Chapter – III

Islam and Women
Islam is undoubtedly one of the major religions of the present day world. Nearly one of the seventh of the world’s population is its devotee. Islam actually is commanding a way of life. Islam guides all sphere of life and provide a distinctive social, economic and political doctrine. Holy book of Islam i.e. Quran provides guidelines about all matters such as social relations, socially acceptable behaviour, treatment of parents, children, wives, relatives, neighbors, orphans, travellers and enemies. It also gives detailed account of marriage, divorce, etiquette of business transactions, punishment of certain crimes, rules and norms of war etc. Islam consists of four parts, which cover all aspects of human life. These are:

1. Iman - relationship with God or Faith
2. Expression of belief in God through all forms of prayer
3. Man’s worldly transactions with fellow beings according to law
4. Observance of good manners and humanitarian attitude towards fellow human beings.¹

In this way, Islam not only moulds the belief but also daily behaviour and activities in life. One important thing is that Quran gives the instructions about male-female relationship and attitude of man towards woman. The Holy Quran provides equal rights for woman but she is denied to play a powerful role in any sphere of life by the society. Before come to know about the status of women in Islam, it is quite essential to have a brief knowledge about Islamic teachings especially in the context of India.

Islam was founded by the Prophet Muhammad in desert of Arabia in 600 A.D.² In the expansion of Islam from Arabia to other parts of the world, its
basic structures such as social, economic and political got changed. For example the egalitarian and democratic structure of power was moulded into feudal authoritarian structure during its expansion. However the culture of different countries were also assimilated into its original structure which consequently in each country Islam had to accommodate with different types of customs and attitude which have brought in the present cultural diversity among its followers.

Islam in India

When Muhammad Bin Qusim invaded the Sindh Valley in eight century A.D. Islam came to India. It came here as an Institutional religion of Arabs in changed beliefs and values. The Muslim rule in India was established in 1911 A.D.³ Earlier Muslim interaction with India was primarily in the form of trade. The first settlement of the immigration of people was from Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, West Asia, Eastern Coast of Africa.² From the 11th Century onwards, people from the Middle East came to India but Muslim rule was established with the advent of Mughals who held sway over large parts of the country keeping others aside.⁴

Through the migration process the Pathans formed a substantial part of upper class and during the expansion of Islam in India its social structure had already got changed. Though the basic concept of equality and brotherhood remained as such but it was classified into different strata of people.

According to Singh – “The Twelfth century, Muslim conquerors of India were distinctly divided into priest (including missionaries) nobility (ruling families and administrators) and all others (soldiers, merchants,
The elite or priests and nobility constituted the upper class of the Muslim society and they called themselves Ashraf or the four major immigrant group of Syed, Sheikh, Mughals and Pathans. It is believed that these upper castes are of foreign origin and that's why they are superior, while the Non-Ashraf are mostly converts and thus inferior. The division between Ashraf and Non-Ashraf is clearly reflected in their attitude towards women. The Ashraf's concept of woman is derived entirely from her role as mother and wife. They want to see her with traditional feminine virtues of modesty, tenderness, beauty, virginity, sensitivity and devotion to the family. Non-Ashraf women by comparison are more free. They do not observe Purdah. And since Purdah was considered as a symbol of respectability, so these are not considered as respectable as Ashraf Women, while they play the significant role in daily struggle. During the days of Muslim rule in India Muslim had enjoyed power and patronage at all levels. The political elites were placed in the higher social status because they were actively involved in expanding Islam throughout India. Thus Muslim enjoyed all political, social, religious and economic power during this period and even after the eclipse of Mughal Empire had held high posts under Marathas.

With the advent of the Britishers, all the prestige and patronage enjoyed by Muslim gradually disappeared. Their elites started losing their prominent status. The changed status of Muslim elite made Indian Muslims more conservative and lose of political power made them reluctant towards civilisation as well as acquiring western education. Muslim were lagging behind in every field due to their conservative attitudes. There were two
groups of Muslims. One, Who believed in western values and thought another, who were conservative and did not like any change in their customs, traditions and attitudes. To improve the position of Muslims, Sir Syed Ahmad started the ‘Wahabi movement’ in 1862 in Lahore and spread all over India.11 It was mainly a peasants revolt against rulers but also had a social stand to protest against the corruption of religion.

