley. The two districts of the valley were selected having. The work was carried out in phases. The first visit to the field was made in the month of March 2009 and was carried for 4 months up to June 2009. The second trip to the field was executed in July 2010 which lasted till November 2010. During these field visits researcher directly visited to agricultural and allied fields to observe the role of women in the agriculture. In the period of stay in the field the researcher also visited some households to conduct interview to women. However researcher could not conduct interviews as there were reservations from the community and women to take part in the interview.

However during the field researcher got opportunity to talk with the persons (male and female) who were working in the fields. At the time of field work while observing the participation and role of women in agriculture the researcher got chances to interact with them. In some places researcher was invited for tea or lunch by agriculture workers when they were coming out from field to have refreshment or lunch.

Agriculture and allied Activities in Jammu and Kashmir

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is predominantly agrarian. According to official statics more than 80% of the population of the state is engaged in agriculture and allied sectors. Agriculture is regarded backbone of the economy of the state. It is estimated that agriculture and allied sectors contribute around 27 per cent to the income of the state. In comparison to Jammu region most of the population of Kashmir division is engaged in agriculture and allied sectors, as private sector is almost absent in the division. Due to railway and easy road connectivity of the Jammu region private sector is well developed. Kashmir region is fertile and known world over for its vegetation besides natural beauty. Rice, maize and wheat are the major cereals cultivated in the valley. Apple, Walnut, Almond and many other temperate dry and fresh fruits are largely produced in the Kashmir valley. The saffron

of Kashmir is world over famous for its quality and aroma. Besides these pulses, fodder, oil seeds, potato, and barley are the main crops cultivated in the region. Farmers in the valley also cultivate cash crops such as flowers, vegetables, quality seeds, aromatic and medicinal plants and mushrooms. However Kashmir is not self sufficient in producing food and the region is facing low productivity in agriculture. The net sown area of the state is very low. In comparison of national average of 46 per cent of net sown area Jammu and Kashmir has only 35 per cent net sown area. The agriculture season in the Kashmir region is short spread over April to September due to longer winters. Almost every rural household in Kashmir is involved in domestication of animals, like cow, goat, sheep, and so on. Rural households are also engaged in and poultry.

Women and Agriculture in Kashmir

Women constitute almost half of the population of the state. According to census 2011 the total population of the state is 12548926 persons, 6665561 male and 5883365 female, having sex ratio of 883. The women in Kashmir are mostly backward and illiterate. They are generally confined to their homes but when it is agriculture and its allied activities they go shoulder to shoulder with male folk even ahead of them. Domestication of animals and poultry is exclusively a burden of women folk, whether is milking of cow, looking after poultry; it is exclusively women who have to do this. Besides looking after the children, domestication of animals, looking after the elder members of the family, cooking the food and other house hold work women in Kashmir participate shoulder to shoulder with male members of the society.

When it is about the education liberation and freedom of the women, the male folk of society show negative attitude towards them (Dabla 1997). They are denied liberty to move alone or freely talk to male strangers by bringing religion, culture, ethics and morality in the defence. People in Kashmir mostly don't prefer their females to move freely, independently and alone. When they have to visit for market or health check up they are mostly accompanied by male member of the family. Women in rural areas are not allowed to talk freely and openly with strangers. Any kind of deviation from set norms is looked negatively. But when it is about to work in agriculture fields religion, morality, culture, tradition and ethics are kept apart. The male members whom they work with in agriculture fields are not all among their close relatives and families.

Women not only work shoulder to shoulder with males in agriculture fields but have to cook meals, and bring them to agriculture field and serve it. Besides this they have to feed animals, milk cows and goats. Take care of poultry at home.

Durir,-; the stay in the field researcher came never noticed that a male member of society is milking cows or goats.

Agriculture, Women and Burden

Women have to look after family, fulfill desires of the husband and work in the field this really put triple burden on her. It was observed in the field that women have to manage home, field, family and husband. It is in the field that she works shoulder to shoulder with men besides managing young children, family and arranges food for the persons working in the field. Their food is not only being prepared by her but she also has to bring it to the field on her head and serve it to them. Despite having more responsibility and a lot to do at home women have to work shoulder to shoulder with men in the field. It was observed that women who bring food to field where agriculture goods are cultivated serve food does not take food before every one finish their meal. In very few cases it was observed that if women also take meal with others she can't take it peacefully as she is engaged and kept busy in minute things. Men who take meal with cannot even take a glass of water on their own, it is women who have to pour water in a glass, take before men.

Besides working in field, prepare and serve food, look after elders and young ones at the home during the day, in the night she has to sharing the bed with her husband no matter whether she is willing, desirous or not. This puts triple burden on her. Those who are yet to be married get socialized and trained to bear this triple burden.

While translating Parson's view of family into Marxian perspective Fran Ansley opines that it is women which makes present oppressive system to run as women absorb the anger and frustration of her husband (quoted in Harlobs P-341). Ketry McAfee and Myran have been also quoted in saying that women enable men to vent their anger and frustration in a way which will pose no threat or challenge to the system.

Agriculture and beyond

As the paper deals with the contribution of women belonging to a particular community it is imperative to know about their social set up and social world.

The women in most of the rural Kashmir are expected to remain confined to their house. They are expected to be sober, modest, and conformist, conformist to the patriarchal set up of the society.

When it is about their education, liberation, freedom, equality and liberty they are being denied these basic and fundamental rights on the pretext of religion, culture, tradition, modesty, and what not. The education of girl child is less proffered in comparison to a male child. They are not treated equally with a male child. Though there has been surge in the enrollment of children in education institutions yet percentage of girls is less. Those who get enrolled are mostly admitted in government schools where the quality of education is very poor. Dabla et. al (1997) maintains that many parents want their girl child to be educated but not at par with male children. Similar finding has been revealed by Fayaz (2009), he documents that patriarchal nature of Kashmir society is making inroads in the way of education of a girl child. Girls are being sent to government schools which have very poor performance in education. He further says that the culture of home is being reinforced and reproduced in schools. Thus schools prove no relief for girl child as they are prepared to be un critical and bear everything silently.

The present study has found that women are not allowed to visit a doctor, market, relative alone. They are not allowed to speak on the household affairs even which are related to them and their lives. During the field visit it has been observed that women are not free to speak to strangers. They were hesitant to express their views. When researcher attempted to get their views they showed their reservation by either keeping mum, leaving place, speaking lefts. While trying to know the reason for this attitude and behavior of women in the field, researcher came to know that people call it modesty, culture, tradition and ethics even related to religion. Islam does not allow women to speak to strangers, an elder member of society said. "Zane Hunz kaaem the se kar garich kaam' (a woman has to handle household,) Numberdar of a village said. However researcher found contradiction in the words and deeds of the people. No doubt women in not given space in the affairs, have o liberty, denied to move freely and abstained to intermingle with males on most of the occasions. But these same women are send to field to work no matter it is stranger, relative or another. At this time no one was seen giving consideration or thought what they call tradition, modesty, ethics, and religion and so on. This clearly shows double standard in the approach of the patriarchal society. They use religion, culture, tradition, morality, modesty and so on as shield and instruments to oppress the women. This can be termed as *cultural shield*. A weapon which is used to defend oneself and attack opposite, when they are denied their rights it becomes defending weapon and when they are put burden it becomes attacking weapon. There seems no logic and reason in

curbing freedom of women by not allowing her to move freely when it is of her education liberty and freedom as she can't even speak to male but when she brings economic gains to family everything is thrown to winds.

