CHAPTER VII

SELF-ASSERTION AND SOCIAL AWARENESS:
THE ISLAMIC VIEWPOINT

In many social movements of the modern times the main focus has been on 'liberty' and 'equality' of both men and women. It is claimed that without securing the liberty of women and establishing their rights equal with those of men any reference to human rights and freedom has no meanings. Moreover, it is also believed that most of the difficulties within the family arise from the absence of freedom for women and the inequality of their rights with those of men. These difficulties in the family can be resolved only if women get equal rights and liberty. However, the question of their rights in comparison to the rights of men formally arose, for the first time, only in the 20th century with the United Nations' "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" which was drawn up in 1948, after the Second World War. The equality of rights of women and men was explicitly declared therein.

Islam is not a rigid system of laws and institutions but a set of principles capable of keeping pace with the change. It permits change by providing the option of ijithad (reinterpretation of laws) within the framework of fundamental Islamic values and principles of general understanding.

whose validity remains unaffected by the varying conditions of social progress. As against western civilization which regards the abundance of material wealth, technical skills and mechanical efficiency as primary importance, Islam puts primary emphasis on just those qualities of soul and mind which lead to greater social harmony and prevent conflicts among human being. As far as the Holy Quran is concerned, it is based on the doctrine of human equality, including sex equality. According to the Islamic view, it is never a matter of dispute as to whether a man and a woman are equal as human being or not and also as to whether their family rights should or should not be equal in value with each other. A woman and a man both are human beings and both are apportioned equal rights.

The Quran says:

"O! people! be careful of (your duty to) your Lord, who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same (kind) and spread from these two, many men and women" (Quran: 4:1).

It further asserted the dignity of women by declaring:

"They (women) are an apparel for you (men) and you are an apparel for them" (Quran: 2:118).

2. Ibid., p.20.
3. Ibid., p.124.
Islam improved the status of women, some 1400 years ago, through a variety of reforms instituted by the Prophet Mohammad. As discussed in the earlier chapters, it improved their status by assigning a share in inheritance for which they were earlier deprived off, by restricting the polygamy to four wives and, under certain circumstances, by giving them the right to accept or reject the marriage proposal. It provided to them the system of Mehr as security, made education necessary and gave them the right to take separation or divorce. Prohibiting the female infanticides it allowed them to hold any public office and facilitated them to hold any public office and facilitated them to remarry after divorce or widowhood. On the basis of Quran, Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammad) and other religious books, the Islamic writers have emphasized that a woman is not treated badly in Islam. Md Qutab is of the opinion that, "as fundamental principle of its system, Islam holds that woman is a human being and she has a soul similar to that of a man." 5

Thus, Islam has enhanced status of women and showered them with ample human rights. In this regard, the famous journalist Khushwant Singh while addressing a workshop of journalists on the problem of girls organised by the UNICEF in Delhi in October, 1985 said, "Unfortunately crimes against

women as bride-burning and dowry-murders are more rampant among the Sikhs, the Jains, the Buddhists and the Hindus while such inhuman events rarely occur among the Muslims and Christians. The reason for this is that Islam gave women a better and equal status long before other communities did.  

The position of women in Islam has, however, been the subject of controversy among the educated Muslims ever since they came under the influence of western civilization. This controversy is the result of social and economic developments among the Muslims in India. The impact of these developments can be noticed in the changing attitudes and lifestyles of both males and females. But these are opposed especially in the case of the latter by a section of Muslims on the ground that these changes are contrary to the principles of Islam.

Therefore, in the light of the above we shall examine, in the present chapter, some of the principles of Islam pertaining to the status, rights and obligations of Muslim women. How far they are aware about their Islamic rights? What are their attitudes towards maulvis and ulamas? Do they think that these ulamas would be helpful in improving

their status or making Muslim women aware about their rights and status? Also, whether they assert for their rights and status and adopt any strategy to impress upon the ulamas to function towards the status and rights prescribed in Islam? These are some of the questions we shall deal with in the following sections. We shall also try to examine the bearings of educational background, age, exposure to mass-media, etc. of the respondents on their views regarding the issues raised above.

