
THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN INDIAN MUSLIM SOCIETY A - STUDY

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Abstract: The issues facing the majority of Muslim women around the world today are those facing the majority of women everywhere: poverty, illiteracy, political repression, and patriarchy. At the same time, there are now and always have been elite Indian Muslim women, with wealth and clout, who have exercised power and autonomy within social and economic networks. No one can argue that these women all share a "status." For this reason, stereotypes of Muslim women as uniquely oppressed bear little resemblance to reality. Yet the attempt to define "women's status in Islam" persists.

Keywords: Issues of Poverty, Illiteracy, Divorced Women, Broken Relationship.

Introduction: Some people take the question about women's status to be about an idealized Islam—mostly referring to Qur'an and prophetic tradition, sometimes including jurisprudence. As with Christian scripture, analyzing isolated passages from these sources is not likely to give an accurate portrayal of women's rights, nor do these sources necessarily reflect actual practice. A focus on the Qur'an verses that specifically address women is, however, one common means of attempting to answer the question "What is women's status in Islam?" Indeed, Muslims have often encouraged this approach as a way of deflecting criticism about women's actual disadvantages in some Muslim societies. Faced with clear evidence of oppression, Muslim apologists state that such practices are contrary to "true Islam," which they claim liberated women from their disadvantaged position in pre-Islamic Arabia. An opposite reaction is heard from detractors of Islam. When women achieve social prominence and personal success in Muslim societies, these critics contend that it is despite Islam; such "progress" (such as several Muslim women becoming heads of state) is possible because of the declining importance of religion. Where legal and social discrimination against women do exist, however, these critics blame it on Islam.

Rights of women in Islam: Islam has granted numerous rights to women including property rights and Mehar which no other religion has given. Some rights given to her several centuries ago have not been given to her even in the modern system of law. Men and women are equal in Islam the inequality is created by society and not by religion. Religious scholars who interpreted Quran denied women their basic rights given by Islam. Islam provides full protection to the rights of woman. The rights Granted to her by Islamic Shariah cannot be taken away by any one. Women are allowed to play an effective and helpful role in the Islamic Society. Shariah allows them to form their own organization for the uplift of the society. Though such organization did not exist during the time of Holy Prophet (PBUH) but the women used to get together during those days and put before the Holy Prophet (PBUH) the problems which they faced and the Prophet listened to them. Now the circumstances are different the Muslim women have to face various difficulties all over the world. Therefore, they can form their own organizations to solve the problems concerning women and children and they can do a lot for their upliftment.

The Prophet restrained polygamy by limiting the number of marriages to four, the essential emphases of the Quran is for justice to women for the protection of rights of women in marriage. Quran while permitting polygamy laid strict conditions that a man may take another wife only if he can treat all his wives equally. Polygamy is based on justice, monogamy should be the rule in marriage and polygamy

should be allowed in exceptional cases. Islam gave rights of inheritance and other property rights to women. Islam encouraged female education and granted the right to hold a job and to involve her actively in trade and commerce. During the early Islamic period women helped men in their outdoor work and were allowed to move about freely among them but not among the strangers. But on practical grounds polygamy along with triple talaq affect the woman most. Husband do not fulfils the conditions of second marriage and gave no equal treatment to his wives as a result of this it affects her social status and also become the cause of domestic violence in which only woman suffers.

A Muslim woman has the right to choose her husband; Islamic law is very strict regarding the necessity of having the women's consent for marriage. The husband gives marriage dower (Mehtar) to his wife for her own personal use at the time of nikah. After marriage she keeps her own family name, rather than taking her husband's. As a wife, a woman has the right to be supported by her husband even if she is already rich. She also has the right to seek divorce (khula) and custody of her young children. She does not return the dower, except in a few unusual situations. Besides all other provisions for her protection at the time of marriage, it was specifically decreed that woman has the full right to her Mehtar which is given to her by her husband and is included in the nuptial contract. Her share in most cases is one-half the man's share with no implications that she is inferior to man. This variation is only consistent with the variations in financial responsibilities of men and women. According to Islamic law, man in Islam is fully responsible for the maintenance of his wife, his children especially the females.