Conclusion

The role of women in the cultivation and production is huge. It seems difficult that male flock can manage agriculture and allied sector alone. They don't only contribute in agriculture by working shoulder to shoulder men but prepare men to work and keep them active and activated. There are sectors where they are exclusively responsible to keep it up like domestication of animals. However when it comes of decision making and business related to agriculture they are kept apart.

Despite absorbing the shock after shock, bearing burden over burden women keep contributing and keep others to contribute. Culture tradition, religion and morality etc are brought forth to attach women and hide injustice and exploitation.

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Contribution of Women Poets to the Persian Literature (From Beginning to Aurangzeb Era)

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There are numerous religion and languages in India. However no other religion gives the importance, status and utility to the fair sex that Islam does. Quran declares 'O Folk we created you from one man and one woman'. It indicates that male and female together are the pivot of beauty in the nature. The divine book was revealed for the guidance of Muslims in the Arabic language, yet the plethora of Islamic teachings, in addition to the holy Quran reached us, the Indians, through Persian which has played a vital role in interpreting and understanding the Quran. Persian is the richest languages in terms of protecting humanism and propagating human values. This is why Persian was picked up by the UNO as an effective tool of spreading the message of humanity throughout the world and uniting the word nations.

Acknowledging the efficacy of this language the western leaders decided to inscribe the following couplets of Saadi from his '*Gulistan*'.

*Bani aadam aazaae yek deedar and; Ki dar aafrinash zayak gauhar and
Cho azwe badard aawurad rozgar ; Digar azwha ra na manad qarar
Tu kaz mehnate digman beghhami ; Nashayad ki namat nahand aadmi.*

(Human beings are like limbs of each other as if they were just like a pearl since Eternity. If one limb felt a pinch of pain other parts of the body will be naturally affected. If you do not share the grief of others, you do not perhaps deserve to be called a human being.)

Enriched with ethical and instinctive thoughts, this poetry is marked by the fusion of both the male and the female a characteristic not found in any other literature. In the 19th and 20th centuries (13th and 14th centuries Hijrah) some glimpses of women's represented may be noticed. The twentieth century is marked with a fashion to talk about women's rights in almost every religion and language. Women's representation in the literature of every has been highlighted. Contrarily in Persian literature has always occupied a distinct place. Though there are no specimens of pre Islamic Persian poetry but it existed even in the pre Islamic era. Shibli Nomani ascribed two couplets to Sufi Yazdi Bahram Gaur

Manam aan peel damano manan aan sher palahl
Naam bahram tura o pidarat bu jabla
(I am an intoxicated elephant, a fierce lion and a wrestler,
Your name is Bahram and your father is Bujabalah)
Zane shah ast dar dao dagarda
Gawaz garded nadarad beem az kas
(The king's wife is matchless in her deceitful ways ,
She roams around fearlessly like a stag)

According to Dr. Zabihullah Safa this is the first couplet ever composed in Persian poetry:

Bahram Gaur was first to compose a couplet in Persian language .When king Bahram was in a pleasant and joyful mood he had uttered these rhymed words :

Manam aan sher galah o manam aan sehr pala
Naam Bahram Gaur kunniyatam Bu jabalah
(I am an intoxicated elephant , a fierce lion and wrestler,
My name is bahram and sir name is Bu Jabalah)

Maulana Muhammad Husain Azad an Indian nineteenth century distinguish and Urdu critic gives the following opinion about Persian poetry:

“Historian and biographers of write that poetry did not exist in Persian before Islam. It is narrated that one day king Bahram Gaur set out for hunting in a jungle where he caught a lion and a tiger alive. He overpowered the two beasts so tactfully that he tied their necks together and proudly exclaimed:

Manan aan peel daman o man am aan sherpilah

Bahram had a beloved who was witty and talkative. Bahram always kept her with him for her five qualities and out of deep love for her. When Bahram uttered the first line of the couplet he looked at his beloved, expecting an encouraging comment. The beloved responded by uttering the words
'Manam Bahram tura pidarat bu habla'

The king liked this repartee. He called for learned people and those well versed in the art of poetry to judge these utterances on the norms of meter and scale and took interest in the art. Thus the above mentioned couplet has been taken as the earliest specimen of Persian poetry with the first line by Bahram Gaur and the second by his beloved and Persian poetry was jointly founded by a male and female.

However the beginning of Persian poetry is traced back to 3rd century BC. When the Arabs conquered Iran they plundered Iran massively. The Ummayyad dynasty made this region a ground for their ravages while Abbasi rulers did not do any justice to it. Even when the tug of war among Abbasids began for ascension to power and a war

between Mamoon Rasheed the son of Haroon Rasheed from his Iranian wife and Ameen Rasheed his son from the Arab wife took place and the former became victorious by virtue of his army chief Tahir Zulmaneen the Iranian emerged on the scenario by astrok of luck. Subsequently the Tahiry rule was founded and from here starts the saga of development of Persian language literature and poetry sprawled its wings when even the western women did not render any service to the society. Women have significantly contributed to Persian language and its literature since the very beginning. Rabia Quzdari (App. 275- 326 H) ranks second among Persian poetess. She was called 'Zainul Arab'. Besides she ranks as the second woman mystic after Rabia Basari. Daughter of Amir of Balakh, Kaab, Rabia quzdari belonged to Quzdar situated between Sistan and Makran.

Mohammad Aufl in his Lubbul Allah, the first biography in Persian, compiled in India in 615 H describe him as the first Persian poetess. He write: Although Kaab's daughter was a woman but excelled men in knowledge and skills. Among Persian lords and intellectuals she had mastery over both Persian and Arabic poetry.

In later biographies also Rabia Quzdari is mentioned as an embodiment of beauty, knowledge and mystic qualities. Athar Neshapuri in his Ilahinama has quoted Rabia Quzdari's couplet as a source. Like other poets she too made devine and mundane love the subject of her poetry. For example the famous treatise on criticism and prosody in Persian by Shams Qais Razi.

One of the ghazals of Rabia Quzdari is presented here in translation to suggest how deep were the influences of the Persian poetry in the third and fourth centuries on later Persian poetry as well as Urdu poetry and how it became inevitable from the point of rhetoric.