The foundation of Modern state was slowly laid down in the 19th century when the Britishers established large scale industries, created new political institutions and developed civic life. The Britishers introduced a new system of education. Over a period of hundred years or so the Indian Society has experienced the process of Modernization. India has also acquired scientific and technological advancement, Industrialization and economic development during these years. In the mean time, Some Muslim poets and intellectuals realised the need to share in process of Modernization. Poets were Mirza Galib, Altaf Hussain, Mohd. Iqbal and Ameer Ali, the intellectuals were Abu Talib, Abdur Rahim Dohri, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and number of student like Zakullah, Maulvi Nazir, Mohd. Hussain Azad etc.12 All these people realised that country was on the door step of a new era. They also felt that this is the time to emphasize on the value of English ideas and Modern Science.13 Mirza Asadullah Khan Ghalib and Altaf Hussain Hali were leading poets of his age. Hali’s concern for deteriorating status of Muslim Women manifested through his poem ‘Manajat Beva and Chup Ki Dad.’14 He showed that now women have become mere object or means of man’s sexual satisfaction. The Muslim orthodoxy had however opposed, all efforts of the poets, intellectuals and
reformers to make improvement in the status of Muslims. The orthodox Muslims expressed no interest in acquiring western values and those who had taken such education were declared Kafirs (One who does not believe in Islam). 15

After the independence, many changes have taken place both in micro and macro structures, which were either absent or slow during the British period. The political structure has further changed with the introduction of adult suffrage and parliamentary democratic system, several community development programmes land reforms and elective village panchayats.

The Quran itself bears testimony to supreme values of learning and science. M. Iqbal asserted the superiority of Islam as a way of life and emphasized on its certain basic principles like Ijtihad (excretions with a view to forming an independent judgement on legal question and 'Ijma' (consensus) which the Muslims have used to adjust to new conditions and make progress. It is considered that the Quran is a book which emphasizes on deed rather than idea. 16

Quran says 'Verily God will not change the condition of men till they change in themselves [sura 58]. Some poets and intellectuals were sensitive and liberal in their outlook and beliefs. For example, Mirza Abu Talib was the first educated and outspoken Muslim who responded favourably to modern education and appreciated the laws, constitution and some English customs. A much more powerful attempt to regenerate the miserable condition of Muslims was made by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan. His aim was to persuade Muslims to acquire knowledge for their survival in modern age. He considered that education was a tool of progress of Muslims. Keeping
views in mind, he established the Aligarh College in 1875 which later became 'Aligarh Muslim University.'

After the Independence, Muslims had been divided between two groups. And there is no change in that such condition even today. One group of reformers who wanted reforms in Islamic orthodox teachings and the other group is more radical and militant.\(^{17}\)

Most of the Muslims in India were ignorant, illiterate and always dependent upon 'Ulema' for guidance. Being economically backward and politically deprived, the Muslims could not be aroused for progressive ideas. As a result, the masses did not respond to education and learning of science. That is why Muslim women remained in miserable condition.

The Muslim intelligentsia currently constitutes a minority community and is in dilemma over mobilisation of Muslims to come out of their old Islamic practices and misconception of Islam and to adopt the progress of modernization for coping with the changing situation. This is why the effort of reformers and intellectuals in past or even today do not seem to be very fruitful as compared with other communities.\(^{18}\) Most of the followers of Islam are very conservative and orthodox and they do not admit any place for change till now. For example we can cite ‘Shahbano case’ and tradition of *fatawa* against *kafir* (who do not believe in Islamic customs.) Yet the fact remains that a limited degree of modernization has taken place among them in general and among their women in particular. Islam as a religion has no place for orthodoxy, fanaticism and conservativeness. But, it is said that Islam is best religion with worst followers. The so-called *ulema*, and politicised ‘Mullahas’ interpreted the principles of Islam in accordance to
their convenience and vested interest. This practice in various societies served to degenerate the status of women and confined them to the household activities. Therefore, modernization and development in this community could not play significant role to liberate women from socio-religious clutches.