Women and family inheritance:

It is true that under the Muslim Personal Law women are allowed to have a share in their father's property. Though as a mother, wife and daughter they qualify for a share almost under all conditions, the Quran prescribes the share of property "to the male equivalent of the proportions of two females" (The Quran, Sura Nisa - 11, 12). According to Menon, "the Muslim inheritance law is equally unjust to women; a woman is entitled to have only 1/3rd of the share in property left by her husband if there are no children, and only 1/8th if there are children. If the husband's father is alive, she and her children are not entitled to have any share in ancestral property when her husband dies." But in the words of Bhatty, "Such provisions the Islam had wrenched in its early reformist phase to liberate the women.

For a woman this was an enormous boost in improving her position and the Islam subsequently was legitimately responsible for it.  

Keeping in view the above mentioned Islamic Law on the inheritance of property, the respondents were asked whether they knew about the right of share of a Muslim woman in her parental property. It has been found that 94% of the respondents are aware of their (and also of the Muslim women) rights in their parents' property. In their opinion, the daughter gets "half of the son's share in inheritance". The rest 6 per cent respondents are unaware of their and also of the Muslim women's share in inheritance. Their awareness and or unawareness of the inheritance of parental property have bearings of the levels of their educational achievement, their age, occupation, exposure to mass media, etc. More precisely, the respondents' educational levels do have some impact on their awareness regarding their share in parental property. Those 37.5% of respondents who are educated upto secondary or intermediate level are less aware and 62.5% are not aware at all about their share in inheritance. On the other hand, the 68% graduates and 67.8% post-graduates have shown a higher degree of awareness towards their share in inheritance. Similarly, age of the

respondents is also related with their awareness towards their property rights, i.e. lower the age of the respondents, higher is their awareness. In other words, those 59% who are below 25 years of age are more conscious about their rights than those 56.9% who are of higher (30-35 years) age group. Moreover, the highest percentage 65.5% of awareness is found among the respondents of 25-30 years of age group. The percentage of the awareness further decreases in the case of the respondents of the age groups of 36-40 years (33.4%) and above (42.8%). Thus, the educational level and age of the respondents do have impact on their awareness towards their right of inheritance in the parental property.

Further, it is necessary to find out whether the respondents know the procedure through which they can get their share. Therefore, they have been asked if they know how to get their share in the parental property. It is amazing to note that among the 94 per cent of the respondents who are aware of their share in the family inheritance, 57.2% know well how to get it while 42.8% do not know at all. It shows that their knowledge is mostly verbal and not the textual. Again, like their knowledge of provision of the inheritance of property, their awareness about the procedure has also the bearings of the levels of their educational achievement, their age and exposure to mass media, etc. In other words, of those respondents who are highly exposed to
mass media, 75% know the procedure and say that they can have it, first, through family and kins and if not through these channels then through the court of law. Similarly, of those who are less exposed to mass media 34.5% know how to get their share in family inheritance whereas a majority of them do not know the procedure at all. Statistically also, the two variables are correlated with a high degree of probability ( \( .001 \) level of significance).

Table 7.1: The respondents' exposure to mass media and their awareness about the procedure for getting inheritance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure to mass media</th>
<th>Awareness towards the procedure of getting inheritance</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High exposure</td>
<td>Aware: 105 (75.0%)</td>
<td>140 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unaware: 35 (25.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low exposure</td>
<td>Aware: 38 (34.5)</td>
<td>110 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unaware: 72 (65.6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Aware: 143 (57.2)</td>
<td>250 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unaware: 107 (42.8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 41.176, \text{ df } = 1, \ P < .001, \ C = 0.021 \]

Women's awareness of their Right to Divorce:

The practice of divorce among the Muslims is a major problem which affects adversely their womenfolk. As pointed out by Kapadia, "the dominion of man over his wife is further asserted by the fact that he is permitted to divorce his wife at his own pleasure and without justifying his action."\(^{10}\)

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It is generally believed that divorce in Islam is a very easy process through uttering thrice in a single sitting the plain word talag (divorce) and, thus, kicking the wife out. But in Islam, divorce is the most detestable act in the eyes of God. It is laid down in the Quran that "Pro-nouncement of divorce in three separate sitting at specified intervals is required to complete the divorce and that too when all attempts of reconciliation first mutually and then through an elder member of the family of the parties have failed." This pronouncement of divorce in three separate sittings can only be done during Tohr (i.e. purity period of women). Such an act through which the husband seeks divorce from his wife by uttering the word divorce thrice in one single sitting or repeating the word thrice separately within one Tohr has been termed as "Talag-e-Bidat" by jurists. But, this type of divorce has been denounced by the Quran and the prophet.