When the rose passed by the garden
It became the art gallery of Mani, the
It excelled the music of Tibet
Spreading its fragrance all around
The clouds perhaps bear the tears
Of magic the lover

The rose resembles Laila's cheeks
As if it is cup full of tulip's tears
Pick up the cup and forget the world
Unfortunate is he who became world's slave

During the last quarter of the fourth and first quarter of the fifth century there emerged a representative Persian poet Parveen Khatoon who has been mentioned by Asadi Tusi (465 H) as in his ' Lughate Faras as Parvez Khatoon. The suffix has also been used to indicate female name with the development of Persian poetry Parveen's poetic expression became figurative. In one of her couplet she says:

"When a child has stomach ache he coils up like a serpent"

It was in the last quarter of the fifth century and the first quarter of the sixth century that Mutriha Kashgari won a place in Persian literature through her poetry. She was a contemporary of Taganshahon whose death she composed an elegy. Through her simple and lucid style she could convey her thoughts to others very well.

In sixth century Hijrah Mahasti Ganjavi brought a revolution in Persian poetry through his Rubiyaat composing Rubai and observing its nuances is a tough job can be estimated from the fact that that there are just a few poets in Urdu poetry who can compose. In Urdu we not yet come across a poetess who has compose dRubai. It is due to fear of Rubai that Urdu poets demonstrate their uncouth nature by treating Rubai and Qatah as four lines. Mahasti Ganjavi contributed to the Persian literature with a set of 150 rubais. She was deft in extempore compositions. Shams Qais Riazi has quoted her couplets as a specimen. Mahasti was also associated with the royal court.

Nizami Ganjavi famous for composing Khamsah form of poetry alos belonged to Ganja. Nizami is one who spurred a host of poets on composing Khamsah. Mahasti's mausoleum is adjacent to that of Nizami. Mahasti also had a mastery over composing satire. For example:

For your passion I had to undergo
A fresh agony every night
With tears in eyes in place of dreams
Like narsicus you have robbed me of my dreams
I had dreams more perplexed than your hair locks

Another poetess of the same era was Firdaus Mutriba Samarqandi. When Sultan Mohammad Khwarizan Shah (596-617 H) defeated Sultan Gaur and captured a good deal of war booty he composed epistal in praise of Sultan Muhammad Khwarizan Shah:

Shaha za tu Ghauri ba bibasat bajast
Maidae jozah az kafe khat bajast

A poetess belonging to this period is Dukhtar Khateeb Ganjai.

The seventh century hijrah is the era of poets like Sadi and the most brilliant era of Persian poetry that produced a number of poetesses like Razia Ganjai, Malik Khatoon, Dukhtar Salar, Dukhtar Sati, Dukhtar Sijistaniya and Razia Sultana of Delhi in the first half of the century.

Continued from Iraq Zaidi.....

Another poet of the same period was Firdous Mutriba Samarqandi. When Sultan Mohammad Khwarizm Shah (596-617 H) defeated Sultan Ghaur and captured a good deal of war booty she composed a qasida, describing his fall from sky to dust.

The seventh century Hijra is dedicated to celebrated poets like Saadi when the Persian poetry attained its prime youth and when a galaxy of poetesses bedecked the poetic horizon. To name a few, they were Razia Ganjai, Malik Khatoon, Dukhtar Salar, Dukhtarasti, Dukhtar Sijistaniya and Razia Sultana, then the emperor of Delhi who dominated the poetic scene of the first half of the seventh century while the second half is marked by Arghawan Khatoon, Padshah Khatoon, Dukhtar Hakem Gall, Aisha Samarqandi and Kankab. The latter is remembered for her quartets in a lucid and appalling style.

The eighth century Hijra witnessed the emergence of Hafiz Sherazi, another stalwart of Persian lyrical poetry, ghazal with Amir Khusrau who shined during the last quarter of the same century when both Persia and India shared the legacy of mysticism and spirituality. It was a period when the courts of mystics like Baba Farid Ganje Shakar, Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia and Charagh Dehlavi were thronged by the king and the popper alike. A noteworthy name is of Bibi Sam Fatima about whom Baba Farid had remarked "Fatima Sam is a male sent in the garb of a female. This reaffirms Fatima Sam's mystic excellence. Baba Farid and his brother Sharikh Majibuddin considered her to be their God sister. She died and was buried in Delhi. In one of her couplets she say, "you are a seeker of both love and beloved. Despite this you are getting one"

Among the poetesses of this period are Benital Najariya, Jehan Khatoon and Hemayash. Distinguished among them was Daulat Samarqandi a contemporary of Amir Taimoor who was very brave and sharp minded despite her blindness. Amir Taimoor heard about her poetic dexterity when he conquered Samarqand. He approached the poetess to be welcomed by the latter with the recitation of the following couplet:

The city of Samarqand is in the grip of fire and and this Timberlane _____
Asked the name was she said Daulat satirically, Timberlane commented daulat (wealth) is not blind. Daulat promptly replied "had it not been blind, it would not have come to a lame person".

During the ninth century Hijrah, Persian poetry had become equally popular in both Iran and India with innumerable poets on the two sides including poetess like Iffati, Araish Begum, Agha Dost, Arzo Samarqandi, Ismat, Zayeri, Bijamee Najjamarah, Rozbab Zaeefi, Auraq Sultan Begum, Bibi Bedili, Nihani, Asfahim, Mehri, Harvi, Nihari Kirmani, Nihali Samarqandi are on the top of the list. Participation of a poetess in poetic meets could not be imagined in those days. Even then, one night Khairat Hassan Rozi invited a few poets to a poetic gathering. Accidently Nihali appeared there and recited her couplet:

*bar Hilal Neest ki bar auj charkh ja kardah
Falak ba kushtane man tegh hawa kardoh*

(It is not the new moon shining in the sky,
It is a sword moved in the air to kill me.)

Here the crescent of the first night is employed as a metaphor of sword. This couplet was quite captivating and appreciated by those present. This appreciation spurred her to challenge the poets there asking them to recite a couplet of such a caliber. Displeased with her arrogance one of the senior poets composed a satire that humiliated Nihali she vowed not to attend any poetic meet.

The tenth century Hijrah is remembered as the golden era of Persian poetry when the Indian Mughal court attracted Persian poets. It was Babur who founded the Mughal rule in 932 H/1526 AD was himself a literary figure which is suggested by his chronogram, 788, indicating 6th of muharram. Babur's court in India was thronged by Indian scholars and men of letters. Humayun's literary taste is known to all. Defeated by Sher Khan when he sought shelter from Tahmasp Shah Safavid, he sent a message in verse through Bairam Khan to Tahmasp. Two couplets read as:

My enemy sher (with dual meaning, lion the beast and Sher Khan, has been chasing for a long period and now he has defeated with his tactics. I would like to request to deal with me same as Caliph Ali (RA) did with Salman in dashte arzan. This incidence speaks of Humayun's literary insight as well as deep understanding of Islamic history. Babur's daughters Princess Gulbadan Begum and Princess Gulrukh Begum were brought up in the same environment.