**POSITION OF WOMEN BEFORE ISLAM**

Muslim women are living all over the world in various socio-economic environment which have enacted different laws exists. In small countries different laws exist and many laws have been changing time to time. Human history reveals that women were granted a lower status in most of the civilization since ancient times. In Puranic Hindu period women were treated as quite inferior beings. In Christianity and Judaism women was considered a source of temptation and evil. In Greece, Rome, Egypt and China, women was generally considered just a domestic drudge to stay at home and mind the house was her only recognised role.\(^{19}\) She had no reasonable place in development process and decision making.

Before the advent of Islam the status of women in Arabia too was same. Women belonged to her menfolk and a birth of girl considered his gracefull and female infanticide was common practice.\(^{20}\) And if a girl was allowed to live, she was married off at an early age of 7 to 8 years. In the medieval period, men dominated the society in Europe and Asia and women had no individual status and legal rights.\(^{21}\) Polygamy was popular and very common among them. There appears to have been no limit about number of wives. A wife was treated as housekeeper and guard for hospitality. In the pre-Islamic Arab society, the husband was free to divorce
his wife whenever he felt for doing so. There was no such right to the women.

The reforms instituted by Mohammed affected a vast and a marked improvement in the position of women. Islam improved the status of women by restricting polygamy to four wives, by prohibiting female infanticide by assigning a share of inheritance to women. Islam contributed to improve the status of women by claiming divorce on certain grounds and by allowing her to hold any public office, including that of the head of an empire or played various roles in various Muslim societies in accordance with time and situations.

**STATUS OF WOMEN IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES**

The countries Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq constitute most homogeneous group with the larger world of the Arabs.

As a result of their education the Arab women have advanced and more or less emancipated. Now they are moving towards equality in every sphere of life. It is generally observed about the women in those countries that a good number of women joined some kind of profession before and after marriage in order to have an independent living and financial security; A number of women are holding important jobs as directors of big commercial concern and there are a number of women journalists. In Lebanon, a large number of women participating in political activities of the country.

In Arab countries, a strong women's movement is developing and demanding justice and equality in all spheres of governmental and non-governmental activities. The educated young women are enjoying more
freedom in the choice of their marriage partners. The Arab society places higher value on pre-marital chastity and moral fidelity of women.

In Turkey the advanced position of women is fully accepted as a reality. Women in professions are playing an important role in the life of the nation.

In Iran, there is a marked advancement of women is a result of the educational progress. Women in Iran are free to move in streets, public gatherings and other places even without wearing a veil.

In Afghanistan, women still have the traditional roles. The economic life of women here is limited to professions. But the educated women have considerable influence in family affairs. In Taliban regime, the women were strictly confined only to household activities. The entry of women in schools and colleges were prohibited and were compelled to behave and sit in accordance with Taliban Farman but after the collapse of that regime, the life of women is trying to come on the normal course.

The Indonesian women are granted suffrage and equal rights with men. They are actively participating in economic life at all levels. Indonesian women are working realistically within the framework of Islam.

In Pakistan, some restrictive customs have a determinative effect on the life of women. Purdah system is still prevalent in Pakistan but the younger women of the educated upper class do not always observe it; Education of girls has been a serious problem because of social and economic causes. The early marriage is popular. In rural areas, women are engaged in agriculture. The women in Pakistan have an unrealized academic potential because of regarding influence of Purdah; Pakistani women are
granted full political rights. The conferment of full political equality has helped women in Pakistan to raise their status.

In case of Bangladesh, the women’s place outside the home is limited. Early marriage system is common, Political rights are granted to women in Bangladesh. But totally it is found in all the countries that the status of women is inferior to men both rural and urban; traditional and modern societies.