The second type of divorce approved by the Quran and the prophet is called Talag-e-Sunnah in which the husband divorces his wife in a single reversible divorce within a Tohr during which he has not had physical relation with her. The divorced wife observes the period of Iddat (three menstrual periods) for three months. During this period, the husband is free to revert the talag uttered earlier to his wife.

11. Iqbal, Safia, op. cit., p. 93.
He has even the option to take her back in presence of the two witnesses. But the Muslims have abandoned this laudable pattern of divorce which is the safest and which gives time for reconciliation for the couple.

The Islam has given women the right to divorce equal to that of men. The Quran says, "there is no blame on either of them if she gives up something for her freedom. These are the limits ordained by God." (Quran: Surah Badar: Ayat 229). The wife too can seek a divorce through the "khula" (a single irreversible divorce). She can obtain a "khula" in which she has to return the amount of Mehr if paid at the time of Nikah (marriage). If the divorce is initiated by husband, he has to pay the amount of Mehr (if not paid at the time of Nikah). The ground provided to a woman for seeking divorce can be as simple as her mere dislike for her husband. The khula can be materialised between the wife and husband in the house itself and if it does not work, then they can go to the court of law. Thus, the Islam has not deprived a woman from an option of getting separated from the wedlock even if the husband refuses to divorce her.

Keeping in view the above mentioned Islamic Law about divorce and the khula, it was intended to know from the respondents' awareness of the women about their such Islamic rights. So, they were asked about their own awareness as well as of the women about the best way of divorce approved
by the Islam. They were also asked if the men knew about the Islamic rule on the divorce. It has been found that 38% (95) respondents are aware of the most laudable pattern of divorce (i.e. Talag-e-Sunnah) and its rule while 62% (158) are unaware of any pattern of divorce prescribed in Islam. But their such responses were not correlated with the levels of their educational achievement and exposure to mass media. In other words, in spite of the higher level of their educational achievement and high exposure to mass media a majority of the respondents are less aware of the Islamic rule of divorce given to men. Further, out of those respondents who are highly exposed to mass media 39.2% have said that, from the Islamic point of view, the talag-e-sunnah is better because it gives the chance to reconcile the decision. They are also of the view that the pronouncement of Talag should not be in anger and the wife be allowed to stay to her husband’s house during the period of her Iddat.

Nonetheless, 60.8% respondents who are highly exposed to mass media are still unaware about the patterns of divorce sanctioned by the Quran and the Sunna to men. They also do not know about the details of the rules and circumstances under which men are empowered, in Islam, to divorce their wives.
Table 7.2: Respondents' exposure to mass media and their knowledge of the approved patterns of divorce

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure to mass media</th>
<th>Divorce patterns</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aware</td>
<td>Unaware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High exposure</td>
<td>55 (39.2)</td>
<td>85 (60.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low exposure</td>
<td>40 (36.4)</td>
<td>70 (63.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>95 (38.0)</td>
<td>155 (62.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is, however, interesting to note that the respondents are quite aware of the **khula**, the right of women to divorce. It has been found that 57.2% (143) respondents are aware that the women have also got a right in Islam to get separated from their husband. Firstly, by persuading the husband, if this procedure fails then she can take the help of court of law or the authorised **Qazis**. They also say that it should be get, first, through persuading the husband in a peaceful manner and giving him back the amount of **mehr**. Against this, 42.8% respondents do not know at all about women's right to divorce and also how to use it. In this connection, an important feeling of the respondents has been noted during the informal chat with them. Majority of them have the opinion that neither the right of divorce nor **khula** given to men and women respectively safeguard the real interest of the Muslim women so far the economic, personal and social security is concerned, in a society like India. They view, with a constant fear, the right of divorce as an all time hanging sword on the Muslim women. At the same
women are deprived of the Mehr amount if they themselves initiate the divorce. In any case, the educational level, exposure to mass media, age and occupational pursuits of the respondents are not correlated with their awareness of women's right to divorce.

Legally, the rights of divorce given both to men and women have been enacted in the Muslim Marriage Dissolution Act, 1939. But the religious belief is entrenched so deeply among the Muslims that they have very rarely utilised the legal measures for seeking divorce. In fact, majority of the Muslims especially women are not even aware of such legal provisions. It was, therefore, intended to find out whether women were aware about the Muslim Marriage Dissolution Act, 1939. Hence, the respondents have been asked if they are aware of the Muslim Marriage Dissolution Act? Surprisingly, only 4.0 per cent respondents are well informed about this Act. These respondents are younger in age, highly qualified and well employed. Thus, it may be said that most of the respondents are just aware of the rights of divorce given both to men and women in Islam but not in the Muslim Marriage Dissolution Act. They are neither informed at all about the details of the rules, procedures involved therein and the most laudable type of divorce recommended by the Prophet Mohammad in Islam nor the legal provisions enacted for the purpose.