The two sisters were bestowed with the wealth of beauty, wisdom and literary taste. Gulbadan Begum authored an important historical treatise Humayun Nama. Two of her couplets are being presented as a specimen of her literary achievement:

- A damsel who does not befriend her lover is certainly a loser in life

- If breeze causes blossoming of a beed in the garden, the key to my heart's lock is the smile on my beloved face.

This is also the age of Akbar known as the golden era of Persian poetry. Akbar's court had a galaxy of poets mentioned in Aaina e Akbari and Muntakhabutawarikh. Other poetess of this era are Mumerah Malik, Fakhrunnisa, Ismati Khawafi, Kharami, the sister of the great poet Ghazali, Agha Begum Aaqai, Afaq Jalaeri, Hayat Haravi, Pari Khan Khanam, Khanzada Turbati and Darkhtar Noor Jahan, Nehani Shirazi. The second major poet of this era is Noor Jahan (later tenth to early eleventh century) endowed with both and genius that fascinated Jahangir so much that he consulted her in the administrative affairs of the state and her name was inscribed on the coins as well.

“By the order of the king Shah Jahan the coin is being issued in the name of Noor Jahan, the life partner of the king.”

Besides, the seal for stamping the royal decrees circulated from time to time bore the name of Noor Jahan.

“Circulated by the will of Allah, by Noor Jahan, the confidant and intimate companion of king Jahangir”

Tareekhe Hasan quotes many couplets composed by NoorJahan extemporely some of which have common authorship of Jahangir and Noor Jahan where one part was composed by Noor Jahan and the second part was added by Jahangir to complete the couplet and vice versa. Here are a few citations:

Noor Jahan's first husband Ali Quli Khan Sher Afghan was killed in a conspiracy and Noor Jahan held Jahangir responsible for his assassination. This was the basis of her hatred for Jahangir. Families of both Jahangir and Noorjahan were in favour of marrying the latter to Jahangir and it was family pressure after all that made Noorjahan to accept the matrimonial proposal from Jahangir that she had earlier turned down.

However responding to the proposal she sent to Jahangir a rose flower as token of acceptance with the following caption

“Narsicist does not naturally turn its face to you”

Jahangir completed the couplet by adding

“I wish Narcist had eyes to see the one who loves it”

The bowl displays it in the fort of Agra speak of Jahangir's boozery. However he stopped drinking wine as a mark of respect for the holy month of Ramazan. When the crescent of Eid was cited Jahangir's desire for wine shove on his face. Finding Noor Jahan before him Jahangir exclaimed with joy: Eid crescent has appeared in the sky
Noorjahan added the line to complete the couplet,
The missing key to the ale house has been found.

Once Jahangir and Noorjahan came out to sight the moon when they happened to see an old man with hunch on his back. Jahangir asked why does the backs of old people bend in old age? Noorjahan replied "They look around for their youthful days.

Once Noorjahan was travelling with the royal contingent when it made a halt for respite in a foothill Noorjahan felt a desire to have some sweets. She herself sat before the hearth to prepare a sweet dish. Moved at this sight, Jahangir commented:-

My candy seller is sitting here to prepare sweets
Noorjahan added the second line to complete the couplet by saying:

As if a fairy is seated under Solomon's throne.

Noorjahan is said to have a "makhfi" as her pet name. The quartets she composed are often cited by the historians of literature.

Akbar came to throne in 963 H and died in 1014. He was born in 1000 H while Shahjahan died. It means that the eleventh century witnessed 32 years out of half century of Aurangzeb's rule including Shahjahan's birth and Akbar's death. This is the century of Mughals decline as well. This is also the century that marks the incessant fall of Muslims all world over.

The eleventh century is marked by a hoard of Persian poetesses like Bibi Yamini, Noorunnishat jahan Begum, Berzungi, Jamila Asfahani, Hayatunnisa Begum, Dilaram, Ziabunnisa Begum, Saleema Begum, Suraha, Khan Neshafuri, Fazakunnisa, Qureshi Khanam, Qandhari Begum, Gulrukh, Gulbadan Begum, Gulsar Mirza Khalil, Mahi Jalair, Nihani Faini, Jahan Ara Begum and Zaibunnisa Makhfi. For a specimen Persian poetry of the period we a selection of couplets by Jahan Ara and Zaibunnisa Makhfi is being given here:

Jahan Ara begum was the eldest daughter of Emperor Shah Jahan. Inspired by the company of her brother Dara Shikoh she imbibed mystic qualities and for that matter

is regarded as a mystic poetess. She is buried in the premises of the mausoleum of Hazrat Nizammuddin with inscription:

My grave is covered by vegetation meant for the graves of the poor.

When Shah Jahan died while imprisoned by Aurangzeb, Jahan Ara composed a pathetic elegy in memory of her father.

Zaibunnisa Makhfi (1048-1133 H) elder daughter of Aurangzeb was a genius like her paternal aunt Jahan Ara. She is famous for her extemporary and intelligence. A collection of her poetry has been published which is said to contain a good deal of couplets a poet Makhfi Khurasani due to confusion of pen name. She had both a royal and mystic temperament.

This account comes to an end with the mention of Zaibunnisa. A full treatise needs to be compiled for an account of the poetesses in the period from 12th to 14th centuries because the presence of women on the Iranian poetic horizon suggests that women can do commendable activities observing the religious obligations and abiding by their social and moral duties. Today, women are at par with their male counterparts in the sphere of literature and poetry. Here it will be worthwhile to quote a couplet by Parveen Etesami:

A place with no woman is void of love and attachment.

Love attachment are such words that are beyond interpretation and explanation .

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CONTRIBUTION OF MUSLIM WOMEN ARTIST

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Introduction

Islamic art has great contribution in cultural and material history. Most of us know that Islamic Art & Architecture was influenced by Byzantine, Roman and early Christian styles, but the demand of Islamic art was very unique and that was creativity without figure or non figurative art. This is the reason why aesthetic ability and artistic expression is seen mainly in architecture, the decorative arts, calligraphy, geometrical designs and Craft such as ceramics, wood, metal, jewelry, carpets and costumes; These are also important part of Islamic Art.

It is clear from the study that, the modernity in Islamic art practices reveals its refreshing aspects and its contribution in making art a universal language. This has evaded the restrictive tendencies and articulate idiom that sustains all humanities. Modern Islamic Artists have the involvement with questions of artistic identity. They remain sensitive toward their eastern heritage and western art education. This gets reflected in their work and language.

Art from the contemporary Islamic world is greatly influenced by art practices in the modern world at large & vice-versa. Islamic artist beautifully assimilated & perfected the European Classical & Liberal Arts & took them to greater heights.