**MUSLIMS WOMEN IN INDIA**

India has been invaded by different rulers in past and these invasions had definitely influenced the Indian women who were also affected all along by the different socio – religious reform movements carried out from time to time. Historically, since the Muslim invasion in 11th century, varieties of new elements had been introduced into the structure of social values prevalent in the country.\(^{22}\)

During the medieval period purdah was found particularly among high Muslim family because it was symbol of respectability. But during the same period the birth of girl in Muslim family was regarded as an unfortunate event. As regards the settlement of marriage it was entirely the concern of parents of both sides who agreed to the conditions of the contract.\(^{23}\) When the Britishers came to India they did not introduce any change regarding the status of women. Unfortunately, in India there have been no significant changes even today, with the result Muslim women suffer under feudal laws.
SOCIAL POSITION OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

It is very surprising that Indian Muslim women are living in social miserable conditions while Islam gave her equal social status. The prophet of Islam was very favourably inclined to raise women’s status even attribute equally if possible. Prophet allowed a woman the right to retaliate against her husband. The Quran unambiguously stressed gender justice. It took care of rights of women in matters of marriage, divorce, property, custody of children. Marriage was made into a contract and the bride’s consent was made compulsory. Quran gives the right to stipulate any conditions she wanted to. She has given the right to what is called khula i.e. to liberate herself from her husband by returning the ‘mehr’. She has also right to ‘Talaq-I-taffiz’ (delegated right to divorce). In fact, she is not bound to too look after the child. If she refuses to do so her husband has to make arrangement for a wet nurse. This provision very clearly shows that bringing up children is not her responsibility alone but is a joint one. In Islam, even producing children is also depends on mutual consent. A husband can not force his wife to produce many children. According to some ‘hadith’, a husband can not force his wife to not give birth a child. ‘azl’ (which means coitus interrupts but also includes others contraceptive devices) can be practiced by the husband with her specific consent. Even she can insist on ‘azl’ if she does not want to loose her charm and beautiful figure or her life in danger due to child birth. Islam gives so many rights regarding herself. Often we think that Quran prohibited abortion to Muslim women but abortion is also permitted in such cases up to a period of four months of conception. While Muslim males consider their right to produce as many
children as they want. Holy Quran and the prophet have shown the highest respect and regard for women. Great importance is given in Islam to husband wife relationship. Islam emphasize that husband has to treat his wife kindly and gently. Wife has to give to her husband not only love and care but also obedience that alone can ensure harmony in the family. Moreover, Quran permits men to have more than one wife but this permission is conditional. Every one of the wives has to be treated justly not only materially but also in love and all other respects. In Islam divorce has no doubt been made easy for the husband. He can claim divorce in case the wife loses his affection and care or she has some physical problems and life with her would be unbearable, the wife also has been given the right under certain circumstances to divorce. Muslim women becomes the victim of triple divorce in many cases. The Holy Prophet strictly prohibited triple divorce and naturally the Quran referred it as sinful act. The Quran has prescribed the procedure of *talaq* that is very fair to women. It even prescribes arbitration (the wife appoints one arbiter and the husband other. The Qazi is required to take into account, before giving his verdict.

As a rule unless it forms a specific stipulation of marriage contract, a woman cannot divorce herself but may obtain a divorce in a court of law under certain condition. According to distribution of Muslim marriage act of 1939, a woman can claim divorce in case her husband takes another wife, on the ground that there is inequality of treatment either psychologically or economically.

Many social problems of Muslim women are on account of purdah system and illiteracy. Purdah among Muslims is generally confined to those
place in India where Muslim rule had been prolonged and prominent. There was a tendency to protect women from the gaze of the vulgar but this custom was confined to kings nobles and merchants. But after some time, it became trend and men used it as instrument to confined the women to domestic life, while Quran never prescribed it as it prevalent at the present time. According to Quran both Muslim men as well as women are required to pray ‘Lord, increase me in my knowledge.’

Prophet also has said ‘Acquisition of knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim, man and woman. Thus Islam improves the position of women in every areas. It is best that suitable quotations from Holy Quran be cited to establish the status given by Islam to Muslim women.