Women's awareness of Rules of Polygamy:

A Muslim man can have more than one wives. The precise
number of wives ranges up to four as stated earlier. The Quran has laid the rules for polygamous marriage according to which all the wives should be treated equally and justly including the economic justice too. According to Ali, it is worthy to note that the clause in Quran (Sura Nisa - 3), which contains the permission for four wives, is followed immediately by a sentence which cuts down the significance of the preceding passage to its normal and legitimate size. It says: "...Marry women of your choice, two or three, or four; but if you fear that you shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or "a captive" that your right hand possesses that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice."\(^{12}\) The Prophet Mohammad has also said that "if a man has two wives and has not treated them equally and justly, then he will emerge on the day of judgement in such a way that half his body will have fallen off."\(^{13}\) In brief, the idea behind the polygamy in Islam is to save the women from misuse, exploitation and, above all, to provide them protection. Unfortunately, polygamy is the most maligned, misunderstood and misinterpreted pattern of marriage among the Muslims in India today.

In the light of the above, it has been intended to find out the awareness of women about the rules of polygamy

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mentioned in the Quran and the Hadith. The respondents have been asked whether they are aware of the rules of polygamy. It has been found that a majority of the respondents (69.6%) are aware of it irrespective of their educational level, age and exposure to media of information. In their opinion, the first and the foremost rule in having more than one wife (upto four) is the equal treatment and social and economic justice to be given to all in the same way. But at the same time they say that this rule is being overlooked in most of the cases specially among the lower and illiterate strata of the Muslim society. In polygamy people hardly marry an orphan or a widow to give her protection which is the basic idea behind this type of marriage. Rest of the respondents (30.4%) do not know under which condition polygamy is allowed. Out of these 50% have received education below the graduation level.

Thus, majority of the respondents know the rules of polygamy as mentioned in the Quran. But very few of them have approved this practice because, in their opinion, men do not obey the rules as mentioned earlier. This idea of rejection of polygamy by a majority of the respondents is in order of the fact that "the feeling against polygamy is becoming a strong social, if not the moral, conviction and many extraneous circumstances in combination with this growing feelings are tending to root out the custom from among the Indian Mussalmans."14

Women's awareness of the Muslim Personal Law:

The Muslim Personal Law provides a distinctive identity to the Indian Muslims. But it is also said that the Muslim Personal Law is responsible for degeneration of the Muslim social structure because it is unable to solve the day-to-day problems of the Muslims. The Law is also blamed to give a free license to Muslim men to go for polygamy and divorce which is against the secular character of the nation. It also isolates the Muslims from the mainstream and, in turn, hinders the national integration. Besides, it suppresses the right of women and, therefore, there should be some amendment in this law. Not only that but there is a widespread demand for adopting a common personal law for all the citizens in the country.

However, according to Mujeeb, "If Muslim lawyers studied the shari'at (Islamic code of conduct) for itself and not only with reference to particular cases, they would find that it provides remedies against its own injunction if they prove irksome and has authorised even utilization of subterfuges." It has also been said that ijtihad is a living source of legal development in Islam and it can form the basis of necessary changes in the Muslim Personal Law as applicable in India. In the same sequence, Dr. Abid Hussain, the founder

15. Iqbal, Safia, op. cit., p.124.
of the *Islam and Modern Age Society*, wrote that "if Muslim Personal Law was not reformed, the belief of the new generation of Indian Muslims in Islam as a same and just religion would be "injured" and they might drift away from the faith itself."18

It has been intended here to find out views of the respondents about the Muslim Personal Law. The respondents have been asked whether they are aware of the Muslim Personal Law. It has been found that 42% (105) respondents know the various aspects of the Muslim Personal Law, like the laws about marriage, divorce, succession, etc. Against this, 58% respondents are unaware of this Law though all of them are educated and a good number of them are highly exposed to media of information. About the changes in the Muslim Personal Law, majority of the respondents (68%) interestingly do not want any change in it on the ground that it is only a cultural identity which separates Muslims from other communities. The Personal Law as such is not discriminatory against women but its implementation is wrong. So, they are of the view that the laws should strictly be obeyed by the Muslims so that the women do not feel insecure and inferior. But a sizeable number of the respondents (32%) do want some changes in the Muslim Personal Law because they think that the men misuse the privileges given to them. They enjoy their rights

but hardly follow their duties which, in turn, adversely affects the status of women.