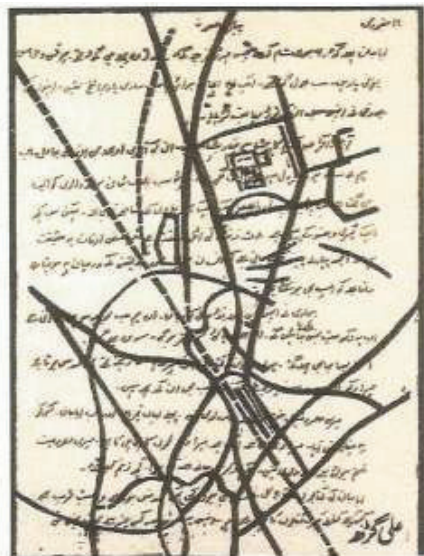
Till 20th century women artists have been excluded from the art world and even by the 1960's only a few have gained recognition. The diversified work of some women artists to counter male domination in art field came into the picture and was known as feminist art. Inspired by the women movement many women artists began to incorporate social and political themes of feminism into their work_ This new generation of feminine artists wanted to express the experience of the women on their own terms as well as producing the work of art that could be recognized as gender issue and sensitivity.

Some women artists created an exclusive platform, notably the ground breaking feminist art programs setup by renowned artists like Zareena Hashmi (India), Shirin Neshat (Iran), Nasreen Mohammedi (Karachi), Ameena Ahmed (India), Farida

Batool (Pakistan) and Huda Totonji (Arab), got fame in contributing to the world of art.

Zareena Hashmi

In the context of Zareena Hashmi, she is a self made Muslim woman artist of India. She studied in Aligarh Muslim University. She had never undergone any formal art education but her creative mind encouraged her to do something she loved the most. It was when she returned to an aspiring and ambitious 21st century of New Delhi and sensing the slow elimination of the Royal depiction of the word— Urdu. She said — "I chose Urdu not for the beauty of its calligraphy or the aesthetic exoticism but because I love it". She placed her work in a historical moment, capturing a time when one wrote and read in Urdu.



Zareena says, "The words inspire me, images came later, Words have their own power. When you describe an image the image disappears, but the words can travel and can be memorized and recited as you carry them within you." She says that "Maps become a necessity to chart the route and find the destiny." That's why she prints or paints the road maps in her work. In one of her paintings she had shown an Urdu poetry in the middle of the Delhi map which was written by Mir Taqi Mir at the time of the dawn fall of Mughals and Urdu language.

If Ilm (knowledge), ishq (love) and haal (ecstasy) were the spectacular moods or protests and enlightenment then Zareena has combined all three in her meditative art. Studying maps she became aware of borders. The first border she drew was the border between India and Pakistan, which splits land, homes and lives of millions of

people. She has very strong memories of her own home in which she spent her childhood.

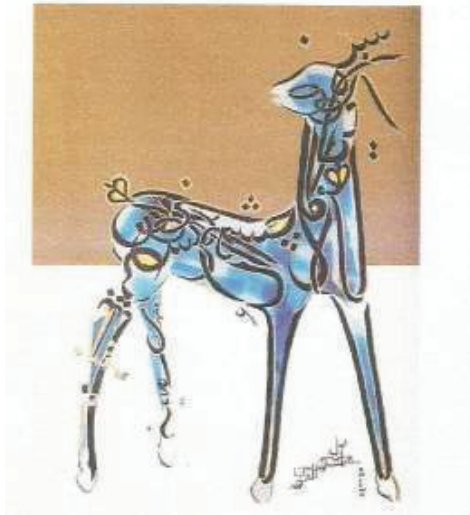
Based on her natural consequences she had lived in across nine cities, and then she made series of "homes". She had always had an inner link to spiritual life being an Indian she took interest in the practice of other faiths and truths. Recently she has dwelled into the concept of Noor — the divine light, in Sufism her another work is Tasbih and Bahisht. Her exhibitions were held in New York, California, France, South Korea, Japan, England and in India also.

Dr Ameena Ahmad

Dr Ameena Ahmad, an internationally renowned artist, formally educated in art from the famed slade school of art, London University did her doctorate in comparative philology from Moscow University. Dr Ameena's learning's were marvelously synthesized in her art of poetry and were converted into exotic calligraphy.

When she was a student, she was fascinated by the calligraphy and took it as an art dialogue that time when calligraphy was going out of fashion. Ameena emerges its beauty and relevance in her unique style. She molds calligraphy and poetry into evocative verse and the figure. However the verse is usually in an animal or bird form. She discovered that animals and birds are perfect metaphors for artistic expressions But Ameena uses the verse only for ornamental purpose, not to read.

She has prominently used the poetry of the great masters of Urdu such as Ghalib and Iqbal, the Sufi masters Attar and Rumi, and the great Persian poet Hafiz and Saadi .She learnt a range of calligraphic styles such as Kofi Nastaliq and Shikasta calligraphy, an art of decorative writing of a script usually cursive although sometimes angular produced by brush. Her childhood learning of using reed pens of varied thickness still accompanies her as she uses special pens in her paintings which give them a distinct accent using colorful and sometimes characteristic strokes of black and white. She distinguishes her paintings with touches of bronze, silver and gold to add texture and depth in her work.

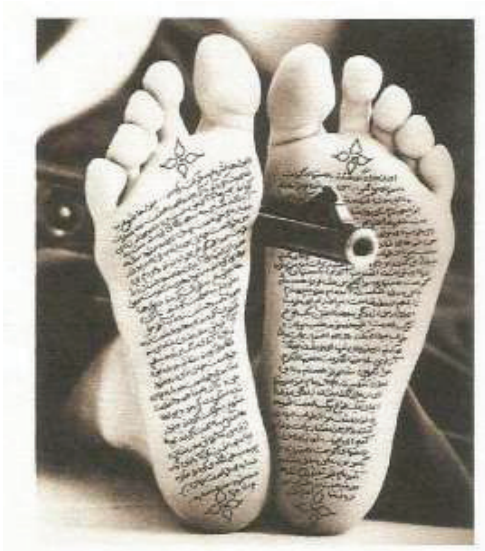


Through this she wants to promote her favorite language Urdu and Persian. She masters in six languages that are Persian, Russian, German, French, Hindi and English. She has also taught Russian at the Jawaharlal University for many year, lectured on poetry in Columbia University and worked as an artist in residence at Harvard University, her works have been displayed in Jamia archives and many other departments of Jamia.

Shirin Neshat

Born in Qazvin, Iran. She left Iran in 1974 to study in the United States of America, after the 1979 Islamic revolution she was unable to return to Iran for 20year's she completed her B.A. in 1983 at the University of California she moved to new York and worked at the storefront for art and Architecture an alternative art space. Since then she has lived and worked in both Iran and America, although she was only able to exhibit in Iran during a period when the regime was comparatively liberal, she has worked with photography and films to explore the role of women within Islam and western perception.