(a) ‘And they (women) have right similar to those (of men) over them in kindness...’ (2.228)
(b) ‘They (women) are raiment for you and you (men) are raiment for them’ (2.187)
(c) ‘Men are in charge of their wives because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah had guarded...’ (4.34)
(d) ‘Consort with them in kindness, for if you dislike a thing in them it may happen that you dislike a thing wherein God has placed much good.’ (4.19)
(e) ‘And whose doeth good work whether of male or female and he or she is a believer, such will enter paradise and they will not be wronged the dint in a date stone.’ (4.124)
All above quotations from the Holy Quran show that in Islam both male and female are equally answerable to God for their actions and will be rewarded equally. Although these rights are not equal, as husbands being protectors and providers have been granted a higher position. But women are also said to excel in their own field over men. Besides these quotations there are so many other references in the Quran which enjoin men to treat their women folk kindly and not to exploit them and torture them. Moreover, the Holy prophet has stressed the importance of treating women well in many of his saying. Some saying are as follows:

1. Whosoever has a daughter and he has not buried her alive, does not insult her and does not prefer his son to her, God will enter him into paradise. (Ibn Hambal)

2. The most perfect believers are the best in conduct and the best of you are those who are best to their wives. (Ibn Hambhal)

3. Paradise is at the feet of mothers.

4. It is the generous (in character) who are good to women and it is the wicked who insult them.³¹

The Holy prophet raised the position of women in many ways. His teachings represent a social reform movement against existing practices, which was very significant for that day and included such measures as the abolition of infanticide, limitation of polygamy, protection of widows and orphans, marriage contract, granting of dowry to women.

**RELIGIOUS POSITION OF WOMEN IN ISLAM**

Muslim scholars have written about the equal status offered to men and women in religion. Mohammed Qutab considers that Islam holds that
women is a human being and has a soul similar to that of man. Men and women are equal in their origin, their abode and their place of return.\textsuperscript{32}

As compared to other world religions, Islam has granted more rights to a woman. The recognition the Quran granted to women's material and spiritual condition seem to be the same as those granted to men. The pilgrimage of Haj, which men and women perform as a community, bears witness to the fact. In earlier days of Islam, it would appear women were free to visit the mosque and pray. This practice was later condemned as men found it difficult to concentrate their mind and prayers in the presence of women. By the third century of Muslim era, although some male were in favour of women's liberty as during the period of Badshah Khan and Sheikh Ahmadullah, women began to attend Friday prayers at the mosques in Kashmir and the frontier province. Often we blame the religion for inferior condition of Muslim women but it is not very true. In fact, the Holy Quran treats men and women equally in most of the spheres of life. As Quran prescribes:-

(a) For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devote men and women, for men and women who are patient and constant, for men and women who gave charity, for men and women who guard their chastity is forgiveness and a great reward. (H.Q. 33.55)

(b) Never will I suffer to lose the work of any of you, be he male or female; you are member one of the other (H.Q.3)

(c) The rewards of paradise are equivalent for both according to the course of their actions. He that works righteous deeds, whether a man or woman and is a believer, such shall enter the garden of bliss. (H.Q. 40:40)
Revelation, which is God’s greatest gifts, is granted to both men and women. Behold the angel said, ‘O Mary, God has chosen thee and purified thee and chosen thee above the women of all nations.’ (H.Q. 3:42)

ECONOMIC POSITION OF WOMEN IN ISLAM

Islam not only grants religious rights, it also encourages women to be economically independent. As Holy Quran prescribe:

unto men that which they have earned and unto women that which they have earned. (H.Q. 4:32)

‘From what is left by parents and those near related there is a share for men and a share for women.’ (H.Q. 4:7)

The Muslim law of succession and inheritance is equally humane. Islam states that a woman is as much an heir as a man under Muslim law, and the son does not exclude a daughter from a share of the father’s property. Even marriage does not give the husband any right over the property of wife during her lifetime, which she can administer in her own right and alienate without the permission of the husband.