Status of women and role of the Ulemas and religious organizations:

The religious elite and/or the religious organizations play important roles in convincing people to change their attitudes, styles of life and behaviour patterns. It is so because people are usually very sentimental about their religion and religious faith. In the case of Muslims "the religious elite can serve as 'cultural broker' and in that way contribute to modernization through the spread of education and new political values to the people."\(^{19}\) In fact, these religious elite and organizations can mobilize the masses and contribute to the socio-cultural modernization. This had happened in Indonesia several years ago where the traditional Islamic School had been the instrument of modernization.\(^{20}\)

In India also the Ulemas (the religious elite) do realise the need to modernize and thereby bring reform in the Islamic social structure and also its outmoded norms but they are still in a fix on these issues. A number of reforms in

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Islam were taken up by the Ulema in 1963 under the auspices of the Majlis-i-Tahqiqat-i-Shariyah. But nothing substantive has come up till date in the name of reforms in the Muslim social structure. In the words of Ziaul Hasan Farooqi, "My impression is that, in spite of the anxiety shown at that time, the ulema took up the problem half heartedly, and as far as I know, nothing substantial has thus far been done by the Majlis. This reluctant attitude is not confined to this particular question— that is legal reforms (italics mine). The ulema generally are incapable of taking any positive steps to reconstruct Muslim society. And yet, it is the ulema who are the leaders and wield authority with the masses." 21

Besides these ulemas as contributor to modernization, the different religious organizations can also function as an influential instrument to the modernization of Muslim social structure. There are enough literature to support that the traditional organizations and institutional structures are capable of promoting modernization. So also, even certain reactionary and orthodox organizations can play a progressive role in the process of modernization. In fact, the Jamate-I-Islami, generally considered as an obscurantist organization, has inadvertently done a lot in this direction. 22


Siddiqi, a leading Jamat intellectual, opines that the Iti had or reinterpretation is usually associated with modernism and he claims that Jamat "is the organization most suited to serve as an instrument of change in Muslim society."

Thus, an attempt has been made here to find out the views of women about the roles of the religious elite and religious organizations in changing the Muslim social structure in general and the position of women in particular. For this purpose, the respondents have been asked several questions about the roles of the ulemas and maulvis, also different Muslim organizations, their objectives and efforts done so far to improve the status of women. Some questions are also directed to know their roles played in bringing reforms in social customs, traditions, etc. which are loaded upon the women on the name of religion. It has been attempted here to find out how far these ulemas are helpful in spreading true teaching of Islam to the Muslim masses, contributing to realization of improvement in their status and reminding the Muslim men to perform their rightful duties towards their women.

The first question, in the sequence, has been asked to the respondents whether they agree that the status of women has deviated from that which is accorded to them through the practice of the basic principles of Islamic Law. It

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has been found that 86% respondents agree with this view. They state that many un-Islamic traditions like demand for dowry, disapproval of widow remarriage, disliking for divorced women, getting divorce without considering the Islamic rules, settlement of girls' marriage without seeking their approval, etc. lower the status of women. Islam has given full right to women in choosing their partner or accepting or refusing the marriage proposal if it is finalised without consulting them. But in practice these principles of Islamic Law are overlooked. The result is that the marriage of a girl is regarded as burden on her parents.

Also, the participation of women in politics and their taking up employment are opposed by twisting what has been said in Quran and Hadith. The wrong social norms, alien customs, ignorance of women's rights given in Islam, degeneration in moral standards, poverty and abandonment of Islamic laws are responsible for the degraded status of women. Further, 11% of the respondents do not agree with the view and they say that women enjoy the same status as given in Islam, whereas 3 per cent do not have any idea of whether the status of Muslim women has deteriorated. In any case, their views on the status of Muslim women in present time are highly correlated with their educational level, age and exposure to mass media.
Table 7.3: Respondents' exposure to mass media and their views on the deviated status of women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exposure to mass media</th>
<th>Deviated Status</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High exposure</td>
<td>130(92.8)</td>
<td>7(5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low exposure</td>
<td>85(77.2)</td>
<td>20(18.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>215(86.0)</td>
<td>27(11.0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ X^2 = 12.759, \ df = 2, \ P < .01, \ C = 0.013 \]

