CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION

The process of modernization has affected all societies of the world and scholars seem to be concerned with studying the various aspects of modernity. The modern western societies have achieved a substantial degree of modernization, whereas other developing countries including India are experiencing a fast development in the direction of modernization. When modernization takes root in a society, it not only affects the structure of that society, but also alters the values and attitudes held by the members of that society. It further affects social relationships among different segments of population of all ages, sexes, ethnic groups, etc. whereas social stratification undergoes the process of qualitative change. Thus, modernization is bound to affect the values associated with the relative positions of men and women in the society.

The Muslim social structure in India seems to be consisted of the core of the traditional cultural set up. However, with an interplay of a number of exogenous forces which have affected its traditional cultural set up and internal endogenous developments some changes can be seen in the Muslim society. More precisely, modern education, secularization and increased communication or mass media have led to the genesis of a relatively open and progressive Muslim social
structure. As a consequence, even the Muslim women have begun their striving and to look at their problems from the rational and scientific point of view. A hitherto unforeseen change has also evolved in the values and attitudes of the Muslim women towards men and their sexual relationships. The dominant values of pre-modern societies like dominance, dependence, segregation, servility, obedience and loyalty are also being replaced by independence, individuality, equality and companionship.

It has been observed, in the present study, that though the Muslim community was based in the past on the rigid social and religious lines, the educational, occupational or status mobility and industrialization have brought about a significant change in this community during the last few decades. The changing attitudes towards different socio-cultural and economic aspects and the emerging new values and ideas are constantly adopted. These subtle changes and values have further affected the position of women in this community. In other words, the Muslim society as a whole has reflected these changes. The marital age, both in the case of boys and girls, has increased and polygamy is no more a common practice. This has been possible more due to present changing socio-economic conditions in the country rather than due to any specific social and religious reforms introduced in the Muslim society. Even the onus of mate-selection in many cases has shifted from parents to their
children. The family structure has also changed from a joint to the nuclear form. While Muslim women had a very low status in the past, they enjoy today a greater say in regard to several issues in family matters. Thus, it is obvious that the process of modernization and change has proved in the case of Muslims to be solvent of their old traditions and established beliefs. Some of these changes specially modernization occurred among the Muslim women have been examined, in this study, with the help of empirical data obtained from an urban locale of a backward state like Bihar.

The data for the present study have been collected, during 1987-88, from a sample of 250 educated Muslims women living in Darbhanga town of North Bihar where Muslims constitute nearly 40% of the total population. More specifically, the sample consists of 100 students, 100 housewives and 50 working women. Besides the types of their occupational pursuits being the main unit for selecting the respondents for the purpose of data used in this study, their educational levels, ranging from higher secondary to post-graduation, have also been kept in mind while drawing the sample.

The analysis of data shows that views of the respondents on one type or the other of changes occurred in almost every major institutional spheres of Muslim society have some considerable bearings of their education, age, occupational status, duration of stay in the town, etc. In other words, their varying socio-personal background have contributed a
lot in changing their attitudes and also, to some extent, their behaviour patterns in the society. Those respondents who are highly educated and exposed to mass media and who hail from nuclear family and are younger in age are more liberal and rational in their thinking. This reflects the changes in the attitudes and also in behaviour patterns, if not of all, then at least of a certain section of Muslim women in India.

Modernization of Muslim women: Educational and Occupational Striving

Islam is not against the education of women. A vast majority of the respondents are aware of it, yet only 15% of them have been found pursuing post-graduate and or technical education. The parental education, specially of father and his occupation have been found influencing, to a great extent, the respondents' education. The structure of family and the duration of stay in the town also have some bearings on achieving the educational level of the respondents. Majority of the respondents are in favour of equal education of both sons and daughters to make them conscious and self-dependent. However, most of the respondents share the general view on education as they do not find any definite purpose of their pursuing education. The reasons seem to be the lack of a meaningful role of educated women in the Muslim community and so also among the people in general in the country. While some respondents hope to acquire jobs and improve their position through achieving
education, a large majority feel that the purpose of education is to acquire knowledge and get a good match in marriage. It has been found, in this study, that the majority of the respondents are in favour of separate schools/colleges for girls after attaining maturity. The awareness of girls' education is further revealed from the fact that the respondents of all the three categories of housewives, working women and students want to educate their daughters as long as they are bright in study.

Regarding occupational status of the Muslim women in general and the respondents in particular, it has been found that out of 250 respondents only 50 are employed. Their employment status is found to be related to the occupational and educational background of their father or husband as mentioned above. In analysing the attitudes of the respondents towards taking up employment by them and the Muslim women in general in relation to their educational level, age, family structure etc., it has been found that those who are highly educated, young in age, living in nuclear families are more rational and liberal on the matter. The general trend of the attitudes of the respondents is that employment of the women raises their status both in and out of the family and makes them economically independent or self-dependent. But majority of the respondents do not have choice of any specific type of job or profession. Instead, they are willing to take up any job according to their
qualifications. Regarding the termination of a girl's achieving education or pursuing job after her marriage, majority of the respondents are undecided which shows the lack of socially and culturally prescribed roles for women in Muslim society or their being tradition bound. Yet, their overall view about women's employment is encouraging as they are of the strong view that women should take up employment to improve their socio-economic status both in and out of their family and also to contribute for the modernization of the community and society.