From a financial point of view, woman enjoys same benefits in Islam as man. Woman may follow any respectable profession if they feel so. She is still free to carry on any work, to make any contract she desires, to dispose of her property as she wishes. Nor is her individuality merged into that of her husband. As for property, moveable or immovable generally very few women work and earn. Although Islam does not prohibit them from working at all. In Islam, there is no concept that she has to confine to only domestic life. She is given the right to own property in her own right.
She inherits as daughter, wife and mother. Thus, she inherits in three capacities. Of course she gets half of what her brother has but then she neither has to pay dower (on the contrary she receives it) nor has she to maintain herself. She is maintained by her father (as of right) while unmarried and by her husband after marriage. She is not obliged to give anything of her wealth to her husband who is obliged to maintain her even if she is rich and he is poor. She has absolute right to property; neither her father nor her husband can claim any part of it unless she gives it of her own accord. As a maintenance her husband is obliged to provide her cooked food, sewn clothes, a house and all other necessities like hair oil, toilet items etc. All this is obligatory for the husband.  

The right to inheritance of a woman is also observed more often in preach than in practice. Agricultural property was never given to married daughter as it would be divided. Though there is no concept of primogeniture in the Islamic law of inheritance, it was in practice among Muslim feudal families. Even in non-agricultural properties she hardly ever received her share of inheritance. The brothers or father give her a token amount in marriage, and even when a woman is aware about that her brothers do not given her the due share, she refrains herself from litigation as it would disrupt cordial relations.

**POLITICAL POSITION OF WOMEN IN ISLAM**

The political condition of a nation has its own impact on the status of women. In the past, woman was considered to be unsuitable for carrying out any type of political activity and was not permitted to participate in political process. The women, who participated in political activities, were belonged
in high-class status. Sultana Razia was a notable example of a Muslim Queen who ruled the vast Empire of her father with remarkable energy and ability. Chandi Bibi of Ahmad nagar (Mughal period) was another important Muslim Queen of medieval India. Coming to more recent times, the three successive rulers of Bhopal state were women. And the state had enjoined justice and prosperity under her Queens.

It is generally believed that the customs and traditions of Islam do not allow women to move freely in public life. Many Muslim women as well as men have the opinion that politics is not a field for women. But contrary to it, the Islam has given full right to women to involve her in political activities, but her involvement should be limited and her appearance should be decent. She is equally entitled to exercise her franchise and participate in social and political matters. She can be a part of legislative and executive by involving herself in the council of the head of state. A woman is equally responsible for reforming and reconstructing the society on healthier lines. She is entitled to pool her efforts with man by influencing the political socio economy and educational scene through the media, writings, public meetings, participation in judiciary etc. Through participating widely in all these social spheres, she can influence the general political scene.36

The fact is that in early Islam women were in several fields of endeavor. Bibi Ayesha, daughter of Abu Bakr and wife of Prophet Muhammad, recognized for the sharpness of her intellect, personally conducted the insurrectionary moment against Hafiz Ali in what is know as the battle of Jamal (camel). Bibi Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed, often took part in discussions regarding the education and
caliphate (Amirali-spirit of Islam P.250) Bibi Zainab, the grand daughter of the Prophet shielded her nephew from the ummayads and brought them in their own courts to shame for their misdeeds in the early history of Islam, almost until the extinction of the Saracenic Empire in the east, women continued to occupy an active position as in modern society. Zubaida wife of caliph Haroon played an important role in the history of her age. The ladies of the prophet’s household were known for their learning and virtues. Baran, wife of Khalid Mamun, Ummul Fazal, Mamun’s daughter were famous for their scholarship. Islam evolved a progressive status for women which can be deciphered from the instances cited above though it is still the fashion of controversialists to deny the fact. Where the birth of a daughter was considered a calamity, Prophet Mohammed gave to women a new status. The Islamic society, became feudalized after the death of prophet and the end of caliphate. Islam was the first religion to accept women as a legal entity and accord her rights in many areas but Islamic pattern of life is so far as it concerns with general life style of women. While Islam wants women to play a responsible role in the process of political decision making through exercise of their right to vote. Islam, generally does not differentiate between state and religion therefore they believe that Muslim leader should be ‘Imam’ (leader) in matters dealing with defence, economy, politics and society. Islamic political system requires certain other conditions for a head of state. These conditions, and not necessarily the gender, are the basis for political leadership. The Quran specifies that the person in authority should be from amongst Muslims. Point to be noted, there is no description about sex. Quran refer only the
...and ‘Muslim’ not male or female. The person must be in a position to fulfill the trust in ‘Allah’. Islam refers rights, duties, obligations towards Allah, family and society. A ruler may be responsible for secrecy. And most important thing is that gender is obviously not the consideration. But main consideration is what qualities and responsibility Islam expect for ‘Iman’. Women could never qualify because of their social responsibilities of child-care, household activities, purdah-system etc. So, male folk reinterpreted negatively the teachings and laws of Quran. In other words, while Islam in general does not endorse the idea of political leadership of women in exceptional situation it may even allow a transitional leadership role to them. In Pakistan the “Ansari Commission Report of Aug 1983” does not disqualify women from the leadership role. However, their participation is subject to their reaching an age limit of over 50 years provided that their husbands may also agree to it. The proposal caused a great agitation among the bourgeois feminists of Pakistan. They think taking permission from husband would make a wife inferior and deny her human rights.