The above table reveals that those respondents who are more exposed to mass media like reading magazines, newspapers, listening to radio, watching T.V., etc. assert more that women are not accorded, in reality, the same respectful status as has been prescribed by the Islamic principles. The respondents who have less exposure to mass media have also supported the view but their negative attitude is comparative more noticeable. It has been found from the observation also that the women realise their status lower than that prescribed in the Islam. But due to the age-old tradition of oppression, they do not wish to discard the un-Islamic traditions and practices which have been loaded upon them on the name of religion as stated earlier.

Further, the younger respondents are more aware and conscious about their rights and status accorded to them in Islam as stated earlier. They feel that they have been put in a condition of the second grade humanbeing in spite of the Islamic emphasis on human equality including even sex
equality. 24

Table 7.4: Age of respondents and their views about women's status deviated from that given in Islam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of the respondents (in years)</th>
<th>Views on their deviated status</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (in %)</td>
<td>No (in %)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>111(91.0)</td>
<td>8(6.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 - 30</td>
<td>29(90.6)</td>
<td>2(6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 35</td>
<td>56(86.2)</td>
<td>7(10.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 40</td>
<td>19(67.8)</td>
<td>7(25.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 &amp; above</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3(100.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>215(86.0%)</td>
<td>27(10.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 44.361, \text{ df} = 8, P < .001, \text{ C} = 0.021 \]

The \( \chi^2 \) test shows that there is a high degree of probability of correlation \( (P < .001 \text{ level of significance}) \) between the two variables. Lower the age of the respondents, higher is their awareness towards their status provided within the Islamic framework.

Like age and mass media, education of the respondents does have some impact on their opinion about the deviated status of women from the Islamic principles. It was found that higher is the educational level, higher is their consciousness about their status as well as of the Muslim women.

It was observed in our study that 86% of the respondents, mainly graduates and post-graduates (60.9%) support the idea about deviated status of Muslim women. Some (11.0%) respondents (mainly under-graduates) have negated this idea.

The next question related to the women's status given in Islam is intended to find out the views of the respondents on the roles of the maulvis or maulanas in the Muslim social structure and its modernization in general. It also intends to know the roles of the maulvis in the improvement of status of Muslim women in particular. Do these maulvis help the Muslims to adopt the path of Islam? Are they really the well-wisher of Ummat (followers of Islam). These questions are significant because "the resistance of any reform is from the lower level of religious elite which is termed as "bazar maulvis". Thus, in response to a question whether the respondents think that the maulvis or maulanas have misinterpreted or twisted the Islamic laws about women, it is surprising to note here that the majority (87.2%) of the respondents have a very poor impression about these maulvis. They termed these maulvis as "Kathmullas" (puppets) who have presented the laws in such a way that the men, specially illiterate or semi-literate, get the idea that women have got the subordinate position in Islam. They say that majority of these maulvis come from a very poor economic strata. They

somehow finish the prescribed course by mugging up the Qur'an without understanding its proper meaning. Hence, they are unable to preach the proper meaning of Islam and its basic principle of equality. Due to lack of adequate knowledge of the Qur'an and Hadith and their dictums for women, they misinterpret several things like education is not meant for women, women cannot take up employment even if they are in need, women have been assigned low status in Islam, etc. The general masses being illiterate follow them blindly which further results in the lower status of women.