Neshat's photography includes the series entitled unveiling 1993 and women of Allah 1993-97. Exploring notion of femininity in an Iran's Islamic environment in the following year her video projection featured poetic imagery. Her trilogy video installations comprise of Turbulent 1998, rapture 1999 and fervor 2000 and utilized dual video screens to portray abstract gender and society based oppositions. These were photographs of women in Islamic dress with Persian texts written on their skin. Neshat has said that the female body seemed to become a canvas for a particular intersection between sexuality, politics and violence. Her current work is based on poetry, philosophy, metaphor and abstracts.



She is the 2006 recipient of the Dorothy and William Artist awards a prize given annually to someone who has made an outstanding performance. She won the silver icon for the best director at the 66th Venus film festival for her film "Women without Men" Neshat has been featured in solo exhibitions at the Franklin Furnace in New York, the Whitney Museum of American Arts and The Art Institute of Chicago.

Nasreen Mohammadi

Nasreen Mohammadi was born in Karachi, 1937 and brought up in Mumbai, India. She studied painting at St. Martins School of art, London. Nasreen joined the faculty of arts in M.S. University, Baroda as a teacher in 1972. Her works are on line grid stains, and she mostly works in black and white on different surfaces.



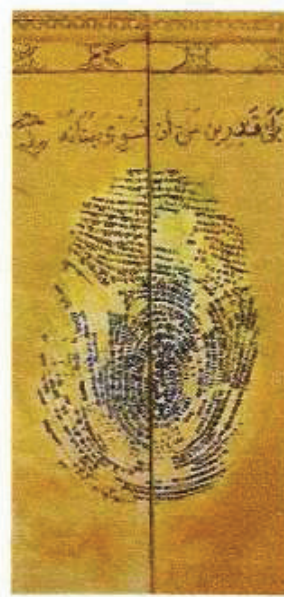
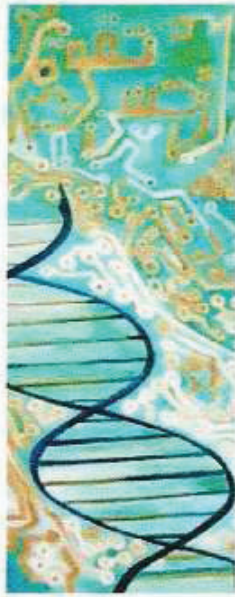
Nasreen's art work shows diversified influences evident throughout the three

decades of her career. Reflective of a delicate stream of aesthetic evocations that somehow defined the modern Indian art faced a midst the flux after the Indian independence. Known for a non—figurative accent she tried to express herself through pure non representational forms. Her approach has been non conventional even in the creation of abstract compositions. Initial days to the much acclaimed ordered geometrical assortment of lines in the complex structure of art in her career. Her work has been exhibited in Wack Art and the feminist revolution, Museum of contemporary art, Los Angeles in 2007 which traveled Canada, Germany and New York.

Huda Totonji

Huda Totonji from Saudi Arab completed her M.F.A. and PhD in Washington D.C, (U.S.A.) and has 7 years of academic teaching experience in fine art and visual technology. Dr Huda participated in more than 60 exhibitions, her experience incorporate the beauty of a culture or an environment into visual art in public and private sectors, her art work was exhibited in the united nation headquarter New York .

As an invited guest artist, Huda spoke in most renowned Universities in the U.S and worldwide being able to combine both the eastern and western ideology that has been a constant interest in Huda's artistic approach .Her PhD dissertation explored the integration of text and researching Islamic calligraphy, female subjectivity, art and science. Her future career goal is to establish robust educational Channel between international universities and universities in Saudi Arab, leading the Saudi female educators and artist into an outstanding productive and creative educational environment.



The digital fingerprint painting illustrates specific visual experiences related to the biology of vision such as how the human eyes and brain process sensory data. Looking at the visual data allows the viewer to move from bottom to top (eyes to brain), as information in the nerve cells are carried from bottom to top. What one sees depends on the framework built by past experiences, and which affects the interpretation of raw data.

Therefore, the topic of this experiment must be visually stimulating. At the same time, the act of seeing how the human brain makes sense of the visual world is very crucial to the overall experience. By combining Quran verses with scientific imagery in a visual art form. This research explores these concepts by specifically focusing on genomics and visual icons. Connecting science, art, and spirituality is the key of this research approach. However, this quest clearly defines the juxtaposition of the three disciplines in one visual element. The Source is from the Quran, Chapter 75 Verse 4 for Fingerprint Painting translation: "Yes, We are Able to put together in perfect order the tips of his fingers." The scientific imagery uses the male and female binary codes that form the shape of the fingerprint.

Farida Batool

Farida Batool was born and raised in Lahore. She received her B.A. in Fine Arts from National College of Arts; Lahore in 1993 She received her MA in Art History and Theory (Research) from the College of Fine Arts at the University of New South Wales in Australia, 2003. Farida is now a PhD candidate in media and film studies at The School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London.

The works of Farida Batool serve as metaphors for the political up-heavals and tumultuous history of her country. They identify the fear that spread throughout

Pakistan and the many citizens who had suffered by the hands of the regime. Batool is constantly confronted with her own feelings of guilt, and nostalgia for her homeland. She magnifies and examines these emotions in her use of lenticular prints (3-d holographic photographs) as a medium. Their double-faced layering allows the viewer to reflect upon the artist's dual perspective, where the injustices of living in both the East and West are scrutinized.



At icon, New York, Batool showed three new prints. Sohni Dharti (Dear Land) shows an image of the artist wearing modern clothes with a flavor of traditional Pakistani dress in the drapes of her scarf. The vibrant red and yellow of her clothes and the flowers in the park around her are the symbol of spring celebrations and festivals in Pakistan. The lenticular print transforms this peaceful scene into a cloud of smoke from the burning building of the Dyal Singh Mansion in Lahore, a colonial building that was targeted by religious extremists. The smoke appears to engulf Farida - eliminating her existence - as if the terror from her home country has finally caught up with her. Phool Mera Watan (My Land, A Flower) shows an aerial view of Lahore, as if looking through the bottom of a drone aircraft from which missiles could be dropped. The work depicts flowers and a baby ejected from the plane, floating above the ground with the artist's homeland at a distance.

Alongside the lenticolour prints series of works entitled Sohni Dharti, Maa Tujhe Salam, and Love letter to Lahore and Song of Love. These mixed-media creations of digital images and pencil drawings show a pregnant belly superimposed onto drawings of military operations in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. The pregnant belly is emblematic of motherhood, protection and one's homeland. Such gender orientation is featured strongly in Batool's work as she calls upon her own experiences as a female citizen of Pakistan and the discrimination to which she was subjected.

Contribution of Muslim women in Urdu Literature

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Introduction

"One woman can change many thing, many women can change everything".