Now question arise – Does Islamic teachings restrict the women’s leadership in political matters? Or is it a male interpretation of Islamic teachings, which has discouraged women from playing a leadership role in the political structure? Let it be said at the outset that Islamic approach in politics as well in other matter is not a sexist approach. Islamic Political system is an externalization of basic Islamic values contained in the Quran. Every political activity must conform to these general guidelines. Islamic society is essentially ethical society, not based discrimination though in all normal activities it maintains an atmosphere of segregation between the
sever. In fact, Islam does not allow conflicts of interests or a confusion of roles in the society. In exceptional situations it does not eliminate the hypothetical possibility of leadership role of women in political, economic and legal matters. While Islam permits women to play a responsible role in the process of political opinion making through exercise of their right to vote A woman is restricted to play a role of political leadership because of certain practical reasons.

There is a difference in the temperament of men and women, which cannot be denied. We always blamed religion for backwardness of Muslim women. But after acquiring the knowledge of Islamic status of women, religion cannot be blamed for assigning inferior condition to women. Religion itself is the end product of patriarchal society. Our values and customs of patriarchal society are more responsible for women's lower rank.

Today, in Independent India, many opportunities are available to Muslim women. Muslim women are beginning to express an independent opinion on the interpretation of Islam in order to bring religion in harmony with modern needs and are pressing for reconsideration and restatement of social legislation in their favour. And this is healthy sign. Of course, all this is not smooth going. A lot of hard work is required and without cooperation of men, women cannot attain success. Moreover, more cooperation is needed from religious leaders who interpret the Islamic teachings. Which they are not in favour of any change in Islamic law. Declaration of Fatwa against Kafir is such an evil, which inflict a crushing blow to the progressive people. Furthermore, both men and women should achieve an understanding of the Quran. This will create a new awareness among people
by which many misconceptions and misinterpretation will be dispelled. Once awareness is created a will has to develop in the community to give women their rightful position.

Religious leader’s misinterpretations and male dominated values are not only responsible for backwardness of Muslim women. But there are so many other factors such as illiteracy, divorce, early marriage, purdah system etc. which are responsible for that condition. Muslims in India are a heterogeneous community while there is conformity in ideas and belief, defined in Quran and the Hadith (sayings of Prophet Mohammed), the general pattern of living, the system of social satisfaction, customs, attitudes regarding women have been greatly influenced by conversion of Islam usually meant the acceptance of different faith while the mode of living remained more or less unchanged. It appears that Quran gives a respectable position to women but not equal to men. Today social economic and political factors has further eroded her already weakened position vis-a-vis men in contemporary society.

References:

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32. Ibid. p.17
34. Ibid.
35. Engineer, Asghar Ali, *op. cit.* p. XIV


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