**Modernization and institutional changes:**

The values in a pre-modern society emphasize subordination-superordination and dependence-dominance in the relation of men and women. On the other hand, the core values of modern society are equality, individuality and independence as stated in the beginning of this chapter. Moreover, the process of modernization contributes to changes in the institutions like religion, marriage, family, etc. Our data on the age of marriage suggest that majority of the respondents (95.0%) are in favour that both boys and girls should get married only after achieving the age of 18 years which is legally prescribed. But in the case of patterns of mate-selection majority of the respondents are still in favour of retaining the traditional one, i.e., arranged by parents only. Also, a majority of the respondents have favoured endogamous
marriage. Moreover, their inclination towards retaining traditional pattern of mate-selection and endogamous marriage shows a relation with higher level of their education and lower age. Marriage among the kins is still very common in the Muslim community. Yet, it has been found that the majority of the respondents (56.0%) who have achieved graduate and post-graduate levels of education have not favoured the marriage among the kins. Views of the respondents regarding polygamous marriage have also shown a perceptible change as a large majority (87.8%) are opposed to such marriage, mainly because they feel that people hardly follow the Islamic rules. The respondents are also against the demand of dowry. At the same time they are quite aware about the payment of Mehr as it should be paid immediately or within the stipulated time after Nikah. In other words, 71.2% respondents are aware about the rules of payment of Mehr. Obviously, such respondents are younger and are highly educated.

Thus, the marriage rules among the Muslims, in principle, are mainly intended to safeguard the interests of women but, in practice, an average woman gets neither the Mehr nor can she refuse to marry, nor initiate a divorce. Yet, it has been found in the present investigation that the young women of today, who have achieved modern education and have taken up employment, consider Mehr as an extra asset. They have also the advantage of understanding the Islamic jural and legal rules. They understand the full importance of Mehr.
and do not wish, out of emotion, to free their husband from payment of Mehr during his life time. The respondents have also shown a keen desire in women being given freedom of obtaining divorce. They have advocated for imposing ban on the unilateral divorce especially given by the husband. Their awareness towards remarriage of a widow or a divorced woman is also found to be encouraging as a majority (65.6%) of them are in favour of remarriage of such women. However, such liberal and rational attitudes are of those respondents who have achieved higher education and are younger in age.

The data on the family of procreation reveals that majority of the respondents want to live in a nuclear family due to the present socio-economic conditions and increased family complications. This preference is found especially among those respondents who are younger but more educated. In a modern society, ideas on the status of women point towards equalitarianism and companionship in the man-woman relationship. It has also been found, in this study, that in spite of the traditionally ascribed subordinate position of Muslim women, education has enabled them to change their attitudes towards equality. The younger and highly educated respondents are more in favour of sharing family responsibilities with men due to the present socio-economic situation. This shows that women do want equality not by breaking traditions, as seen in the west, but by thinking rationally about the situation. Their urge for equality is also evident from the fact that as the education level of
the respondents increases, they are more opposed to the sole authority of men in family matters. They do want equal authority by saying that "family is a cart which runs on two wheels". This view of the respondents on equal authority structure in managing the family affairs again reveals their rational outlook.

Further, with regard to equal treatment to be given to boys and girls in deciding the types and levels of achievement of their education, choice of their career and choice of their selecting life-partners, it has been found that women are still reluctant to allow their daughters the rights and privileges for exercising the last two choices. This attitude is not found uniformly among all the respondents. Instead, it varies with their age and the levels of their educational achievement. In other words, education and age of the respondents affect their attitudes and values towards their strife for achieving equality through undertaking new roles in the society. Quite encouraging results have been found about limiting the family size. Though religion still has some impact on this issue, majority (91.6\%) of the respondents are in favour of limiting their family size. Their such views are based mainly on the present socio-economic situation and their concern for providing better education and facilities to their children. Again such views have been expressed by those respondents who are younger in age but are highly educated and have stayed in the town for about a generation or so. The *purdah*, as has been pointed out by different
scholars, is an obstacle in improvement of status of Muslim women. But it is found, in the present study, that whether the respondents use burqa (purdah) or not, does not make any difference in their attitudes. It also does not prevent them from acquiring education. Rather, the use of burqa, in their opinion, is more due to the surroundings and is for their security and protection than a religious binding on them.