Islam in India: Islam came to south Asia prior to Muslim invasion of India. Islamic influence felt in India with the advent of Arab traders in Malabar region in the early 7th century and many Arab traders married local Mappila women's. The province of Sindh was conquered by an Arab army under Muhammad Mir Qasim and Sindh became the eastern most province of the Umayyad Caliphate. Before Arabs began to conquer Sind in 711 A.D., Arabs were already trading and settling along the west coast from modern Kerala to the Gulf of Cambay. There was presence of Muslims, presumably traders, in some of the towns in north India before the opening of Mohamed of Ghazni's campaign into north Indian plains in 1001. A successful invasion by Mohammad Ghorī in 12th century eventually led to the formation of Delhi sultanate and north India came under Muslim rule.

Muslims are in minority in India, their women's position is even worse, because Muslim men have generally prevented their women from modern education and social and economic progress. Educated women are not allowed to seek employment because the patriarchal „respectability“ is likely to get smeared. This has resulted in the general backwardness of Muslim women in India which is aggravated by the discriminatory treatment as well as the feeling of the discrimination experienced by them in many parts of the country. In India Islam is the second largest religion, making up 14.9% of the country's population with about 180 million adherents (2011 census). India has the second population of Muslims after Indonesia. States that Muslims in India are governed by “the Muslim personal law (Shariah) application act, 1937 It directs the application of Muslim personal law to Muslims in marriage, dower, Mehtar (dower), divorce, maintenance, gifts, waqf, wills and inheritance. The Indian constitution provides equal rights to all citizens irrespective of their religion. Article 44 recommends a uniform civil code. However , the attempts by successive political leadership in the country to integrate Indian society under common civil code is strongly resisted and is viewed by Indian Muslims as an attempt to dilute the cultural identity of the minority groups of the country.

Women in Muslim society in India: During Muslim rule in India Muslims enjoyed power and patronage at all levels. They had the lion's share in the services and also held high posts under the Marathas after decline of Mughal rule. With the advent of British rule in India they lose all privileges and patronage and refused to absorb the new influences which gradually lead to their economic backwardness. Later they were slow to adopt new reforms and policies in this Muslim women suffered more than men. After independence women began to participate in certain spheres of socio- economic activities in India and started coming out of their seclusion and started active participation in vocations that are largely the monopoly of males. Socially one of the most fundamental and most remarkable

changes brought about since independence is the comparative emancipation of women kind and its emergence from the seclusion of home into the activities of the world outside". But no spectacular transformation has taken place in the case of Muslim women.

Muslim women are not a monolithic community like other women but belong to different sects, social groups, occupations, regional, Linguistic-cultural groups, educational level, etc. Their lives are similar at the intersection of gender, family and community within the dynamic context of Indian society, polity and economy. Study that stereotypes of Muslim women, entrenched by the trinity of multiple marriages, triple talaq and Pardah have held them hostage for so long that they have become difficult to dislodge. Muslim women probably comprise the poorest and most disadvantaged group in the country. Muslim women have been viewed as wards of their community, and on the other as independent freely-choosing subject entitled to rights, resources and protection, irrespective of sex religion. In most analysis as well as in much of the campaigning and struggle, greater attention has been paid to the question of Muslim personal law and its curtailment of rights vis-à-vis women and on legal equality in the matter of personal law as a minimum guarantee of equal citizenship than on socio-economic, historical on local factors. The problem of raising women from oppressed, a lower value status to social economic and political equality, from tradition to modernity has been a discontinuous and indeed a complex process linked with the contradictory pulls and tensions of class, caste and power. The realization of equality has been an inseparable process of modernization in „our society“ of the Middle Ages and in a protracted and bitter struggle the dynamic concept emerged as a great ideological force. An important aspect of the transition from tradition to modernity is the change in the pattern of social stratification.