Some of the respondents even go a step further and say that these maulvis are also politically motivated and are more involved in solving their own interest. Against this, 8 per cent (20) respondents are of the view that the maulvis don't misinterpret the Qur'an or Hadith or misguide the people; rather, they preach whatever is written in the Qur'an or is prescribed in the Islamic Law. Finally, 4.8 per cent (12) do not have any idea about the roles played by the maulvis. In any case, views of the respondents on this issue are not correlated with their educational level, age and exposure to mass media. In other words, irrespective of variations in the socio-personal background majority of the respondents have the opinion that these maulvis do not guide the Muslims in accordance with the Islamic laws. But they are also of the view that people have blind faith in them and, therefore, whatever they say the masses think it as sacrosant.
The last question is regarding the ulemas and their roles in improving the status of women. The respondents have been asked if they agree that the ulemas would be helpful in improving the status of women. It is really very encouraging to notice that women do want the ulemas to help them to come out of the unIslamic tradition. It has been found that 95.6% (239) respondents irrespective of their educational level, age, occupation, exposure to media, etc. have agreed on this point. They say that it is the duty of the ulemas to make improvement in the total Muslim social structure including the status of women because women are an important segment of society. They are of the opinion that the Muslim social structure as a whole has degraded from the basic teachings of equality and brotherhood. Many unIslamic traditions like demand for dowry, endogamy, disrespect for divorce and barren women, considering the presence of a widow as inauspicious on some auspicious occasions, etc. have pierced in the Muslim society. It is only the ulemas who can remove the unIslamic customs through preaching the true tenets of Islam, giving education to women through providing them proper religious knowledge, asking the men to follow strictly the religious rules regarding marriage and divorce. They are also of the view that since ulemas have kept the bridle of Islamic injunctions around themselves, it is they who can help in changing the situation and eradicating especially those unIslamic practices which are directed against the womenfolk.
The respondents, more or less, are in accordance with the view that the ullemes can serve as 'cultural broker' and contribute to modernization of Muslims in general and their women in particular through spreading education and religious knowledge. A sizeable percentage (44%) of the respondents have disagreed with this view and said that these ullemes are more involved in solving their own interests rather than tackling the issues pertaining to women and guiding the men to adopt the proper religious ways. Concerning the role of ullemes in improving the status of women in India, Brijbhushan states that, "it is notable that no pressure of the ullemes is ever brought on men who deprive women of their due rights although here is no scope for interpretation, the injunction being laid down in absolutely unequivocal terms. To use a modern phrase, this is male chauvinism of a high order. The clergy, being male and not always given to the highest degree of integrity, seems to take care not to make any pronouncements which may be against their own future interests or in the light of which their own actions may not bear scrutiny."  

Besides the maulvis and the ullemes, the religious organizations also play important roles in modernization as mentioned earlier. It is, therefore, intended to know views

of the respondents how do they think about these organizations and, also, how far these organizations, in their opinion, are able to raise the status of women. To this end, the respondents have been asked whether they think that the religious organizations play any role in improving the status of women. In response to this, 47.2% (118) respondents have found these organizations not playing any positive role. Instead, these organizations are more political than religious. These have become the centre of political activities and are unable to spread the Islamic knowledge among the people. They are of the view that the organizations like Jamati-i-Islami are less interested in solving the social problems and in bringing reform in the Muslim social structure in general and in status of their women in particular. These organizations should come forward and try to help the Muslims to adopt the process of modernization, through ijtihad, within the framework of Islam. Their views are in the order that the religious organizations like Jamati-i-Islami and traditional institutions like Madarsa Board, Deoband, etc. can mobilise the masses and contribute to socio-cultural modernization among the Muslims in India. 28

But 30.0% respondents say that these organizations, are working for the betterment of women. For instance, the Jamati-i-Islami provides educational facilities for women

28. Geertz, Clifford, op. cit., p.104; see also Wright, T., op. cit., p.55.
through organizing *ijtimā* (religious gathering) to remove the misconception about the Islamic laws and make women aware of their rights. But there are 22.8% (57) respondents who do not have any idea about the roles of the religious organizations played for the Muslims in general and their women in particular. Such views of the respondents do not have any bearings of their education, age, occupation and exposure to mass media because a good percentage of them are not even aware of such organizations and their roles.

Thus, it can be said that the Muslim women do want a change in the traditional way of life and attitudes to be brought through the *ulemas* and religious organizations and not through the extraneous forces. In their opinion, most of the problems in Islam particularly those related to the rights and status of women are "due to the absence of a sanctioned church in Islam, religious institutions, which could play a significant role, do not function very well. The *mullahs* are theologicians rather than priests and due to lack of official or private patronage, they are a part of the Muslim *ghettos* and therefore ineffective." 29 These *ulemas* can convince the Muslims through making them understand that women in Islam have not been placed lower. They are equally respectable members of the society and are not to be exploited.

Women are, however, becoming conscious of their rights and status in the society and are not willing to accept the misuse of Islamic traditions in the name of religion. They also think that the way of preaching of maulanas should be checked to remove the misconception of the Muslim masses about the women's rights and status prescribed in Islam. The role of formal education and mass media cannot be undermined in analysing their views. Today, they are in a position to think rationally on any Islamic or cultural issues.