Present paper has three fold objectives: (a) it tries to locate and trace the genre of the literature adopted by Muslim Women. (b) Their concerns, issues on which they wrote, reflected upon. (c) What is their contribution towards, and for that matter how they have enriched the literature. This paper does have temporal and spatial limitations as well. As it is seeking to talk about the writings by Muslim women, from Indian sub- continent. Chosen period is from the very start of twentieth century till the beginning of the era of economic liberalization in India. Consolidation of Bangladesh as a society and polity. Re-emergence of democratic forces in Pakistan. The said period has seen emergence of consciousness of one being women, of women being in bondage, subjugated and exploited. Emergence of progressive writers and their subsequent ideology and the impact of that ideology(Communism) on their writings, national movement, partition of the country , abolition of landed aristocracy, emergence of the third wave of feminism that is radical feminism in the wider social science writings, a time period which witnessed the commoditization of women body. Annihilation and trivialization of issues related with women.

By implying 'Content Analysis' as methodology, this paper covers Muslim women writers and poets. One limitation in making these selections is that female writers were selected on the basis of Muslim heritage as opposed to other women writers of the same region and period who were not Muslim. Much of the twentieth century literature in Muslim societies of the Indian Sub- continent does not deal directly with religion, while ethnic, linguistic, religious, and national identities are more complex and fluid than can be easily categorized under discrete headings. Studies of literature are most often grouped on the basis of the language that is the vehicle of expression or the national context of the author. Increasingly, migration, exile and cosmopolitan identities complicate any project of strictly situating writers according to linguistic or national identity. Thus the categories enumerated here may be taken as preliminary and suggestive rather than determinative. As a sociologist, I am especially interested in social and cultural context of their texts. It seems clear that women's writing may take many forms and are outcomes of her experiences which she goes the human sentiments. Though some women choose poetry as a genre for expression. Muslim women writers who picked the pen at the

start of the twentieth century were from upper or middle class, and like most of the Muslim women, were in purdah. They rarely went out, and when they did they were heavily veiled and accompanied by a male relative or a servant. When they were in company, it was with other women, or with members of their Immediate or extended families. When they wrote, they wrote to communicate, express and to tell about themselves.

Before her untimely death in 1908, Muhammadi Beghum wrote lots of novels and poetry, many of these works serialized in the pages of Tahzib (journal). Her novels are patterned on the popular novels of those days. One of her novel titled, 'Safiya Beghum', is a cautionary tale about the dangers of marrying off a daughter without her consent. Safiya had been engaged at birth to her cousin. She grows into a lovely and charming young woman, educated by her father, taught the household arts by her mother, and to care for the sick by a family friend who happens to be a woman doctor. Her mother feels that it is time to marry her, and though her father has little enthusiasm for the match, and the cousin has become a lazy good-for-nothing and a consumptive, the father contacts the relatives. The cousin, sensibly, turns down the marriage proposal, citing his illness. Safiya and her parents are relieved by this turn of events and arrange her marriage to a well-educated upstanding young man. Unfortunately, before the marriage can take place, the cousin's family reconsiders, having decided that Safiya's dowry is too good to pass up, and they invoke the childhood betrothal. Safiya's parents are honor bound to opt for their kinsmen, even though he is less worthy. Safiya, not consulted about this last-minute change in her intended spouse, dies of humiliation, leaving behind a note imploring parents not to marry off their daughters without their informed consent, an act which, in addition to everything else, is contrary to the sharia. This poignant story sounds much like the plot of a Bollywood film, yet Safiya's tragedy also reflects a distinctly feminist consciousness. Safiya is educated and skilled, but caught in a conflict between her duty to her parents and their differing views of family and religious obligation. In her moral conflict between customary views of what is honorable and religiously correct action, Safiya's father gives in to his wife's sense of family obligation, in the process violating both religion and Safiya's best interest. Safiya cannot win, for to disobey her parents would dishonor them all. The only way out is to die, though she does not take her own life but conveniently dies of a broken heart. This melodramatic turn violates what is otherwise a fairly realistic scenario. Muhammadi Beghum illustrates the importance of family relationships and the sense of duty to them that complicate moral choices and limit women's freedom of action.

The content of Muhammadi Beghum's writings reflect upon and discussed about education, housekeeping, and child care, gave recipes, advice to daughters-in-law on how to get along with their in-laws, and so forth. A constant theme was the reform and simplification of custom and the need to eliminate wasteful expenditure on household rituals. Muhammadi's Novels expressed moral dilemmas within acceptable boundaries and her poetry provided one of the few

windows for her own feelings.

Rokeya Sakhawat Hossein (1880-1932). Is especially known as a Bengali woman educator and outspoken critic of purdah. Less well known is that she also written in Urdu and in English. In 1905, she composed a story in English Titled "Sultana's Dream" a feminist utopian fantasy that tells of a society. "Lady land," where women rule and the men are kept in mardanas—as opposed to zenanas—out of sight, because of their unreliability and quarrelsomeness. one of the most radical of early feminist writings. She went on to write in Bengali and attack the pardah system and traditional attitudes towards women. It appeared in rough as a person. She may write short stories, novels, poetry. Muslim women of Indian sub-continent adopted most often Urdu and some English and Bengali as a medium of expression. So it was natural for a women writer of Urdu to choose prose as a genre for expression. For the fact that Urdu poetry at that time particularly dominated by ghazals, and ghazal, etymologically stands for talking about women, and describing about love, separation and many facet of relationships associated with these English in the Indian Ladies Magazine in 1905 (ten years before Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Her land, another feminist utopian tale that appeared in 1915). Through this story she questions the whole logic of confining the victims while perpetrators of crime are free. In this story she describe about the non conventional and renewable source of energy, sustainable development which has become a buzzword in developmental and environmental issues, military strategy, gardening, landscaping and also a well imagined/visualized/dramatized science fiction.

Zahida Khatoon Sherwani was an early women writer who in her poem composed in 1915, reminds men of the last sermon of the prophet in which he instructed Muslims to be on guard when it comes to their treatment of women. She also wrote a poem expressing her disapproval of the prevalent custom in the Punjab of disinheriting Muslim women from their right to hold property. Same year she composed a poem to remind the Muslim women of their obligations as Muslim to pray, to recite Quran, and to save money for performing Hajj. In 1914 while addressing at the opening ceremony of Sultania hostel for girls at Aligarh she recited a couplet which reflects upon the past and future of education for Muslim women In India. She used powerful imagery in her poems to draw parallels between the status of Urdu-marginalized, ignored, hidden from view—and the status of women in her society. Beginning with the imagery of not being seen and having an under-appreciated beauty, she proceeds to the image of a mushaira, or poetic assembly, and changes the discourse to one of not being heard, or of trying to speak and not being understood. In spite of grace of form and style, she was condemned for showing off her beauty and is powerless in the face of incomprehension. In her collection `Sipas-Nama', Zahida khatun Sherwani looks to have developed a distinctive voice, rich in irony and contradictions. If one places her poetry, in the context of the times in which they were composed; it can well be labeled as an autobiography.