Women and their Political Modernization

Islam is not against women's taking part in any political activities. It has been found in the present study, that 50% of the respondents have approved the idea of women's participation in politics. Most of such respondents have achieved higher level of education and are younger in age and highly exposed to mass media. It has also been found that 66% of the respondents are quite aware about the ideologies of the different opposition and ruling parties. Here also, the awareness of the respondents is found to be related with their educational level, age and exposure to mass media. As far as the respondents' active political participation is concerned, it has been found that only 10% of the respondents are actively involved in politics. Majority (65%) of the respondents are not at all involved in politics while 26% are less involved. Those respondents who are actively involved in politics are highly educated and belong to students and working women categories. But at the same time it has been found that the respondents are quite aware about their voting right as 56.4% of them have used their franchise in the last general
elections. Such awareness has been found more among those respondents who are younger in age and have achieved higher level of education and also are highly exposed to different media of behaviour.

It is often said that Muslims are less responsive to the process of modernization due to their minority feeling and they are afraid of losing their separate identity. But in the contemporary India there is a change in their such feeling. This is reflected from the fact that in the present study 37.2% respondents are not aware at all of the minority complex. Whereas 46.0% respondents do have such complex, 37.6% do not have it at all. The feeling of minority complex is more in those cases where the respondents are highly educated and are employed in various types of jobs. In other words, this feeling becomes more visible in interaction with the people of other communities at the places of works and residences.

The role of religious elite in modernization

Women in Islam have been regarded as a respectable member of the society as *Quran* says, "heaven lay under the feet of mother." They have been garlanded with several rights. In the present study also it has been found that the women are quite aware about their status and rights prescribed within the Islamic framework. They do want a change in the traditional way of life and attitudes, through
the positive roles of the *Ulema* and different Muslim religious organizations and not through the extraneous forces. In their opinion, the religious elite or the *Ulema* have a very strong hold on the Muslim masses. To know the attitudes of women about these *Ulema* and so-called maulanas, several questions have been asked to the respondents and it has been found that women are becoming aware of their rights and status and are not ready to accept blindly what the Maulanas say. They are also quite aware about the roles of the *Ulema* which are not, at present, effective as far as the women's issue is concerned. For them the *Ulema* are the most influential people and they would have played an important role in improving the status of women by preaching the whole Muslim masses to follow the Islamic way of life and give women their due rights and status. This awareness is among those respondents who are younger in age but who are highly educated and exposed to mass media. They are also employed in one or the other types of jobs.

**The New Vista**

In the light of the above analyses of the various aspects of modernization of the Muslim women, there is need of undertaking some more concrete steps so that women can further improve their status by changing their traditional attitudes and values. But such changes among the women are easier when there is change in the attitudes, values and behaviour patterns of men. In other words, there is need of changing the entire
Muslim community if a meaningful change is realised in the status of the Muslim women. In so far as education has been found to have an unlimited potential for changing the attitudes and increasing the awareness of the Muslim women about their status and rights. However, there is need of launching an intensive programme of educational promotion for them.

In this the state machinery has to be supplemented by voluntary efforts on a large scale. Some religious organizations like Jamati-e-Islami, Tablighi Jamat, Madarsa Board etc. may come forward and try to promote women's education so that they would be able to cope with the present situation. Unfortunately, these voluntary agencies have not come forward till today to undertake this specific task. Therefore, these voluntary agencies along with the government need to make more vigorous efforts in transforming the traditional conservative attitudes and values of the Muslim women and making them modernized by cherishing the modern attitudes and values.

Since very strong preference has been expressed by a majority of the respondents for separate schools and colleges for girls it is desirable that separate educational institutions for girls be established.

The unequal property rights enjoyed by women also has no justification in law. According to the Muslim Personal Law, women are entitled to have only half as much value as men. If the women are given equal rights in property, it would affect them both psychologically and socially. Psychologically, it
will remove the inferiority complex of women based on property rights and socially it will change the attitudes of men towards women that they are not subordinate but their equal. In this regard, the state can take initiatives by enacting necessary legislations.

The marriage system among the Muslims is also discriminatory against their womenfolk. The major elements requiring change are the practice of polygamy and the practice of unilateral divorce. Polygamy has declined, of course, but not disappeared. As long as it persists as a permitted practice this is bound to lower the position of women. So is the case with easy process of divorce given by men. While in other communities divorce is permitted only for valid reasons which could be proved in a court of law, in Muslim community it is very easy by pronouncing it three times on an interval. But the Muslim women are deprived of such rights.

It may, thus, be pointed out here that the above mentioned practices are justified and protected under the provision of the Muslim Personal Law in the name of religion. So, it would be better for improving the status of women, and for their modernization if these laws are reformed and re-examined in such a way that women do not suffer from the discriminations. These reforms may be initiated by the Muslim cultural organizations themselves through organizing movement for bringing out reform in the traditional practices which cannot stand before the test of time. The ulamas or the religious elite would be
of great help in the reformation of the Muslim Personal Law. They are the only persons who can change minds of the people and can improve the status of women. Such changes to be incorporated in the Muslim social structure have expression of a large majority of the Muslim women covered under the present study. If these changes are incorporated in the Muslim society, both men and women may get equal opportunity not only to improve their own status separately but also to transform and modernise the Muslim social structure as a whole.