Socio-Economic status of Muslim women in India: Against this background, it is necessary that we examine why Muslim women remained backward compared to the women of other religious communities in social, economic, cultural and political fields. When the British came to India in the 16th century A.D., women had been completely degraded, as society was stagnated by religious customs and traditions. Pardah system, child marriage, female infanticide, sati and restrictions on widow marriage were common in those days when the British entered India with a new culture and social values based on equality. During the British rule in India, several laws were enacted to eliminate social evils prevalent in the society. Although only a few women belonging to the upper class took advantage of the new culture, the attitude and behavior patterns of Hindus changed drastically. But Muslims did not take the benefit of the new culture. "The Hindus had taken more readily to the western concepts of a humanistic and democratic way of life. On the other hand, the Muslims despite their forward-looking leaders like Sir Syed Ahmed Khan stuck to their conversation and refused to imbibe democratic values and even modern education. Thus, the hiatus between the Hindus and Muslims developed, giving rise to an inequality of status for which of course, no one but the Muslims themselves are to be blamed.

The minority position of Muslims in The minority position of Muslims in India further discouraged them from accepting the modern culture and values. They were scared of imbibing democratic culture for the reasons of losing their identity and maintained ancient customs and traditions, backed by the support of religious ulemas. This attitude affected the development of Muslim women. They sanctioned ancient restrictions on them. They restricted their women from reaping the fruits of modern education and employment. The autonomy of Muslim women has been severely eroded. Muslims have to rethink their position being the largest minority community and inhabiting the second largest Muslim populated country of the world. Their status in social, and economic spheres such as education, public services, banking, public sector undertaking, etc., is deplorable. The backwardness of the Muslim affects the development of their women more than their men. The women play a far greater role in the socialization of their children. An educated mother therefore can play an effective role in the physical and emotional development of children.

Sachhar committee report (2005) 64 presents the backwardness faced by the Muslim through various indicators. According to this report Muslim are lagging in socioeconomic sphere which affect the position of Muslim women. The reason behind their poor socio economic condition is not religious but

social factors such as poverty, low income, illiteracy. Muslim have low rate of literacy and employment. According to this report Muslims are not only the victims of poverty, but have come to accept inequality and discrimination as their inevitable fate.

However, Muslim women have remained backward in most of the areas of life and are slow in taking the benefits of modernization and development. But in recent years there have been signs of change. Modernization and development have brought about some changes in their role and status; they are no longer isolated from the outside world. In this process of change, they have surmounted several barriers. "Some of these changes have taken the Muslim women out of the protected environment of the past into the rush and confusion of the modern world. Her world is no longer bounded by the four walls of the house, but by the wider area of civic and national interests and even international relationships. Muslim women are availing themselves the opportunities provided to an average citizen of India. Now-a-days, we can see Muslim women in the field of teaching, medicine and even judiciary and like. Many changes have taken place in the matter of education, employment and Pardah for the Muslim women. Their status has considerably improved specially in the last three decades. Observes that there is definite evidence to show that Muslims are undergoing change, though the rate and extent of change varies between the rural and urban areas and different socio-economic classes. There has been a changing trend towards traditional status of the Muslim women owing to spread of education, slackening of patriarchal rigidity, dynamic political system and growth of women's organization.

Conclusion: From the above discussion we conclude that Muslim society is a patriarchal and women are under the subjection of male elders of the family but as we found in other studies on Muslim in India. We have to re-codify the Shariah laws pertaining to women on the basis of the liberal, modern interpretation of the Qur'an, and some ahadith that are in conformity with the Qur'an spirit. Such an approach, it is hoped, will be an instrument in the struggle for women's rights for practicing Muslim women. This requires a great deal of research among the authentic Islamic sources. This process has started, and needs to be strengthened and supported. Initially they may have to face opposition from the conservative 'Ulemas, but there is no other way they can demand change. Second, the most important task before all of us is to de-politicize all Muslim issues, which are detrimental to national integration. Muslims should not be seen only as a vote bank. There has to be a sincere effort on the part of the community and the state to improve the overall condition of Indian Muslims. And if the overall conditions of Muslims improve, and they are well-represented in all social sectors, the conservative element would not get a chance to campaign for strengthening and maintaining a communal identity. For this, an aggressive but meaningful campaign as part of a larger project aiming at creating a critical class within the Muslim society has to be evolved by Muslim intellectuals through a scientific and modern interpretation of Islamic scriptures.

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