Rashid Jahan's famous short story `Dilli ki Sair' is a little narrative about a burqa

clad women watching life on railway platform waiting for her husband to turn up and take her home . The story is a brief but penetrating tells on life behind the veil and the blindness of male privilege towards the experience of women behind the purdah. She robustly criticized the obscurantist customs in her community, and the sexual hypocrisies of some feudal land owners and men of religion.

Urdu novel has crossed many stages. It had an established tradition of its own, came Qurattulain Haider who established one of her own. Which was different from other novelists not only in terms of theme, but also in the style of presentation? Sometimes she looks poetic and sometimes she goes for the simplicity of the language. She has a very diverse subject and wide issues to write upon. Contrary to her predecessors of Urdu novel such as Maulavi Nazeer Ahmad who seems to preach through his novel. For Sharshar the society of Lucknow is whole world. Sharar confined himself for the history of Islam. Ruswa who depicted a particular section of society through his novel. Premchand confined himself for the Indian villages. The prime time of Qurattulain Haider's writing coincided with the peak of progressive writing. She never became part of the movement but continued writing independently for the sake of literature than for movement. A prolific writer (she began to write at the young age of 11), her literary works include some 12 novels and four collections of short stories. Haider has also done a significant amount of translation of classics. Her own works have been translated into English and other languages. Aag Ka Dariya, her magnum opus, is a landmark novel that explores the vast sweep of time and history. It tells a story that moves from the fourth century BC to the post-Independence period in India and Pakistan, pausing at the many crucial epochs of history. Critics were of the opinion that "Aag Ka darya" is to Urdu literature, as "Hundred Years of Solitude" is to Hispanic literature. Aag Ka Darya is essentially a novel written from the point of view of the believers of Pakistan and depicts their agony in detail, especially towards the climax of the novel. In her novel "Sita Haran" she depicted the exploitation of women. In "Chai Ka Baghan" tried to sketch nuances of human life. In "Dil Ruba" written about the changing culture. "Agle janam Mohe Bitia Na Kijo" described about the way injustices inflicted upon women. "Housing Society" is a telling depiction of the down fall of landed aristocracy. Compared to her contemporaries. The breadth of her literary canvas, her vision and insight, transcend time.

Ismat Chughtai (1915 — 1991), in her writing she tried to depict the middle class young women. Psychology of this section of the society was her main theme of writing. She written about the sexual perversion and talked about the alternative sexuality. Her language is pure and refined and actual representative of feminine language. She was an eminent Indian writer in Urdu, known for her indomitable spirit and a fierce feminist ideology. Considered to be the grand dame of Urdu fiction, Chughtai was one of the Muslim writers who stayed on India after the subcontinent was partitioned. Ismat's work stands for the birth of a revolutionary feminist politics and aesthetics in twentieth century Urdu literature. She explored feminine sexuality, middle-class gentility, and other evolving conflicts in modern India. Ismat's

outspoken and controversial style of writing made her the passionate voice for the unheard, and she has become an inspiration for the younger generation of writers, readers and intellectuals.

Wajeda Tabassum in much of her writings uses Hyderabad locale and the Dakkani dialects of Urdu literature. She has a peerless match for the use of this dialect. She depicted the indulging and luxurious life style of Hyderabad nawabs. She had written many novels and serialized stories depicting exploitation and helplessness of women, just because of her gender and upbringing.

Born in 1948 in Karachi, Pakistan, Azra Abbas is a prominent feminist poet of Urdu literature. In 1981, she published an extended prose and poem in stream-of-consciousness style, "Neend Ki Musafatain," and since then, she has written three collections of poetry, a compilation of short stories, and a novel. Azra has most notably written about the challenges that come with women's roles in society. Domestic chores, sexual desire, and gender inequality are some of the issues she explores in her work. Azra blends the private and political life of women in meditating on the "hidden wonders and abysses in everyday life, and one scholar has described her work as capturing the "poetry of life's prose." For instance, critics have described her poem, "A Dot Might Appear," as a contemplative, evocative piece which makes us wonder about, and even question, accepted perceptions and established priorities.

Parveen Shakir was a famous contemporary Urdu poet. A number of her poetry books were published and received nationwide recognition in Pakistan. Before her untimely death, Parveen Shakir was awarded the Pride of Performance award, by the government of Pakistan. Parveen Shakir's poetry mainly consists of Ghazalyaats lyrical poetry written in recurring ri-ines, and free verses. Her ghazal style represents a combination of "classical tradition with L-7,:idern sensitivity." The most prominent themes in Parveen Shakir's poetry are love, feminism, and social stigmas, though she occasionally wrote on other topics as well. Her work was often based on romanticism, exploring the concepts of love, beauty and their contradictions, and heavily integrated the use of metaphors, similes and personifications.

Defying the most commonly masculine syntax used by other poets, Parveen Shakir was the first female poet to use the word ladki'(girl) in her work. Similarly, she often made use of the Urdu first-person, feminine pronoun in her verses which, though extremely common in prose, was rarely used in poetry, even by female poets, before her.

It is imperative to include the name of Taslima Nasreen here, Bangladeshi poet and writer. Many critics would argue that Nasreen's work illuminate an Islamic feminist voice. Her own experience of sexual abuse as a child and her work as a .gynaecologist where she had routinely examined young girls who had been

raped; and heard many women cry in the delivery room in despair if their new born baby was a girl; had influenced her writings. That is why her writing is characterized by two connected elements that is her struggle with native culture and her feminist philosophy. She had also written memoirs in the fictionalized way. Nasreen's writings can be recognized for candidness, frankness; and her approach is radical.

In comparison to women of other religious group and their subsequent population, and while considering educational and economic backwardness among Muslims in general and among Muslim women in particular. It is a well known fact that Muslim women's contribution towards literature is immense. Be it their contribution in any language namely Urdu, English and Bengali and be any genre of literature (Poetry, novel and short stories).The Muslim writers of Indian Sub-continent highlighted the issues affecting contemporary societies and women in those societies. They highlighted the transformation of women which they are going through due to the ongoing process of modernization, westernization, urbanization, changing class structure, effects of caste and partition of the country. One writer even wrote on the basis of her secret accounts of violent opposition to her education from her immediate family. Muslim women writers were having a voice beyond the conservative and religiously sanctioned changes for women. They are exploring gender justice and trying to liberate the women out of bondage created by social tradition and custom. Muslim women writers of Sub- continent tried to analyze the shifting patterns of the private and public lives of the women of Sub-continent. Most often they are /were trying to illustrate the importance of family relationships and the sense of duty to them that complicate moral choices and limit women's freedom of action. Muslim women's contribution in literature is valuable as they wrote it to express their feelings and treated it a way of liberation. It is worthy to note here that their contribution to literature has added new dimensions and perspectives and brought into surface issues which no one has ever touched or dared to touch. It is the contribution of Muslim women writers that these issues became the part of literary discourse. Also have shown how to make society, culture, polity and economy more inclusive for women.

"Work for your contemporaries; but create what they need, not what they praise"

Freirich Schiller.
